

## Nehemiah 3-4

- The restoration of Israel is in its final phase
  - The Lord has raised a godly leader to take Israel from the classroom to the field
    - The plan is for Nehemiah to lead the people into rebuilding the wall and gates of their precious city
    - But, the spiritual purpose goes far beyond brick and masonry
    - God's purpose is to build up a people who will follow Him truly
  - Last week, we saw Nehemiah leave Persia after bravely requesting permission to assist the people of God
    - The king permitted his departure because the hand of the Lord was upon him
    - So he left Persia and, as we'll learn later, he brings about 42,000 more Jews with him
- We ended last week at the end of Chapter 2, as Nehemiah conducted his inspection of the gates and rallies the people to build the wall
  - Let's take a second look at that passage, as we begin to move forward in the book

**[Neh. 2:9](#)** Then I came to the governors of the provinces beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.

**[Neh. 2:10](#)** When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

**[Neh. 2:11](#)** So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

**[Neh. 2:12](#)** And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding.

**[Neh. 2:13](#)** So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon's Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire.

**[Neh. 2:14](#)** Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass.

**[Neh. 2:15](#)** So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned.

[Neh. 2:16](#) The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the rest who did the work.

- Our story of Nehemiah has moved into a new section, revolving around the completion of the work of building the wall
  - We'll see the challenges Nehemiah must face, the problems he must solve, the enemies he must contend with
    - And if that weren't bad enough, he has to lead Jews
    - Nehemiah's greatest task is moving the people of God together as one group, without having them tear each other apart in the process
  - The point in this section of Nehemiah isn't to learn the intricacies of wall construction or even leadership in general
    - It's a study of the way God uses the accomplishment of a task as an opportunity to build up His people
    - And He does this work through the leadership of godly men like Nehemiah, who recognize that the physical work is secondary to the spiritual work
    - It's a laboratory setting in which sanctification can take place
- Notice in vs.9-10, we already see the opposition beginning early
  - Although Nehemiah traveled with letters of passage from the king, the other province officials aren't happy to hear Israel was receiving help
    - These two men are officials in Samaria and Ammon, neighboring territories of Judah
    - But there's nothing new in this moment
    - Anytime God's people are receiving grace from the Lord, the enemy and his followers are quick to notice and protest and scheme against it
  - A godly leader moving in to do the Lord's will, had better have a thick skin
    - Because the world isn't shy in sharing its opinion or trying to get its way

- Had these officials had their way, Israel would never have been rebuilt
- And we haven't heard the last of these two adversaries
- Nehemiah's decision to wait for three days in the city has intrigued students forever
  - Was there something specific Nehemiah was waiting for?
    - Did he want to avoid tipping his hand concerning his purposes too quickly?
    - Maybe his encounters with Sanballet and Tobiah left him concerned that his enemies might disguise themselves as thieves and attack him if he were in public
    - Maybe he wasn't sure where to start and needed some time to think about his plan
  - Perhaps all these reasons are true, but when the time to set out came, Nehemiah goes it alone and goes out at night
    - His travels proceed outside the city, by way of the Valley gate, headed south
    - Then he moves eastward around the southern end of the city, and then north up the east side of the wall
    - The southern portion of the city walls and their gates are still present, though in terrible condition and without wooden gates
    - This makes sense, since the attacks from Babylon came from the north, so the only portion of the wall that remained was on the south
    - Eventually, he gets stopped by an impasse and returns to the Valley Gate
- Once again, why did he go alone and at night?
  - Did he want to be free of other opinions as he considered his options?
    - Perhaps, but he doesn't seem like a man who worried about others' opinions
    - Was he was trying to conceal his plan from his enemies?

- That doesn't seem like a good reason, since Nehemiah announced his plan publicly the very next morning anyway
- In v.16, Nehemiah does mention that no official in Israel knew where he went or what he planned to do
  - It would seem that he was concealing his purposes from the Jews themselves, at least at first
  - The only logical answer is that Nehemiah wanted to control the message
    - He had one chance to make a first impression
  - If he had paraded around the city wall in the day time, and with an entourage, the word would get out that he was surveying the wall
- That public display would then give rise to assumptions and gossip among the people concerning Nehemiah's plans and purposes
  - "He must be sent from the king to check on our work."
  - "He's here to make Israel slaves to finish the work."
  - "He's going to rebuild the walls and kick out the Jews."
  - Whatever their conclusions, Nehemiah faced the possibility of losing the PR battle long before he could make his case
- Instead, Nehemiah wants to assess the situation in private, develop his plan and then make his pitch without competition

