

Nehemiah 4:16-23 – Protection of the Wall-Builders

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gaebelin, Armstrong, INT, Geneva, Barnes, Delitzsch, Poole, Gill, JFB, Henry, Handfuls, Clarke, Trapp, Ps24

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The enemies of God's people **not only mocked the people of God**, they went further to **make severe and credible threats of murder** (even increasing the confederacy against the Jews) and caused them to fear.

But rebuilding Jerusalem's wall was critical and Nehemiah had to respond. So Nehemiah **prayed to God** for help.

He **encouraged the people by reminding them who God is and how great his promises were.**

He then **armed the people for protection.**

Today you will hear the details of how he armed the Jews for their protection.

Our headings are:

Protection by Weapons

Protection by Unity

Protection by Day and Night

Our goals are: **That you will learn the art of protection for God's people so they can be safe to do the work of the Savior (whose hands we are today) so Jesus would get the praise and glory.**

Protection by Weapons

16 So it was, from that time on, that half of **my servants worked at construction**, while the other half held the **spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor**; and **the leaders were behind all the house of Judah.**

1. After the serious credible threats came against God's people, half of the men were turned into military personnel and half continued to work on repairing the walls around Jerusalem.

2. These soldiers had to be trained and be well-equipped, and they were – with spears, shields, bows, and whole armor – with offensive weapons-spears, and defensive weapons-shields.

They knew better than to take a knife to a gunfight.

To get these weapons for the protection of the church and preservation of worship, they had to invest their personal money.

Historically, Jews were armed, especially at sowing times, as Arabs would raid and rob them of their good seeds.

(By the way, “servants” is best translated “young men.” It could be these youths were his bodyguards.)

3. More, the leaders of the Jews supported the workers so they had the motivation to protect God’s people.

What a horrible thing it would have been if the leaders lived luxurious lives while the builders were sleeping in the open air!

Josephus wrote Nehemiah would go around the city at night to see the progress of the work and to plan, even though he was working all day.

The leaders were totally committed.

In war, supporting those who fight is just as critical as the ones who fight.

17 Those who **built on the wall**, and those who **carried burdens**, loaded themselves so that with **one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon.**¹⁸ Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

4. Of the half of the people who were building the walls, they too had to be armed with weapons to help the soldiers if they were attacked by the growing confederacy against the Jews.

So even **while doing the hard work of removing garbage and clearing the ground, they still had to be armed for battle.**

They had to always be ready to fight on quick notice. It is likely the sword was in a sheath on their thigh, not in their hands.

5. Nehemiah had a man next to him with a trumpet who could sound the alarm if the enemy attacked and other trumpeters would make sure everyone would be ready on quick notice to fight.

6. Lessons:

a. The church needs leaders who are able to recognize threats against the church so the church can take defensive actions to keep everyone safe.

Leaders need to recognize **the danger of being “woke,”** and explain how to protect against wokeness.

Leaders need to recognize the **danger of the state trying to be the provider from cradle to the grave** so young people don't fall prey to the state's abusive tax policy of wealth redistribution.

In short, leaders need to stand behind those who are doing battle.

b. Spiritual warfare and spiritual work can never be separated.

Don't wait until your life is perfect (spiritual warfare) to invite people to your home (spiritual work).

Don't wait until you are very close to God (spiritual warfare) to tell others about Jesus (spiritual work).

Don't wait until you have conquered every sin in your life (spiritual warfare) to help someone with their weakness (spiritual work).

If you focus only on your life (spiritual warfare), you will not be able to defend the faith (spiritual work), and vice versa.

And **you must work hard at both!**

c. These Jewish men were not just fighting for their families, they were also fighting for the world's future.

It might have seemed like a little duty in the grand scheme of things, but it was **foundational for Jerusalem to be kept from being overrun by her enemies so Christ would come to liberate the world** from there.

So this work was ultimately about eternal security found only in Jesus Christ when he defeated your enemy on the cross.

You too are fighting for the world's future!

Protection by Unity

19 Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people,
"The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from

one another on the wall. 20 "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

1. The Jews were working at various points in the wall so they did not crowd each other, but that distance between them posed a danger in case they were attacked.

