

## Defeating Discouragement

Nehemiah 4:1-23

*"Home, home on the range; where the deer & the antelope play. Where seldom is heard a discouraging word, and the sky's are not cloudy all day."*

Discouragement is one of Satan's most effective weapons. We need to know how to defeat it.

You may be discouraged right now because of something going on in your life  
health crisis, marriage problems, parental difficulties, financial issues, career crisis

I read - 1000 pastors/yr leave ministry in Southern Baptist Convention denomination

= 20 pastors/wk - number one reason is discouragement -

In Seminary we were told never make a major decision on Mondays (Mondays follow Sunday)

We all are discouraged from time to time - things happen and we're disheartened, defeated, feel like giving up

A word of encouragement:

The more we try to live for the Lord, the more we'll have to battle discouragement because it is the Devil's choice weapon.

So, if you're feeling discouraged today - PRAISE THE LORD!

Bible - *"Do not be discouraged" NT - do not be "weary," "faint," "lose heart," "give up," "dismayed"*

Ga 6:9 *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

This morning we want to look at Nehemiah chapter 4 where we will find the reasons for discouragement and the remedy for discouragement.

### **The Reasons for Discouragement**

586 B.C. Babylonians conquered Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, capital city - took key people into exile.

Neh 1:3 *The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."*

By the time of Nehemiah, city had been in ruins for 100 yrs

Permission from Persian king to oversee the rebuilding of wall around city - wall essential for protection

As they were building, each day the workers became more & more discouraged

Ne 4:10 *Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall."*

Neh 4 - Three reasons for discouragement

### **1. Fatigue causes discouragement**

*"The strength of the laborers is giving out,"* Fatigue - when our strength gives out.

- #1 cause of discouragement - physical exhaustion.

When I say to my wife, "I'm feeling kind of discouraged today," her first reaction is, "You're tired. Take a nap."

Take naps is a great idea. The concept of siestas around the world - except here.

*"If you burn the candle at both ends, you aren't as bright as you think you are, and you will get burned in the end."*

We can't be spiritually and emotionally high if we are physically low - fatigued

Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is take some time off, go on vacation, relax, get some rest  
God's directive - day of rest (time off, vacation)

### **2. Frustration causes discouragement**

Israelites were discouraged because *"...there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall."* Vs. 10

No heavy equipment to move tons of rubble (3 miles, 16 - 49 ft. high)

There was actually less - Ne 4:6 (They) *rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height,*

Most discouraging part of any project is when it's half finished - excited to start, fatigued halfway

We begin focusing on problem rather than the purpose = discouragement  
Instead of focusing on what's already been accomplished and the purpose  
they only see the rubble - frustration causes them to lose their vision and purpose  
*Pr 29:18 "Where there is no vision, the people perish."*  
We have been giving you glimpses of our vision for our church - June 27 lay out full vision

### 3. Fear causes discouragement

Israelites afraid - enemies threaten to sneak in and kill them (11,12) could be attacked at any time.

In Abidjan our home broken into 3 times - easy to be afraid (got dog, hired night guard)  
Israelite's neighbors kept saying, "We're going to drop in unannounced and kill you." Scared and discouraged

Often negative, critical comments create discouragement because they cause fear of failure.

- We all get it, pastor's included
- If we are trying to do something for the Lord, people try to discourage us - Satan uses that all the time

Joshua & Israelites conquering Jericho - walk around 6 days. 7<sup>th</sup> day walk around 7 times.

*Jos 6:10 "But Joshua had commanded the people, "Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout."*

Why? It would only take one critic to discourage them all.

One person, "This is really stupid." Negative spirit passes. "Yeah, this is crazy, this isn't doing anything!"

No one talks - always one critic

- Stay away from negative people - Churches often have 2 or 3 chronic critics who spread negativism.

### SO WHAT?

**The Remedy of Discouragement** (Doing 3 things)

#### 1. Continue with a new approach

*Ne 4:13 Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.*

Didn't give up or lose vision - did something different to accomplish

"Only a fool does the same thing the same way and expects a different result."

- first reaction - quit, walk away

Nehemiah wants a different result so he uses a different approach.

You'll see us doing that here at the church. As we set out our vision that God has given

- if we aren't getting results, we'll change the approach, try something new, something different

Many people drop out of college, walk away from marriages, or quit their jobs because discouraged

- it becomes easy to get into habit of quitting

Nehemiah doesn't give up, tries new approach

- set up guards by families groups around the wall - support group - they encourage one another

One of the main functions of the church - *encouragement*

*Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.*

- Don't give up education, try diff study method.

- Don't give up on marriage, try date night or counseling.

- Don't quit job, take vacation and come back renewed.

- Don't give up on your business, try a different marketing strategy.

Our church - continue with a new approach

## 2. Concentrate on the Lord

Nehemiah understood this

Neh 4:14 *"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."*

What does that mean, to "remember the Lord?"

### a. Remember God's promises

La 3:22 *Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.*

### b. Remember God's presence

We get discouraged often because we feel all alone

"No body loves me, everybody hates me, I'm going to go eat worms."

De 31:8 *The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."*

Mt 28:19,20 *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, ...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

### c. Remember God's power

Neh 4:14 *Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome.*

Lu 1:37 *For nothing is impossible with God."*

Jos 1:9 *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."*

God told Israelites to set up alters to remember what He has done

- My call to my wife
- My call to the mission field
- My call to this church

Anytime I get discouraged, I can think of Nehemiah 4:14, *Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome.*

## 3. Carry someone else's burden

Ne 4:21,22 *So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. At that time I also said to the people, "Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and workmen by day."*

People living outside of Jerusalem, asked to come inside for support and help and encouragement and safety.

Discouragement tends to cut us off from people. Pity party. Selfish. Focused on our own problems.

Someone once said, "Our own burdens become lighter when we help carry someone else's."

- God's design. Not logical.

If we want to be encouraged when we're discouraged, remember what Paul said.

Ga 6:2 *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

How does that work?

When we carry someone else's burden,

- they will be encouraged
- we will be encouraged by taking focus off our problems.

Jas 4:7 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

Spiritual battle - resist Satan - If discouragement is one of his greatest weapon - refuse it. Fight against it.

Ro 8:37 *In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*