**[Neh. 2:17](#)** Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach."

**[Neh. 2:18](#)** I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work.

- Nehemiah knew he must preach the call of God to the people without voices of dissent competing for the hearts and minds of the people
  - The spoken word is the powerful tool God uses to stir His people into action one way or another
  - But the Lord doesn't share His stage with anyone

- Nehemiah couldn't afford to lose his one opportunity to preach the truth of God's call to rebuild the wall
- Throughout the ages, God has determined, by the mystery of preaching, to speak to His people through the mouths of men called to preach
  - And there is simply no substitute for the call of the spoken word
  - The Word made flesh by the voice of men echoing the words of God
- Nehemiah's address to the people of Israel must be a spoken call to action and obedience
  - Nehemiah doesn't send his appeal through messengers, or by letter
  - He assembles the people and delivers His call with God at the center of his argument
  - This technique is as ancient as Creation, and yet, it remains God's method to reach, exhort and inspire His people to know and follow Him
- It's no coincidence that even in this age of the Internet, smartphones, multimedia and the like, that people still find pulpit preaching compelling, essential and irreplaceable
  - These modern inventions have only served to make preaching more accessible and popular
    - We can read sermons
    - We can watch dramas
    - We can browse websites
    - But nothing stirs us to think and act differently as powerfully as a well-delivered sermon from the Word of God
  - And that's the way the Lord intends
    - Godly leaders in the Church can come in many shapes, sizes, personalities and with a variety of strengths and gifts
    - But the one universal ingredient is a gift of exhortation, combined with a grasp of God's Word

- Call it teaching or preaching...
  - But the ability to communicate through the spoken word is essential to leading God's people
- And when the time comes to exhort God's people, a godly leader understands that the enemy will be close behind, trying to disrupt and interrupt the preaching
  - Hoping to block or neutralize its effects
  - So Nehemiah stacks the deck in his favor as he determines the time and manner to reveal his plan
- And sure enough, the enemy responds in short measure

**Neh. 2:19** But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, "What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

**Neh. 2:20** So I answered them and said to them, "The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem."

- The two officials who had been disturbed by Nehemiah's arrival hear of the plan
  - Clearly, the word has spread fast, indicating that not everyone in the city of Jerusalem is a friend
    - As these enemies of Israel learn of the plan, they go down to the city to see what they can do to put a stop to it
    - They've seen the king's letter, so they can't oppose Nehemiah directly
    - So they try the next best thing: they look to undermine him in the eyes of the people
  - Notice, in v.19, these three men are said to mock and despise "us"
    - They aren't speaking to Nehemiah
    - They are directing their derision against the people of Israel, hoping to discourage them or frighten them into disregarding Nehemiah's call
  - The enemy rarely makes a frontal assault against the work of God

- He is too crafty for that, preferring to attack at the weak spot
- Nehemiah wasn't going to be swayed by God's enemies
- But God's people are fragile and vulnerable, which is why Nehemiah was sent to them in the first place
- So these men try to place doubt in the people's minds
- Once again, Nehemiah steps up to defend and encourage God's people
  - Nehemiah bravely stands up to these men and states one of the more memorable one-liners in the Bible (and he has another one later)
    - Nehemiah tells them three important things
    - First, he says the success of the people doesn't depend on their skill, bravery, wealth or even the king's permission
    - They may have skill, they may feel brave, they may have wealth, and they may even have received permission from the king
    - But their success won't come from these things...it will come from the Lord alone
  - Therefore, Nehemiah says, secondly, that the people will persevere in building the walls, because if the Lord is for us, who can be against us?
    - Knowing the Lord will bring success doesn't mean we don't have to work or contend with difficulties
    - It means we have every reason to persevere, despite those things
    - And that's Nehemiah's conclusion as well
  - Finally, Nehemiah informs the men that they have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem
    - The word "portion" refers to having a tribal history in the land
      - So no portion of the land belonged to their ancestors
    - Therefore, they have no right to claim any of the land of Israel in their day
      - They had no standing to decide how the land might be used or what might take place with it

- Finally, they have no memorial, meaning there will be no record of these men in any future Jerusalem
  - Said simply, these men have no past, present or future interest in this matter...so butt out!
- So the building begins, and Chapter 3 is the detail of who did what to accomplish the building of the wall
  - You have a map handout to help you follow the places where the work was taking place
    - So we're going to read the entire chapter at once to see the entirety of the building process

**Neh. 3:1** Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel.

**Neh. 3:2** Next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

**Neh. 3:3** Now the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

**Neh. 3:4** Next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz made repairs. And next to him Meshullam the son of Berechiah the son of Meshezabel made repairs. And next to him Zadok the son of Baana also made repairs.

