

Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions: Beating Burnout Part 2 - Nehemiah 4

Describe a situation you experienced where you wanted to quit but had to persevere.

Share about a time when you failed to finish an important project or task. What distracted you from completing the task?

When Nehemiah learned that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates were destroyed, he didn't give up; he prayed. When they were half finished and faced opposition, he didn't quit; he kept following God's lead. Nehemiah demonstrated godly perseverance by responding to difficulty with faith and action.

The enemy's fourfold attack to quit

1. 1/2 finished attack point.

The people were half through with the wall in Nehemiah 4. At this point they experienced new opposition. Why is it so tempting to quit something when we are half finished? Why is this often a time of vulnerability? When have you been tempted to quit, halfway through?

2. The external attack point.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ NEHEMIAH 4:1-5.

What was Sanballat's intention in ridiculing Nehemiah and the Jews who were rebuilding Jerusalem's wall? How do you typically respond to criticism, even if you are pursuing something you know God has called you to do?

We might say we don't care what other people think about our work and service to the Lord, but negativity and opposition weighs on us and tempts us to quit. Sanballat's questions were pointed. By calling them pathetic, he meant to make the Jews wonder if the job might be too big for them. By asking if they could restore it by themselves, and Tobiah's evaluation that a fox would break it down, Nehemiah and the Jews would face doubts about the wisdom of their project. By asking if they would offer sacrifices, Sanballat meant to cause them to wonder if God was behind them and if He would answer their prayers. By asking if they could bring the stones back to life, the Jews might wonder if the materials they were working with were strong enough.

When have you experienced an external attack when attempting something you knew God had called you to?

3. The internal attack point.

The external attack can lead to an even greater internal attack. This can lead to doubt, worry, and discouragement. Discouragement can spread and infect a whole people. Read vs 10-12

What questions tend to get your attention and cause doubts when you face difficulty in the tasks God has called you to do? When have you seen negativity and doubt spread and affect a whole group of people?

4. The attack of confusing purpose.

Nehemiah's resolve only angered the opposition. Their final attempt was to confuse the people's purpose. **It doesn't explain in the text exactly how the enemy did this, but how do you think the enemy attempts to confuse our purposes today?**

A threefold response to attack

1. Look up.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ NEHEMIAH 4:6-9.

What effect did Nehemiah's prayer have on his own people?

Do you think the people would have continued without the strength they found in prayer? In the encouragement they found together in community?

2. Look around.

What did the Jews do in addition to prayer (v. 9, 13-15)? Think about a situation you're needing to endure currently. In addition to prayer, what precautions, or practical steps, can you take to guard yourself against attacks that might otherwise cause you to give up? How did they depend on God and depend on one another during this time? How have you found Christian community to be a vital component in maintaining the will to keep working?

Nehemiah and his team trusted in God for ultimate deliverance, but they also used their God-given minds to take reasonable precautions against attack. They recognized the opposition and stationed a guard day and night. If we are going to persevere through opposition, we must take similar steps and rely on one another for strength and support.

3. Look down.

Eventually they just had to go back to hard work for the Lord.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ NEHEMIAH 4:13-21.

Serving God requires a time for rest, and a time for hard work. What in these scriptures show the people's determination towards hard work?

APPLICATION

How can this group help you demonstrate godly perseverance, responding to your difficulties with faith and action? How might this type of response to hardship give you the opportunity to share the gospel with others?