

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



NEHEMIAH

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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# Nehemiah

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# How to Turn Your Problems into Possibilities

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 10, 1978**

**Main Scripture Text: Nehemiah 1; 2:1–8**

*“And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.”*  
NEHEMIAH 2:8

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## Introduction

Be finding, please, the Book of Nehemiah. And we're beginning now a series through this book. I want us to notice what I consider to be the verse that sets the tone for the book, in Nehemiah chapter 2 and verse 20. We'll look at that verse; and then, we'll go back to chapter 1, verse 1, and begin there. But I love this verse. I believe it is so applicable to us today.

In Nehemiah chapter 2 and verse 20: *“Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build”* (Nehemiah 2:20). Don't you like that verse? *“The God of Heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build.”* We begin a new series, this morning,

entitled, “Together We Build.” And I want you to look now in Nehemiah chapter 1. Our message today is entitled this: “How to Turn Your Problems into Possibilities”—“How to Turn Your Problems into Possibilities.”

Anybody here ever have any problems? Oh, you do? Well, wonderful. Congratulations. Because, you see, a problem really is an opportunity in disguise. And you need to learn this: that God wants you to see your problems as potentialities, and your adversaries, really, as opportunities. *A Christian is not someone who sees a difficulty in every opportunity, but to the contrary, he’s one who sees an opportunity in every difficulty.* And that’s what we’re going to learn as we study together the Book of Nehemiah, under the general heading of “Together We Build,” and, today, particularly, “How to Turn Your Problems into Possibilities.”

Now let me give you a clue, as we study the Book of Nehemiah, or study any book of the Bible. If you want to understand it, and if you want to make the Bible come alive to you, ask these three questions. Number one: What did it mean then? You study it in its historical setting. What did it mean then? Number two: What does it mean now? Because, you see, you have to take it from yesterday and put it into today. What does it mean now? But you’re not finished yet. After you’ve asked what it meant then, and what it means now, ask the third question: What does it mean to me personally? Now if you’ll look at the Scripture that way—what it meant then, what it means now, and what it means to me personally—then the Bible will burst aflame in your hand, and it will become a very living and a very vital book to you.

We’re going to look at the Book of Nehemiah that way: what it meant then, what it means now, and what it means to us personally. Whether we, as a church, are going to try to turn a problem into a potentiality, or whether you, as an individual, are transforming your problems into potentiality, we’re going to see that God has a wonderful plan for us.

## **I. Visualize**

Now there are three steps in getting ready to do anything great and glorious in the name of Jesus, three steps in achieving our maximum potential. Number one: We call this to *visualize*, to *visualize*. I want you to notice here, in chapter 1, the first three verses: *“The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire”* (Nehemiah 1:1–3).

Now Nehemiah is in Persia, and he has seen certain brethren who have recently been in Jerusalem. And they had no television; they had no radio; they had no newspapers, as we know them. They had no telephones; and so, he's wanting some news. He said, "What is the city of God like? The people of God—what is their condition? I want to know. Tell it to me, so I can visualize it, so I can see it."

And they brought this report. They wept, I'm certain, as they said, "Oh, Nehemiah, you cannot believe the degradation. You cannot believe the desolation. You cannot believe the danger. You cannot believe the poverty. The city is in disarray. The gates have been burned with fire. The walls have crumbled. The streets are filled with weeds, and trash, and debris. The people are discouraged; the people are in poverty; the people are in hunger." And Nehemiah saw this: a city with walls that had crumbled. And you're going to find out that the Book of Nehemiah, a large part of the Book of Nehemiah, is the story of the rebuilding of these walls. And that's the reason I've chosen it, as we can preach together on this theme: "Together We Build."

Now these walls were literal walls in that day, but we're asking a question: not only, "What did it mean then?" but, "What does it mean today?" Because, you see, walls are also symbolical. Walls stand for protection. Walls are symbolic of separation. Walls speak to us of conservation. Walls spoke of the glory of God. Walls, in the Bible, and especially around the city of Jerusalem, had a symbolic meaning. They spoke of the glory of God; they spoke of the salvation of God; they spoke of the protection of God over His people. And the walls had fallen.