**Neh. 3:5** Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.

**Neh. 3:6** Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars.

**Neh. 3:7** Next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, also made repairs for the official seat of the governor of the province beyond the River.

**Neh. 3:8** Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah of the goldsmiths made repairs. And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

**Neh. 3:9** Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs.

**Neh. 3:10** Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah made repairs.

**Neh. 3:11** Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of Furnaces.

**Neh. 3:12** Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his daughters.



[Neh. 3:13](#) Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and a thousand cubits of the wall to the Refuse Gate.

[Neh. 3:14](#) Malchijah the son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-haccherem repaired the Refuse Gate. He built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars.

[Neh. 3:15](#) Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, the official of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He built it, covered it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and the wall of the Pool of Shelah at the king's garden as far as the steps that descend from the city of David.

[Neh. 3:16](#) After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, official of half the district of Beth-zur, made repairs as far as a point opposite the tombs of David, and as far as the artificial pool and the house of the mighty men.

[Neh. 3:17](#) After him the Levites carried out repairs under Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, the official of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district.

[Neh. 3:18](#) After him their brothers carried out repairs under Bavvai the son of Henadad, official of the other half of the district of Keilah.

[Neh. 3:19](#) Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, the official of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the ascent of the armory at the Angle.

[Neh. 3:20](#) After him Baruch the son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the Angle to the doorway of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

[Neh. 3:21](#) After him Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz repaired another section, from the doorway of Eliashib's house even as far as the end of his house.

[Neh. 3:22](#) After him the priests, the men of the valley, carried out repairs.

[Neh. 3:23](#) After them Benjamin and Hasshub carried out repairs in front of their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, carried out repairs beside his house.

[Neh. 3:24](#) After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah as far as the Angle and as far as the corner.

[Neh. 3:25](#) Palal the son of Uzai made repairs in front of the Angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh made repairs.

[Neh. 3:26](#) The temple servants living in Ophel made repairs as far as the front of the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower.

[Neh. 3:27](#) After them the Tekoites repaired another section in front of the great projecting tower and as far as the wall of Ophel.

[Neh. 3:28](#) Above the Horse Gate the priests carried out repairs, each in front of his house.

[Neh. 3:29](#) After them Zadok the son of Immer carried out repairs in front of his house. And after him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, carried out repairs.

[Neh. 3:30](#) After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah carried out repairs in front of his own quarters.

[Neh. 3:31](#) After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, carried out repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, in front of the Inspection Gate and as far as the upper room of the corner.

[Neh. 3:32](#) Between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out repairs.

- The third chapter of Nehemiah provides a detailed (some might say tedious) list of all the workers and their assignments in the building of the wall
  - The list begins with Eliashib, the grandson of Jeshua and his brothers building the Sheep Gate
    - They filled in the wall between two towers that marked the center strongholds on the northern wall
    - This family had the help of at least two other families
      - In this context, a family means a clan, a large group
  - Then as we scan down the chapter, we find the same thing happening all around the city wall
    - Another clan rebuilds the Fish Gate also on the northern wall
    - Another clan builds the Old Gate on the extreme NW corner
    - Another team for the Valley Gate on the west side of the city
    - Another team worked on the Refuse Gate (Dung Gate) on the extreme southern end
  - Then, up the eastern wall, the Fountain Gate is repaired
    - Another man named Nehemiah works as well
    - And down the chapter, we see different families taking part at different places along the city
    - We even find the Levites and priests working in sections
    - By the time we reach the end of the chapter, we're back at the Sheep gate, having circled the entire city wall with workers
- What's most interesting about this chapter, is the diversity of people engaged in the project
  - Literally, there is no one in the city who isn't working on the wall

- They have put aside any other daily duty or pursuit
  - Their regular labors have taken a backseat to pursuing the call of God
  - Crops aren't being planted or harvested
  - The expectation is the Lord will take care of those needs as Israel serves Him
- Isn't it remarkable how Nehemiah was able to engage so many different families in such a large project
  - I admire him, because I have trouble getting my entire family to participate in an afternoon of yardwork
  - He had thousands of family members working together
- Every member of the nation had a part to play in the work
  - The wall lay in ruins for decades as the people went about their daily lives
  - And then suddenly, the people were of one mind in responding to the call of the Lord
  - One godly man speaking a word from God can move a people to turn their priorities upside down
- For any aspiring leader, here's the secret to sanctifying God's people: let them do the work of ministry
  - Paul says that the path to Christ-like living is to serve, and that service is encouraged and enabled through the preparation of godly leaders

