

Our subject today the building – the opposition -

“Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, and consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel.” (Nehemiah 3:1)

The names of several families that rose up to build are mentioned and how each knew their place to build and how far to build. They all knew what to do and they all were of one mind to do, you could say their hearts were in this work. There was no strife among them, no one had their own ideas, or separate interest. Eliashib the high priest, the grandchild of Joshua the first high priest was involved leading the work. He did not say I can't be expected to put my hand to hard work – don't you know who my grandfather was. No rather the Leaders or preachers should be first in the work their position obliges them to lead and teach and provide an example. This is on top of preaching and teaching Gods word. Remember the greatest among us is a servant top all. Even the Apostle Paul. *“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;” (1 Corinthians 9:19)* and even our Lord *just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mat 20 28.*

The Holy Spirit had breathed life into this work, there was **unity of purpose**, they **were quickened**, while there was diversity in the operations. Just like it is in the church today, one man is called to preach, another to take care of the administration, each member takes care of their own part and seeks Gods help to do their duty in the right way and in a way that is pleasing to God. There must be a cord of sympathy between the workers because ‘they are members of one another.’

The work of rebuilding the wall was great. Far too much for one man or for even a few. **All hands were required.** The work was divided out and each man had his special portion given to him, generally close to where he lived. **Do you know there is work to be done all around where you live,** if only you would look for it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

How often we speak to a brother or a sister about our work, or the work of others we have heard of. Yet when you ask about their work, what a change, thier tongue is loosed their whole face glows with enthusiasm. Its

natural and right, they are building their portion of the wall, that which is assigned to them by the Holy Ghost. While he is not ignoring others also building the wall, his heart is specially on the part of the wall assigned to Him.

As we look back on church history, we see that the most ground that was gained was by men who concentrated on one area and one task. It is the fashion in our day rather to criticize “**men of one idea.**” This fashion is much promoted by **men of no idea.**

It’s better to do one thing well and properly than to do many things half-heartedly, or never finish.

As we look back on world History there have been cities with broken down walls, cities in ruin. We could read how ancient Rome was burned with fire. How the citizens rebuilt, but they were great in number, rich and powerful. But we see with Nehemiah a small remnant, not wealthy, yet with a simple but solid trust in God they begin rebuilding. **The Church may be small in numbers compared to the many that are outside.** But it is the Lord who has strengthened our hands. The Holy Spirit who has directed our plans. The wall shall be rebuilt.

In Nehemias day the high priest worked, the governor and the nobles worked. Well there is one case mentioned where they did not work, “*But their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord*” (verse 5). **The daughters worked.** “Shallum, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters” (verse 12). **The young were involved** “And Hanun **the sixth son of Zalaph**, repaired another piece” (verse 30) **The builders belonged to different parts**(all tribes worked) they loved the work of God and showed great interest in the work of God. No matter where they were from they desired to see this holy work done. This is the common cause of all those who name themselves Christian. **We should never get so absorbed with our own interests that we forget the interests of the Kingdom.** If we really love the Lord there will be regard for His honour, this regard is tested by our active involvement and effort to advance the kingdom of righteousness.

Up until this point all is going on very well without opposition.

The enemy of souls uses many instruments, and methods, many projects,

to bring accusation on the active servants of God, or to take them from their work.

“But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews.”

(Nehemiah 4:1)

We must understand that Samaria was already in those days a deadly rival of Jerusalem. **Sanballat was the governor of Samaria.** He wasn't content to only make Samaria great, **he wanted to make sure Jerusalem would remain downtrodden.** When news came that Nehemiah had letters from the king to rebuild the walls, this news drove Sanballat beside himself. Much of the book of Nehemiah is taken up with his evil plots to even murder Nehemiah and destroy the new Jerusalem. We see in Sanballat a tireless opposition, full of malice, and no godly principle. Only interested in his goals without any regard to love and without truth.

"What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?"

Many a man can endure a big attack, but the petty criticisms get to many. It annoys us that someone would call us feeble – or say that even if a fox climbs upon the wall it will fall- **I read a paragraph that explains this point very well.** It's often more difficult to endure little stinging insects or spiders than to face the bigger and more deadly animals. Many a man bravely faces great danger but becomes a coward at petty annoyances which irritate him, and wear out his nerves and cause him to lose self-control. **Every man that attempts to do the will of God will find this petty criticism,** who do you think you are? What makes you think you can make a difference; your efforts are so feeble, you are wasting the time of people. **What's the answer to these little criticisms.** Well Nehemiah shows us - **A busy man has no time to stop and meet his critics in detail; he must do his work, and let that be his answer to criticism.** *“So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?"”* (Nehemiah 6:3) Also they say, hear oh God how they despise us and reproach not only us but you as well. They ask the Lord to deal with them. Their answer was to pray and continue working.