Now what does this mean to us today? Ladies and gentlemen, we too are called to rebuild some walls that are in decay. And I want you to think with me, for a moment, about some walls today that have fallen to the ground, some walls that are in disarray.

#### A. **Walls of National Security**

I think, for example, about the walls of national security. Are you listening? The walls of national security. We must face the grim fact that America is in danger. Now whether you like it or not, that is true. And you may think, this morning, that I am an alarmist before I'm finished, but I am grieved for America. I believe that America has a general trend, which is toward Sodom and Gomorrah. And I believe that the wrath of God is in the imminent foreground for America, unless we repent and get right with God. We are losing our freedom in America by degrees every day that we live, and freedom is like help: You must lose it, sometimes, in order for it to be appreciated.

John Philpot Curran said, in 1808, that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." But we have forgotten to be vigilant, for we have forgotten God. And what has been the result? You look around us. We have seen the collapse of morals; we have seen the disintegration of the home; we have seen the highest crime rate of all time, and the

bloodiest century in human history. This is the harvest that we've reaped, because we have forgotten God.

The communists are lurking in the shadows. It is their doctrine that they will take America without firing a shot. They believe that we will fall off into their hands like an over-ripe piece of fruit. And I want you to learn this about communism: Many of our young people are not learning in school and college the danger of communism. I want you to learn that communism, contrary to popular opinion, is not primarily a political party. It is not even an economic theory. It is a form of perverted religion. Karl Marx is the messiah. The Bible is *Das Kapital*. And it is a religion with a missionary emphasis. And the missionaries of communism are encircling the globe, preaching that there is no God. And they have to say this, because if they did not say this and did not preach this, every other plank in their platform would fall. Communism is godless.

You see, once you've done away with God, then man doesn't really matter anymore. Man is simply matter in motion. A human being is not someone made in the image of God; he is more of a glorified machine. And if he must be liquidated, he can be liquidated. And as I stand here this morning, thousands upon thousands of people are being slaughtered in Cambodia, right now, by the communists. I wonder where Jane Fonda is now. Communism is unspeakably immoral and murderous in all of her ways. And the communists feel that, one day soon, they're going to take over America. And if man is but an animal, why not treat him as so? And the communist strategy has been to ridicule our national leaders, corrupt our youth, and drain our natural resources.

Wilbur Schwartz says that the communist recipe for taking over America can be found in these words: "External encirclement plus internal demoralization plus thermo-nuclear blackmail equals progressive surrender." And that's exactly what we're doing: surrendering a day at a time, a step at a time, stepping backward, backward, backward, backward to communism. But what a lot of people don't understand is that communism is an idea. And you cannot kill an idea with a bullet. The only thing that will shoot down an idea is a better idea—and that better idea is not capitalism, but it is Christianity. And we need to be preaching and teaching the Lord Jesus Christ. And the only answer to militant godlessness is militant godliness. And what we need in America is a sweeping revival of the Christian religion. I'm talking about the old-time religion that made America the great nation that she is. But those walls are crumbling before our very eyes.

And you've heard this before, but they tell us that the average age of the average nation in civilization is 200 years. We've just passed our 200th birthday. And they tell us that nations decay, and the walls of national defense fall, in nine cycles. And here they are: number one, people go from bondage to spiritual faith; number two, from spiritual faith to courage; number three, from courage to liberty; number four, from liberty to abundance; number five, from abundance to selfishness; number six, from selfishness

to complacency; number seven, from complacency to apathy; number eight, from apathy to dependence; and, number nine, from dependence back again to bondage. And I believe we're somewhere, right now, between number seven and number nine. That's where we are. And the walls have crumbled. And I'm telling you, ladies and gentlemen, that it is time that some of us took our place along the walls and rebuilt the walls of defense that God wants us to have for our nation. And I'm not just simply talking about more armament. I'm talking about moral armament and spiritual defense.

