

**Preparing for Battle**  
**Nehemiah: Building Beyond Ourselves, Part 4**  
February 1<sup>st</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018

2 Corinthians 4:7-9 (NLT/Ph) “<sup>7</sup>We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves. <sup>8</sup>We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. <sup>9</sup>We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!”

God uses **IMPERFECT** people to reflect what God **CAN DO** in a person’s life

If you choose to follow Jesus, there will be **OPPOSITION** (this is especially true if you **LEAD**)

**The Presence of Opposition**

Nehemiah 4:1 (GN) “When Sanballat heard that we Jews had begun rebuilding the wall, he became furious and began to ridicule us.”

Change is a **THREAT** – especially change that leads to **PROGRESS** & **GROWTH**

Nehemiah 4:2-3 (NAS) “<sup>2</sup>He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, ‘What are these feeble Jews doing?’...Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him...”

Critics run with **CRITICS**

You must be able to measure the **VALUE OR WORTH** of criticism

Sometimes the best course of action is to **RESPOND** to criticism and **LEARN** from it (friendly criticism); at other times, it must be completely **IGNORED** (hostile criticism)

Proverbs 15:31 (NLT) “If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise.”

Nehemiah 4:3 (NAS) “Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him [Sanballat] and he said, ‘Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!’”

Tobiah’s mistake was not realizing “their stone wall” was actually God’s – sometimes people don’t stop to think they may be criticizing **GOD’S PROJECT**

Progress should not stop because a **FEW** are critical of the plan

**Facing Criticism Squarely**

Two significant things Nehemiah did in response to criticism: he **PRAYED** & he **PERSISTED**

Nehemiah 4:4-5 (GN) “<sup>4</sup>I prayed, ‘Hear how they make fun of us, O God! Let their ridicule fall on their own heads. Let them be robbed of everything they have, and let them be taken as prisoners to a foreign land. <sup>5</sup>Don’t forgive the evil they do and don’t forget their sins, for they have insulted us who are building.’” (*Remember this is hostile criticism*)

It’s okay to be **HONEST** with God – He **KNOWS** what you are thinking anyway!

1 Samuel 17:47 (NLT) “[David said before his fight with Goliath] And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues His people, but not with sword and spear. This is the LORD’s battle, and He will give you to us!”

Daniel 6:10 (NLT) “But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room,... He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.”

You are never more successful than when you are **PRAYING**

Proverbs 15:1 (NLT) “A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.”

If you want to stop an argument, **CLOSE** your **MOUTH**

Proverbs 15:28,29 (NLT) “The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words. <sup>29</sup>The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayers of the righteous.”

James 1:5 (NIV) “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

### ***The Need for Common Sense***

Nehemiah 4:6 (GN) “So we went on rebuilding the wall, and soon it was half its full height, because the people were eager to work.”

Critics **DEMORALIZE** – leaders **ENCOURAGE**

Nothing excites Satan or the critic more than for his negativism to result in a slowdown of **PROGRESS**

Nehemiah 4:7-8 (NIV) “<sup>7</sup>But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. <sup>8</sup>They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.”

When confronted with continued harassment, Nehemiah intensified his **PRAYER**

Nehemiah 4:9 (NIV) “But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.”

Nehemiah also took a **COMMON SENSE** approach – he took up arms

### ***Three Practical Truths to Apply to Your Life***

**1. It’s impossible to lead anyone without facing OPPOSITION**

**2. It is essential to face opposition in PRAYER**

**3. Prayer is not all that is necessary if opposition grows – use COMMON SENSE**

1 Samuel 19:10 (GN) “Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his spear, but David dodged, and the spear stuck in the wall. David ran away and escaped.”

### ***My Next Step Today Is:***

- I have been facing criticism that I need to listen to. I am asking God to help me do this
- I have been facing criticism I need to ignore. I am asking God not to let this criticism slow my progress
- I will pray that God will enable us to meet our 3 year goal to raise \$1.5 million toward our building

Next week: Join us next week as we explore “Staying Focused in Battle.” Bring a friend!

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