



# THE VICAR

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## WRITES



**PRESS ON** - Have you been discouraged by negative remarks from people when you have put in much effort to your work? I am sure we have experienced that at some point in our lives. The people of God had to face nasty criticisms from their enemies, "what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!" (v.3). Sanballat and Tobiah had tormented them to discourage them from rebuilding the walls. But instead of being discouraged, the people of God pressed-on together as one people. "So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work" (v.6).

Their enemies intensified their attacks. They "plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and cause confusion in it" (v.8). That forced the people of God

to near breaking point. They became weary, "the strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall" (v.10). For some of us, this may be too much to bear, especially when the testing and challenges become too much to bear, and this may become the point of giving up. But instead of giving-up, the people of God pressed-on to rebuild and to defend the city of Jerusalem, both at the same time. "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. And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built" (vv.17-18).

You may be wondering why I have chosen to focus on the above stories on how the people of God overcame the most difficult challenges in this month's Vicar's Write. For many of us we may have started 2021 with great hope and aspirations. But the last one month has been filled with nothing but bad news after bad news. Some of us may be in distress and are already wondering how are we to survive the next eleven months?

Through the two stories, I hope that in this season we can press-on to overcome discouragement and challenges together as a community. And we can press-on by holding-on tightly to God when the going gets tough - for *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns"* (Psalm 46:1-5).