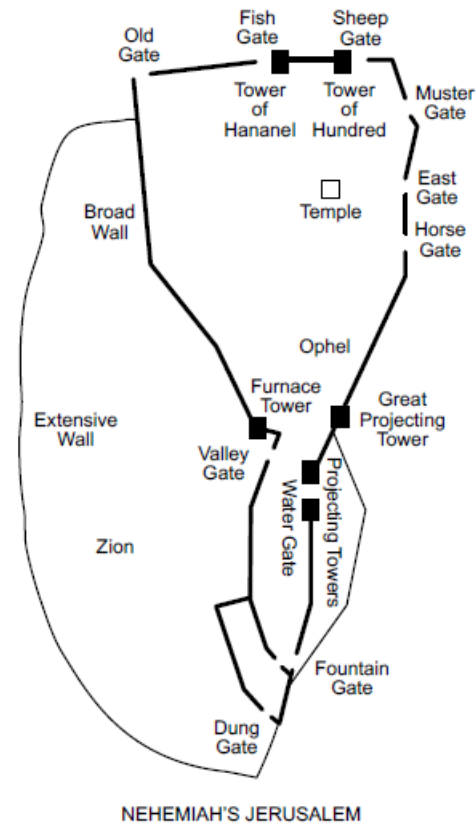


# Hand Me Another Brick

Nehemiah 3 & 4

Nehemiah 3 describes the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem, starting with the Sheep Gate near the city's northeast corner. The chapter is often skipped over because it just appears to be a list of hard names. However, it provides several key principles about leadership, planning and service.

1. The work of God is done in an orderly and disciplined manner. The wall was rebuilt in a counter-clockwise manner. North wall (1-5); West wall (6-12); South wall (13-14); East wall (15-32).
2. There was a division of labor in the Lord's work. Everyone played a part; the leader cannot do it all.
3. All kinds of people from all walks of life were required. An every member ministry.
4. They kept the big picture in mind. "They *restored Jerusalem* as far as the Broad Wall" (8).
5. The Lord remembers and honors those who serve him. As a humble servant, Nehemiah's name is absent.



Nehemiah 4 demonstrates that success, not failure, breeds opposition. It could be concluded from reading chapter 3 alone that the work on the wall proceeded unhindered. The exact opposite was true. The higher the wall went up, the more the enemies increased their anger and attacks. Because Nehemiah was succeeding, the enemy intensified their opposition.

Critics resist change. No matter whether the change is for the better or for the worse, there will always be some who oppose it. Because change is unsettling, there will be some who will oppose any change simply because it threatens the status quo or their position.

Nehemiah's opposition came in three different forms—two were external; one was internal. Nehemiah demonstrates that *when critics attack, we should pray for protection and encouragement, and trust God to fight for us.*

## Opposition by insults (1-6)

Sanballat and Tobiah, furious and angry, employed psychological warfare (1).

Sanballat publicly asked five rhetorical questions that implied incompetence (2).

Tobiah used ridicule to say the wall was so weak that even a light weight animal would crumble it (3).

Rather than respond to the critics, Nehemiah cries out to God (4-5). His prayer is similar to the imprecatory psalms. He is asking God to keep his promise to bless those who bless Israel and to curse those who curse Israel (Genesis 12:1-3).

The people were motivated to continue and built the wall to the halfway point (6).

There is a partnership between heaven and earth. While it is important to pray, it is also our responsibility to do our part and work diligently.

### **Opposition by intimidation (7-9)**

The enemies surrounded the city (7). Sanballat (North/Samaria); Tobiah (East/Ammon); Arabs (South); Men of Ashdod (West).

There were plots and threats of physical violence (8).

Nehemiah prayed and posted a guard (9). His response again demonstrated a partnership between heaven and earth. Prayer plus practical activity.

### **Opposition from internal affairs (10-23)**

The people became discouraged from the loss of four things:

Strength – “the strength of those who bear the burden is giving out” (10a)

Vision – “so much rubble” (10b)

Confidence – “we will not be able to rebuild the wall” (10c)

Security – “they will attack us” (12)

Nehemiah addresses the discouragement in reverse order:

Security – He posted a guard (13). He provides a sense of unity as they were stationed by families.

Confidence – “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome” (14a).

Vision – “fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes” (14b).

Strength – the enemy acknowledged God’s power (15). While they returned to the work, they prepared for future attacks (16-23).

### **Principles to Practice**

Opposition comes whenever we want to do something for God.

Our first response to opposition should be prayer.

Keep working. Don’t grow weary of doing good.

Trust God to fight for you.