

When You Feel Like Giving Up

Nehemiah 4:6, 10-14

“So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work...¹⁰ Then Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.”¹¹ And our adversaries said, “They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.”¹² So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, “From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us.”¹³ Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.¹⁴ And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”

The longer I preach and deal with people, the more I have come to believe that *discouragement is probably man's most deadly disease.* It is worse than Cancer, Alzheimer's, or AIDS because it is universal. Sooner or later everybody gets *discouraged.*

Some of you are discouraged this very night and you are ready to quit. Some of you may be ready to quit the *choir*, some of you may be ready to quit *teaching*, some of you may be ready to quit your *marriage*, some of you may be ready to quit *church*, some of you may be ready to quite your *job*, some of you may be ready to quit *school*, and some of you may be very close to being ready to quit *life*. *Discouragement is no respecter of persons.*

Not only is it universal but also it is highly contagious. If you are around somebody who is *discouraged* you can get *discouraged fairly quickly.*

But it is also curable. When speaking concerning baseball players, Bill Russell made this statement, "Winners never give up in a slump. They just keep on and ride it out." They ride out a slump. They just keep on going. What do you do when you feel like giving up? Life has its ups and downs. Everybody has their off days. Maybe you feel like you have had an off week or off month. You feel like giving up and you ask yourself is it worth it.

I think one of the reasons the book of Nehemiah is in the Bible is that it gives us the cures and the causes of discouragement. Verse 6 reads like this in the Hebrew, "At last the wall was completed to half its original height around the entire city, for the people had worked very hard." Nehemiah had led some Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Verse 10 says, "Then the people of Judah began to complain that the workers were becoming tired. There was so much rubble to be moved that we could never get it done by ourselves. Meanwhile our enemies were saying, Before they know what is happening, we will swoop down on them and kill them and end their work."

In this passage we have four causes of discouragement. They start - they got going on the project but they began to get the feelings of discouragement. Why? Four reasons:

1. The number one cause of discouragement is fatigue. Look at verse 10, "The strength of the laborers is giving out." We just wear out. They had worked a long time. They were physically exhausted. They were tired, weary, worn down. When you are physically down it is hard to be emotionally and spiritually up. My advice to a lot of people with discouragement is just to get some rest. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is just go to bed. Vince Lombardi said, "Fatigue makes cowards of all of us." That is true. It is amazing how much better things look just after a good night's sleep. Maybe you don't need to change anything. Maybe you just need a vacation.

Farmers rotate crops. They leave the land fallow. They actually rest portions of the land. Every farmer knows that land that has rested produces a greater harvest. You need periodic rest.

When does fatigue usually set in? When does discouragement set in? Verse 6 says, "So we rebuilt the wall until all of it reached half its height." Fatigue and discouragement comes at the midpoint. Everybody's got energy when you start. It is a new project, a new problem, and a new solution. But after awhile the newness of the project wears off. You get bored, tired and discouragement sets in.

When Linda and I bought our home, we needed to get a lot of work done in a very short period of time. One night we were painting our living room. I was doing pretty good until about half way through I realized, "I am tired." And I realized that I not only had to finish the room but I had to clean up afterwards. I started to get aggravated .

You climb a mountain and you get half way up to the top and turn around and look back. You see how far you have got to go back and you see how far it is yet to the top. You say, "Maybe it is not God's will I go to the top after all."

Fatigue comes at the midpoint, when they were half done. That is when discouragement sets in. That is why so many people never complete anything.

2. Another cause of discouragement is frustration. "... And there is so much rubble." He is talking about the litter, the debris, and the trash. Whenever you are in a building project there's rubble and trash. And it multiplies. These people were building the wall and there was broken bricks and broken mortar and all kinds of trash laying all around and it began to accumulate and it becomes frustrating. You have to walk over it. Have you ever tried to live in a house that you are remodeling at the same time? You know how frustrating that is!

Have you ever noticed that trash multiplies? Trash is like rabbits. It is over in the corner multiplying. **It just gets bigger and bigger.** If you do not clean it out periodically it becomes a barrier to your main goal and it will halt your progress.

You cannot avoid rubble but you have to be able to recognize it and know how to clean it out. Otherwise it keeps you from reaching your goal.

What is the rubble in your life? The rubble is the trivial things in your life that keep you from accomplishing your main goals. It may be television. **It may be a relationship.** It could be anything. It takes your time.

