

God of the Underdogs

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 1:3-4 They said to me, “Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire.”⁴ When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. (NLT)

3 Punches to Block

1. Ridicule

Nehemiah 2:19-20 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you rebelling against the king?”²⁰ I answered them by saying, “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.” (NIV)

Nehemiah 4:6 At last the wall was completed to half its height around the entire city, for the people had worked with enthusiasm. (NLT)

2. Doubt

Nehemiah 4:10 Then the people of Judah began to complain, “The workers are getting tired, and there is so much rubble to be moved. We will never be able to build the wall by ourselves.” (NLT)

Nehemiah 4:13-14 So I placed armed guards behind the lowest parts of the wall in the exposed areas. I stationed the people to stand guard by families, armed with swords, spears, and bows.¹⁴ Then as I looked over the situation, I called together the nobles and the rest of the people and said to them, “Don’t be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!” (NLT)

3. Distractions

Nehemiah 6:1-9 Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies found out that I had finished rebuilding the wall and that no gaps remained—though we had not yet set up the doors in the gates.² So Sanballat and Geshem sent a message asking me to meet them at one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But I realized they were plotting to harm me,³ so I replied by sending this message to them: “I am engaged in a great work, so I can’t come. Why should I stop working to come and meet with you?”⁴ Four times they sent the same message, and each time I gave the same reply.⁵ The fifth time, Sanballat’s servant came with an open letter in his hand,⁶ and this is what it said: “There is a rumor among the surrounding nations, and Geshem tells me it is true, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel and that is why you are building the

wall. According to his reports, you plan to be their king.⁷ He also reports that you have appointed prophets in Jerusalem to proclaim about you, 'Look! There is a king in Judah!' "You can be very sure that this report will get back to the king, so I suggest that you come and talk it over with me."⁸ I replied, "There is no truth in any part of your story. You are making up the whole thing."⁹ They were just trying to intimidate us, imagining that they could discourage us and stop the work. So I continued the work with even greater determination. (NLT)

Nehemiah 6:15-16 So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun.¹⁶ When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God. (NLT)