

***Rebuilding What Was Lost***  
***The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah***



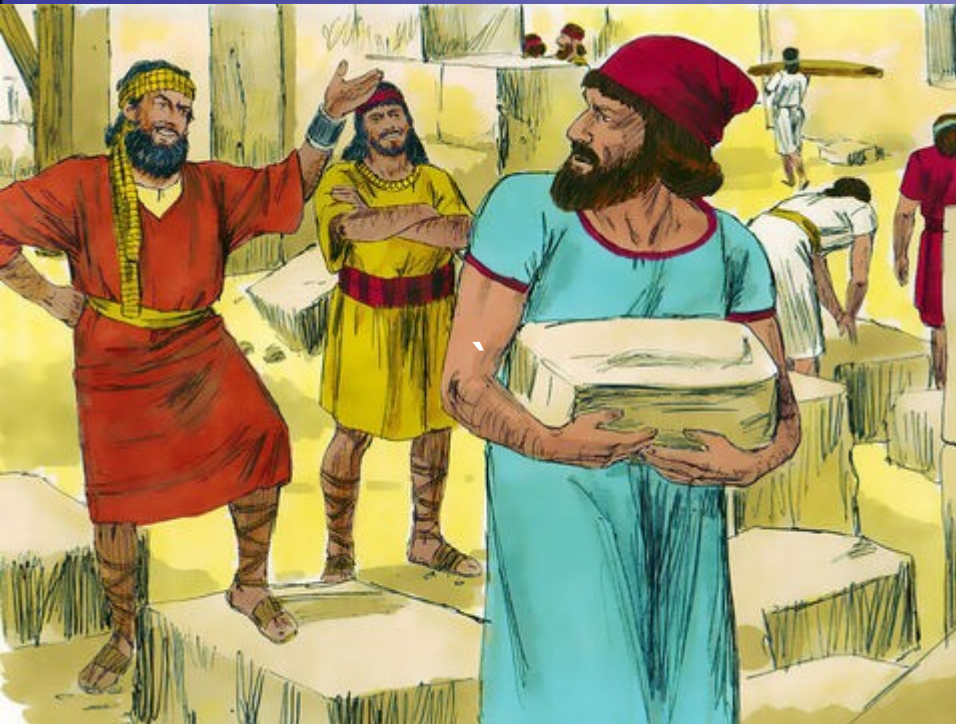
# ***Rebuilding What Was Lost***

- *A Little Bit of Background*
- *The Return*
- *Laying the Foundation*
- *Letters to Kings*
- *The Return of the Heroes*
- *After “The End”*
- *The Cupbearer to the King*
- *Nehemiah Comes to Jerusalem*
- *Rebuilding the Wall (part 3—The First Opposition)*



# *Rebuilding the Wall*

- After a century, they're finally rebuilding
  - And that's when opposition started building too



# Rebuilding the Wall



Funky little teaching moment...

- What the best way to deal with fearful opposition?
  - In June of 1314, King Robert the Bruce of Scotland was in the middle of his War of Independence against King Edward II of England
    - Up until this point, it'd been a lot like our own War of Independence 460 years later—basically guerilla fighting against the superior numbers of the English—but Robert's brother, Edward tied up the Scottish forces in a siege of Stirling Castle at Bannockburn and Edward II had the time to bring up his own troops (a force that was *three times* as large as the one that the Bruce brothers had—including his famous and undefeated cavalry)



# Rebuilding the Wall



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    - If you're Robert the Bruce, what do you do?
      - You can try to dig in for a long fight, but you're outnumbered and stuck between the English cavalry and the walls of the English castle—your army won't survive a prolonged battle
      - You can try to run for it, but they've got their cavalry and you've only got a few horses for your handful of knights—your army won't survive a retreat
      - Or you can take a stand at the wall...



