

Title: Surviving Surrender: Persevering Through Opposition in the Christian Walk

Sermon Summary: Drawing from Nehemiah chapter 4, this sermon addresses the reality of spiritual opposition and tribulation that accompanies the Christian life. The speaker argues that the church has done a thorough job communicating the benefits of salvation but has fallen short in preparing new believers for the warfare and trials that follow their commitment to Christ. Using Nehemiah's mission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem as a framework, the sermon explores how God-ordained assignments will inevitably attract opposition, how God's compassion ultimately overcomes his wrath, and how believers must be spiritually prepared for threats that arise even in seasons that appear safe or favorable. The sermon also draws on the speaker's personal campus ministry experience and childhood memories to illustrate these truths in relatable terms.

Key Points:

- The church has not adequately warned new believers about the spiritual warfare and tribulation that accompany salvation, leading many to fall away when trials arise
- Discipleship is described as God's retention strategy, the means by which God keeps people grounded in the kingdom after their initial commitment
- Just as Nehemiah was in a position of comfort and favor before being called to a difficult assignment, believers are often called out of comfortable circumstances to serve others who are struggling
- God allowed Jerusalem's walls to be destroyed as a consequence of sin, but then turned his compassion back to the people by sending Nehemiah to rebuild, demonstrating that God's wrath is temporary
- If a believer's anger or bitterness toward others outlasts God's own wrath, they have stepped outside of God's will and taken up their own
- A faith or calling that is not tested is a faith or calling that is not proven; opposition is a sign that one is genuinely operating in God's will
- Nehemiah's encounter with those who opposed his God-given mission illustrates the reality that any true kingdom assignment will face resistance

Scripture Reference:

- Nehemiah 4:12-15, which describes Nehemiah stationing guards along the wall, encouraging the people not to fear their enemies, and God frustrating the plot of those who opposed the rebuilding effort

Stories:

- The speaker recounts growing up on Best Road in Bethune, South Carolina, where his grandmother warned the children to come inside before dark because foxes came out at night; while hunting one day, a family member fired a shot in front of the speaker's foot to stop him from stepping on a snake, illustrating how one can become so focused on known dangers in the dark that they fail to recognize threats in what appears to be the light
- The speaker describes his campus ministry at Winthrop University, where thirty young adults gave their lives to Christ through Bible studies, leading to the creation of new life sessions that walk new and rededicated believers through the foundational truths of salvation

- The biblical narrative of Nehemiah serving as cupbearer to the king, receiving resources and permission to return to Jerusalem, and then encountering opposition as he worked to rebuild the wall is used as the central illustrative framework throughout the sermon
- The book of Jeremiah is referenced as chronological context, noting that God warned Jerusalem through Jeremiah of the coming destruction as a consequence of sin before Nehemiah was later sent to rebuild