

Nehemiah 4:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens,
with those that laded, every one with one of his hands
wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

Analysis

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

This verse within Nehemiah 4 addresses themes of opposition, perseverance, prayer and work, spiritual warfare. Opposition intensifies as the work progresses, requiring both spiritual response (prayer) and practical measures (armed defense). The construction work (banah, בָּנָה) symbolizes restoring what sin and judgment destroyed. Jerusalem's wall (chomah, חֹמָה) provided security, dignity, and testimony to God's faithfulness. This passage demonstrates biblical principles applicable across both testaments—God's sovereignty combined with human responsibility, faith expressed through obedient action, and the necessity of both individual and corporate commitment to covenant faithfulness. Nehemiah models leadership that combines vision, prayer, courage, integrity, and perseverance amid sustained opposition.

Historical Context

Nehemiah's account occurs during Persian imperial dominance (539-331 BC), specifically 445-433 BC under Artaxerxes I. The 52-day wall completion represents remarkable achievement given opposition and limited resources. Excavations have confirmed portions of Nehemiah's wall and various gates mentioned in the text.

The Persian period was crucial transitional time when Jewish identity shifted from monarchical nationalism to Torah-centered covenantal community. Without political independence, the people's cohesion depended on shared scripture, temple worship, and covenant obedience. This established patterns persisting through the Second Temple period into New Testament times. Understanding this context illuminates Jesus's ministry among a people shaped by these reforms and challenges.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Nehemiah 4:17 deepen your understanding of God's character and His work in human history?
2. What specific contribution can you make to building up Christ's church in your local community?
3. How does understanding your work as part of God's larger purposes transform your approach to daily responsibilities?

Interlinear Text

הַבּוֹנֵי יָם	בְּחוֹמָה הַ	וְהַנִּשְׂאֵי יָם	בְּטָרְלָה	עִמָּשׁ יָם
They which builded	on the wall	and they that bare	burdens	with those that laded
H1129	H2346	H5375	H5447	H6006
וְאִתּוֹ ת	יָדוֹ	עָשָׂה הַ	בְּמַלְאכָה הַ	וְאִתּוֹ ת
and with the other	of his hands	wrought	in the work	and with the other
H259	H3027	H6213	H4399	H259
מִן־קֶטֶד	הַשְּׁלַח:			
hand held	a weapon			
H2388	H7973			

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 6:7 (Parallel theme): By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

2 Timothy 2:3 (Parallel theme): Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:7 (Parallel theme): I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

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