# Rebuilding the Wall



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- What the best way to deal with fearful opposition?
  - In June of 1314, King Robert the Bruce of Scotland was in the middle of his War of Independence against King Edward II of England
  - The Bruce was a student of historical battle tactics so he organized his men into three tightly-clumped groups called “schiltrons” and outfitted them all with thick-shafted, 12-foot-long spears
  - As the English heavy cavalry charged toward them, he ordered his men to dig the blunt end of the spears into the ground, point the tips forward, and take their stand (a tactic similar to one that had been used 16 years earlier at the Battle of Stirling Bridge by his fellow Scotsman, Sir William Wallace)



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  - As the English heavy cavalry charged toward them, he ordered his men to dig the blunt end of the spears into the ground, point the tips forward, and take their stand
  - At that point, a battle becomes a bit like a deadly serious game of chicken
    - If your men break ranks and run, then the cavalry will kill them all
    - If they can stand their ground, then the cavalry will get impaled and turn back
  - So the crucial question is, “Can you face your fear?”
    - They began to pray



# Rebuilding the Wall



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  - Edward laughed and mocked, “They pray for mercy!”
  - One of his attendants replied, “Aye, sire. But from God, not you. These men shall conquer or die.”





# Rebuilding the Wall



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  - When the English cavalry hit the Scottish schiltrons, the infantry held strong, and the cavalry was broken—forced into a disorganized retreat
  - Hundreds of English were slaughtered on the field, and far more drowned trying to cross the River Forth or trying to make it safely back to England across 90 miles of rugged, hostile Scottish territory

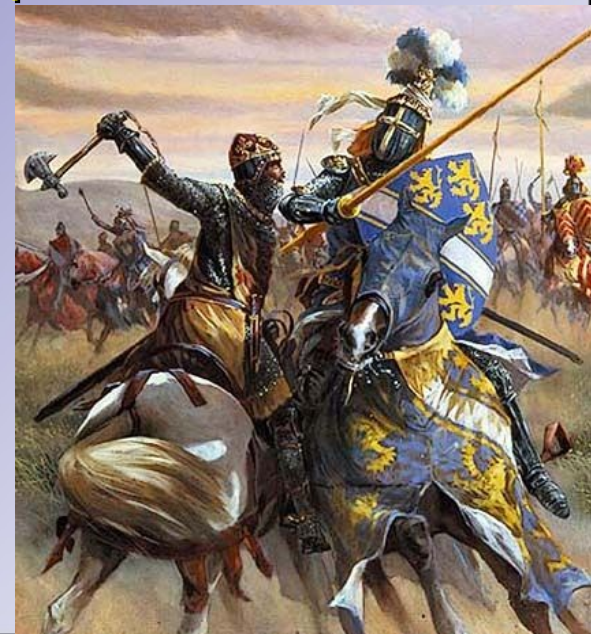


# Rebuilding the Wall



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  - By the end of the two-day battle—a battle which had seemed like it would clearly be a one-sided rout of the Scottish—11,000 English troops were killed including 700 knights (one of whom fell in a famous episode of single combat between Henri de Bohun's lance and Robert the Bruce's axe)



