

A STRATEGY OF HOPE - Battling & Building

Nehemiah knew that God wanted him to motivate the Jews to Re-build Jerusalem's walls...

So he leaves a responsible position in the Persian Government to do what God wanted him to do!!!

Nehemiah Chapters 2 & 3 – Nehemiah casts a vision to the folks (he organized the people)

Fellow Jews had reported that the walls and gates were in disrepair...

- The Circumstances were very Dim, Discouraging and Dangerous!!!
- Nehemiah looked at the circumstances –
- He was deeply moved...(everyone knew who was in charge)
- Nehemiah was deeply dependent on God!!!!

THE BIG IDEA (VISION) – See the city as God see's it!!! (Judea – where Jerusalem was located)

- NOT as man sees it or with human eyes...
- Nehemiah sees the good in the city
- He looks through a different lens than everyone else!!!!

Nehemiah motivated them... (DO SOMETHING)

- He said rise up and GO!!!
- Nehemiah himself had a REAL LOVE for the people
- He wanted to see the people restored...

When we as leaders get DISTRACTED

- We can lose focus - We can re-purpose our call...

Sanballat (Governor Of Samaria) & Tobiah

They try to stop the work with insults, ridicule, threats and sabotage...

Nehemiah 6:3 NKJV - ³ So I sent messengers to them, saying, **“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.** Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?”

- **Further opposition** – they (Sanballet & Geshem) were scheming to harm Nehemiah!!!

Then we can become **DISCOURAGED**

- When we as leaders get **discouraged**
- **We stop feeding** our sheep!!!! **We start beating** our sheep!!!!

1 Corinthians 7:35 – NKJV - And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and **that you may serve the Lord without distraction.**

* Paul’s focus here – Greater focus on Christ and His work!!!

Building is a battle

Not everyone is excited that you are **building your life in Christ!**

- Not everyone is excited that **His Church is growing and maturing!**
- We're trying to **build a church** and **build the kingdom** of God.
- That's **why I like this short passage** in Nehemiah about battling and building.
- They had a **tool in one hand** and a **sword in the other.**
- They **had to multitask** and keep **one eye on the work** and the **other eye on the enemy.**

READ: **Nehemiah 4:11-23 CEV** - ¹¹ Our enemies were saying, “Before those Jews know what has happened, **we will sneak up and kill them** and **put an end to their work.**”

¹² On at least ten different occasions, the Jews living near our enemies warned us against **attacks from every side,** ¹³ and so I sent people to guard the wall at its lowest places and where there were still holes in it. **I placed them according to**

families, and they stood guard with swords and spears and with bows and arrows. ¹⁴ Then I looked things over and told the leaders, the officials, and the rest of the people, ***“Don’t be afraid of your enemies! The Lord is great and fearsome. So think of him and fight for your relatives and children, your wives and homes!”***

¹⁵ Our enemies found out that we knew about their plot against us, but ***God kept them from doing what they had planned.*** So we went back to work on the wall.

¹⁶ From then on, I let half of the young men work while the other half stood guard. They wore armor and had spears and shields, as well as bows and arrows. The leaders helped the workers ¹⁷ who were rebuilding the wall. ***Everyone who hauled building materials kept one hand free to carry a weapon.*** ¹⁸ Even the workers who were rebuilding the wall strapped on a sword. The worker who was to blow the signal trumpet stayed with me.

¹⁹ I told the people and their officials and leaders, ***“Our work is so spread out, that we are a long way from one another.*** ²⁰ If you hear the sound of the trumpet, come quickly and gather around me. Our ***God will help us fight.***”

²¹ Every day from dawn to dark, half of the workers rebuilt the walls, while the rest stood guard with their spears.

²² I asked the men in charge and their workers to stay inside Jerusalem and stand guard at night. So they guarded the city at night and worked during the day. ²³ I even slept in my work clothes at night; my children, the workers, and the guards slept in theirs as well. ***And we always kept our weapons close by.***

Building is a battle

Accomplishing any large task is tiring.

