

City of God Part 17 - “Stand Firm” (8-16-26)

Introduction: Review where we are in the Series so far, then introduce today’s topic - Starting Nehemiah

- **Nehemiah** - 3rd wave of exiles return, the rebuilding of the Wall, the reading of the Law, further Reforms
- **Timeline:** 12-13 years after the events at the end of Ezra 9-10

Today’s Text: Nehemiah 4:1-15 - Halfway done! New Schemes of the Enemy, and preparing for battle

1) “A sign that is opposed” (Luke 2:34 - Simeon’s prophecy over Jesus)

Nehemiah 4:1-3 (ESV)

[1] Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. [2] And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?” [3] Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!”

Note: The very presence of The City of God (even just the hint of it being established) in the region is viewed as a threat. Living by a different way is no small thing. It serves as . . .

- **sign** (another way to live, there is an alternative)
- **invitation** - you are welcomed at the table, there is a home for you in the City of God
- **threat** - because there is now a clear distinction which exposes the rot and destruction of the World

Therefore, it was met with opposition, first to discredit, then to undermine, and finally to oppose and destroy

Matthew 7:13-14 (ESV)

[13] “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. [14] For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Note: I believe that, the **Narrow Road** and the **Wide Road** don’t diverge, they bump up against each other. This makes it hard for the narrow road walkers, but creates an on-ramp for those on the road of destruction.

- **Nehemiah’s response** to opposition: **Awake** to and **Aware** of the **Danger**, and he responds in **prayer**!

Nehemiah 4:4-5 (ESV)

[4] Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. [5] Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

Note: Nehemiah prays, crying out for justice, and the Lord’s intervention on their behalf to fight their enemies

David Guzik (Enduring Word Bible Commentary) - “Nehemiah’s response was a great example. He didn’t debate, he didn’t form a committee, he didn’t even deal with the two enemies directly. Instead, he took it to God in prayer. For Nehemiah, prayer was a first resource, not a last resort. When times of opposition come, God wants us to rely on Him – and the purest way of expressing our reliance on God is through prayer.”

Zechariah (father of John the Baptist) - Luke 1, stirred by the Holy Spirit . . .

Luke 1:68, 71, 74-75 (ESV)

[68] “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people . . . [71] that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us . . . [74] that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, [75] in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

2) “A mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6)

Nehemiah 4:6 (ESV)

So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

Note: Mind - most often translated Heart. This is the inner-man, the core or center which is focused, single-minded on the work. And now they are halfway there!

Nehemiah 4:7-8 (ESV)

[7] But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. [8] And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.

Note: Their progress only made the enemy double-down. He wants to break the “mind to work”

Nehemiah 4:9 (ESV)

And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

Note: Prayer and Strategy - a full-time guard for protection.

- The longer I spend in **Nehemiah** the more I’m drawn to Paul’s letter to the **Ephesian** church
- **Ephesians:** Building up the body in unity and maturity, and a people prepared to fight!

Ephesians 6:10-13 (ESV)

[10] Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Note: This isn’t just a vivid description of a vague fight. This is a call to a strategy that will guard and protect our **Hearts** and **Minds** as we set our focus on the work the Lord has called us. Prayer, finding strength in the Lord, and standing firm against the schemes of the enemy is our strategy!

3) “Remember the Lord, and fight”

Nehemiah 4:10 (ESV)

In Judah it was said, “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.”

Note: The internal battle in their minds leads to those thoughts giving voice to discouragement.

Nehemiah 4:11 (ESV)

And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.”

Note: Their enemies plot to kill and destroy.

Nehemiah 4:12 (ESV)

At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.”

Note: Their own people, who did not participate in what was being built, under the guise of protecting and caring for them, try to draw them away from the work they’ve been called to.

Nehemiah's Response . . .

Nehemiah 4:13-14 (ESV)

[13] So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. [14] And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

Note: Nehemiah has already been watchful, continually prayerful, and now this leads to a strategic plan, and words of truth and encouragement to build up the people.

***Ephesians 6:14-17** (Worth reading and reflection on how the armor and weapons the Lord gives us enable us to have strength to stand, to endure, and to fight)

Ephesians 6:14a, 18 (ESV)

[14] Stand therefore . . . [18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints

Note: Stand, pray in the Spirit, persevere, and stand with the people of God in regular prayer for each other.

Conclusion: Nehemiah, awake and aware of the dangers, responds in prayer, and gives strategic plans for building and warfare. When the threat of attack and sense of discouragement arose, He spoke words of truth and encouragement to protect the people who had a mind to work.

Friends, in light of the inevitable attacks of the enemy, let's be aware, be prepared, encourage one another, stand together in the fight, and above all pray!

Nehemiah 4:15 (NKJV)

And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.