# Rebuilding the Wall



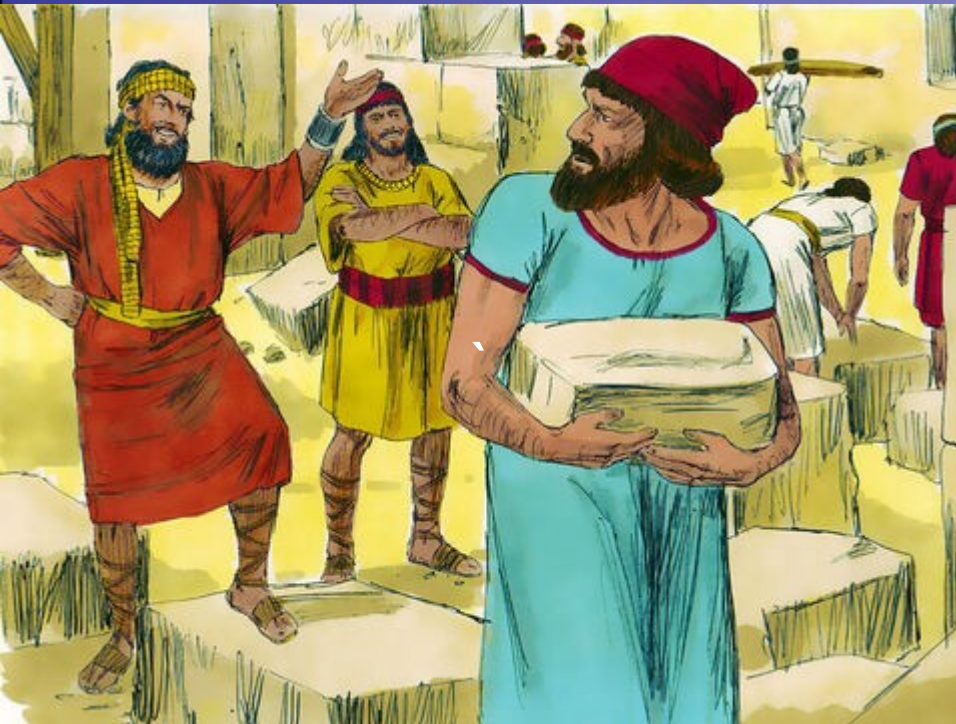
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  - By the end of the two-day battle—a battle which had seemed like it would clearly be a one-sided rout of the Scottish—11,000 English troops were killed including 700 knights
  - The Scottish lost 2 knights, and a handful of infantry—specifically *because* they didn't give in to their fears when faced with fearful opposition...
    - That end result was statistically significant enough that it's worth calling a basic rule of “how to win against very scary odds”
    - So how can we apply that basic idea today?



# Rebuilding the Wall

- After a century, they're finally rebuilding
  - And that's when opposition started building too
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:1-3
      - Please re-read Nehemiah 2:9-10
        - Why were these guys “disturbed” that someone might come to help Israel?
      - Please re-read Nehemiah 2:18-19
        - Why had the anti-Israel coalition grown?
        - And why had they started mocking and ridiculing?
      - How have things escalated even farther in 4:1-2?



# Rebuilding the Wall



Funky little teaching moment...

- If you're working hard at something that you don't really want to do—and getting attacked for doing it—how might you be tempted to respond?
  - What sorts of taunts do these men fling at Israel?
    - “Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices?”
      - What is this mocking?



# Rebuilding the Wall



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  - What sorts of taunts do these men fling at Israel?
    - “Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices?”
    - “Will they finish in a day?”
    - What kind of attack is this?