- There are **always pressures** that **foster discouragement**
- The task **seems impossible** - It can **never** be finished
- **Too many factors are working against us!!!**

The enemy planned a surprise attack. (But, Tool in one hand sword in other)

¹¹ ***Our enemies were saying, “Before those Jews know what has happened, we will sneak up and kill them and put an end to their work.”***

¹² ***On at least ten different occasions, the Jews living near our enemies warned us against attacks from every side,***

- The enemy planned a **surprise attack**.
- "We are going to take them **when they are not looking** for us."

What will be Nehemiah's strategy against a surprise attack?

Nehemiah 4:13 - And so I sent people to guard the wall at its lowest places and where there were still holes in it. **I placed them according to families**, and they stood guard with swords and spears and with bows and arrows.

Nehemiah put every man in the position **where he could defend his own family**, which made him more comfortable when he was building, of course.

So Nehemiah put them **with their families** and **armed them well**.

Our first priority and main job on this earth is to **take care of our family**.

- **We're not** just talking about providing food, shelter, and necessities of life
- But also **providing for them spiritually**.
- **Training them up!!!!**

Nehemiah 4:14 – NKJV - "**Remember the Lord**"

¹⁴ And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, "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."

- "**Remember the Lord**" was to be their motto, **their rallying cry**.

When Paul the apostle wrote his letters to a young preacher named Timothy, **he gave him a rallying cry**.

2 Timothy 2:8 NKJV

⁸ **Remember that Jesus Christ**, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,

That is the rallying cry of believers today.

"Remember the Lord" *was the rallying cry for the Jews in Nehemiah's day.*

There are a host of things you will have to BATTLE WHILE BUILDING

1. ***The Tool Of Distraction***

Sanballat - ***Nehemiah 4:2*** – In front of his friends and the Samaritan army he said, “**What is this feeble bunch of Jews trying to do?**

- Are they going to rebuild the wall and offer sacrifices all in one day?
- **Do they think they can make something out of this pile of scorched stones?**”

The enemy wants to talk to Nehemiah, or so they say.

- “**Maybe we can work out a compromise.**”
- ***Nehemiah, SORRY – I’M COMMITTED!!!***

Nehemiah knew they were not sincere.

- **When the devil can't defeat us as a roaring lion, he will try to approach us as an angel of light.**

Ridicule can cut deeply

- Causing ***discouragement*** and ***despair***
- Sanballat and Tobiah used ridicule to try to dissuade the Jews from building the wall

What they really wanted was to kill him.

- And **the devil makes sin look nice**, but ***he wants to destroy you!***
- **God's work must be done God's ways.**

Nehemiah understood that he had nothing in common with this worldly crowd, and therefore there was no basis for cooperation.

2. ***The Curse of discouragement***—it’s ***the devil’s #1 tool*** he uses to try to get you ***out of the game!*** Out of church, ***to give up on life.***
- ***Nehemiah 4:1-11*** – ***Opposition to the rebuilding...***

Discouragement doesn't discriminate

- Even the best Christians are under its power at times.

Nehemiah 4:10 - Then Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is failing, and *there is so much rubbish* that we are not able to build the wall.”

Verse 10: first 3 words... **Then Judah said...**

- Judah was the chief tribe, the leaders among the nation, the cream of the crop!
- It was these that said, ‘*we can’t do it, we can’t continue.*’

Discouragement is debilitating. It will stop you dead in your tracks.

- “Anyone can do more *than a man who has lost heart!*”
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3. *The Causes Of Discouragement*

Verses 10-11

a. Worn out

they had been working hard, but still things weren’t going anywhere.

b. They had lost their zest for the work.

Verse 6: *It was halfway done.*

- That’s where we often get discouraged, *When we’re in the thick of it.*

You are **worn out and discouraged**, and maybe the only thing that sounds good is sitting still!

The men of Judah are worn out physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

- It is wise to know your limits, and learn how to say no!!!
- If you get worn out you get discouraged
- Then you’re no good to anybody

c. Weighted down

Verse 10: “much rubbish”

- They were looking at the total job, instead of just their section.
- They had miles to go and had their eyes on the wrong focus.
- **Rocks everywhere.**
- They were trying to juggle too much...they let life just pile up on them.

We must:

Prioritize—not just what’s the most fun, but **what’s most important**.

- ***Not only what’s most urgent***, but truly important.
- **We must** set aside daily time for ***God as a priority!!!***

Plan—don’t bounce around like the pinball in the machine, but **learn to live by a schedule...be organized**.