**[Eph. 4:11](#) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,**

**[Eph. 4:12](#) for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;**

**[Eph. 4:13](#) until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.**

- These various leadership roles in the Church were given to the Body to ensure that the Body was properly equipped
  - That we are taught, that we are inspired, exhorted, and led

- And that equipping is intended to prepare us to serve in ministry
- And Paul says that ministry is service to the Body of Christ
- If our time spent in Bible study or in church doesn't ultimately lead us to serve in some capacity, then the equipping has been for nothing
- And then, Paul says in v.13, that the work of service is the means by which we attain to the unity of faith and to the knowledge of the Son
  - It is the path to becoming a mature Christian
  - So to put it simply, we are sanctified through service
  - When the Nation of Israel responded to Nehemiah's call to serve, they experienced a measure of sanctification in their sacrificial service
- Nehemiah couldn't build a wall by himself, so he had no choice but to recruit the nation to work beside him
  - But pastors and other leaders have that choice today in many cases
  - We can look to the people to serve in the Church or we can look elsewhere
  - We can use the Church funds to hire people to perform many of the duties in the Church, rather than exhorting the people to serve
  - When we do this, we outsource sanctification
  - We go against the principle of Ephesians 4:11-13
- We have to be willing to allow a call to go unmet so that the pressure builds for the members of the Body to step up to meet the need
  - In Jerusalem, the walls sat in ruins for decades
  - That wasn't the best outcome, but it was better than letting someone else build it for Israel
  - In the day that Israel finally heard the call of the Lord and responded in unison, they received a great spiritual blessing

- Not only were the walls built, but the people were edified...they were built up too
  - Which is the true mission of any godly leader: to build up the people
- And since the work has begun in such a dramatic way, then certainly God's enemies will step up their challenge as well
  - Once these walls are complete, the city will be in a position to defend itself from any attacker
    - At that point, they have respect and standing among their enemies
    - The world could no longer take advantage of an Israel that could defend itself
    - And so the prospect of the walls going back up is greatly disturbing to any who hated the thought of a strong Israel
  - So the protagonists return to the city and begin to mock the workers as they work at their tasks

**Neh. 4:1** Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews.

**Neh. 4:2** 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?"

**Neh. 4:3** 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!"

- Once again, Sanballat and Tobiah try their best to discourage the people by ridiculing them as they work
  - We're told he spoke in the presence of other influential men from the surrounding area of Samaria
    - The Hebrew word for "wealthy" also means "army", and that is probably the better translation in this case
    - Sanballat has come down from Samaria and brought his clan and army to intimidate the people as they build
  - And in a loud voice, they begin their mocking

- They ask can this people restore a wall by themselves?
  - Can they finish in a day?
  - Can they sacrifice?
  - And if a little fox jumped on the wall, it would fall
- The point in these questions is to imply the people are in a hopeless situation
  - First, they question the people's expertise and ability to construct a useful wall
  - Then, they ask is they can finish it quickly enough to avoid an attack from the army that stood watching them
  - And they ask if they can sacrifice, suggesting the people would need to pause their work sooner or later to conduct the normal sacrifices
    - Which would then leave the walls unguarded
  - Finally, even if the wall was finished, their army could tear it down easily
- Each of these taunts were intended to drive doubt and fear into the people's hearts again
  - None of these people were likely expert wall builders, so the comments probably worked to a degree
  - But as Nehemiah has already said, their success wasn't dependent on their own abilities, but on the Lord
  - Moreover, the point in God's economy wasn't to build the world's strongest wall...it was to build the world's most godly people
  - They need not worry about the army...God was on their side
- Once again, when the enemy is working to discourage God's people, the response of a godly leader becomes all-important
  - He doesn't need to puff up his chest and fill the room with hot air, trying to fight words with words
    - Instead, the godly leader leaves the fight to God
    - And that's what Nehemiah chooses to do

- He prays for the Lord to avenge the people and lead the enemy's tactics to fail

**Neh. 4:4** 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.

**Neh. 4:5** Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders.

- Nehemiah's response is to pray to the Lord for justice in the face of the enemy's work
  - He calls to the Lord for vengeance
    - This is the proper response for a godly man
    - We can fight only so far in our own power
    - But when the enemy begins to discourage our people, pray for the Lord to deal with His enemies in His own power
  - As Paul teaches