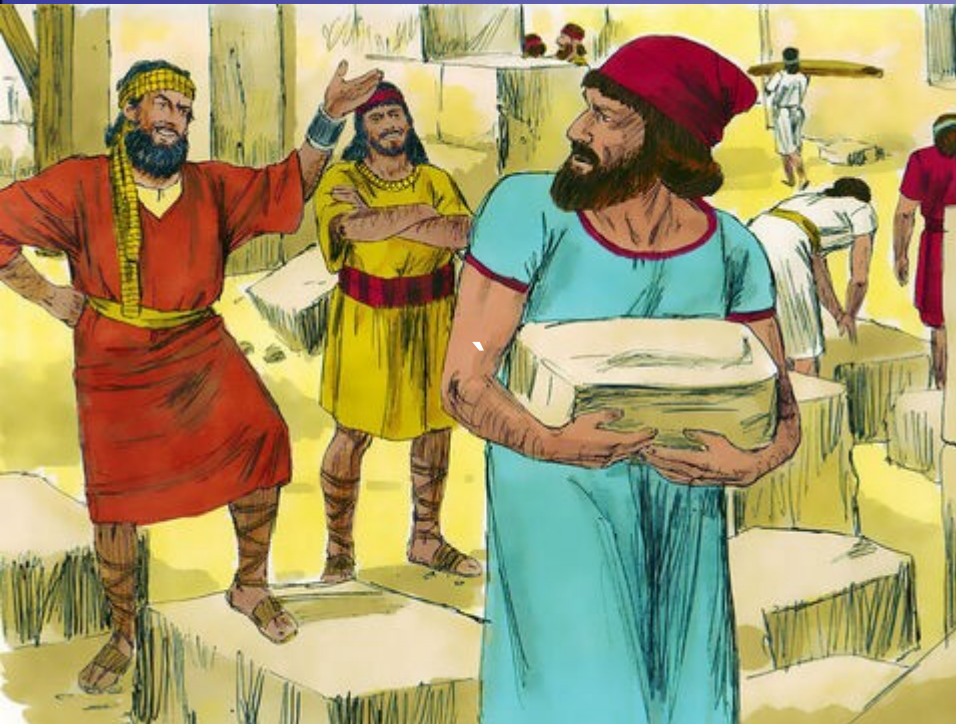


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  - What sorts of taunts do these men fling at Israel?
    - “Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices?”
    - “Will they finish in a day?”
    - “Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?”
      - How is this undermining their morale?



# Rebuilding the Wall



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  - What sorts of taunts do these men fling at Israel?
    - “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?”
    - “If even a *fox* climbed up on it, he'd *break* it!”



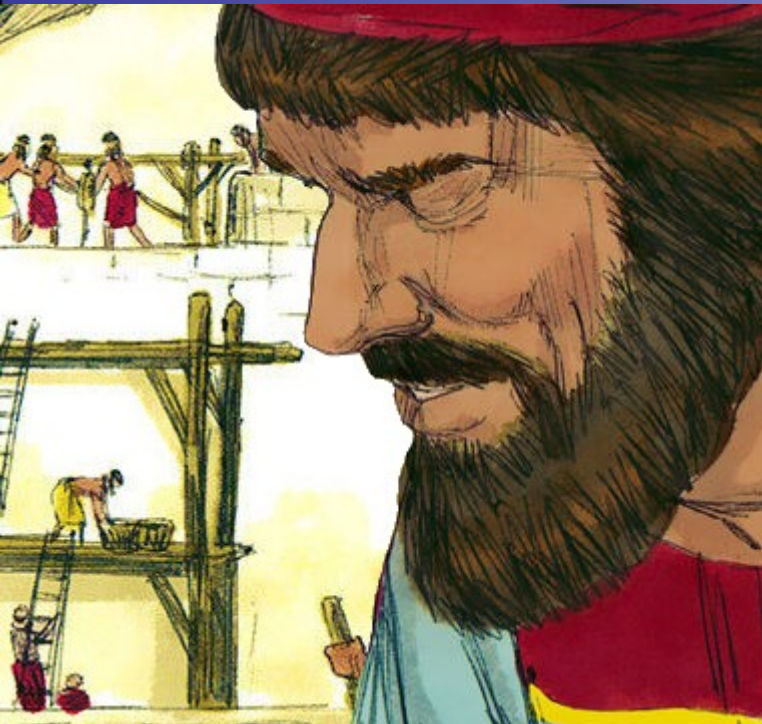
- What is Tobiah making fun of here?
- These aren't just snarky little jabs—these are malicious attacks, consciously aimed to undermine all of the positive things that Nehemiah and Israel are trying to accomplish here
  - your worship is a joke
  - you'll never get it done
  - it's too far gone to fix
  - you stink at this
- Can these sorts of ideas still undermine our work today? How so?





# Rebuilding the Wall

- After a century, they're finally rebuilding
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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:1-3
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:4-5
      - What was Nehemiah's response to their attacks?
        - He prayed—because *that's what Nehemiah does*
          - When he first heard that Jerusalem was in trouble, he spent months in prayer
          - When he finally got the chance to talk with King Artaxerxes, he stopped first and prayed
- I mean, the Scottish pike-men stopped and prayed as the English cavalry galloped toward them, so when is *not* a good time for us to pray?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:1-3
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:4-5
      - What was Nehemiah's response to their attacks?
      - This is called an “imprecatory” prayer—a prayer that calls down God's judgment on someone else
        - So is this just as petty and malicious as what Sanballat and Tobiah had been doing?
          - Why or why not?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:1-3
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:4-5
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:6
      - What was Israel's response to the attacks?
      - How does it help your mental picture of Sanballat's timing—and how the people of Jerusalem *might* have perceived them—if at this point they'd hadn't even gotten half finished yet?
  - At what point *should* you consider just giving up on a project like this?
    - At what single point in time did *Jesus* suggest in Luke 14:28-30 that it makes any sense to consider giving up on a project?



