

Nehemiah 4:7-15 – Struggling to Cope with Relentless Pressure

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gray, Armstrong, Handfuls, Henry, JFB, Gill, Clarke, INT, Barnes, Poole, Delitzsch, Geneva, Gaebelein,

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: **Everyone expects some degree of trouble in his life.** You expect you will **get sick.** You know you could **lose your job.** You might **get into an accident.**

But how would you feel if you keep getting sick all the time, or if you keep losing your job, or if you keep getting into accidents every month? Won't it be frustrating? Of course it will!

Imagine now how the Jews felt! They wanted security so they could prosper and worship God, but **horrible men of neighboring countries would not leave them alone.**

In fact, **they got increasingly worse in harassing God's people.**

How did God's people cope with this increasing harassment? That is what you will hear about today.

Our headings are:

Threats move from mocking to murder

God's people responded to the threats with words

God's people responded to the threats with actions

Our goals are: **That on learning of increasing threats against Christians, you will not panic, but turn to the one who went to the cross for you and continue performing your duties for his kingdom.**

Threats moved from mocking to murder

7 Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites **heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored** and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that **they became very angry,** 8 and all of them **conspired together to come and attack** Jerusalem and create confusion.

11 And our adversaries said, "They will neither know nor see anything, **till we come into their midst and kill them** and **cause the work to cease.**"

1. The enemies of God's people, led by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, after they heard and even saw the progress of God's people in repairing Jerusalem's wall, became very angry.

They **had mocked the Jews and their work but yet it did not cause them to stop**

repairing the wall, so they responded in great anger...not regular anger. Why were they so angry?

They **could not tolerate the Jews restoring worship.** That would mean they were getting their relationship right with God. That would mean spiritual prosperity.

They **could not stand that Jerusalem was secured.** That would mean economic prosperity for God's people as before.

Nehemiah used the word "healed" (restored) to show what was happening to the walls. He was likely hinting at what was taking place in the hearts of God's people.

2. The enemies moved from mocking to conspiring to come and attack Jerusalem, kill the Jews, create confusion among them, and cause them to stop rebuilding the walls.

And notice how the **group of opposition to God and his people continued to expand.** The Ashdodites joined with the Jews, the Ammonites, and the Arabians.

3. They planned to attack Jerusalem in a surprise attack on God's people and murder them.

4. Lessons:

a. Wicked men will never be satisfied with what you do and how you live your life. They want you on their side. **Misery loves company.**

You see how the homosexual lobby has worked! It wanted you in the 1980's to **tolerate them,** then it wanted you to **accept them,** and then it wanted you to celebrate them. Now it wants you to promote them and pay for their lifestyle through taxes. If you don't do it, they will try to silence you and call your speech "hate speech," when **they are the hateful ones.**

This is just one example. There are many others. Learn about them.

b. The wicked are jealous of your relationship with God through Christ!

They can't stand that your soul is prospering! **Your God loves you.** **Their gods destroy them.**

Your God sent his Son to die for you.

Their gods want your sons to die for their own sins in hell.

The wicked might smile with you, but they can't stand the fact you are at peace and they can't steal your peace.

c. The wicked men of the world will join in an increasing conspiracy against the church. This is what it has always done.

God's people responded to the threats with words

9 Nevertheless **we made our prayer to our God**, and because of them we **set a watch against them day and night.**

1. God's people's first response, as they were led by Nehemiah, was to pray to God, their help in time of need.

10 Then Judah said, "**The strength of the laborers is failing**, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall."

2. But God's people then expressed their frustration with their situation because they were tired and facing existential threats.

They were **literally shaky, exhausted** because of all the hard work and **not everyone was pulling his weight**, like the elders from Tekoa, and then they faced these murderous threats.

They felt like giving up.

12 So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, "From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us."

3. God's people, who lived in Samaria, communicated with the Jews in Jerusalem about threats from Sanballat and Company. (A good use of words!)

These conspirators were so confident, weren't they? They thought they could stop God's work. But brothers helped brothers to become aware of the threats.

14 And I looked, and arose and said to **the nobles, to the leaders**, and to the rest of the people, "**Do not be afraid of them.** Remember the Lord, **great and awesome**, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

4. Nehemiah then encouraged the people as they were getting concerned (even nobles and leaders became afraid) about the increasing frequency and severe nature of the threats from their enemies and their physical strains on their bodies.

Nehemiah did not give the Jews token encouragement, but encouragement grounded in the nature of their God.

The Lord was great. Yahweh was able to protect his enemies. Encouragement 1!

