

# CAPITOL STUDIES

FEBRUARY 2, 2022 • WEEK 6



## NEHEMIAH: THE CIVIL SERVANT FROM SUSA

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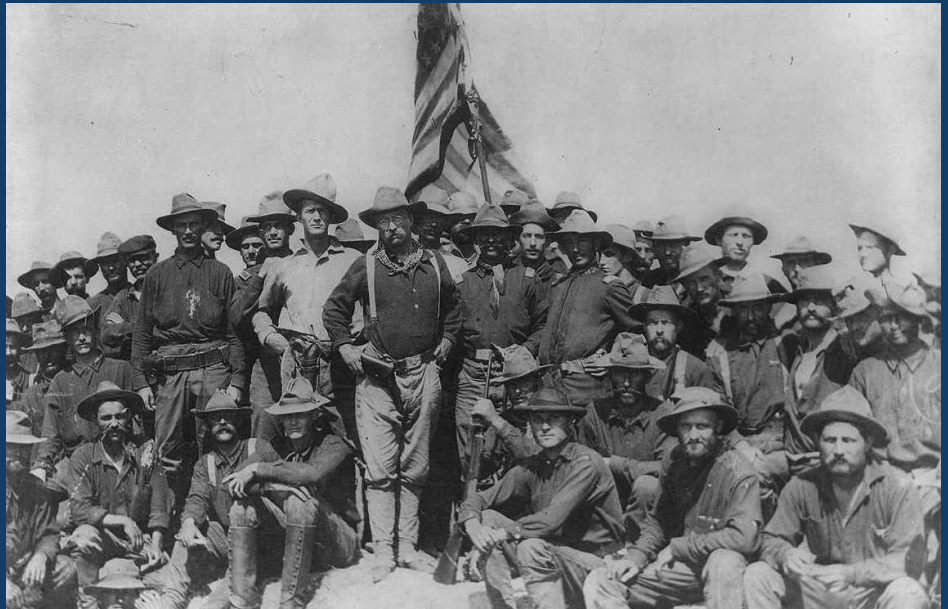


### *Verse of the Week*

Nehemiah 4:6

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

## Nehemiah: Builder with Courage



IT IS NOT THE CRITIC WHO COUNTS, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.<sup>1</sup>

— Theodore Roosevelt, 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States

*Arin Hess*

Pastor Arin Hess  
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## INTRODUCTION

Nehemiah led the charge in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem with **courage**. Movement creates friction. If you are attempting to move forward, expect resistance. Friction will occur when wills, temperaments, or opinions clash. Satan is the enemy of spiritual progress; therefore, conflict will inevitably be a part of a Christian's life. It takes courage and perseverance to keep going.

Nehemiah showed **courage** in the middle of conflicts. He led with resolve and ingenuity.

### I. EXTERNAL CONFLICT

*Nehemiah 4:1-3*

*Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. <sup>2</sup>He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?" <sup>3</sup>Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, "Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!"<sup>2</sup>*

Enemies of God's work are always in abundance. Sanballat, a pagan leader, wanted to stop the advance of God's kingdom. But God intended to rebuild His desolate City of Peace through Nehemiah and the Jewish remnant, and He would not be stopped.

#### A. Criticism of Their Ability

"Do they actually think they can do this?" This mocking ridicule was intended to deflate, defeat, and destroy. Its intent was to stop the workers from laboring fervently and faithfully.

"God, however, delights in using the weak to accomplish His will (cf. 1 Cor. 1:27-29). It is more important to be yielded to God so that He can work through you by His power than to have power in yourself and in your own resources."<sup>3</sup> Remember this when your work is clearly for the glory of God and the good of man. Take heart.

#### B. Criticism of Their Accomplishments

"This wall will never stand." Note that the criticism was neither factual nor legitimate. This is a tool Satan will use again and again when opposing God's work. One must always determine whether criticism is justifiable or simply manipulative. Is it intended to be helpful or harmful?

*Nehemiah 4:4-6*

*Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. <sup>5</sup>Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for*



*they have demoralized the builders. ‘So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.*

**Nehemiah does not respond to his critics:** Before beginning, Nehemiah **prayed** and **planned** (2:7, 18). Now, he remembered God’s good hand in Artaxerxes’ favorable response.

**Nehemiah implores God to judge:** Again, Nehemiah **prayed**. His immediate response was to pray to the God of heaven. What is your immediate response when you are criticized?