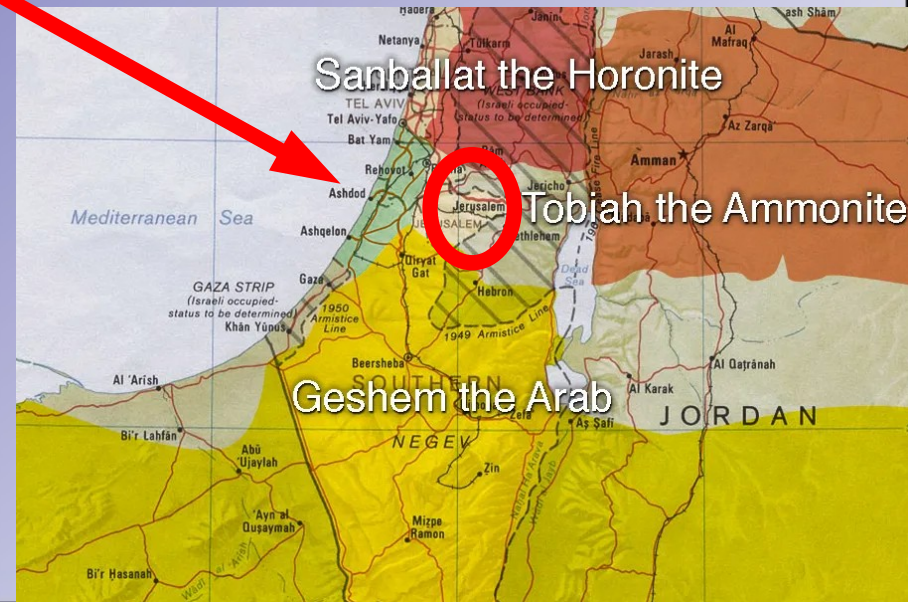
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  - At what point *should* you consider just giving up on a project like this?
  - So everyone keeps doing it all right—but what's the first word in vs. 7?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:1-3
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:4-5
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:6
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:7-8
      - The more we take a stand for God, the more the world is going to chafe against us
      - Notice how the coalition is growing, with the people around Ashdod joining in now, encircling Jerusalem...



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      - Please read Nehemiah 4:7-8
        - The more we take a stand for God, the more the world is going to chafe against us
        - Notice how the coalition is growing, with the people around Ashdod joining in now, encircling Jerusalem...
          - But it's also growing in ferocity
            - 2:10 They were disturbed
            - 2:19 They were slanderous
            - 4:1 They were angry and openly mocked them
            - 4:7 They were very angry, and ready for a fight
- When the cavalry gets closer, is that the time to run?
  - Or is that *why* you put your foot on the pike and stand your ground?
  - What's the first word in vs. 9?