### **B. Domestic Walls**

Now secondly, not only have national walls fallen, but domestic walls have fallen. We talk about being a disaster area. Parts of Whitehaven, because of the tornado being a disaster area... May I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, the American home today is a disaster area. In 1870, little more than 100 years ago, only 3% of our homes ended up in the divorce court. Today, in 1978, over 40% of our homes end in the divorce court: 40%—from 3% to 40%.

There is a militant war being waged against the home. The feminists today are anti-home, many of them. Let me read what one of them has written. And here is a leader of the feminist movement who has written in a declaration of feminism, "With the destruction of the nuclear family"—but, she means by the nuclear family, a family where there's a father and a mother and children living under one roof—"With the destruction of the nuclear family must come a new way of looking at children. They must be seen as the responsibility of the entire society rather than individual parents." They are saying, "We need to take your children, and teach your children, brainwash your children, indoctrinate your children to the new society, the new way of doing things."

Dr. Mary Jo Bane, another leader in the feminist movement, has written, "The fact that children are raised in families means there is no equality. It's a dilemma. In order to rear children with equality, we must take them away from families, and communally rear them. Divorce makes for a better family life." Now that's right. It would be laughable; but it's sad—it's sad. And the truth of the matter is these are not just a few people out here on the periphery. Here is a mighty, militant, dynamic movement in America.

### **C. Decency Walls**

But we need to visualize. We can't be like an ostrich with our heads in the sand. Walls of decency are decaying. Look what's happening to us. Pass the newsstand in the average corner drugstore, and pornography will stare you in the face as if a broken sewer line were overflowing in the newsstands. We have ceased to be shocked. And what used to amaze us, now, just simply amuses us. And what was horrible yesterday is acceptable today, and has become a stepping-stone for something worse tomorrow—if it can get worse.

And some of us believe that we've almost reached the bottom of the garbage pile, as we laugh and make jokes about the flaunting of God's holy commandment that says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (Exodus 20:14). We have accepted pornography in America like we have accepted taxes and hot dogs—pornography! Oh, people tell us, "Well, it doesn't make any difference. Pornography doesn't affect our children. Pornography doesn't affect our marriages." How foolish can you get? How stupid to say that pornography does not affect the mind!

Can a man go upon hot coals and his feet be not burned? Can a man take a fire in his bosom and be not burned? (Proverbs 6:27–28). Can a person feed on garbage and it not affect his health? They say that what the kids watch in the movies does not affect them. They say what the kids watch on television has no affect. If it has no affect, then, would you tell me please, sir, why industry and commerce spends millions and billions of dollars in advertising, if what people see has no affect on them? Would you tell me why that people will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for one minute of television time to tell about their product, if what they see has no affect on them?

And you cannot tell me that someone sitting there and watching some sex-saturated show for one hour is not going to be affected, if someone will pay \$100,000 for one minute. Of course, they are affected by what they see. As a matter of fact, what we see makes us what we are. It's the stimuli that come into our minds and into our beings. But I'm telling you that moral decency has decayed, and that wall has fallen.

Look, if you will, at the decency in our educational system. What's happened to our educational system? Why are students running wild? I'll tell you why. We have put prayer out of our schools. We put God out of our schools. And with the Bible out, and with God out, evolution is in, homosexuality is in, illicit sex is in, murderous abortion is in, venereal disease is in, and God is out.

Now I feel sorry for a school teacher who stands up and tells kids "You must do right," and, they say, "Teacher, what is right? And where do you get right from? Who says what is right? And who says what is wrong, unless there's a God in Heaven who does?" We've got to get back to God. How can we morally govern anybody, unless we come back to the moral foundations? The Bible says, "*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*" (Psalm 11:3).

In 1960, 150,000 high school girls went from the school desk to the maternity ward—150,000. By 1965 now, that 150,000 has changed to 1/4 of a million. And then, we continue until today over a million high school girls are becoming illegitimate mothers. One million. In just such a short time. And God only knows how many abortions are taking place. What's happening in America? We have forgotten God.