And with **hard work and tiredness**, carelessness was likely, so Nehemiah required trumpeters (he had one too), and the people had to be within distance to hear those trumpeters.

Jewish historian Josephus wrote the trumpeters were placed 150 meters apart.

2. What is the significance of the trumpet?

When the trumpet sounded **a particular sound, it was a call to war**. A **different sound was to mark the end of war**. People were trained to know the difference.

So when the people heard the war sound from the trumpet, they could rally together quickly for war.

This was unity! They didn't always have to be together physically and repairing at the same place, but they had the unity of purpose - for protection.

1 Corinthians 14:8 For **if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare** himself for battle?

3. Nehemiah assured the Jews that through their work and preparation "our God will fight for us."

Joshua 10: 42 All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.

God often, but not always, used human means to protect his people and destroy the enemies!

4. Lessons:

a. Churches must work in unity. It doesn't mean you have to agree on every point of doctrine, but you can work together with other churches for the common good.

You see how many churches **work together to promote pro-life causes!**

You can **work together to help the needy in natural disasters.**

You can **work together to protect the persecuted church.**

Churches work together to examine new candidates for ministry to make sure they are qualified.

b. Preachers are the sounders of God's trumpet today to warn of clear and present dangers. Listen to them.

If you don't come to church to hear preaching, you are sticking your finger in your ears.

Guess what will happen! You and your fellow Christians will be in danger. You won't hear the warnings!

c. The final trumpet will blow one day and all God's people will gather...but it would not be a sound of war... It will be a trumpet that will sound the end of all spiritual wars. Hallelujah.

But until that day, listen to the sound of faithful Gospel preaching.

Protection by Night and Day

21 So we labored in the work, and **half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared.**

1. Nehemiah went one step further to preserve the city so God's people could get economic and spiritual security: He made sure there were large numbers of guards ready during the day – till late in the evening when the stars came up.

22 At the same time I also said to the people, "**Let each man and his servant stay at night** in Jerusalem, that they may **be our guard by night and a working party by day.**"

2. Nehemiah then ordered men from the villages to stay in Jerusalem to preserve the work they were doing and to prevent any invasion by the enemies at night.

This also helped so they did not have to travel to work every morning, which was the normal practice.

(The word "servant" here, as earlier, meant "young men.") So each worker had an assistant.

It was uncommon for others to fight at night, but **Nehemiah did not trust these enemies.**

In those extraordinary times Jews had to be temporarily separated from their families outside of Jerusalem. They had to miss those special times with the

kids...and even their wives and mothers. It was a sacrifice of freedom in order to serve others. **Even residents of Jerusalem lost family time!**

23 So neither I, my brethren, my servants, **nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.**

3. In order to do this great work, the men were always ready, not even taking time to change their clothes.

They literally slept in their clothes.

4. Lessons:

a. Christian kingdom building demands self-denial. Whatever task you have, it starts with self-denial. Love demands you put others before yourself.

And sometimes your family will have to do without ...in extraordinary times of kingdom work. God will reward you for what you lose.

b. Be weary in the work you have to do; don't be weary of the work you have to do.

c. How much are you willing to give up for the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Have you ever thought how much Jesus had to give up for you? Doesn't it make it easier to give up time, money, and effort for the one who gave his life for you and gave you eternal life in heaven?

Conclusion:

God's people were **protected by their weapons**, they were **protected by their unity**, and they were **protected day and night**.

Ultimately, they worked, but it was the Lord who was protected them!

That protection helped them to be secure and prosper as they waited for the true Protector to come, the Lord Jesus.

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus:

1. Learn to work for the protection of Christ's church.

Do this by **knowing the Word of God well**.

Listen to good preaching.

Do this by **sticking together** and holding each other accountable.

2. Remember how valuable the church is to Christ. He paid for her with his life.

Knowing this will motivate you to care for her.

Forgetting this will make you careless.

3. Work at convincing those who oppose the church of *the danger they are in outside the church and of the blessing to be on the inside the church.*

They are welcome to join.

Those who are enemies can become family.

Finally: You might have a good security system in your home and advanced warning systems on your car, and they offer some protection, but what protection do you have for your soul for eternity? The only protection is to know Jesus paid the price of your soul by dying on the cross for sinners. Accept it and live. Reject it and die.