

Radiant Church, September 26, 2021  
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### Nehemiah 3 and 4

Broken down walls (a real circumstance, and a metaphor)  
National, ethnic and religious shame

Guilt is about what I did  
Shame is about who I am  
You are what you accomplish, or what you failed doing  
Distorted concept of identity

We fear silence and any self-assessment because we fear the reality of who we are

I attempt to deal with shame by:  
Taking on more things, because I'm afraid it won't otherwise get done  
Become impatient with other people who have other priorities than mine

Guilt looks for resolution  
Shame looks for isolation

Everybody gets involved, together, on the rebuilding project  
No one is mentioned as being a civil engineer or an experienced wall builder

If we are going to live for and devote our lives to something greater than ourselves, we have to be convinced of something beyond our own comfort and our own preferences.

We have to be convinced of the truth, the beauty and the goodness of God on display in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the ongoing advancement of the Church.

Participating in God's Great Commission and Kingdom work requires all of God's people to cooperatively and sacrificially give their time, abilities, resources and best efforts to carry it out.

**Nehemiah 3:5** *And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord.*

There will always be those who want to enjoy the benefits, without the investment  
Was the labor beneath them?  
Or did they fear their territorial governor (Geshem the Arab)?

**Nehemiah 3:12** *next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters.*

**Opposition:**

**Nehemiah 4:1** *Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews.*

**Nehemiah 4:3** *Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building - if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall.*

Sanballat and Tobiah were likely territorial governors serving Artaxerxes

These two agendas cannot be reconciled to each other. Nehemiah is seeking the good of others, and Sanballat and Tobiah are seeking their own advantage at the expense of others.

### **Response to anger and ridicule and verbal assault:**

Instead of talking to his enemies, Nehemiah talks to God

**Nehemiah 4:4-5** *Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.*

Response to fatigue and discouragement, and threat of physical assault:  
A death threat will get anyone's attention

**Nehemiah 4:11** *And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.”*

**Nehemiah 4:13** *So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.*

**Nehemiah 4:14** *And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.”*

### **Response to physical threat:**

**Nehemiah 4:16-17** *From that day on, half of my servants worked on the construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.*

**Nehemiah 4:22-23** *I also said to the people at that time, “Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night*

*and may labor by day. So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon in his right hand.*

They take up arms  
They establish an alarm system  
They remain vigilant  
Guilt is about what I did  
Shame is about who I am

Guilt looks for resolution found in the glory of God  
Shame looks for isolation away from the glory of God

How do we take up arms?

God's Word to us in Scripture. What does God actually say?  
God's word to us in Prayer, including careful if not brutal self-examination  
God's word to us in Worship. Taking our eyes off of ourselves  
God's word to us through fellowship with others

What is our "Alarm System"?

When we find ourselves more concerned with shame and accepting a false identity. Not believing who Jesus is and what Jesus has done is enough

When we are fearful, and allow those fears to dominate our decisions  
Do I already have a pre-determined and preferred outcome, and am not open to what the Lord may actually want for me?

How do we remain vigilant?

Believe and keep believing the gospel of Jesus  
His sacrifice has covered over our guilt  
Our identity is in Him, and not in our shame

**Romans 10:11** *For the Scripture says, "everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."*

**Psalms 34:5** *those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.*