

SUCCESS!

NEHEMIAH 6:1-16 | Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it..., ² Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm. ³ And I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" ⁴ And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. ⁵ In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. ⁶ In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. ⁷ And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, 'There is a king in Judah.' And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together."

⁸ Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind."

⁹ For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands. ¹⁰ Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night." ¹¹ But I said, "Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in." ¹² And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³ For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me.

¹⁴ Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did.... ¹⁵ So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. ¹⁶ And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.



*W*arfare surrounds the birth of a miracle. And its completion too, in Nehemiah's case.

Opposition continues from start to finish. So far, all threats have been directed against the community. But now, having failed on all counts, the gang of three regroup and targets Nehemiah personally with four new and bewildering tactics:

- Isolation: lure him off to a rural area to abduct or assassinate him (:1-6).
- Incrimination: spread rumours of rebellion and messianic ambition, which could cost Nehemiah his head (:5-7).
- Intimidation: scare him into hiding in the temple, which was illegal for a layman and would create a scandal (:10-14).
- Infiltration: conspire with Jerusalem's nobles and spread intrigue through 'social media' (:17-19).

How does Nehemiah respond? With spiritual weapons as always:

- single-minded persistence (:3)
- spiritual discernment (:8-9, 12-13)
- personal integrity (:11-12)
- and unceasing prayer (:9,14).

He doesn't rail at the enemy. His defiance is diplomatic and respectful. But defiance it is! He doesn't flinch an inch from his divine mission. He sets his face like flint to finish the work as soon as possible in the face of all opposition.

God rewards him with a miracle: *So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days* (:15). It wasn't quite the wall of precious stones with gates of carbuncle that Isaiah had prophesied (ISA 54:11-12). Excavations show that it was built in haste. But it would do for now.

The first fruit of the miracle was the complete consternation and demoralisation of the enemy: *all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God* (:16). Mission accomplished! The enemy's schemes have backfired in his face.

So what now, Nehemiah? Take a Sabbatical? Ride on the momentum and build a governor's mansion? Or better

yet, erect a monument to yourself and go back to wine-sipping in Susa. No way! In actual fact, the wall was only the first phase of Nehemiah's mission—a means to much greater ends. His first term as governor has only just begun. He's got eleven years and nine months to go. *The best is yet to be.*

WALL OF DUTY

■ Declare: *The best is yet to be.* God is strengthening our hands to remake church in the new normal. He is the Master Builder. We are his co-labourers. We discern the times. We see the big picture. Revitalising church is a means to a much greater end: *a life changed, a church revived, a nation transformed, a world evangelised!*

■ Declare: We are called to a great work: *Loving Singapore Together, Turning Singapore Godward.* We resist Satan's foul schemes to divide and distance, confuse and conquer. We arise in the opposite spirit: We regroup. We close ranks. We cease from strife and competition. We make greater efforts to keep unity, cast vision, enhance strategy, exchange ideas, optimise resources, champion best practices, and collaborate like never before! We love God by loving Neighbour, block by block, family by family. With integrity of heart and skillful hands (PS 78:72), we set our face like flint to fulfil the call. We pray without ceasing. Our eyes shall see the devil's schemes backfire on him!

■ Declare: With singlehearted devotion to God, we will persist in our mission and mandate, no matter what curve balls the enemy throws at us. By God's all-sufficient grace, we shall prevail. Because of *the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe* (EPH 1:19), we shall succeed! For he is *able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us* (EPH 3:20). All will see and know that this work has been accomplished with the help of our God. To God be the glory!