The liquor dealers are having their way. Beer is an acceptable thing. We can have gospel singing and a beer bust on our mall in our city at the same time and nobody

seems to know the difference. Everybody thinks that's wonderful. They forget to tell us, dear friend, that we have more alcoholics in America than we have dope addicts. Every twenty minutes someone is killed on the highways of America because of a drunken driver. We have more bar maids in the United States of America than we have college girls, and we have eleven saloons for every church. And we sing "God Bless America," why should He? Why should He unless we repent?

#### D. **Doctrine Walls**

I'm saying that the walls of decency have crumbled. Walls of doctrine have fallen. I believe with all of my heart there's not a lot wrong in America that could not be changed, if we had a generation of preachers who would stand in the pulpit and preach, "*Thus saith the LORD*" (Jeremiah 29:4). I believe that with all of my heart.

But we have many ministers who are preaching the gospel—and I thank God for them; but we have many who no longer believe that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God. And many times, the congregation doesn't know that, because they don't have enough courage to stand in front of people and say, "I no longer believe this book." And they're taking their salary under false pretenses. They ought to get out. They're cumbering the ground.

Liberalism is a parasite. It has no power to build. It doesn't build orphanages, and colleges, and churches. It is a parasite that crawls into institutions that have been built by Bible-believers. And I'm telling you that walls of doctrine and walls of theology have crumbled, and it is time that God's people started to rebuild them.

And I know what you're thinking now: "Brother Rogers, we must be tolerant. Certain things we must tolerate." Well, friend, if you keep on tolerating, before long, you will evaporate. That's right.

Now I'm not saying we ought not to love people as individuals—whoever they are, wherever they are, whatever their philosophy, whatever their creed, whatever their race, whatever their color—they are to be loved, for Jesus Christ loves them. I don't care who they are. But we are not to tolerate godless philosophies that are taking our country apart a stone at a time. The walls have fallen; and it is time that we open our eyes, and that we saw. And the thing that motivated and moved Nehemiah so long ago was that he was able to visualize. He saw the situation as it was.

## II. **Agonize**

Now the second step: If you would change problems into possibilities, not only must you visualize; but, secondly, you must agonize. Continue to look here, in the Scripture. We left with verse 3, so let's begin in verse 4: "*And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed*

*before the God of Heaven” (Nehemiah 1:4).*

### **A. A Prayer of Contrition**

What kind of a prayer was this? It was a prayer of contrition. It was a prayer where Nehemiah wept salty tears over the condition, as it was. Do you know what’s wrong with our society? Society has forgotten how to blush, and the church has forgotten how to weep. No longer do we weep.

When was the last time you spent a night in prayer? When was the last time you fasted and prayed? When was the last time you shed a tear over some soul that was mortgaged to the devil? Oh, my dear friend, we pray without crying; we give without sacrifice; we live without fasting. Is it any wonder that we sow without reaping? Weeping, fasting, praying, seeking the face of God, has become a lost art. But there is no way that America will come back to God, until God’s people begin to pray a prayer of contrition—a prayer of brokenness. One preacher preached a sermon entitled, “A Dry-Eyed Church in a Hell-Bent World.”

### **B. A Prayer of Confession**

But not only was Nehemiah’s prayer a prayer of contrition; it was a prayer of confession. I want you to look, as he prays. He says here in verse 6: *“Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned”* (Nehemiah 1:6).

Now I want you to notice the confession in this prayer. It was national and personal. He said, “Israel has sinned, and I have sinned.” And I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, we must pray for our city. We must pray for our state, for our nation. And we must nationally repent. But that is no good unless we individually repent.

Have you repented? Don’t you sit here and weep, and mourn, and bow your head, and mourn over the condition, unless you’re willing to repent, because, if you don’t repent, you’ll never be a part of the solution—you’re a part of the problem. And it’s not enough just to weep salty crocodile tears.

### **C. A Prayer of Confidence**

Nehemiah prayed a prayer of contrition, and he prayed a prayer of confession, but I want you to go on and notice that he prayed a prayer, ladies and gentlemen, of confidence. Notice in verse 8: *“Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather*

*them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand”* (Nehemiah 1:8–10).

