**READ REFLECT & PRAY**

**READ: Nehemiah.ch.4 v6-14**

So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.

But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the labourers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.” Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.” Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”

Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

**REFLECT OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT (1)**

This passage is part of the great story of the return of God's people to their spiritual home, Jerusalem, after about 70 years exile in Babylon. Nehemiah, faced with fierce opposition from local war lord's and a very discouraged workforce didn’t flinch from his God given task but "looked things over" (v.14) and changed the way his team worked. Sometimes, especially in these strange and difficult times we need to look things over, take stock and maybe change the way we live our Christian lives. The last verse of our reading includes the words " Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome". Nehemiah's Lord is our Lord; He never changes, never leaves us, never forsakes us, however difficult our situation. Don’t be discouraged, be encouraged - Alleluia

**PRAYER.**

Thank you Heavenly Father for your faithfulness to Nehemiah and your unbreakable promises to us. May we have Nehemiah's courage and foresight to look at our Christian lives and be ready to adapt to your will as circumstances in our lives change. In Jesus name AMEN.

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**REFLECT OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT (2)**

In our second thought on the way Nehemiah overcame discouragement we look at part of v.14 in our reading: " I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome". Nehemiah encourages his listeners to REMEMBER. Like Nehemiah let us remember God's goodness to us in the past, His closeness in the present and His power for the future. As Nehemiah says we worship and serve a great and awesome God who knows and loves us as individuals. Don’t be discouraged, be encouraged - Alleluia

**PRAYER.**

Heavenly Father thank you for your presence in our lives, yesterday, today and forever. May we never forget just how much you love and care for us. May we remain in your love; serve and worship you with all our heart. In Jesus name AMEN.

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**REFLECT OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT (3)**

Today we complete our look at v.14 of the passage above with the words " fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.” To complete God's will and rebuild Jerusalem's walls Nehemiah knew he had a fight on his hands. Look again at the early verses of our reading! As a world, nation and as individuals we have been through some very gloomy times which could so easily discourage us. But in this wonderful verse Nehemiah challenges us to overcome the difficulties we face with fortitude and optimism. Winston Churchill once said "I'm an optimist. It doesn’t seem too much use being anything else." Nehemiah's word to dispel discouragement is wonderfully simple yet profoundly comforting and encouraging: “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome" May that same awesome God bless us all in the days, weeks and months which lie ahead whatever we may have to face. Finally I leave you with more encouraging words from the great Psalmist David:

"I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who

look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called,

and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord

encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the Lord

is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him". Ps.34 v.4 - 8

**PRAYER.**

Thank you Heavenly Father that you are indeed an awesome God who loves us individually more than we can ever contemplate. Help us to take heart from Nehemiah's courage and faith and help us to face up to life's challenges with that same faith and fortitude always remembering that you never leave nor forsake us - ever. In Jesus name AMEN.