**NOW STRENGTHEN MY HANDS**

Nehemiah 6:1-14

Key verse 9

They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.” But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”

**Introduction**



 Nehemiah was a cupbearer of Persian empire. He could have lived comfortably in the palace. But he had a clear value system. Isaiah 33:6 reads, “He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure.” Through God’s word of wisdom and knowledge, he feared Him and wanted to serve His eternal will. He must have wanted to fulfill God’s will in his own generation. The Lord had given him a mission to do. He left everything behind, his life, his plans, his future security and everything else and he set out for Jerusalem so as to rebuild the broken down walls of that great city Jerusalem. Today’s passage shows clearly that until the completion of God’s project by God’s help, he stays focused on it to the end, not distracted by different problems and challenges. We are called for God’s soul saving project. Let’s grow to be God’s people who stay on God’s project until it is done overcoming challenges and obstacles. Amen.

1. Read verses 1-4. What did the enemies do to Nehemiah when the work was almost

 completed? How did he respond to them?

1-1, Read verses 1-4.

When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates—**2** Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+6&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12404a)] on the plain of Ono.”

But they were scheming to harm me; **3** so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?”**4** Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

1-2, What did the enemies do to Nehemiah when the work was almost

 completed?

1-3, How did he respond to them?

***When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates—2 Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.”***

***But they were scheming to harm me; 3 so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?”4 Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.***

* The enemies of Nehemiah *change their tactics.* Instead of ridiculing and threatening, they resort to friendliness and persuasion.
* Perhaps they saw Nehemiah’s firmness in rebuilding the wall and realized that they could not stop the work by threat and attack.
* Now they cordially invited Nehemiah to a conference down on the plain of Ono, the home of some of Nehemiah’s enemies.
* But Nehemiah knew that they were scheming to harm him. So he declined by saying, “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?”
* His enemies pressured him four times, but he gave the same answer four times. And after refusing it a few times, we back down because of repeated pressure.
* But Nehemiah was not swayed by their repeated pressure. He repeated with the same reason, “I am carrying on a great project. I have a great calling. God has committed a tremendous project to me, and if I leave, it will be threatened.”

* We may also experience continuing pressure to change our mind and course. But like Nehemiah, we can overcome temptation by reminding ourselves of God’s personal calling for serving his great soul saving project.
* Nehemiah knew that God entrusted him with a great project. He committed himself to the project fully. He didn’t want to lose even one minute of building the wall.

Acts 20:22-24 reads,

“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”

* We too can overcome repeated temptations by renewing our calling from God for the greatest project.
* May we recommit our heart and life to the great project that God entrusted us and that sets the priority within our lives.
* We are to renew our calling to God’s great project. We are called to pioneer all colleges and universities with one to one disciple making ministry.
* Sometimes what we are doing appears to be insignificant. But it is a great project and we have a great calling from God. God has committed His tremendous project to us.
* May the Lord renew our hearts and our holy calling through the book of Nehemiah and we have resume God’s great project and an absolute sense of calling! Amen.

2. Read verses 5-9. How did Sanballat try to harm Nehemiah for the fifth time? (5-7)

 What did Nehemiah do? (8, 9) What can we learn from Nehemiah about fighting the

 good fight against God’s enemy? (2 Tim 1:6)

2-1, Read verses 5-9.

Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter **6** in which was written:

“It is reported among the nations—and Geshem[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+6&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12408b)] says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king **7** and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us meet together.”

**8** I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”

**9** They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.” But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”

2-2, How did Sanballat try to harm Nehemiah for the fifth time? (5-7)

***5 Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter 6 in which was written:***

***“It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king 7 and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us meet together.”***

* When Nehemiah didn’t respond to their flattery, the enemy switched back to their original tactic of threats. Now Sanballat sent a letter to Nehemiah to accuse him of plotting to revolt by rebuilding the wall.
* He also accused that Nehemiah was about to become their king in Jerusalem. It was a false accusation designed to put pressure on Nehemiah to yield to their demand, and thus fall into their trap. But he resisted because he saw that it was their bait with complete lies.

2-3, What did Nehemiah do? (8, 9)

***8 I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”***

***9 They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.”***

***But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”***

* So Nehemiah sent him the reply, “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”
* When they were all trying to frighten him, he prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”
* Fear comes to a man’s heart and paralyze him only when that man does not walk in the fear of God, but walks in his own way, doing his own thing.
* Nehemiah lived and walked in the holy fear of God. He knew that God is sovereign over all things in heaven and on earth.
* He also knew that the work of God was to be completed, and that nothing must interfere with what God had willed be done. He was not afraid.
* As long as his eyes were on God, and on God’s will, Nehemiah was unshaken. “Now strengthen my hands.” His prayer reveals what’s on his heart.
* He did not pray for his enemies to be destroyed not for his name to be cleared, nor did he pray for strength to endure his persecution.
* He prayed that God would strengthen his hands. He asked God for strength so as to finish the work, God’s mission in his life.

2-4, What can we learn from Nehemiah about fighting the good fight against God’s enemy? (2 Tim 1:6)

* Many people live paralyzed by the fear of what others are saying about them. One of Benjamin Franklin says, “Since I cannot govern my own tongue, how can I hope to govern the tongues of others?”
* No man can lead a work of God if he allows himself to be governed by what other people think and say. May the Lord help us to follow Nehemiah’s spirit of prayer to get strengthened by the Lord, Almighty God.

3. Read verses 10-14. Why was Shemaiah hired? How did Nehemiah overcome this

 trap?

3-1, Read verses 10-14.

One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home. He said, “Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you.”

**11** But I said, “Should a man like me run away? Or should someone like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!” **12** I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. **13** He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.

**14** Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophet Noadiah and how she and the rest of the prophets have been trying to intimidate me.

3-2, Why was Shemaiah hired?

3-3, How did Nehemiah overcome this trap?

***10 One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home. He said, “Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you.”***

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***14 Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophet Noadiah and how she and the rest of the prophets have been trying to intimidate me.***

* Again the enemies changed their tactics. This time they had hired a Jewish prophet Shemiaiah who spoke a false prophecy to Nehemiah.
* Shemaiah’s prophecy seemed to protect Nehemaih. But Nehemiah discerned that it was a trap and said, “Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!”
* Nehemiah realized that Shemiaiah had been hired to intimidate him and to discredit him.
* So he prayed to God about what they had done. He simply trusted in the invisible hand of God. Nehemiah overcame the enemies’ repeated attempts to bring him down by committing himself to his work to the end.
* Likewise, the devil persistently tempts us. How can we defend ourselves from the devil’s relentless temptations?
* There is an old cliché that goes, “The best defense is a good offense.” We Christians’ good offense is to do God’s project positively.
* The devil changes his tactics and tempts us continually. But we can resist the devil by serving God’s project determinedly. Amen.

**Conclusion**

 When we make a decision to follow Jesus and engage in his world salvation project we will face lots of oppositions and challenges inwardly and outwardly. So we must be prepared. We must pray that God may give us strength to keep on working for God’s great project. We must not be distracted from God’s great work. May God help us to serve the great work that God entrusted us to serve.

**One word: Strengthen our hands!**