



# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

## NEHEMIAH 4:1-9

### NEHEMIAH COMBATS DERISION AND DANGER—

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#### INTRODUCTION:

Nehemiah is a Jew who served Persian King Artaxerxes I as cupbearer or personal taster and server of royal food. He received a leave of absence to lead a team to Jerusalem to rebuild the city's fallen walls about 445 B.C. and to purify temple practices about 432. He exemplified godly servant leadership, and brought revival and covenant renewal to a dispirited people.

#### LESSON: I. ENEMY MOCKERY NEHEMIAH 4:1-3

**4:1** But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. Sanballat was governor of Samaria, the region just north of Judea where Jerusalem was located. He insulted and mocked the Jews, became very angry and greatly enraged after hearing that the wall was rebuilt.

**4:2** And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?— Sanballat spoke to his brethren and the army of Samaria saying *"What are these feeble Jews doing?" Will they expect to build this themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they build in a day? Will they revive the charred stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"* The enemy will always mock your good intentions. God will always put the right one in place where He knows He will get the glory! Mocking someone is a sign of insecurity. There will be adversaries (enemies) speaking and there will be advocates (supporters) speaking. We know that the Samaritans didn't like the Jews and vice versa. But what God had placed within Nehemiah's heart was like fire shut-up in his bones and couldn't be stopped until completed! Even when you want to stop, it'll still be calling you to complete it. This reminds me of a homestead that's left to the family, and it begins to get run-down, but there's one out of the family that will want to rebuild the legacy left to the family, and then there are some that will want to sell and get the money (their share) of the property.

**4:3** Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. Now Tobiah the Ammonite standing by adds to this criticism saying their stone wall will still break and tumble down even if a fox should climb upon it after building it. So, both Sanballat the Horonite who spoke to his brethren and the army of Samaria, and Tobiah the Ammonite had nothing good to say and cast despairing remarks to what was needed to be done, but didn't like who was doing it. We also had a third in 2:19 by the name of Geshem the Arabian. Three adversaries (*Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem*) and three advocates (*God, the king and the men sent with him*). Three things Nehemiah took into this battle: Purpose, Prayer, and Perseverance. All those things Tobiah and Sandballat were saying was to throw Nehemiah off guard, but he stayed true by pursuing his purpose; he prayed purposely, and he persevered with persistence.

#### II. PRAYER AND PERSEVERANCE NEHEMIAH 4:4-6

**4:4** Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:— Nehemiah prayed, *"Hear us O Lord God for we are being mocked"*

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**Turn their reproach (criticism, rebuke, reprimand) upon their own heads, and let them be given up to wasting in a land where they are prisoners.** Nehemiah didn't have to say a word to his enemies. He said it all to God. He told God just how he and the workers felt and what he wanted to see happen to their enemies that were still against what was placed within his heart to do for Jerusalem—his father's sepulchres (2:5). He even wanted them to be placed in captivity like the 70yrs the Jews had been cast into.

**4:5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.** The prayer continues: *"Do not cover their guilt or let their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have opposed the building which we are doing."* Nehemiah laid it on the line. He didn't want them to get off with a slap on the wrist for their behavior. He went so far as to tell God that these men had provoked God Himself to anger in front of the workers. While praying Nehemiah never lost sight on the work to be done.

**4:6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.** To conclude, in all that went on, Nehemiah and the workers persevered: *"So we built up the wall to half its height around the entire city, for the people had a mind to work."* Everybody had their part to do, and what made it possible was they all had a made-up mind to work. Mark 3:25 says, *"...If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand."* They rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height.

## III. ENEMY THREATS AND MORE PRAYER NEHEMIAH 4:7-9

**4:7 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,—** Now Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and now the Ashdodites became very angry when they heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem had continued, and that the broken places were beginning to be closed. You may not know them, but we never run out of enemies.

**4:8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.** These enemies plotted together to come fight against Jerusalem; to hinder the people from the work. We know this is what the Pharisees did when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. Matthew 12:14 says *"Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him."* And the chief priests and Pharisees in John 11:47, 53 took council together as to how to put Jesus to death right after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. These men were enemies of God and ready to fight against and hinder the plans of God. When doing anything for God, our fight is spiritual, not physical. It's *"not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord of hosts"* (Zachariah 4:6c).

**4:9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.** Nevertheless, anyway the enemy is not in control unless you give him control! Nehemiah said we prayed to our God to set a watch; a guard as a protection against them day and night. Prayer is our key weapon, not our second or last option! They didn't give up. You need to say: *"I'm not giving up!"* They just kept praying and kept working. Matthew 10:16-22 (NLT) says...

*16 "Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. 17 But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. 18 You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me. 19 When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. 20 For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 "A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and*

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*children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. 22 And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved."*

**We must not see ourselves as victims but victors. Whatever we go through, God's ending is better than the beginning! Threats may come, but prayer calms us.**

## **SUMMARY:**

Sanballat became very angry after hearing that the wall was rebuilt, and he insulted and mocked the Jews. Sanballat spoke to his brethren and the army of Samaria saying *"What are these feeble Jews doing?" Will they expect to build this themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they build in a day? Will they revive the charred stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?* Now Tobiah the Ammonite standing by adds more criticism to this saying *"their stone wall will still break and tumble down even if a fox should climb upon it after building it"* (4:1-3).

Nehemiah prayed, *"Hear us O Lord God for we are being mocked. Turn their hurtful criticism upon their own heads, and let them be given up to wasting in a land where they are prisoners. Do not cover their guilt or let their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have opposed the building which we are doing. So, we built up the wall to half its height around the entire city, for the people had a mind to work"* (4:4-6).

*"Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites became very angry when they heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem had continued, and that the broken places were beginning to be closed. They plotted together to come fight against Jerusalem; to hinder the people from the work. Nevertheless, we prayed to our God to set a watch; a guard as a protection against them day and night"* (4:7-9).