3. **Another cause of discouragement is failure.** Verse 10 says, "There is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." They are saying, "We should never even tried this project. It's ridiculous. Who are we to think we could ever finish this job?" They were unable to finish the wall in the time that they had set originally and they did not meet their original deadline and they got discouraged and gave up because they had failed. They were not able to finish the task as quickly as planned and the result was their confidence goes down the drain. **They lose heart.** They lose their enthusiasm. And they get discouraged.

4. **The fourth cause of discouragement is fear.** Verse 11 says, "Also our enemies said, 'Before they see us we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to their work.'"

The background of this story is there were some enemies who did not want the wall built. They were doing everything they could to keep the wall from being built. First they ridiculed the Jews, then they criticized the Jews, and finally they threatened the Jews, "We are going to kill you!"

Nobody likes to be criticized. And nobody likes to be afraid either.

Who gets afraid? Verse 12 says, "Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, 'Wherever you turn they will attack us.'" If you constantly live near negative people and you constantly listen to negative thoughts and complaining, you are going to be infected.

What fears are causing you to be discouraged tonight? Fear of embarrassment? Fear of failure? Fear that you have to be perfect? Fear that you can't handle the pressure?

1. **Rest your body.** The first thing Nehemiah did was he gave a little rest to everybody. When you read the whole chapter, Nehemiah actually proclaimed some holidays. It is amazing how much better, sometimes, things look after a good night's sleep.

Psalm 127:2 reads like this in the Living Bible, "God wants His loved ones to get their proper rest." **Some of you need to underline that, put it on your refrigerator.** The Bible says it is vain for you to rise up early, stay up late. Psalm 119:73 says, "You made my body, Lord, now give me sense to heed your laws." **Eat right, get your sleep, exercise, and relax.** Balance. Your rest is important to God. If you ignore it you are going to get discouraged.

2. **Recognize your life.** Verse 13 says, When Nehemiah saw the people got discouraged he says, "Therefore I station some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families with their swords, their spears and their bows."

Set some priorities. Make sure you have time for the things that are important -- God, family, church. Make sure those things are in gear and focus on that.

The Bible says Nehemiah grouped them by families. That is why we need church. Over and over in the Bible it says, "one another:" "serve one another," "love one another," "help one another," "care for

one another,” “pray for one another,” “greet one another,” “encourage one another.” Fifty times in the New Testament they use that phrase “one another” because we need support. **We need each other.**

3. Remember the Lord. Verse 14 says, “After I looked things over I stood up and said to the nobles and the officials and the rest of the people ‘Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome.’” **Typically when we get discouraged what has happened is we have gotten our eyes off the Lord and onto the problem.** Off of the **solution** and onto the **circumstances.** The Bible says when David got discouraged; he “encouraged himself in the Lord.”

What do you do? What do you need to remember when you are **discouraged?** There are three things you need to remember.

1. Remember God's goodness to you in the past. Start making a list of all the things that have been **good about life**, all of the things that have been **positive.** Make a list: “Count your many blessings, name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.” **Scientists say that the healthiest emotion you can have is gratitude.** You remember God's goodness to you in the past.

2. Remember God's closeness to you in the present. He is with you right now. Jesus says, “Lo, I am with you always. I will never leave you or forsake you.” **You are never without Christ.** Open up your eyes and see God's closeness in the present. There is no experience in life that you will ever go through that God does not go through with you. Recognize the fact that “I am not in this alone”. **Open your eyes.** He is with you right now.

3. Remember His power for the future. Over and over again, the Bible is full of promises that God says, “As your days are so shall your strength be. ... I will give you the power... I will help you.” Over and over, all these promises for strength are found in scripture. God promises in Isaiah 40:31, “I will help you. I will strengthen you. I will see you through this.”

Get your mind off the discouraging circumstance and get your mind on the Lord. Psalm 119:25 says, "I am completely discouraged. I lie in the dust. Revive me by ... " "... by television, ... by going to a good restaurant, by going on a shopping spree, ... by going to Tahiti." **No.** "... Revive me by your word." **If you want the quickest antidote to discouragement get in the Word.** Remember the Lord.

One of my favorite verses is Jonah 2:7. Jonah's at the bottom of the sea in the belly of a great fish and it says, "When I had lost all hope I once again turned my thoughts to the Lord."

4. Resist the discouragement. Nehemiah said, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord is great and awesome and fight for your brothers and your sons and your daughters and you wives and your home." **Don't give into discouragement without a fight.** Don't just roll over and play dead. **Resist it in the name of Jesus.** Resist the discouragement.