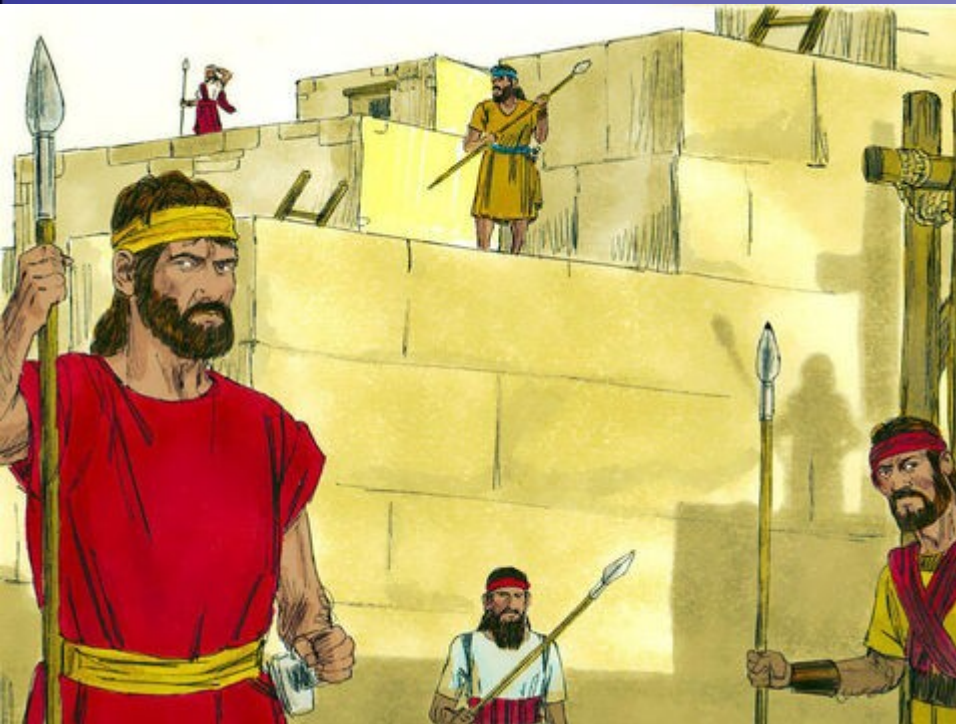
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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:6
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:7-8
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:9
      - Because Nehemiah had studied his Scottish history
        - It's more than just having guts—it's recognizing that giving in to fear is *how you lose*

(and remembering that *trusting* in God is *how you win*)

(note that the first thing that Nehemiah did wasn't to post the guard, but rather—*because he's Nehemiah—to pray*)

- What did Paul later write in Ephesians 6:13 and 18 about standing up against evil?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:4-5
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:6
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:7-8
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:9
    - Three people, please read Nehemiah 4:10,11,12
      - What three-pronged morale-crushers do you see here in these verses?



- What are the people of Judah starting to worry about? (vs 10)
- What are their enemies constantly telling them? (vs 11)
- What are their neighbors starting to say about all of this? (vs 12)
- Cross-apply these three morale-crushers to our context today—how might those look in undermining our modern efforts?
- If you were Nehemiah, how would you respond here?  
(how should you?)





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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:9
    - Three people, please read Nehemiah 4:10,11,12
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:13
      - Smart move—shoring up the weakest points, getting the people to take up their own defense...
      - As usual, Nehemiah uses wisdom to figure out the smartest move to respond to troubles looming on the horizon (and one well-worth emulating today)



# Rebuilding the Wall



## Funky little teaching moment...

- Okay, it's a little thing, but there *is* a *difference* here
  - Is there any consistently Nehemiah-type thing that *isn't* specifically mentioned here?
  - We aren't told that he *prayed*
    - Maybe that's nothing. Maybe he prayed. He probably prayed, and is just isn't mentioned here. No big deal. And what he did totally made sense to do and it totally went in line with what they did the last time when they prayed first, so they probably prayed here, too

