

Nehemiah 4:10-23 Battling Discouragement

Tonight we are going to be looking at the subject of Discouragement.

A)What do you do when you are discouraged?
How do you deal with it?

B)Do you isolate? Tendency of some men

C)Do you throw yourself into your work? ME

D)Do you turn to some vice or area of compromise
- sort of check out?

The 2nd part of Nehemiah ch. 4 gives us some great insights into why we get discouraged

A)As well as how to combat it

B)Review: The Book of Nehemiah is a story about God calling this man Nehemiah – Persia / king –

C)God calls him to go to Jerusalem – lead a group of destitute pp in rebuilding the walls

D)Daunting task – but Nehemiah was a man of great vision and great leadership

1)He was able to Rally the pp behind this vision.

E)But from the beginning he was met by opposition.

We see two examples of that in Ch. 4

A)In v.1-9 we have opposition that comes from the outside –

B)Enemies of the Jews who don't want Jerusalem to become a fortified city again.

C)They bring threats and accusations and mocking intimidation against the pp of God.

D)We noted that anytime we are seeking to engage in the work of God -for our lives or the lives of others.

1)Any time we are seeking to take back ground that has been lost - sin or compromise

E)The Enemy is going to put up a fight.

We noted last week that the way that Nehemiah dealt with the External Opposition was

A)They had a mind to work = they ignored the mocking and focused on the task at hand

B)They had a heart to Pray = they cast their cares about the Lord

C)Instead of getting side tracked by the threats or filled with fear - they gave that to God

1)Trusted God to take care of their enemies

So they had a Mind to work, a heart to pray and an eye to watch.

A)We talked about the importance of watching - keeping our eye open for the schemes of the enemy

B)There should be no surprise attacks in the Christian life - we are to always be on guard.

Tonight we are going to see a different type of opposition - This one is from within.

A)It comes in the form of Discouragement

B)In our text we are going to see 4 reasons for their Discouragement

C)#1 V.10 Fatigue 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.”

The leaders of the tribe of Judah come to Nehemiah saying - the workers are tired, we are worn out.

A)Note: V.6 The wall was ½ done. -

B)This happens all the time - half way point in projects is often the hardest

1)There is an excitement in the first half of the project - but then the excitement wears off

C)The routine sets in and that turns to a grind - starts to get boring - easy to get fatigued

D)Midlife Crisis - ½ way point in life - guys start looking around -

1)seems like there is so much work left to be done

It is also worth noting - we learn in Chapter 5 there was a famine in the land.

A)People were not getting proper nourishment - led to be tired ///

B)I think one of the times when we are the most susceptible to Discouragement / Depression

1)Is when we are tired - **Fatigued**

C)It is also a time when we are the most susceptible to attack - **TIRED**

But I see a **Spiritual principle in this - When there is a famine in our lives or spiritual nourishment**

A)Not getting in the word

B)Don't have a healthy spiritual diet of the word and prayer - **We will get fatigued - spiritually**

1)which will lead to get discouraged

C)Lose perspective - not seeing things the right way in our lives - #1 Fatigue

**#2 Reason for their Discouragement - Frustration
There is too much Rubbish**

A)**Rubbish and discouragement** are Siamese twins – they go together!

B)Everywhere they turned there was rubble and debris from the walls being torn down.

C)The workers had the wrong focus – they were focusing on the rubbish –

D)they saw the glass $\frac{1}{2}$ empty instead of $\frac{1}{2}$ full

1) Instead of rejoicing in how far they had come

E)they were only seeing how much farther they had to go – **TOO MUCH RUBBISH**

**That can be the temptation for all of us –
Rebuilding your marriage**

A)Discouraged – because even though you have made strides – there is still a lot of rubbish {

B)Face reality - **you spent 5yrs neglecting & wrecking – not changing over night**

C)Working on your walk – God is working things are happening – reminded of how much there is still to do

1) When we are focused on the RUBBISH – the temptation is to RUN / the temptation is to quit

We all have rubbish: Pride / self-focused / unbelief

A)There is rubbish (Garbage) in all of us – there always will be until we get to heaven

B)None of us have arrived - all a work in progress

C)Instead of seeing everything that they had done the wall was half way done

D)They were overwhelmed by the work that was left and all the **rubbish that was lying around.**

E)We can make that same mistake in the Christian life.

Instead of focusing on what God has done - or what he is capable of doing

A)We focus on how far we are from the goal.

