

Lessons from Nehemiah's Wall Builders #2

As a review, why would we need a wall around the church, or our personal lives?

1. *To keep the church from being infiltrated by unbelievers, or polluted by openly sinning members.*
2. *To keep from being infiltrated by errors, heretical doctrines, and factions.*

Church is for believers. If a pastor or leaders limit what they say to what is acceptable to unbelievers, the church will dry up and fail. We do not try to be offensive, but speak the truth and "let the chips fall".

3. To keep ourselves personally safe from demonic oppression and habitual sin.

Jesus came to set us free (Jn. 8:32-36, 10:10). If we receive deliverance from ungodly habits and sins, we must be careful to erect a wall in our lives to prevent us from falling back into the same degradations. Jesus told the man in Jn. 5:14 – "thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

These walls can be in the form of new friendships with people who will help us, prayers, Bible study (with application and obedience), avoiding old areas of temptations, refusing to be caught in compromising situations, etc. This is one reason why being a functioning part of the church is so important.

What kind of walls?

There are **spiritual walls of faith and trust in God**.

Ps. 91:1-2 – we are to dwell in "the secret place" of the most High, "under the shadow" of the Almighty. He is our refuge and fortress. v. 4 – God covers us with his feathers, and under his wings we are to trust. v. 9 – We make the Lord our refuge and habitation. v. 11 – he gives his angels charge over us

Ps. 18:2 – "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."

Prov. 18:10 – "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous run into it, and is safe."

There are **walls of common sense and wisdom**.

Prov. 1:10 – "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." 13:3 – "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." 13:20 – "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." 1 Cor. 7:1 – "... It is good for a man not to touch a woman." (other than a wife)

There are **walls of intercession**. We can pray for God's protection around ourselves, the church, our loved ones, and even unbelievers that we are especially concerned about, or the country.

What can we learn of wall-building from Nehemiah?

1. **There must be a catalyst** – someone who wakes up and realizes the sorry state of the church, remembers what it used to be like, or what it should be like, and determines to do something about it.
e.g., Nehemiah (chaps. 1-2), Moses, Martin Luther, ...

In our personal lives, it could be some event that gets our spiritual attention, like an accident, illness, breakup with a friend, divorce, death of a loved one, etc.

2. **We must be able to awaken others** to the vision, and motivate them to the work.
2:17-18 – "... Ye see the distress that we are in ...Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." 4:6 – "...the people had a mind to work."
3. **We must be willing to do something ourselves**.
5:14-19 – Nehemiah didn't even take the normal governor salary, but supported the work personally, both by providing food and by doing the wall work (or at least supervising it). He didn't buy any land.
4. **Each one worked on a designated portion, often the part by their own house**. e.g., 3:23
It is obvious that no one person can do it all, but if we all work together the wall can go up quickly. This is called "body ministry" – each member of the church body has unique gifts and calling.

If we would concern ourselves with strengthening the walls in our own lives and homes, and local church, we wouldn't have time to be harping on others for not doing their part. Put up a wall against ungodly thoughts, fears, imaginations, hatreds, suspicions, etc. Stop listening to, or perpetuating gossip.

5. We **must stick to the task, and not be distracted or give up.**

4:21-23 – They stayed right there in Jerusalem, and worked from early morning until the stars appeared. They didn't even change clothes except for necessary washing.

6. We **must expect opposition.** We must have wisdom, and not naively expect that others will be in sympathetic agreement.

a. Opposition by **those who “don't have the vision”**

3:5 – “... but their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord.”

Inevitably, there will be foot-draggers, or nay-sayers, or just lazy. It wasn't their idea.

b. Opposition from **openly hostile enemies**

4:1-3 – Sanballat was an enemy of the Jews and opposed the wall building continually. Here he used mockery.

4:7-8 – When mockery didn't work, Sanballat and his crowd moved to conspiracy and came to Jerusalem to fight and hinder the building

c. Opposition from **treacherous “friends”**

Not all church members, family members, or former friends will approve of your change, and may even resist your efforts at revival or reformation. They may act like they are sympathetic, when they are really backstabbers, trying to catch you up somehow.

6:1-14 – Sanballat then moved from open opposition to plotting and strategy. He invited Nehemiah to come somewhere to meet him (and be ambushed). Then he tried blackmail using an open letter full of lies. Then a supposed friend tried to move him to self-incrimination by fleeing to the temple for refuge. This plot was even supported by the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets, to put him in fear.

6:16-19 – “ the nobles of Judah even sided with Sanballat and Tobiah. Many in Judah were sworn to them. Family ties were (and still are) sometimes greater than loyalty to the work.

1 Jn. 2:19 – “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

7. We **must be willing to engage in fighting (spiritual warfare)** to rebuild the wall, but really to trust that God will fight for us.

4:9, 13-14 – Nehemiah and the Jews responded with prayer, and setting a watch. They armed themselves with swords, spears, and bows, and faith in God.

4:16-18 – half the people worked and half bore the weapons. Those who built on the wall worked with one hand and with the other held a weapon, with a sword at their side.

4:19-20 – were spread thin, so when they heard an alarm, they would rush there and fight, but it says “our God shall fight for us”.

8. **Work can be done by anyone with a heart to it**, not just the strong and mighty. Nehemiah's builders included goldsmiths, apothecaries, merchants, and their daughters (3:8, 12, 32) – people for whom laying a stone wall was unusually heavy labor.