

Sanballat Lives

by RoseAnn Salanitri

The Bible is filled with an extraordinary amount of wisdom that can be gleaned from political controversies in the far past. One such book is that of Nehemiah. It is a book that has much to offer to a nation that has been given a reprieve by God that symbolically as well as literally wants to rebuild its walls.

Nehemiah is often referred to as God's "wallbuilder." He began his political career as the king's cupbearer. As a result of their relationship and Nehemiah's obvious depression over the plight of the Jews after their captivity in Babylon, the King gave Nehemiah all he needed to restore the walls of Jerusalem that were decimated during the Babylonian conquest. Nehemiah's prayer for his people that contemporary Americans can relate to, can be found in Nehemiah 1:5-11.

While there is much to learn from this book of the Bible regarding rebuilding what has been lost, there is also much to learn about the spiritual obstacles that can be expected to challenge the rebuilding of national walls that rest on spiritual foundations. And no one better personifies the opposition of such a noble quest than Sanballat the Horonite.

Sanballat had a personal vendetta against the Jews which he visited upon Nehemiah. Nehemiah escalated the animosity between them by pointing out publicly that Sanballat and his cohorts had no heritage, or right, or memorial in Jerusalem (Neh. 2:20). In 21st century American terms we might say that they were illegal immigrants.

Regardless of Sanballat and his cohorts' motives, their actions cannot be disputed. With great zeal and passion, they opposed Nehemiah and Nehemiah's mission in every way possible. First they laughed at Nehemiah and his workers with great scorn and hatred. (Neh 2:19). All this mockery and verbal abuse did not stop Nehemiah. He was a man with a mission from God to rebuild, and rebuild is exactly what he did. But Nehemiah's continued support by the Jewish people did not assuage the anger of Sanballat. Actually, it kicked it up another notch. Now a furious Sanballat began to mock the Jews as well recruit the support of others. But the people stood behind Nehemiah and their work continued - and so did Sanballat's.

Next Sanballat et al conspired to attack and create confusion among the Jews, but Nehemiah continued to trust God. However, the Jews started being negatively affected and if it weren't for Nehemiah's strong leadership, they may have abandoned their work, the walls would not have been rebuilt, and history would have changed forever. Nehemiah encouraged them saying: "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses." (Neh. 4:14). The intimidation, the threats, the evil plots continued and the wall was built in a remarkable 52 days - a task that often seemed impossible to the Jews living under that degree of devastation. Not only was the wall rebuilt, but the nation once again thrived by reconnecting with its spiritual calling from God. In other words, Nehemiah won.

So, here's the characteristics that were displayed by the opponents of God's wallbuilder: at first they laughed at him, then they scorned him, then they created confusion among his supporters, then they threatened and conspired to harm him. A quote often credited to Gandhi about the opponents he faced, says: "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." Regardless of who said it, the quote is famous because what it says is observable - especially in the spirit of Sanballat that lives today in the form of the mainstream media. As Sanballat and his cohorts did not prevail because Nehemiah stood firm in his trust for God and the mission he had received, may President Donald Trump follow his lead. And may we, the people of these United States, stand firmly behind him as he seeks to build our nation's walls and restore sanity and religious freedom to America - recognizing that as Sanballat failed in 444 B.C., so will his contemporary successors fail in 2017 and forward - if we stand together. For evil can intimidate, mock, create confusion, and threaten, but it cannot thwart God's plans when His people stand firmly together. So, to America I say: Stand firm and stand together. To President Trump I say, "Mr. President, build that wall!"