Do you notice what he’s doing? Do you know what he’s doing? He’s saying, “God, You remember what You said in Your Word? Do you remember those promises You made in Your Word? God, I’m holding You to Your Word.” Isn’t that great? You see, that’s what real prayer is.

*Real prayer is not just letting your mind wander and thinking up some things that you want and going to Heaven with a little shopping list. Real prayer is rooted in the rock-ribbed promises of the Word of God. It is finding a promise in the Word of God and standing on it.* God says, “Concerning the work of my hands command ye me” (Isaiah 45:11). Nehemiah audaciously came to the Father, and, he said, “Father, I am praying a prayer of confidence. I am believing You, God, because You promised. And because You promised, Lord, I am holding You to Your Word.”

Oh, listen. We serve a great God. And someone has well said that, “Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is laying hold of His willingness.” Find a promise in the Word of God that means it’s something God wants to do, and then, stand upon it. And pray big prayers. “

*Thou art coming to a King,  
Large petitions with thee bring;  
For His grace and pow’r are such  
None can ever ask too much.*

—JOHN NEWTON

And so he prays a prayer of confidence.

#### **D. A Prayer of Commitment**

But I want you to notice also, and pay attention—He also prays a prayer of commitment. Look in verse 11: “O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king’s cupbearer” (Nehemiah 1:11).

Nehemiah had a very important job; he was the king’s cupbearer. Here was a fantastically, lavishly wealthy king, so wealthy that he had a cupbearer who would come in with his wine and with his goodies everyday, and offer them to the king. This was a job that paid well. This was a job, a very high-elevated job, because you were right there with the king in his most intimate moments.

And here was Nehemiah, the king’s cupbearer, and he had a job of luxury. He was so far removed from the poverty, and the degradation, and the fallen walls. Here he was

in his little place of security. Here he was in his own little warm nest. But he couldn't stay there. God had burdened him. And when he saw the condition of the fallen walls, he said, "By the grace of God I'm going to get involved." And he says, "Lord, I'm starting to do something. Lord, I feel a fire burning in me. Lord, I feel something welling up in me. God, You're calling me now, and You prosper me, Lord, in what I'm about to do. Because I'm about to get out of my warm nest; I'm about to get committed."

Now let me tell you something, friend: It's not enough for you to pray the prayer of contrition, the prayer of confession, and the prayer of confidence, unless you're also willing to pray the prayer of commitment. Prayer is no substitute for commitment. Prayer is not a smokescreen in which you can hide your lack of commitment.

Do you think we are going to be able to do what we've called ourselves to do, and what we feel God is leading us to do? We can, if you'll do more than pray. You can't do more than pray, until you've prayed. But you should do more than pray after you've prayed; you should be committed. It will take all of us. Not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice, a commitment. So many of us don't want to get out of our little warm nests. But I tell you, your nest may disappear before you know it, sir. And you won't have a nest to go back to, anyway. It's time that we got committed.

Flip Wilson, the comedian, in one of his little monologues, said, "Somebody asked me what my religion was. I told him I was a Jehovah's Bystander. He said, 'What?' He said, 'Yeah, they wanted me to be a Jehovah's Witness, but I didn't want to get involved.'" Remind you of anybody you know? I know a lot of folks who are just Jehovah's Bystanders. They don't want to get involved; they don't want to get committed. But here was a prayer of commitment.

### **III. Organize**

Now look—the first step in turning your problems to opportunities is to visualize. The second step is to agonize. That's what Nehemiah did. The third step—are you listening?— is to organize. You know, sometimes people get so spiritual that they fail to do anything practical. And the thing I like about Nehemiah that he was deeply spiritual and intensely practical. And so when God began to move in his heart, and he saw that the walls were in disarray, and he saw that there was a need, his mind began to work, and he started to plan. And he was thinking the thoughts of God after Him. And he made some plans. We, as a church, have made some plans. And these plans have been soaked and saturated in prayer. And we believe that our plans are God's plans, for we have the mind of Christ. And we're thinking His thoughts after Him.

