

Motivation for Home Defense, Nehemiah 4:12-15**B. Nehemiah 4:14**

First of all, some historical background from:

Thieme, R. B., Jr. Freedom through Military Victory. 3d ed. Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1996; pp. 18-24:

After Solomon's death in 931 B.C. the client nation fragmented. Jeroboam led the ten northern tribes in rebellion, dividing the nation into the larger Northern Kingdom of Israel and the smaller Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Northern Kingdom was destroyed and dispersed under the fifth cycle of discipline by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.

In 586 B.C. God used Nebuchadnezzar, king of Chaldea, as His instrument to bring chastisement on Jerusalem. In the devastation that followed Nebuchadnezzar's conquest, the walls, palaces, and Solomon's temple in Jerusalem were leveled. The Jews who survived the invasion were enslaved and forced to march from Ramah to Babylon, a captivity which lasted seventy years.

By 539 B.C. Babylon fell to the powerful empire of Persia. In 538 B.C. Cyrus, king of Persia, decreed that fifty thousand Jews return to Palestine. Zerubbabel, the appointed governor of Judah, led the crucial expedition to rebuild the Temple, the focal point of spiritual life. Zerubbabel's temple was completed about 516 B.C. Ezra led a second expedition of Jews back from Babylonian exile around 458 B.C.

With the completion of the Temple, Jerusalem needed a defense system to protect the inhabitants and to preserve Temple worship. Nehemiah was God's chosen leader for the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was appointed at a young age by Artaxerxes (Longimanus), king of Persia, to the influential court position of cupbearer. In this post of implicit trust and unimpeachable loyalty, Nehemiah's primary duty was to taste the wine of the monarch to insure that it was not poisoned. His lofty position required intimate and prolonged contact with the Persian royal family. Such close association undoubtedly allowed him to obtain a commission as governor of Judea and in 445 B.C. to return to Jerusalem with the authority to reconstruct the fortifications of the city. But the rebuilding of the defenses of Jerusalem did not go unopposed.

Four neighboring tribes were threatened by the return of the Jews and the reestablishment of a Jewish state: Sanballat was the leader of the Samaritans, adversaries to the north; Tobiah led the Ammonites, the antagonists to the east; Geshem and the Arabs were enemies to the south; and the Ashdodites were foes to the west.

Faced with an impending attack and too little time to rebuild, Nehemiah decided to develop defensive tactics with a fully mustered legion and to trust in the Lord for deliverance.

Even though Nehemiah inaugurated mandatory military training, even though the army was prepared for every exigency, even though the general populace would fight to avoid enslavement and annihilation, there were still some cowards who wanted to surrender. Jews from outlying areas had reconnoitered the approaching armies and could see no escape. Terrified over the possibility of attack, they flocked to the city frantically repeating a warning to Nehemiah:

Nehemiah 4:12b - Our enemies are coming from every direction—we are trapped!

Knowing such hysteria could spread to the troops and the public-at-large, Nehemiah took decisive action.

Nehemiah 4:13 - I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears, and bows.

Lacking a completed wall around the city, Nehemiah set up a defensive perimeter. He placed some of his troops in the breaches which lured the enemy in.

The rest he hid behind the sections of wall which still stood thus hiding them from the enemy's view.

If enemy troops tried to exploit any breach, the instant reaction force behind the wall would counterattack from the side, hitting their flanks.

Every man was also given the ultimate motivation to hold his ground, kill the enemy, and concentrate on victory.

Each Jewish soldier, whether standing in a breach or hidden behind a wall, had deployed along with them his entire family.

Panic is about to spread among the Jews. Nehemiah must quench their fears, focus their attention on the task at hand, and give him motivation to execute under pressure.

Tinkle, Lon. The Alamo. New York: New American Library, 1958; pp. 128-153 passim.

He implores the use of the ultimate problem-solving device available to the Old Testament believer—the faith-rest drill:

Nehemiah 4:14 - When I saw their fear I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials, and 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.”

Stage 1 is the confession of sin and the claiming of a promise: “*Do not be afraid of them.*”

Stage 2 is the use of a doctrinal rationale: “*Remember the Lord who is great and awesome.*”

Stage 3 is a doctrinal conclusion which enables the believer to pay attention to detail while staying focused on the objective: “*Fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.*”

He implores them to depend upon the Lord to help them defend the four divine institutions:

1. “*Fight for your brothers*” refers to their fellow citizens and by application client nation Judah, divine institution number four.
2. “*Fight for your sons and your daughters*” refers to one's immediate family, divine institution number three.
3. “*Fight for your wives*” refers to one's partner in marriage whom he vowed to protect until death, divine institution number two.
4. “*Fight for your homes*” refers to the principle of one's volitional freedom, privacy, and property which must be defended from those who initiate force. Volition is divine institution number one.

It would have been impossible for these people, made up of private citizens as well as troops mustered from among them, to defend their families, had they not been armed. (See Nehemiah 4:13)

It is an undisputed principle of warfare that when faced with the danger of armed combat, soldiers do not place their lives on the line for the sake of their country or their political leaders. They fight for the lives of their fellow soldiers with whom they have developed a bond called esprit de corps.

There can be no stronger sense of esprit de corps than that which exists between a man and his family. There can be no higher expression of love than that he would be willing to lay down his life for his friends.

Nehemiah 4:15 - And it happened when our enemies heard that their surprise attack was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one of us to his work.

The allied armies assembled against Judah were deterred by their military preparedness and retired without a fight.

Archer, Gleason L. Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982, p. 219:

God could not be called good if He were to turn the world over to the horrors of unbridled cruelty perpetrated by violent and bloody criminals or the unchecked aggression of invading armies.

Luke 22:36b - ... let the one who does not own a *machaira*, sell his *himation* and buy one.