

“Defeating Discouragement (Nehemiah, Part 4)”

Text: Nehemiah 4:1-23

As we come to Nehemiah 4 everything seems to be going wrong all at once. When God is at work the enemy is also at work. Satan stirs up agitators to block the work of God, and discouragement is a major weapon he uses in his attempts to neutralize Kingdom work. We can identify both some causes and cures for discouragement in this chapter.

One external cause of discouragement is **ridicule** (4:1-2). Someone has said that ridicule is the “*language of the devil*.” The enemy will laugh at, mock, attack and insult the servants of God. Whenever you attempt to get involved in the work of God you will always face ridicule. Expect it, and don’t ever stop working. A *second* cause of external discouragement is **the threat of destruction** (4:7-8). One commentator observed: “*God’s people sometimes have difficulty working together, but the people of the world have no problem uniting in opposition to the work of the Lord.*” Nehemiah’s workers were surrounded and lived in constant fear of being ambushed, which led to their discouragement.

Pressure from the outside can lead to depression on the inside. *One* cause of internal discouragement is **fatigue** (4:10). The workers were so tired they were staggering and stumbling. Nehemiah 4:6 says that this discouragement from fatigue came when the wall was *half-way* done. When you’re tired and discouraged you begin to think that you will never finish the job, so you start thinking about throwing in the towel and quitting. A *second* cause of internal discouragement is **frustration** (4:10). Nehemiah 4:10 says *there was so much rubbish that the workers were not able to build the wall*. They became discouraged because they were so aggravated with the situation. So, too, we can lose sight of our goal when we have too much *garbage* in our lives. *Another* internal cause of discouragement is **fear** (4:12). The enemies of the Lord’s work had struck fear in the hearts of God’s people, and they felt like giving up. Those most affected by fear were those who lived near to pessimistic people. However, so much of what we fear never comes to pass.

Nehemiah 4 shows us that discouragement is curable! The *first* cure for discouragement is to **request God’s help** (4:4-5, 9). Nehemiah knew that the enemies were really fighting against God, so he asked God to deal with them. Here’s a sound principle we can learn from Nehemiah: *when people talk against you, don’t talk back, talk to God*. A *second* cure for discouragement is to **reorganize your priorities** (4:13). A new situation requires a change in organization. Continue to adopt changes in your approach, as necessary. Don’t be overcome by discouragement—do something about it! A *third* thing we can do to defeat discouragement is to **remember who God is** (4:14, 20). Don’t forget God when life gets tough. Don’t be a *rubble-gazer* – be a *God-gazer*!

Discussion Guide/Action Steps

1. Expect enemy opposition in the work of God.

2. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is rest.
3. Get rid of anything that causes you to be frustrated in your pursuit of Godliness.
4. Limit the depressing thoughts that bring fear into your life by refusing to hang around with negative people.
5. Don't ever fail to ask God for his help.
6. What changes do you need to make in your approach to areas of your life that are causing you alarm?
7. Devise a system that will work for you so you can remember who God is.