

# CAPITOL STUDIES

FEBRUARY 16, 2022 • WEEK 8



## NEHEMIAH: THE CIVIL SERVANT FROM SUSA

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### *Verse of the Week*

Nehemiah 6:15-16

*So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. ... They recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.*

## Nehemiah: Builder with Perseverance



CONSIDER THIS MAN whose life was characterized by failure. At the age of 22, his business failed. At 23, he ran for the state legislature but was defeated. He turned to another business, which failed when he was 24. At age 25, things started to turn around when he was elected to the legislature, but at 26, the love of his life died. He had a nervous breakdown at 27 and was defeated in his run for speaker at 29. At 31, he lost his race for presidential elector. He lost again in his race for Congress at 34 but then managed to win at age 37. He was defeated in his reelection to Congress at 39 and in his run for Senate at age 46. He tried running for Vice President at age 47 and lost. Then he was defeated in his run for Senate at 49. This man was stubborn as a mule, but not a winning mule.

However, at the age of 51, he was elected President of the United States. He would, in fact, become one of the greatest presidents in the history of our country. His name is Abraham Lincoln. He endured through the hardships, the trials, the defeats, the rejections, and the failures until one day he became our Commander-in-Chief. That is the power of perseverance. It is vital for success.<sup>1</sup>

*Arin Hess*

Pastor Arin Hess  
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**PERSEVERANCE:** “The implication of steadfastness, patience, persistence is confirmed by the use of the verb *proskartereō* — to attend constantly, continue unswervingly, adhere firmly, hold fast to (Ephesians 6:18)... It relates simply to the continual and patient dependence of the Christian upon Christ.”<sup>2</sup> *Perseverance* is used 24 times in the *New American Standard Bible*.

## INTRODUCTION

In earlier chapters of Nehemiah, we saw that Nehemiah faced criticism (2:19, 4:1-3), conspiracy (4:7-9), discouragement (4:13-15), and unfairness (5:1-5). This building of the wall had not been a cakewalk. The demands were real and difficult. It required persistence or **perseverance to keep pressing on** despite the attacks and setbacks. He exercised great courage in the face of formidable opposition from within and without. Now he needed to press on with the building, but again opposition arose.

## I. SATANIC OPPOSITION: THE CRAFTINESS OF THE WICKED

### A. Seduction: An Appeal to Compromise or a Deceitful Enticement

*Nehemiah 6:1-2*

*Now when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall, and that no breach remained in it, although at that time I had not set up the doors in the gates, <sup>2</sup>then Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying, “Come, let us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono.”<sup>3</sup>*

This was an invitation to meet with the opposition for discussion. Now the enemies were endeavoring to sidetrack the work with seductive dialogue. It was a pretense to friendship and compromise. “When you invite the devil to join your team, expect him to change the rules and the goals; and expect to be defeated.”<sup>4</sup> Ono was likely toward the seacoast near what today is Joppa, a nice resort area for a religious conference. Maybe they were suggesting organizing a retreat so that, instead of being adversaries and sniping at one another, they could get together and discuss commonalities. Nehemiah responded with “O No!” to the plain of Ono.

Be careful that those who wine and dine don’t pull your heart away from what is right. Don’t take someone’s advice just because he or she claims to have God’s perspective on the situation; search the inspired Scriptures yourself. No matter what your calling, if you are a Christian, Satan is your adversary. Resist him, steadfast in the faith (1 Peter 5:8-10). God will bring you through the trials for His glory. Trust Him and follow His guidance. “Through many dangers, toils, and snares... Grace will lead me home.”



## B. Slander: Character Assassination through False Statements

People are always quick to believe the worst about others.

*Nehemiah 6:5-7, 17-19a*

*Then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same manner a fifth time with an open letter in his hand. <sup>6</sup>In it was written, “It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu says, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel; therefore, you are rebuilding the wall. And you are to be their king, according to these reports. <sup>7</sup>You have also appointed prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, ‘A king is in Judah!’ And now it will be reported to the king according to these reports. So come now, let us take counsel together.” ...<sup>17</sup>Also in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah, and Tobiah’s letters came to them. <sup>18</sup>For many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. <sup>19</sup>Moreover, they were speaking about his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him.*

The slander did not come from the heathen but from some of God’s own people. These people were not walking in love, although they professed to be saved (1 John 3:17-18). They spread rumors and misrepresentations, perhaps for money, perhaps in fear, perhaps in naivety. Whatever the reason, Satan desired to use their words to defeat the Lord’s work. Ask the Lord to set a watch over your lips, so evil will not proceed from them (Psalm 141:3).<sup>5</sup>

Most open letters aren’t written to solve problems but to produce them. When reading letters of accusation and fault, it would be easy to believe the innuendos. These letters accused Nehemiah of pride and self-seeking. We know it was not ambition that brought him to Jerusalem but the call of God.

The name Tobiah means “the Lord is good.” It would appear Tobiah had a nominal connection to God, for his name was Jewish. However, he was persuaded by the nobles who supported him, some of whom he was related to by marriage, to relay correspondence back and forth between them and Nehemiah. The hope was to wear down Nehemiah’s resistance to false ecumenism and, thus, ruin the work of God.