- ***Most people don’t plan to fail***, they just fail to plan, and it leads to bigger failure!

Plod—this means to just take it a day at a time, don’t look at the whole job and the long term, but ***take the vision we laid out in planning and have some focus...***

d. Wasting away

Verse 11: Their enemies were planning.

- And Satan has a plan, so we might as well ***form a game plan***, too!
- **The devil’s plan is to hit us when we’re down and discouraged**
- **We won’t even see him coming.**
- Our plan must be **not to abide in discouragement**, but to **escape it!**

Isaiah 54:17 - NKJV

¹⁷ **No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn.** This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me,” Says the LORD.

Notice from verse 10 it is compounded when Judah “**said**” it. That’s how Satan can “spread” it to others. Then it became, “**we are not able...**”

James 3:4-5 CEV

⁴ It takes strong winds to move a large sailing ship, but the captain uses only a small rudder to make it go in any direction. ⁵ Our tongues are small too, and yet they brag about big things. **It takes only a spark to start a forest fire!**

What we say can be encouraging, or very discouraging to others around us.

- ***The same is true with what we do.***
- **Your presence** in services can be an encouragement to others.

Nehemiah gave his people 3 steps to getting out of discouragement:

1. Nehemiah Armed The People

- **Verse 13** He said **we're not** going to take **the enemies advances lying down**.
- **He gave them** swords, spears, and bows.

Think about it: we already know what Satan is going to try to do.

- He's going to attack us **with discouragement**.
- So, we are foolish **if we don't prepare** ourselves and take up arms!

Ephesians 6:10-13 NKJV - The Whole Armor of God

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

- Then it goes on to **detail each piece of armor** to put on!
- **Accept no substitutes.**
- As David told Saul, **I need my own armor**, not another's.
- **Don't try to be encouraged by anything other than Christ.**

What does it take to lift you from discouragement?

2. Nehemiah assured the people.

Verse 14: Then I looked things over and told the leaders, the officials, and the rest of the people, **"Don't be afraid of your enemies! The Lord is great and fearsome. So think of him and fight for your relatives and children, your wives and homes!"**

- **'Your dad's bigger than their dad!'**

If it had been written I'm sure Nehemiah would have quoted Romans 8:31 - *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

- That's the opposite of discouragement!
- *Know why we get discouraged?*
- In a nutshell: because we take our eyes off the Lord!

Are you discouraged?

- Peace is not found in the absence of trouble
- It is found in the presence of God.

Romans 8:28 NIV

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

CLOSE:

3. *Nehemiah aroused their spirits.*

Verse 14: *'There's too much at stake to be discouraged.*

- We cannot quit!
- We're not just building walls...
- We're fighting for our families and church families!
- It's not just brick and mortar, it's flesh and blood!

Don't give up on:

- Your Call - Your church - Your marriage - Your children - Your dreams
- OR - What God has called you to do!

There are many discouragers...so we need you to join the ranks of the encouragers.

When Nehemiah saw the potential of the wall, many people saw only problems.

In verse 12, others came to Nehemiah and warned him of the impending dangers of building the wall saying, "they will be upon you."

When Nehemiah saw hope many saw only hopelessness!!!!

Although this opposition may have discouraged Nehemiah, he remained persistent to His God-given purpose. **And so must you!!!!!!!**

Every day we remain discouraged is a day that we're not going anywhere for God.

- Don't let up, don't shut up, don't back up, and don't give up, ***until you're taken up!***

Nehemiah was a man of Character – Persistence – and Prayer!!!!

- ***Brilliant planner – organizer – and motivator***
- ***Under his leadership*** - the wall around Jerusalem ***was rebuilt in 52 days***.
- ***As a political Leader*** – led the nation to religious reform and spiritual awakening
- ***Nehemiah was CALM under opposition***
- Capable of being bluntly honest with his people ***when they were sinning***.

The people under God's direction can accomplish impossible tasks

There are two parts to real service for God:

- Talking with HIM
- And, walking with HIM

Praise Team: Summary

1. Will you make Him your truest treasure?
2. Will you prize what He prizes?
3. Does your faith need rebuilding?