**Rom. 12:19** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

- The Lord is more than capable of handling these situations
- We need not worry...if our work is truly the work of the Lord, then nothing will prevail against the work He has ordained
- Nehemiah's prayer is a strongly worded condemnation of these people
  - At first, this might sound excessive and harsh, but it's really nothing more than asking that their own words come to rest upon their heads
    - Nehemiah asks that all they say about Israel would be brought back on their heads
    - Let their walls be felled
    - Let their cities be taken
    - Let them be plundered and taken in to captivity
  - Then he asks the Lord that their sin would not be forgiven for having demoralized the builders

- We need to understand this statement as an inspired statement reflecting God's will for these men
  - God himself is speaking through Nehemiah to announce His own intentions
  - These men are not going to be counted among the saints when all is said and done
  - And their sin in this situation will be brought back upon them
- As a result of Nehemiah's prayer, the wall construction continued

**Neh. 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.

- The wall has now reached half its intended height
  - Now Israel's enemies can't deny that the city wall is well on its way to being built
  - If they can build it halfway, they can build it all the way
- So once more, they set out to stop the progress

**Neh. 4:7** 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.

**Neh. 4:8** All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it.

- After days and weeks of trying to discourage the builders, now the enemies of Israel decide it's time to take up arms to stop them
  - Sanballat and Tobiah are back, along with Arabs, Ammonites and Ashdodites, all long-time enemies of Israel
    - These four groups represent the four sides of Jerusalem
    - The attack would come from the north, south, east and west
  - Though Nehemiah doesn't record it in detail, we know an attack took place and it claimed many casualties
    - Josephus reports that many Jews were killed in the attack that followed



- But the attack wasn't strong enough to capture the city
- Does it surprise you that the Lord allowed this attack to claim Jewish lives? Or that He allowed the attack at all?
  - Would you have expected that the Lord would have defended the city from its enemies entirely?
    - He certainly could have done so
    - But He doesn't for at least two reasons
  - First, the people are given a firsthand lesson in why the wall needed to be rebuilt, and why it should have been rebuilt in earlier decades
    - Obedience to God's Word is an imperative
    - God is a righteous judge, and if we run afoul of God's instructions, we can expect consequences
    - God allowed the enemy to succeed in a limited, measured way to teach Israel a lesson on the importance of finishing this wall
  - Secondly, the Lord has already declared through Daniel the prophet that Israel's past sins under the Old Covenant would result in a long period of Gentile oppression over Jerusalem – we call it the Age of the Gentiles
    - It began in 605 BC
    - And it will not end until the Second Coming of Christ
    - And this attack is but one in a long history of attacks by Gentiles on the city of Jerusalem, as Jesus described

**[Luke 21:23](#) “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; [Luke 21:24](#) and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**

- The times of the Gentiles is that time between the first attack of Nebuchadnezzar and the Second Coming of Christ at the conclusion of Tribulation
- Only at Christ's return, will Jerusalem return to a period of eternal peace

- Once again, Nehemiah's response is prayer

**[Neh. 4:9](#)** But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

**[Neh. 4:10](#)** 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.”

- Notice this time, it's not just Nehemiah praying for the Lord to intervene
  - Now the whole of the people is praying together
    - This is a good example of the sanctifying effect of serving together
    - As the people join together to work on the Lord's task, they begin to see the persecution that comes upon God's people
    - As they face that persecution together, they are brought to a greater dependence on the Lord
    - As they sense that dependence, they pray together
  - Sanctification is a process of coming to the end of ourselves so that God may show us something better in us
    - These people are learning to follow the Lord in the face of adversity
    - They are learning to pray when faced with trials
    - They are learning to trust the Lord with their needs
    - And they are learning these things because a leader inspired them to join in the work of the Lord
- Prayer is important and makes everything else possible
  - But there is also a time to act in keeping with God's instructions
    - Nehemiah tells the people to set up guards to protect the workers
    - This isn't an act of faithlessness

- It's a recognition that God had given them the means to solve the problem
- Even still, guards aren't going to be successful against an army unless the Lord grants that success
- The point is, that a godly leader is a man who demonstrates dependence on prayer, combined with a willingness to act when God makes a way available
  - Nehemiah organizes these guard units, but the damage has already been done
  - The people are burdened now with the weight of the work, the fear of attacks, the mourning of the lost people, and the immensity of the task
  - At this point, the work is in jeopardy, and the outcome is in doubt
- So it falls to the leader to respond yet again for the sake of the people