## C. Scaring: Intimidation Causing Fear or Alarm

*Nehemiah 6:10, 19b*

*When I entered the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined at home, he said, “Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you, and they are coming to kill you at night.” ...<sup>19b</sup>Then Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.*

A show of **fear**, and even cowardice, would be a lack of trust in God and would undermine the confidence of the people in Nehemiah’s leadership. His enemies tried to persuade Nehemiah to act out of self-interest and to





run from the danger inherent in serving the Lord. The enemy's main purpose was to generate fear in the heart of Nehemiah and his workers (Nehemiah 6:9, 13-14, 19), knowing that fear destroys faith and paralyzes life. "Adolph Hitler wrote, 'Mental confusion, contradiction of feeling, indecisiveness, panic; these are our weapons.' Both Jesus (Luke 13:31-35) and Paul (Acts 21:10-14) had to face the specter of fear, and both overcame it by faith."<sup>6</sup> We can, too.

A lot of well-meaning people will try to get you to do things that deviate from God's plan. Search the Scriptures so you are certain of God's will (Isaiah 8:20). Then trust Him to help you achieve it (Proverbs 3:5-6).

## II. SCRIPTURAL OPERATION: THE CHARACTER OF THE GODLY

### A. Nehemiah Had Perception

*Nehemiah 6:2b; 12*

*But they were planning to harm me....<sup>12</sup>Then I perceived that surely God had not sent him, but he uttered his prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.*

Ask God to give you discernment so that you can perceive if these are friends or enemies (1 John 4:1). Determine if they have the best interest of others in mind. Measure each by the Word of God to decide if someone might be a false prophet.

### B. Nehemiah Had Purpose with Persistence

*Nehemiah 6:3-4*

*So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"<sup>4</sup>They sent messages to me four times in this manner, and I answered them in the same way.*

Nehemiah simply replied that he couldn't come and stayed at task. Focus determines your future! You have a job to do. Don't be distracted. Why should the work cease? Keep at the work with determination (Acts 20:24, Philippians 1:20-21).

### C. Nehemiah Had Principle

*Nehemiah 6:8-9a, 11, 13*

*Then I sent a message to him saying, "Such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind."*

*<sup>9</sup>For all of them were trying to frighten us, thinking, "They will become discouraged with the work, and it will not be done." ...<sup>11</sup>But I said, "Should a man like me flee? And could one such as I go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." ...<sup>13</sup>He was hired for this reason, that I might become frightened and act accordingly and sin, so that they might have an evil report in order that they could reproach me.*





Nehemiah was like Joseph in Genesis 39:9-10. He took a stand at great cost—fortitude in duty. Should such a man flee? Should such a man fear? “Nehemiah’s spirited retort shows a proper pride (in his work) and a proper humility (in God’s accomplishment).”<sup>7</sup>

#### D. Nehemiah Had Prayer

*Nehemiah 6:9b, 14*

*But now, O God, strengthen my hands....<sup>14</sup>Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these works of theirs, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who were trying to frighten me.*

Nehemiah exercised one of the Christian’s greatest offensive weapons, persevering prayer. “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18). From the beginning of this building project, Nehemiah practiced short, urgent prayers—simple, direct, and effective. It was second nature to him. And here he asks God to strengthen him for the work and warfare ahead.

What is the Christian’s other offensive weapon? (Ephesians 6:17)

#### E. Nehemiah Had Production

*Nehemiah 6:15-16*

*So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.<sup>16</sup>When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.*

The finished wall and the accomplishment of a job well done were proof that God was with Nehemiah and his fellow workers as they rebuilt the walls. Do your work well and let it silence your enemies and critics.

### CONCLUSION

This is a testimony of the perseverance of Nehemiah (and his co-workers). It is also a testimony of their faithful God. If you are a Christian, He is your faithful God, too. In 1 Peter 2:12 it says, “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.” And in 1 Peter 3:15-16, “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.”



*Verse of  
The Week*

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- 1) How do you respond to bullying tactics of intimidation or hurtful slander and gossip?
- 2) Where have you taken a stand against compromise and or the deceitfulness of a compromising spirit?
- 3) How do you fight off discouragement, fear, and deception?
- 4) In what areas do you need perseverance and persistence to finish the work God has committed to you?

It has been said that “the only ground between right and wrong is a battleground.” Remember for Whom you fight.

Pastor Arin Hess

### FOOTNOTES

1. This illustration from [https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/72304/endurance-by-tyler-edwards](https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/72304/ endurance-by-tyler-edwards).
2. A. S. Wood, “Perseverance” in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, edited by D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and D. J. Wiseman, InterVarsity Press, 1996, pg. 903.
3. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*.
4. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Determined*, Victor Books, 1996, pg. 73.
5. Edward Watke, *Building and Battling for the Lord*, Watke.org, 2002, pgs. 22-23.
6. Wiersbe, *Be Determined*, pg. 72.
7. Derek Kidner, *Ezra & Nehemiah*, InterVarsity Press, 1979, pgs. 99-100.

### WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meeting during the  
107<sup>th</sup> Legislature's  
Second Session

#### SENATORS

7:00–8:00 A.M. Wednesdays  
Meeting Room 1124

#### STAFF

12:00 P.M. Wednesdays  
Meeting Room 1124



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