There are some people who don't want to plan. There are some people who think that, if you organize, you're unspiritual. You're unspiritual, if you don't organize. You're unspiritual, if you do not plan. God is a very practical God, and God said, "*Let all things*

*be done decently and in order*” (1 Corinthians 14:40). And you’re going to see, in just a moment, the plans of this man, Nehemiah.

Look here, in chapter 2, beginning in verse 1: *“And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid”* (Nehemiah 2:1–2).

Why would he be so afraid just to look sad? I’ll tell you why: No cupbearer, or no servant at all, for that matter, would dare to come into the presence of an oriental king with a sad face. That would be to make the king sad—to rain on the king’s parade. And it was an unforgivable sin, punishable by death. No wonder Nehemiah was afraid. The king says, “You’re not sick. Why are you looking so sad?” Nehemiah had a burden on his heart so big he couldn’t hide it. And what was on his heart came out on his face.

But Nehemiah had prayed, and he’d sought the face of God, and so, I want you to continue to read: *“And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven”* (Nehemiah 2:3–4).

The king says, “What is it you want, Nehemiah?” And ol’ Nehemiah, can’t you see him? He’s praying and talking at the same time. Have you ever done that? I do that when I preach. I’m up here praying and preaching at the same time, saying, “O God, help me to say it right.” And here’s ol’ Nehemiah saying, “Oh God, here’s my chance. Lord, the king wants to know what it is I want.” Now do you think he just suddenly blurted it out? For four months he’d been planning it. He knew exactly what he wanted. And he asked for three things of the king that every one of us need to ask. Are you ready? Are you listening?

#### **A. Ask His Permission**

The first thing that he asked for was the king’s permission. Look in verse 4: *“So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers’ sepulchres, that I may build it”* (Nehemiah 2:4–5)—“I want your permission to go.” Now friend, before you do anything in the name of Jesus, you’d better get His permission. It’s as dangerous to run ahead of God, as it is to run behind Him. And so he asks for the king’s permission.

“Oh,” you say, “well, he didn’t need an earthly king’s permission.” Friend, it wasn’t the earthly king who was giving him permission. Don’t you know that an earthly king is

controlled by the Heavenly King, the King of kings? The Bible says, *“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will”* (Proverbs 21:1). That’s the reason Nehemiah had just prayed to the God of Heaven. And he was asking, number one, for the king’s permission.

### **B. Ask for His Protection**

Number two: He was asking for the king’s protection. I want you to look in verse 7. He also says, *“Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah”* (Nehemiah 2:7). He’s saying, “As I go, these people are going to say, ‘Who are you? and, What is your authority? What right do you have to travel here?’ And,” he said, “I want a letter that I can pull out. I want something that I can show to say that King Artaxerxes sent me. I want your protection.” My dear friend, aren’t you glad that, as His children, we have that protection? Aren’t you glad that He’s given us His letter, God’s Holy Word? Aren’t you glad that He has given us His authority? Jesus said, *“Behold, I give unto you power...over all the power of the enemy”* (Luke 10:19). *“And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20).

### **C. Ask for His Provision**

He wanted the king’s permission; he wanted the king’s protection; and, he also wanted the king’s provision. Look in verse 8, and he says, *“And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into.”* He said, “I need some building materials, king, and I want you to give them to me.” And then, just put a star by the last part of verse 8: *“And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me”* (Nehemiah 2:8). You see, it wasn’t this earthly king. This earthly king was only a tool in the hand of the King of kings. *“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever He will”* (Proverbs 21:1)

Ladies and gentlemen, if you will visualize until God gives you a burden, and then, if you will take that burden, and agonize until you know that you’ve confessed your sins and made a commitment, then you have every right to come, and organize, and go to work. You have every right to look into the face of your God, and say, “God, I want Your permission; I want Your protection; and, Oh God, I want Your provision, because I am getting ready to rise up and build.”

