

REBUILDING A LIFE FOR GOD - Studies In Nehemiah - Part six
Sunday, October 15th, 2023, 5:30 p.m.
Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

THE WAY OF GOD IN DISCOURAGING TIMES

Nehemiah 4:10-23 - “In Judah it was said, “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.” [11] And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.” [12] At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.” [13] So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. [14] And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.” [15] When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. [16] From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, [17] who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. [18] And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. [19] And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. [20] In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.” [21] So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out.”

[22]“I also said to the people at that time, “Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.” [23] So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand.”

Notice the contrast between **verse 6** and **verse 10**:

Nehemiah 4:6 - “So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.”

Nehemiah 4:10 - “In Judah it was said, “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.”

Now, there’s quite a difference in attitude described in those two verses, “**the people had a mind to work (6)**,” and “**the strength of those who bear the burden is failing....by we ourselves we are not able to rebuild the wall”(10)**. Something begins to happen in the hearts of this group of people as they rebuild their wall, and ***as they rebuild their lives.***

Actually, the text says several things happened at once:

1) **FIRST, THERE WAS A LOSS OF STRENGTH**

Nehemiah 4:10 - “The strength of those who bear the burden is failing”

Notice that their strength was failing at a particular time - **verse 6** -
“**....all the wall was joined together to half its height....**”

Don't rush over that sentence. There's a certain point at which spiritual labour is exactly like any other labour. In any task there comes a particular point where you are more prone to fatigue - **to loss of strength** - than you will be at any other point.

There is a certain type of weariness - frustration - that sets into anything you do when it's only **half way completed**. The enemy knows this. This is the best time to orchestrate set backs, to arrange opposition, to try to wear you down.

When you're half way done, **you're far enough into the project that the initial thrill is worn off**, yet, **not quite far enough down the road to see the end in sight**. That's the toughest part of the whole task. The middle stretch is the discipline stretch. It's the lack of motivation stretch. It's the thrill-less stretch. It's **away from the crowds at the starting gate, but not within the cheers of the finish line**.

Listen, it's important that we understand this stretch of the rebuilding process. It's important that we know how to run this leg of the race because that's where much of our race for the Lord has to be run.

There are so many every day illustrations of this ***middle of the race*** principle. When does a new car lose its “newness”? About half way before it’s paid for. It’s not as exciting as when you first drove it into your driveway. It doesn’t have that “new car smell.” It may have some dents in the door from being parked at the mall. But it still has to be paid for.

Perhaps you’ve done some ***redecorating***. I suppose for some it’s exciting to shop and read the magazines. It’s fun to plan and organize and picture what it’s all going to look like when it’s done. But it’s a pain in the neck when the house is a mess. You can’t eat in your half-renovated kitchen. Dust gets into all the carpets and furniture.

Or what about that fun filled trip with the kids? It’s fun to get the maps out. Fun to talk about the hotels or swimming pools. Great to have that first meal on the road in a nice restaurant. But after a couple of days on the road, you know what you’re going to hear from the back seat - ***“Are we almost there yet?”***

No doubt about it. Half way through anything is a discouraging time. It’s when we usually ***become aware of our loss of strength***. Almost any task is larger than you anticipated at first. Mid-way is the point where we discover this.

2) **THERE WAS ALSO A LOSS OF VISION**

Nehemiah 4:10 - “In Judah it was said, “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.”

Your heart goes out to these dear people. Can't you hear their voices? ***“There's so much rubbish! There's nothing but rubbish!*** There's as much rubble now as there was months ago when we started building. ***In fact, I don't think we're getting anywhere!”***

I can relate to that. Do you ever see so much rubble in your life that you don't think you're getting anywhere? Do you ever start to think that you will never complete any of the things God wants you to get done?

At the beginning of the rebuilding project, the people had a mind to work (**verse 6**). They were excited about getting at the task. ***They pictured the walls - big strong walls - firmly in place.***

But something has happened since that great start. The text makes it very clear that there was a constant bombardment of opposition. Their enemies had sown thoughts in their minds like ***maggots in a grapefruit.***

Look at verse 12 - “**At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, ‘You must return to us.’”**

Ten times over! I mean, talk about spiritual nagging! Never miss the plan of the enemy. Whether these predicted attacks even actually came upon these Jewish rebuilders or not (really they never did in Nehemiah’s case), that constant nattering of threats is designed to keep you from thinking about the ***completed wall***. It’s the enemy’s plan to take the confidence - the heart and soul - out of your walk with God. ***Never let him do that to you.***

And you can see the effect this had on the Jewish workers - verse 10 - “**In Judah it was said, ‘The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.’”**

“We will not be able to rebuild the wall!” Now really, there was absolutely no reason for them to say that. ***They had already finished half of it.*** They could have easily looked at the wall, half of its full height, extending fully around the entire city of Jerusalem. They could have seen that they ***were*** making progress. The task wasn’t impossible. They ***had already*** finished much of the work.

There is such an important lesson here. If you listen to every argument, if you entertain every complaint, if you second guess the whole task every time a doubt rises in your soul, not only will you be more likely to give up and quit - ***you will not even be able to see any of the progress you have already made.***

And that kind of spiritual blindness is very damaging precisely because it's ***seeing the progress already made that gives you increased faith in the goodness and promise of God for the work that still remains to be done.***

Look at verses 11 and 12 again: “**And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.” [12] At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.”**”

Do you see the message? ***“No matter what you do, it's not going to work!” Ten times that was said!*** I know that there are lots of unrealistic spiritual deceptions in Christ's church. And I know there are lots of unscriptural distortions about faith and prosperity present in the church today as well. But all that aside, there is still something positive and important from God's Word for us to hear today:

Hebrews 11:6 - “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

God is a rewarder. And please notice that holding that conviction is an absolute requirement for people of the faith. You not only have to believe in God’s ***existence***. You must believe He is a ***rewarder***. I take that to mean if you don’t hold on to the conviction that God is a rewarder, you might as well not believe in Him at all. Such a faith will do you no good.

But ***why?*** Why is the faith that God is a rewarder so vigorously commanded. Why ***“must”*** we hold on to this conviction? And the answer to that is one of the most fundamental and important principles you can learn. You ***“must”*** (as the writer of Hebrews insists) cling to the belief that God is a rewarder because He doesn’t always ***appear*** to be a rewarder.

That’s what faith is all about in the first place. If we always had immediate ***proof*** that God is a rewarder faith wouldn’t be necessary or even possible.

This conviction is the **essence** of faith in God. You have to hold on to certain truths about Him. One of the truths essential to a walk of faith is that ***our God is a good God. He loves to reward those who seek Him.*** He ***is*** out to bless your life.

I don't care what the circumstances of your life seem to be screaming at you right now. I don't care about all the voices that would tell you otherwise. If you are sincerely seeking God - if you are honestly desiring to walk in His ways - ***He is out to reward your life!*** My Bible tells me so. ***Always factor God's faithfulness and reward into the future of your circumstances.***