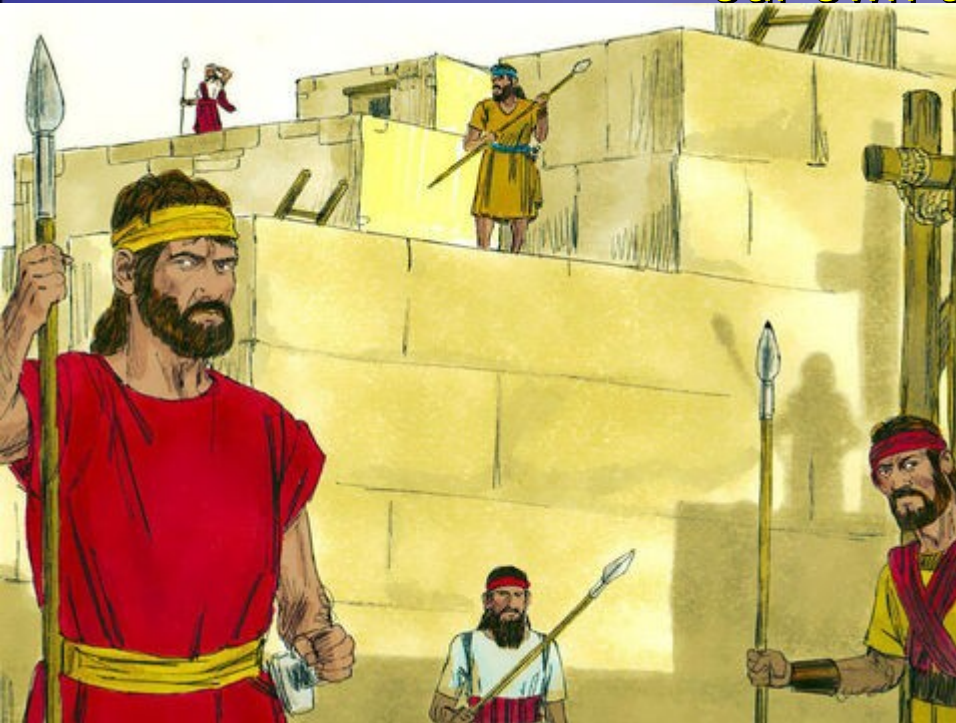
*But it isn't mentioned here...*

(and yet, Nehemiah's focus is still very clearly on God...)



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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:14
      - “Put your foot on the spear and stand, guys!”
      - I love Nehemiah's line of thinking here—
        - Don't be afraid of those bullies next door... If you want to think of someone being all big and scary, think about how great and awesome God is—and *He's* on *our* side of the wall...
        - How can we apply that kind of thinking today in our own contexts?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:14
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:15
      - Again, this is the sort of thing that I love about Nehemiah as a leader
        - He gives an awesome little Captain Kirk-ish, "St. Crispin's Day"-type speech to the people that galvanizes them all against the bad guys' plot but in *Nehemiah's* mind, "God had frustrated it..."



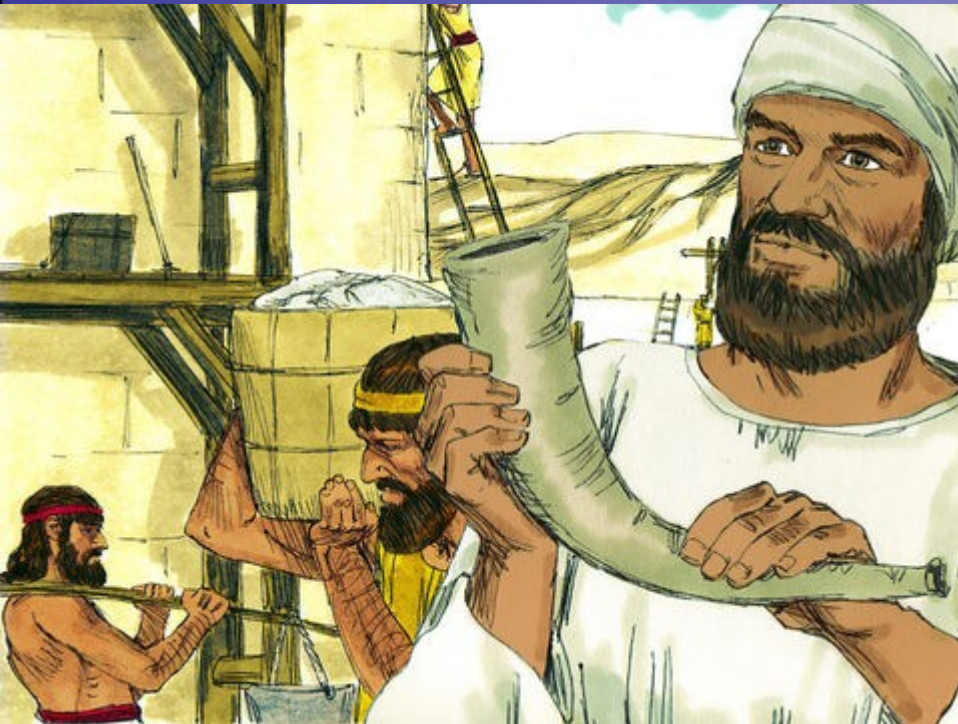
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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:14
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:15
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:16-18
      - That would slow you down, wouldn't it?
        - But was it worth it? I mean, it's just a wall, isn't it?
          - No, it's God's wall, and things have been this way for far too long—things *have* to change
          - You can't live in fear—we have to live by *faith*
        - But this is still a faith that has also counted the cost enough to know that it's a wise move to carry a sword and a spear while you're trusting God



