

Message Notes

PREVAIL: The Story of Nehemiah

Part 4: Staying the Course

Nehemiah 4:1-20

June 3/4, 2017

Pastor Daniel Hahn

The Obstacles Presented —

- Unjustified criticism (4:1-3)
- Unrelenting attacks (4:6-8)

“One of the heaviest prices anyone in leadership must pay is being misunderstood ... blamed for doing what is right. Those hours of lonely anguish. The leader must be one who, while welcoming the friendship and support of all who can offer it, must have sufficient inner resources to stand alone, even in the face of fierce opposition, in the discharge of his responsibilities. He or she must be prepared to have ‘no one but God.’” -- J Oswald Sanders, Spiritual Leadership

- Unraveling hope (4:10)
- Unnerving threats (4:11-12)

How do we stay the course when problems seem insurmountable?

1. “Hear us, O our God, for we are despised” (4:4-5).
Assess your situation honestly, and bring your pain directly to the Lord.
2. “...we posted a guard day and night to meet this threat” (4:9).
Change what God has put within your power to change.

“Brick walls that seem impossible to get over, are there for a reason. They’re there to keep everyone else out...except for those who want to get passed them bad enough. They give us the chance to show how badly we want something.” -- Randy Pausch, The Last Lecture

3. “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome...” (4:14).

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? ²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. ²⁹ He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. ³⁰ Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; ³¹ but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. -- Isaiah 40:27-31 (NIV)

Refocus your attention back on God’s ultimate strength to handle anything.

4. “Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there” (4:19-20).
Stay connected within a close-knit community of God’s people.

Discussion Questions

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1. Share anything that really impacted you from last weekend's message on Nehemiah.
2. Spend a little time reading and commenting on Psalm 62. How does this psalm expand on the picture of God's faithfulness in the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem?
3. Sanballat and Tobiah criticize and mock the Israelites. Why are they unhappy about the rebuilding of the wall? What do they hope to accomplish with their criticism?
4. Nehemiah responds to their criticism with a strongly worded prayer in 4:4-5. What do you think of his prayer? Does it seem harsh? Why or why not?
5. What emotions or feelings would be natural in the midst of the opposition that surrounded the Israelites?
6. Think of a time when someone criticized you for doing good. How did you respond? What does our response toward criticism reveal about our fears?
7. When Sanballat and Tobiah begin plotting an attack, what two actions do the builders take in response (4:9)? Why are both important?
8. The Israelites in the surrounding areas hear rumors of attack when the wall is only halfway done. How would you characterize their state of mind (4:10-12)?
9. Nehemiah gives three commands to the people in 4:14. What are they? Why does he give these three specific commands?
10. While physical harm might not be our imminent threat, there is a very real threat against our souls every day. What are some of the daily battles you fight and how might you need the Lord's help in them?