Whenever we do a work doubt will be sown. Faith will be attacked. look of those foes of the faith Nehemiah had to withstand. *“My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid.”* (Nehemiah 6:14)

There was Noadiah the prophetess. She would have put Nehemiah “in fear.” She used her position and the name of God to nerve the efforts of a good man. Noadiah could threaten, instil doubts, and arouse dread. She pretended to care for the Jerusalem, and she also pretended to commune with God. She was not true, she had joined Sanballat and Tobiah to intimidate them and try to get them to stop building the wall. She was a fake. **The Church to-day lacks courage.** Too many Noadiah’s are prophesying evil things, and leading others to believe that Christian missions, Christian gospel preaching, and Christian hopes of the final triumph of truth are only doomed to disappointment, but the Noadiah’s are wrong.

Then there was Shemaiah who was “shut in the temple.” He pretended or feared that great danger approached. He sought to sow fear in the Reformer into a state of inactivity, to paralyze the work. However, Shemiah had his price. He had been hired. Money dictated his actions as it does that of many materialistic people who hinderer the truth.

Then there was Sanballat. He was a most dangerous enemy. A governor who had influence over the army of Samaria. Of him it is said, “Sanballat was very wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews and spoke before his brethren (relations), and the army of Samaria.” He was the worst unrelenting seeking every possible way to hinder Nehemiah. Sanballat was indeed a bitter east wind-

Then there was Tobiah, who lived at Ammon, He had power in all the province and had most likely got his post by flattery in the royal court. He was a slave now in power. He was one conceited and opposed to truth. What was dangerous was **that he was well acquainted with the affairs of Jerusalem.** He must have known several people, even although he was one used to harass the building of the wall, he was able to secure Himself a dwelling place in the temple because of his relationship with the high priest. **A traitor pretending to be a friend.**

Another enemy was Geshem an Arabian. He was a wild, characterless man. He brought false charges against Nehemiah. Twisted words, whispering words gushed from his mouth. Accusing Nehemiah's motive, getting people to question what he was doing. How many we face even today men who spread lies, men who whisper reports designed to do much damage. They pretend to be concerned about the honour of God but they are really only interested in their own ambitions. **Usually, the ambition is to be rich to gain material prosperity.** They can't understand Christians who will do something for the Honor of God.

All of these enemies were united. All cunning and cruel. Some were supposed to be allies or friends of Jerusalem. Yet they were half-hearted in their loyalty. How many enemies do we have that are half-hearted toward us, not loyal. We doubt that some who claim to be our allies are even converted. An old writer calls them good fellows but not good Christians. It is better to have the devil's war rather than the devil's pretended peace.

Nehemiah demonstrated how He dealt with the attacks. He resisted by establishing watchmen, setting a watch to give warning; he resisted by placing weapons into the hands of all. Our weapons of defence are God's commands, God's promises, God's love. Nehemiah resisted by teaching the people to keep behind their defences. We, when assaults on our faith or temptations come, should get behind the walls, **should keep within conscience—keep within the Word.**

The criticisms of enemies should rather quicken us to our duty than drive us from it. When the builders had reason to think the plan of the enemies broken *and to return to their work*, yet they were not so secure as to lay down their arms, knowing how restless and unwearied the enemy is in this attempt, and that, if one design failed, they would be hatching another. We must always watch over our spiteful enemy, not thinking the battle is over until the work is completed. **We see they were always in readiness** to fight while one half worked, the other half were with sword and shield and spear and bow in their hands, not only for themselves but the builders would quickly join the fight. Each man had a sword on their side, (having the two edged sword at our side never hinders our work only helps and makes it possible to keep going and finish). The spears were held in hand from sunrise to sunset and from sunset to sunrise to terrify the enemy. This is

how we ought to always be on guard from our spiritual enemies. Not only in the light but also in the darkness, In this world of the prince of darkness is always trying this or that. While the work was ongoing they never took off their cloths, they always stayed in readiness. *none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.* Neh 4:23

Nehemiah had motivated all the people working together in unity- Building the wall. There was no fighting and strife they were all too busy building. All too consumed with this holy motive. When there was building to do they all built but when the enemy attacked they stood together as one all taking up weapons. We as Christs labourers should always be ready to stand together when a common foe attacks us. The inhabitants of the surrounding villages were all instructed to come within the walls and be close ready to help in the event of an attack at night. v22. The strength of a city is more than just its walls. It's the hands of its people, the standing together of its people. The blessing of God upon them.

The people were able to resist because they were inspired to have **confidence in God**. They truly believed God was mightier than all their foes. *“Be not afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”* And again, *“Our God shall fight for us”* (Neh 4:14; Neh 4:20). Words like these are worthy to be the battle-cry of the Church.