B)We focus on **all the negatives** - we focus on what is not happening - instead of what God is doing

C)John the Baptist - Dungeon of Doubt and Discouragement

We can fall into that same Dungeon of Doubt and discouragement when we focus on our circumstances

A)We focus on what is not happening instead of what God is doing in our lives

B)We focus on the weight of the responsibility on our shoulders - the weight of the work at hand

1)Too much - don't have what it takes

C)So The 2nd Reason for their discouragement was a loss of focus - focused on the wrong thing

Reason #3 - Was loss of Fortitude

A)When you lose your strength and focus the next thing to go is your confidence/ **they say:- we are not able to build the wall."**

B) In v. 6 we were told that they had a mind to work – but now that is a thing of the past

1) It has been replaced by this overwhelming feeling – **We are never going to make it**

C)Problem here is a MISPLACED CONFIDENCE

V.10 in the NASB **Yet there is much rubbish; And we ourselves are unable To rebuild the wall."**

This task was never SOLEY up to them –

A)Just like any rebuilding project that we are involved in is not solely up to us

B) This act of rebuilding the wall was going to be a God thing/ God partnering with his people –

1) Same true for us

C) Ephesians 6 - Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might

2 Chronicles 16:9 ⁹For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him.

D) Strong on behalf of loyal yielded hearts!!!

O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places.

The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people. Psalm 68:35

E) The eyes of the people were focused in the rubbish and what was left to be done - instead of on the Lord

1) So they were discouraged

The 4th Reason for their discouragement is really the result of the first 3 - FEAR- They were afraid.

11 And our adversaries said, "They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease."

12 So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us **ten times**, "From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us."

Their hearts are filled with fear because of the threats.

A) Alan Redpath said that fear is the greatest enemy of our faith!

B) Fear has a way of crippling us – fear happens when we are focusing on the threats of the enemy – they said it ten times

1) Instead of focusing on the truths of God's word

The Bible says: 2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

C) Fear is not from the Lord.

What are some things that men fear the most - good group discussion - tonight

A) Ideas: Fear Failure - so they don't take steps of faith - they don't try.

B) Men fear that they are not enough - put way too much pressure on ourselves

C) Fear that we are not going to be able to provide

Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? NKJV

For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5

²⁰ And David said to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and do *it*; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God—my God—*will be* with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD." 1 Chronicles 28:20

So the People were discouraged - how does Nehemiah help them get past the discouragement? 4 things

A) #1 Strategic positioning V.13 -

13 Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

B) The builders had been scattered all over Jerusalem working on the wall –

1) but this time Nehemiah stationed them w/ their families

C) He knew they would fight the hardest for their families

1) Area of interest – Seeing their families – Motivation

D) In our battle with discouragement we have to learn to position ourselves to see things the right way

#2 Strategic Focus - He exhorted them to put their focus on the Lord v.14a 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,

A) They were too busy looking at the rubbish – they needed to get their eyes off of the rubbish and get it on the Lord

Aa) **Off of the greatness of the TASK & onto the greatness of their GOD!**

B) David marched out into the Valley of Elah – not seeing a Giant Champion warrior

1) Some big dude that was defying the name of HIS AWESOME GOD!

C) **Get your eyes off of yourself – off of the obstacles and on to God! -**

1) Now every time – what do you want to do!

D) **BARNHOUSE – BIG GODDER**

The greatness of God is what Kept Nehemiah going!

A) 1:5 ⁵ And I said: “I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God,

B) Here in Ch.4:14 - *Remember the Lord, great and awesome,*

C) Chapter 8 Ezra is on the scene now – They are having a Bible Conference. –

Nehemiah 8:6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, **the great God.** Then all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands.

Lifting their hands:

A) I don’t know where we got this practice of folding our hands when we pray. –

B) Not anywhere in the Bible: Actually it is an Oriental custom–

1) how they pray in the Orient - Fold their hands

C) Jewish people prayed with their arms lifted because they were EXPECTING TO get something

1) Bring it on Lord

We don’t expect to get anything – so we go like this (Fold hands)

A) The Lord couldn’t squeeze a blessing in there!

Daniel 11:32 **the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.**

B) Key phrase is **THEY KNOW THEIR GOD!**

C) People who believe in **a Big God** – pray with expectation.

