

Up Against the Wall

Key Verse: "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.
—**Nehemiah 4:6**

Selected Scripture:
Nehemiah 4-6

In our Key Verse, Nehemiah again petitions God to take note of Israel's plight and also to avenge their cause and bring reproach upon their adversaries. Believers today would probably not pray that their enemies be punished in light of Christ's admonition, "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matt. 5:44) Nehemiah's entreaty, however, was probably rendered in the spirit of God's promise to bless those who blessed Abraham's descendants and to punish those who cursed them.—Gen. 12:1-3

In addition to the pressure and opposition from heathen neighbors, the immensity of the task caused the workers much fatigue in their rebuilding efforts. When fellow Jews living outside of Jerusalem warned of imminent attack, Nehemiah positioned armed men behind the

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were vexed by the early rebuilding efforts in Jerusalem and also used ridicule to discourage the Jews as they attended to their task, saying, "What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"—Neh. 4:1,2

lower portions of the wall while encouraging the leaders to remain steadfast. He exhorted them to remember the LORD'S promises on their behalf.—Neh. 4:7-14

Since the people of Judah were prepared to defend themselves, her enemies abandoned plans for a surprise attack. Nehemiah also arranged for half of the workers to engage in constructing the wall and the remainder stood guard. Such sacrifices and discomfort were necessary in order to complete the work God had directed them to do.—vss. 15-23

In the midst of the rebuilding, there were internal problems such as food shortages and increased taxes placed upon the people by the king. Some individuals had to borrow money from wealthy Jews at exorbitant interest, and some even had to sell their children as slaves. Nehemiah interceded to rectify the situation, urging the return of property gained by usury and to restore a portion of the interest collected on loans of money and food commodities. In all of these proceedings, Nehemiah demonstrated fairness and generosity towards those in need.—Neh. 5:1-19

Despite all the difficulties encountered, Nehemiah ultimately achieved what God set forth for him to accomplish. "The wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."—chap. 6:15,16

The glorious outcome of doing God's will always brings blessings. For Christians, Nehemiah is a noble example as to the value of persistence in rendering faithful obedience in serving the Heavenly Father. The Scriptures assure us of God's favor if we falter not under adversity. "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."—Gal. 6:9 ■