

NEHEMIAH 6

NEHEMIAH'S ENEMIES ARE BAFFLED!

This chapter gives us an account of two plots that were laid against Nehemiah by his enemies, and how they were frustrated by God's good Providence. First, they attempted to trip him into a snare. All the gaps in the wall were closed, so the project was almost as good as done, even though the gates were not yet on their hinges. So it was now or never for the enemies; by one bold stroke, they *must* get rid of Nehemiah immediately! They knew he was well-guarded, so there was no hope of being able to attack him directly; therefore, they tried all the arts of deception to get him into their hands. They begged him to meet with them privately in a little country village, as if they coveted his friendship; but they really intended to do him a mischief! With heavenly wisdom, he declined their invitation and sent them a prudent answer by messengers of his own: "I am doing a great work! I am very busy, and I am unwilling to let the work stand still while I leave it to come down to you!" Four times, these men attacked Nehemiah with the same invitation; and four times, he returned the same answer.

After realizing that Nehemiah would not be drawn away to one of their private meetings, they devised a plot to terrify him and keep him from finishing his work. Sanballat tried to plant fear in Nehemiah's heart by sending his servant with an open letter, declaring that his undertaking to build the walls of Jerusalem was generally represented as seditious and treacherous to the Persian king, and that it would be dealt with accordingly. He pretended to inform Nehemiah of this as a friend, in order that he might hasten to court to clear himself; or at least stop his work, for fear that it would be thus misunderstood. But Nehemiah knew what he was really aiming at; and therefore, he not only asserted that such reports were false, but he also denied that they were even being reported in the first place.

In the midst of Nehemiah's complaint about his enemies' malicious endeavors to frighten him and weaken his hands, he lifted up his heart to heaven in a short prayer: "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." It is the great support and relief of believers that in all their difficulties, they have a good God to go to; from Him, by faith and prayer, they receive grace to silence their fears and strengthen their hands against their enemies.

The Jews' enemies left no stone unturned in their efforts to take Nehemiah away from building the wall around Jerusalem. The next thing they tried was to bring him to do a foolish thing, so that they might laugh at him and lessen

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Nehemiah refuses to come to a private meeting with his enemies – verses 1-4
- ❖ They claim that his actions are being represented as treasonable – verses 5-9
- ❖ They try to get him to flee into the Temple, but he refuses – verses 10-14
- ❖ The wall is finished quickly, despite secret treacherous correspondence – verses 15-19

his influence over the people. Tobiah and Sanballat hired a false prophet and prophetess to persuade Nehemiah to quit his work and hide for his own safety. Shemaiah, the false prophet, suggested to Nehemiah that his enemies would come and slay him in the night, which he had reason enough to believe was true; and he very gravely advised him to hide in the Temple until the danger was over. But if Nehemiah had yielded to this temptation, then the people would have immediately stopped their work and thrown down their weapons; and then the enemies would have gained their point. "Should such a man as I flee?" he asked. "Shall I desert God's work, or discourage my own workmen whom I have employed and encouraged? Why would I go into the Temple and lurk within its walls when there is important business that must be done?" He bravely resolved that he would die at his work before he would shamefully retreat from it, even in order to save his life.



So Nehemiah continued to lead in the building of the wall of Jerusalem, until the project was brought to completion in just 52 days – not counting the Sabbath days, upon which the people rested. The threats of their enemies, which were intended to weaken them, only served to encourage them to go on with their work even more vigorously. But Nehemiah had the discouragement of seeing some of his own people treacherously corresponding with Tobiah. There were many in Judah who were in a strict but secret confederacy with him, in order to advance the interests of his country – although it would certainly be the ruin of their own. They were sworn unto Tobiah as their friend and ally, because both he and his son had married daughters of Israel. They betrayed Nehemiah's counsels to Tobiah, and they had the impudence to try to court Nehemiah himself into a friendship with him – representing him as an honest gentleman, who was worthy of his acquaintance.

When the Lord works for His children, the people of the world are dead-set against it! God's plan of redemption is always accompanied by a movement of opposition. But this historical narrative of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls is a picture of how the Lord brings His Gospel-work to completion, in spite of all the attempts of the devil and the world to bring it down. Wicked people persecuted Nehemiah in his time, they persecuted Christ when He walked the earth, and they'll still persecute us today. But Jesus has already won the victory; and when we have passed through all the troubles and afflictions and arrive in heaven, it will be well worth it to spend eternity with our Beloved!

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the assurance that we shall indeed subdue all oppositions, and that we shall be more than conquerors through Your grace helping us; for by Your blessed Spirit, we are made strong in the power of Your might! Amen.