The 2nd part of that strategic FOCUS was he reminded them of what they were fighting for v.14b- Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses." **What is at stake?**

A) If there was ever a fitting word for this generation in the Church it is this one – **Fight for your families**

B) Families are under attack - Stats are incredible - how well a family does when dad is leading

C) Studies show that, without a father, children are:

- At an increased risk for sexual abuse
- 2 to 3 times more likely to use drugs
- Twice as likely to drop out of school
- 2 to 3 times more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems
- More than twice as likely to be incarcerated

D) **When Fathers are involved in their kids’ lives**

- Children have more confidence
- Children do better in school
- Children are more emotionally stable
- Children have more respect for others
- Children are less likely to be victims of abuse

D) In a 26-year-long study, researchers found that the number one factor in developing empathy in children was father involvement.

E) Fathers spending regular time alone with their children translated into children who became compassionate adults

F) We need to fight for our families –

Strategic positioning / strategic Focus

#3 Strategic Working - Remember that Building & Battling go hand in Hand

15 And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.

A)Note that last line again: all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.

B) This was the victory. Defending against the attack was not a victory;

1)Getting on with the work was the victory.

C)When we are under spiritual attack it is easy to feel that just enduring the storm is the victory.

1)Or not caving into the discouragement is the victory

D)It is only part of it - The attack is meant to prevent progress and from engaging in the work

E)So Victory is not enduring the attack but it is continuing the progress and work for the LORD.

16 So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah.

Half worked - the other half stood guard -

A)This could have slowed down the work but in actuality it allowed those who were working to work undistracted knowing - their bros had their back

When the Golden Gate Bridge was completed in 1937, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world.

A)During the first phase of the building of the bridge project 23 men fell to their deaths in the icy water.

B)The Builders made an adjustment They reorganized and built the largest net ever made,

1)and attached it under the area where the men were working.

C)Was it worth the cost and the time it took to do this?

D)Ask the ten men who fell into it without being injured!

E)Not only did it save those ten lives, the work was completed in three-fourths the time because the workers no longer lived in fear of falling.

Knowing other guys got your back - is Huge

A)Cohort - praying

B)Knowing you have other guys in your corner is monumental to spiritual growth and victory

17 Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon.

18 Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

A)Nehemiah combines the work with the war!

B)Reminder - when we are building - we never stop battling

C)Each man goes to work with an instrument in one hand for labor and a sword in the other for battle. 1)So he is ready for either.

Charles Spurgeon, the great English preacher of the last century, published a newspaper in his church, called: The Sword and the Trowel.

A)The name was clearly derived from Nehemiah.

B)Spurgeon said that Christians should always be building the kingdom of God,

1)but be ready for battle at any time.

C)Building in The kingdom of God includes both a sword and a trowel,

1)a sword to come against every spiritual force of wickedness in high places,

D)and a trowel to do the work of building up the people of God.

E)Verses 19-23 further illustrate this wonderful blending of faith and preparation.

19 Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall.

20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

21 So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared.

22 At the same time I also said to the people, "Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day." 23 So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed

me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.

Some are working by day
Others are guarding by night -

#4 Strategic gatherings - Have a rallying point V20 – Church is – the Cross!

A)Accountability

20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

B)Guys we are not in this battle alone - we need a band of brothers to fight with us.

C)I met last week with a guy in our church and he was telling me about - this men's group he is in
1)Every Tuesday night - Study the word together - talk share -

D)He is one of the youngest guys in the group - We talk about everything -
1)They know everything about me - struggles/
PRAY

Our Sunday night men's study.

A)Talking to another guy last week - in his 40's he mentioned he and one of his friends - youngest

B)All the other guys are in their 70-80's - I love it
Great guys - great time

C)Something to be said about being around seasoned guys strong in the Lord

I know other guys in our church that like to get together - play poker - cards - Cigars - beers

A)It is their way of unwinding - check out - relax
Nothing terribly wrong with any of that

B)But my question is this: Could that time be better spent building each other up

C)All things are lawful - but all things are not expedient - they don't do build up.

Youth Pastor Bachelor party pranks

A)No different from the world - except -not getting drunk and going to strip clubs

B)What example are you setting for the young guys in our church.

C)Do something that is not only going to leave a memory but also leave a spiritual IMPACT

We all need RALLYING POINTS -

A)You call they come

B)Guys who would get on planes - be here tomorrow if I needed them

C)Who are those guys in your life - take imitative - get a group together

PRAY