To “hear” means to give attention to this request: “May You return their reproach.” This is an imprecatory prayer, a prayer asking for God’s vengeance on His unrepentant enemies. In Hebrews 10:30, God reminds us that “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” Let God take care of the opposition.

**Nehemiah continues to do what is right:** Nehemiah and the people **proceeded** despite the opposition. This was godly perseverance. Will you persevere when the going gets tough?

### C. Conspiracy to Fight

*Nehemiah 4:7-9*

*Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. <sup>8</sup>All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. <sup>9</sup>But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.*

**They faced a forceful alliance:** These people groups were on all four sides of Jerusalem: the Samaritans from the north, the Arabs from the south, the Ammonites from the east, and the Ashdodites from the west. They were surrounded by enemies of God.

**They faced a fearful assault:** This enemy coalition was intent on hindering the rebuilding of the walls. Now they threatened actual violence. Undoubtedly, this caused real fear. Is it hard to serve when threats come to you or the ones you love?

Notice that the whole group prayed this time. Corporate prayer is a mighty tool in the hand of God. What are things that we can pray for one another? (e.g., wisdom: James 1:5, strength: Joshua 1:9, etc.)

They also set up guards so they would be **protected**. “Intensified opposition against the will of God calls for intensified response. Nehemiah not only heard the opposition, but he also analyzed the available data, prayed, and took decisive, practical action. He said, ‘Let’s set up a guard against them.’ That was a common-sense response. He persisted by taking up arms.”<sup>4</sup>





## II. INTERNAL CONFLICT — DISCOURAGEMENT: THEY FOCUSED ON SELF

*Nehemiah 4:10-11*

*Thus in Judah it was said, “The strength of the burden bearers is failing, Yet there is much rubbish; And we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall.” <sup>11</sup>Our enemies said, “They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work.”*

Personal fatigue was beginning to set in. They had labored for perhaps up to five weeks. Now difficulties and murmurings were coming from within the ranks of the builders. This becomes contagious. They were in a situation where attack could come to them or their families at any time. What was the solution?

### A. Nehemiah Reorganized the People

*Nehemiah 4:12-13*

*When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, “They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,” <sup>13</sup>then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows.*

### B. Nehemiah Reminded Them of the Lord and Refocused Their Vision

*Nehemiah 4:14*

*When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and 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 houses.”*

### C. Nehemiah and the Builders Returned to Their Work

*Nehemiah 4:15-17*

*When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work. <sup>16</sup>From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows, and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah. <sup>17</sup>Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.*

### D. Nehemiah and the Builders Recommitted to Their Vow: “Let Us Arise and Build.”

*Nehemiah 4:18-23*

*As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter stood near me. <sup>19</sup>I said to the nobles, the officials*



and the rest of the people, “The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another.”<sup>20</sup> “At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”<sup>21</sup> So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared.<sup>22</sup> At that time I also said to the people, “Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day.”<sup>23</sup> So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water.

## CONCLUSION

God needs leaders with integrity and **courage** whose automatic response is to turn to God when opposition comes. He needs leaders who will help others get a renewed vision of Him and His work. He needs leaders who will stay with the job, no matter the cost, trusting the outcome to Him.

“Problems are a part of life; they are certainly part of the Christian experience. The apostle (Paul) testified ‘we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed’ (2 Corinthians 4:7-9). These problems have solutions that enable the Christian to know more of God’s grace and glory.”<sup>5</sup>

Pastor Arin Hess

## FOOTNOTES

1. “Citizenship in a Republic” is the title of the speech from which this quote is excerpted. It was given by Theodore Roosevelt at the *Sorbonne* in Paris, France, on April 23, 1910. (<https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Learn-About-TR/TR-Encyclopedia/Culture-and-Society/Man-in-the-Arena.aspx>). The picture at the top shows Colonel Roosevelt with his Rough Riders after capturing Kettle Hill in Cuba in July, 1898.
2. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*.
3. Peter A. Stevenson, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, Bob Jones University Press, 2011, pg. 132.
4. Charles R. Swindoll, *Hand Me Another Brick*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978, pg. 78.
5. Stewart Custer, *Biblical Viewpoint: Focus on Nehemiah*, Bob Jones University Press, 1986, pg. 33.



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*Personal Study Notes*

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