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          - You can't live in fear—we have to live by *faith*
            - But this is still a faith that has also counted the cost enough to know that it's a wise move to carry a sword and a spear while you're trusting God
            - And yet, it *really is* still at its core genuinely trusting God—'cuz what does Nehemiah say in vs. 19-20?
              - He has faith *not* in the swords and the spears, but in *God*—who'll probably use their swords and spears if it comes to a fight, but still...



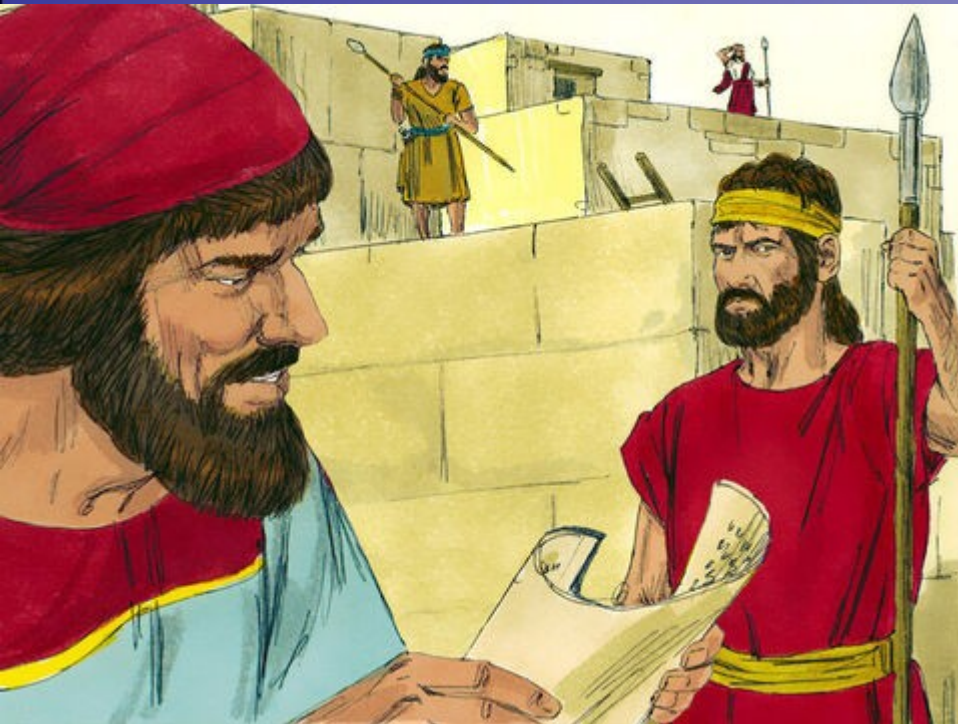
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            - And yet, it really is still at its core genuinely trusting God—'cuz what does Nehemiah say in vs. 19-20?
              - So *who's the scariest combatant out on the battlefield...?*
                - Nehemiah? Goldsmiths?  
Sanballat? Samaritans?  
Or God Himself?
              - Can you put your faith in that basic **I**ruth?



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    - Please read Nehemiah 4:16-20
    - Please read Nehemiah 4:21-23
      - Be alert, be ready, plan for contingencies, work hard—but do all of that within the context of seeking God and trusting Him first and foremost
        - Is that a workable life strategy?
          - Why or why not?



- What have we learned (from any part of this), and what can we apply today in our own contexts?
  - What—if anything—struck *you* personally today?

