

November 3 & 4, 2018



## Perseverance

### Perseverance in the face of external opposition

#### 1. The enemy mocked and ridiculed the builders.

*Nehemiah 2:19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us . . .*

*Nehemiah 4:1 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, 2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble — burned as they are?"*

*3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building — if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!"*

#### 2. The enemy accused the builders of rebellion.

*Nehemiah 2:19 ... "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?"*

#### 3. The enemy planned an attack on the builders.

*Nehemiah 4:7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs*

*to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. 8 They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.*

*9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.*

#### 4. The enemies plotted to assassinate Nehemiah.

*Nehemiah 6:1 When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it — though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates— 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono."*

*But they were scheming to harm me; 3 so I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?" 4 Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.*

#### 5. The enemy planted fake news against the builders.

*Nehemiah 6:12 I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.*

### Perseverance in the face of internal dissension

*Nehemiah 6:17 Also, in those days the nobles of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah and replies from Tobiah kept coming to them. 18 For many in Judah were under oath to him, since he was son-in-law to Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of*

*Meshullam son of Berekiah. 19 Moreover, they kept reporting to me his good deeds and then telling him what I said. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.*

1. The dissenters had unauthorized contact with the enemy.
2. The dissenters advocated on behalf of the enemy.
3. The dissenters provided unauthorized assistance to the enemy.

*Nehemiah 13:4 Before this, Eliashib the priest had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was closely associated with Tobiah, 5 and he had provided him with a large room formerly used to store the grain offerings and incense and temple articles, and also the tithes of grain, new wine and oil prescribed . . .*

*6 But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king . . .*

4. The dissenters discouraged the builders.

*Nehemiah 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."*

*11 Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work."*

*12 Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."*

5. The wealthy were exploiting the poor.

*Nehemiah 5:1 Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers. 2 Some were*

*saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain."*

*3 Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine."*

*4 Still others were saying, "We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. 5 Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others."*

*Nehemiah 5:19 Remember me with favor, O my God, for all I have done for these people.*

### Timeless Lessons

1. God's work always faces opposition.
2. God's work always faces dissention.
3. Perseverance comes from praying.

*Nehemiah 4:4 Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.*

*Nehemiah 4:7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. 8 They all plotted*

*together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.*

*9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.*

*Nehemiah 6:9 They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed."*

*[But I prayed,] "Now strengthen my hands."*

#### 4. Perseverance comes from preparation.

*Nehemiah 4:9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat*

*Nehemiah 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.*

*14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "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."*

*15 When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work.*

*16 From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah 17 who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, 18 and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked . . .*

## Discussion Questions

### Icebreaker:

1. If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?

### Digging Deeper

1. Did God reveal something in your life that needs restored? Please share with your group.
2. Identify who opposed Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall.
3. If you were facing this kind of opposition what feelings or emotions would be natural to experience? Which responses reveal a fear of man and which reveal you are trusting the Lord?
4. The enemy planned an attack on the builders, which easily could have caused the people to fear. What is often your first response to fear? What does your response say about where you place your confidence?
5. Opposition came from outside and inside Jerusalem. Does your response change depending on where the opposition comes from? Please share.
6. We are challenged each week to change our world. Have you experienced opposition as you live out your faith? Describe what happened.
7. Nehemiah prayed and prepared when faced with opposition. Which of these is your natural response when faced with opposition?

### Live It Out

1. Where in your life do you need to persevere in order to restore what is broken? How can you use the lessons from

Nehemiah of prayer and preparation to determine your next step?