

The Exile of Judah to Babylon in 586 BC.

- Israelites spend 70 years in exile, 700 miles east of Jerusalem in modern-day Iraq
- Zerubbabel, Ezra, & Nehemiah lead three waves of returnees from exile
- upon their return, they begin to rebuild

Book of Nehemiah records the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem.

Approx. 2 miles of wall, 50 ft. high, 10-15 ft. thick.

Nehemiah is the construction manager on the project.

➤ Resistance indicates progress.

Nehemiah 4:1-3

1 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, 2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble-- burned as they are?" 3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building-- if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!"

Ephesians 6:10-12 = real battle is beyond physical

Working to create and shape with the light of Christ's presence will clash with the powers of darkness.

"There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan." – C.S. Lewis

➤ Present to God, present to the work.

Nehemiah 4:4-6

4 Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders. 6 So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

"Two main elements of job discipleship: one, work diligently with Jesus' help; two, offer gentle non-cooperation with evil." – Dallas Willard

Nehemiah 4:7-8

7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. 8 They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.



Nehemiah 4:9

But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

Nehemiah 4:10-12

10 Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." 11 Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." 12 Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."

Nehemiah 4:13-14

13 Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. 14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."

➤ **Resilience built through opposition.**

Nehemiah 4:15-16

15 When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work. 16 From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor.

Nehemiah 4:21-23

21 So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. 22 At that time I also said to the people, "Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and workmen by day." 23 Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.

"It is possible to evade a multitude of sorrows through the cultivation of an insignificant life. Indeed, if a man's ambition is to avoid the troubles of life, the recipe is simple: shed your ambitions in every direction, cut the wings of every soaring purpose, and seek a life with the fewest contacts and relations. If you want to get through the world with the smallest trouble, you must reduce yourself to the smallest compass. Tiny souls can dodge through life; bigger souls are blocked on every side. As soon as a man begins to enlarge his life, his resistances are multiplied." — John Henry Jowett (1864-1923)

A prayer of perspective...

Lord, thank you for the gift of work—when it's going well and when it's not. Help me to see each person that I interact with today through your eyes. Grant me strength to respond to all the situations of this day with wisdom and grace; that more of your life would be reflected in more of my life. May my words, thoughts, attitudes, and actions be honoring to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.