Deuteronomy 31:6 "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

The Lord was awesome. "Awesome" is not the best translation. "Awesome" is different today. The old word was "terrible," meaning God was great to his people, but terrible to his enemies, destroying them. Encouragement 2!

Isaiah 51:12 "I, even **I, am He who comforts you**. Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the son of a man who will be made like grass? 13 **And you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth**; you have feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, when he has prepared to destroy. **And where is the fury of the oppressor?**

5. Lessons:

a. God's people faced threats. They **cried out to God** for help. They **continued doing what God called them to do.**

That is the method of dealing with threats.

Don't panic.

Don't be distracted by atheists.

b. Don't be impatient when things don't happen immediately. See the preparation God made in the past. Nehemiah's delay in Shushan, Persia, was not really a delay at all; there he learned the leadership skill he needed to do the work he was called to do.

c. Prayers are like breathing to the Christian. If you aren't praying, your soul is either dead or dying.

Even the Son of God prayed to his Father when he faced the prospects of the crucifixion.

d. Pray eagerly and passionately for God to bless the labor of your hands and that his kingdom will come.

Pray he will stop your enemies from destroying you.

(If God is your refuge, won't you run to him?)

Pray God will destroy those who set themselves over against him.

e. Greater is he who is in you (Christ your Savior) than he who is in the world.

Don't give up!

f. While you must be prepared to fight, know that it is ultimately the Lord who gives the victory.

Praying and “not watching” working – is irresponsible.

You expose yourself to danger and temptations if you don't do both.

But God will make you win if you work and pray.

g. Sometimes you will have to spend more time dealing with fear your friends have than dealing with threats from the enemies. But that is just part of life.

Be prepared to encourage each other when they are not sure they can go on!

God's people responded to the threat with actions

13 Therefore I positioned men **behind the lower parts of the wall**, at the openings; and I set the people **according to their families**, with their **swords, their spears, and their bows**.

1. After prayer, Nehemiah then positioned men at preferred places so they would protect Jerusalem from a possible attack

He put men to guard behind lower walls...and on top of higher walls.

Watch and pray is the motto of every Christian, isn't it? Matthew 26.

2. Nehemiah organized the Jews properly, putting families together.

Everyone would fight better and more determinedly if he were defending his family.

3. Nehemiah made sure the men had swords, spears, and bows, the leading weapons of the day.

They had offensive and defensive weapons – swords, spears, and bows.

15 And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.

4. How disappointed the enemies of God's people were when they saw God's people continued to be joyful, confident, and even prepared for their attack.

The Jews were tired, but they were encouraged. So the bullies backed down.

5. God's people simply went back to the work of repairing the wall, confident they were doing the right thing, and their God, the true and living God, was behind them. What could man do to them?

6. Lessons:

a. When you know God is taking care of you, you can work hard and work without worry.

This is true if you *raising your children*, if you are *doing business*, or if you *struggling in your marriage*.

Remember, God works in you **both to will AND to do**...not just to will!

Don't fight his Spirit in you. **He will encourage you and remind you of the confidence you have.**

b. There is never a time when the Devil will leave you alone.

But you have to have your **trowel in one hand** and your **sword in the other**.

In other words, **be prepared to work and fight at the same time.**

Don't wait for the time of perfect peace to do the work the Lord has called you.

Are you weak in faith? Keep attending worship, reading your Bible, and praying. Get encouragement from your brothers and sisters.

c. If God wanted to allow some bad circumstances in your life, accept it. He has his reasons. Just keep doing what you should.

Conclusion:

The enemies of the church ratcheted up their threats from mocking to threats of murder. Instead of panicking, God's people prayed, encouraged each other, and put their hands to the wheel – and persevered in their work.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus:

1. There will always be those who oppose you and try to mock you or block you from doing God's work in your home, church, school, job, or country.

Don't stop.

Be aware of their threats.

Make preparation. But don't stop your work!

2. If you persevere, Christ's church will be protected and better worship will go up to God on account of Jesus' work on the cross.

You were saved to serve!

Don't let the Lord Jesus seeing you lazy or pursuing your own pleasure and profit.

You belong to him.

This is your motivation to service.

3. When the church is protected, it will become a haven for those who are still lost at sea. Christ's kingdom will grow.

Finally: God sees all the wrong things you do – public or hidden. It doesn't matter if you have **actively or passively opposed God and his people**. You are under just condemnation.

God can remove that condemnation if he counts Christ condemnation and death for you. If you want him to do that, ask! He will do it.