

Solutions for Discouragement

By Matthew Black, Pastor

Text: Nehemiah 4:1-23

Date: Sunday, September 20, 2009, 6pm

Series: Nehemiah

Tabernacle Baptist Church

7020 Barrington Road

Hanover Park, Illinois 60133

Website: www.GodCentered.info

Introduction: Last week we looked at the sources of discouragement. Nehemiah and God's faithful people faced discouraging circumstances.

- A. There was **Derision**. They took verbal harassment. They were pushed verbally beyond what they were capable of humanly enduring.

We find out in **verse 1** that Sanballat "mocked the Jews". "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews". Ridicule can be effective, though.

Application: Satan's first weapon against us will be the praise of men being replaced by the mockery of men. Remember Jesus was mocked. They bowed the knee to Him and put a purple robe on Him and hit the face of their creator and mocked Him! We as God's servants are not greater than our Lord. If they mocked Him they will mock you.

How did Nehemiah answer them? He prayed to his God! Peter tells us that we need to follow the example of Christ, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (**1 Peter 2:23**). When you are derided, defer to God! When you are MOCKED, MOVE closer to God. Let God be your judge.

There are well meaning Christians who will discourage us. They do not mean to discourage you, but regardless, you should never allow discouragement or ridicule to stop your ministry. Instead, take it to the Lord in prayer, and keep on working.

- B. A second source of discouragement is **Danger**. Look at **verse 11**. Nehemiah records the plan of their enemies—it was a plan to murder the whole lot of Jews there: "And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease".

Jesus gives us some insight as to how we should think about those who might try and do us harm. In **Matthew 10:28** He says, "...fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Sometimes working for God will put you in danger. You may lose your job if you like godly in Christ. You may lose your reputation. In some countries, becoming a Christian means losing your life. Yet this danger is a good thing, because we know that God is on His throne. He works all things after the divine counsels of His own will (**Ephesians 1:11**). Listen, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (**Romans**

8:31). We have nothing to lose! We can lose our reputation. We can lose our possessions. We can even lose our lives. But if we lose everything, but gain our soul, we have gained everything. On the other hand, “what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? And what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (**Mark 8:36-37**).

- C. A third source of discouragement is **Disappointment**. Things are never what you expect them to be. There is nothing perfect on this earth. The only perfect things are in heaven.

Look at **Nehemiah 4:10**, we hear the words of Judah, one of Nehemiah’s peers, “And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is much rubbish*; so that we are not able to build the wall.” They point out the problems.

Do you ever feel that way? You have too little strength. What you are dealing with is too big of a mess, and the job is way too much for you to handle? Do you ever feel UNDER IT?

Transition: Well, what are the solutions for discouragement?

- I. Determine to keep the right **Focus**. God owns us. We are bought with a price. Nehemiah knew he wasn’t in Jerusalem for himself, but for God. He was doing God’s work. So Nehemiah focused on God.

When Sanballat and his friends threatened to fight and kill Nehemiah and his Jewish brothers and sisters, Nehemiah turned to God. Nehemiah says to the people in **verse 20**, “our God shall fight for us”! **Romans 8:31**, “If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?”

- A. Our protection comes from God’s **ownership** of us. God will fight for us. Look at Nehemiah’s prayer. **Nehemiah 4:4-5**, “Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: 5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked *thee* to anger before the builders”.

This is a fierce prayer. I don’t know that any of us would pray this way. But look at the theme of the prayer. They are saying that God has total ownership of their cause. Can you say that? Can you say that what you are doing with your life was not your idea, that you are doing what you are doing because it is God’s will. Can you pray in such a way that you say, Lord you told me to do this. This is your cause. Those who fight against me are really fighting against you!

- B. God’s protection always **prevails!** Look at **verse 15**, “And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work”.

We need to be constantly calling on the One who can change the course of human events! The prophet Zechariah received a message from the Lord that we all need tonight. **Zechariah 4:6**, “Not by might [collective brute force or armies], nor by power [your singular personal strength or authority], but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” In other words, all the collective strength in the world is nothing

compared to God's, and all the authority in the world cannot overthrow God. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. The LORD GOD Omnipotent reigns!!

Jeremiah 33:3, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

- II. Determine to stay **Faithful**. **Nehemiah 4:6**, "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work." What we lack in our culture and generation is faithfulness and loyalty. We give up too easily.

When we get to heaven, God is not going to say, "Well done my good and comfortable servant". What is He going to say? "Well done my good and FAITHFUL servant". Are you committed?

Illustration: Adoniram Judson served for more than thirty years as a missionary to Burma. Buddhist Burma was so hostile to Christianity that Judson was told by his church not to go there because they would not respond to the Gospel. Judson went anyway. He already knew Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, immediately began studying the Burmese grammar but took over three years learning to speak it. Four years of practical isolation passed before Judson dared even to hold a semi-public service. Judson began public evangelism in 1818 sitting in a roadside shelter calling out "Ho! Everyone that thirsteth for knowledge!" It was to be six, long, soul-crushing, heart-breaking years before the date of the first person converted to Christ. It took Judson twelve years to see eighteen people converted. But there was more opposition. Judson was imprisoned as a British spy — an imprisonment of twenty-one months. After this, the Gospel spread rapidly. Although he had waited six years for his first convert, sometime after Judson's death a government survey recorded 210,000 Christians in Burma—one out of every fifty-eight Burmans!

- III. Determine to **Fight**. **Nehemiah 4:13**, "Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

Paul tells us that we need to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (**2 Timothy 2:3**). David's brothers accused him of coming to the battle for entertainment. "You just came to see the battle!" they said. And David's response to them was: "Is there not a cause?" (**1 Samuel 17:29**).

A. We ought to be **motivated** to fight.

1. We ought to be motivated to fight for our **FAITH** "Remember the Lord which is great and awesome".
2. We ought to be motivated to fight for our **FAMILY**: "fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." **Reclaim** the purpose of God in your home – fight!

Illustration: How can you be motivated to do something? You need to just go and do it, and you will find motivation. If I want to teach you to swim I can give you a book on "37 Lessons of How to Swim" and you won't get through the first chapter. But if

we go to a dock and I push you in the water, you will have plenty of motivation to learn to swim!

It is the same way in ministry. You need to jump in and do it!

- B. What is the **model** of fighting that we should adopt? Fight FEARLESSLY while also focusing on the work! We need to have a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other! **Verse 17**, "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.**"

Conclusion: Do not fear the devil and his assaults. Do not fear testing and trial. I want you to listen to the words of Theodore Roosevelt about what it takes to face opposition.

It is not the critic who counts... The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms...who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly. Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat."

-Theodore Roosevelt 1910

If you love Christ you are going to face discouragement. You've got to keep fighting. Never give up. Be faithful to Christ! Focus on the Lord. If you are committed to Him, then stand for Him. Don't back down. Fight for the Lord, for it is He who fights for you!!