Now I’m not just talking about building a building, I’m talking about building a life. I’m talking about building a family. I’m talking about building relationships. I’m saying, ladies and gentlemen, it is time that God’s people begin to act like it. Well, the Bible says, *“The people who know their God shall do exploits”* (Daniel 11:32). May God help us; may

God help me; may God help you, to ask: What did it mean then? What does it mean now? What does it mean to me today in this place?

## **Conclusion**

Bow your heads in prayer. Father in Heaven, we just pray that You will lay upon our hearts a burden. O God, that we'll not be content to be in our warm nest of security, but Lord, that we might do something to help heal humanity's hurt. Oh Lord, that we might find our place along the wall—that we might say, "The hand of our God is upon us...Therefore, we, His servants, will arise, and build" (Nehemiah 2:18). And Lord, help us to see that problems are also opportunities. And help us to see, Lord, that our problem is a possibility and a potentiality, if we'll only see it that way. In the name of Jesus, amen.

# Calling America Back to God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 27, 1996

**Main Scripture Text:** Nehemiah 1:1–11; 2:1–8

*“The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.”*

NEHEMIAH 1:3

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## Introduction

Would you be finding the Book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament—chapter 1? Today is a special day. We’ve been in a series of Bible studies on spiritual authority, but today, because of the urgency and the emergency of the hour, we are talking about bringing America back to God.

Let me tell you this: the America that I knew as a boy is gone. I say that with a broken heart. The people of God in this Old Testament story that we’re going to read, in Nehemiah’s day, had been taken captive by a foreign entity and carried away into a strange land. And, I must confess to you that America has been taken captive by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

God has blessed America. God gave us abundance, but the abundance has turned

to greed. God gave us freedom, but the freedom has turned to license. This nation was dedicated by our Founding Fathers to Almighty God; and now, there are powerful forces in America that are endeavoring to make it illegal for us to make mention of His name in public places, for boys and girls to carry Bibles to school or to wear Christian emblems on their clothing. America has been taken captive. Did you know that America is the most sinful nation on Earth? “Now,” you say, “wait a minute. What about the pagan nations?” They have not been given what we’ve been given. We have sinned against light.

Did you know that the United States of America is doing more to corrupt other nations than any other nation? We are exporting pornography around the world. People are watching American movies and American filth around the world; and, as Christians, we have been unfaithful to God. All of this has happened, as we’re going to see in our study today, on our watch. And, all of the problems, the debauchery, in the world today is a monument to the failure of the Church. I’ve already read the newspaper this morning, but it’s like yesterday’s newspaper and the newspapers of the past year: crime, abortion, divorce, violence, suicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, unwed teen pregnancy, lust, pornography, fornication, adultery, sodomy—that is America, so-called “God-blessed” America. And yet, I believe there’s hope. And, while the message may, to begin with, sound pessimistic, it will end on an optimistic note.

And, I want you to find out what happened to Nehemiah; and then, I want you to take what happened to Nehemiah, and I want you to apply it to you. As I told you Wednesday night, two weeks ago, when you read any Old Testament story—or New Testament story, for that matter—you ask three questions. Number one: What did it mean then? Study it to understand it. Then, number two, you have to ask this question: How does it apply now? But, you’re not finished yet. You tighten the focus a little bit. What did it mean then? How does it apply now? And then, you ask yourself this question: What does it mean to me personally?

I’m going to ask you to listen, today, to the message this way. I don’t want you to go out of here saying what Adrian said to everybody. I want you to listen this way: I want you to listen to what God is saying to you. Now, will you do that? Will you say, “Lord, do You have a message for me today? If you can use the pastor to deliver it to me, fine. But, I did not come to hear him; I came to hear You. I did not come to hear what he said to everybody else. I came to hear, today, my Father in Heaven—Your Word for Your son or Your daughter”? Will you listen that way? Our need in America today is for a recovery, because we’ve been taken captive; and for revival to get back to where we ought to be; and then to rebuild, because we have lost our moral foundations.

Now, what had happened is this: as I tell you again, in Nehemiah’s time, the people of God had been taken captive and carried away to a foreign land. Nehemiah himself

was in that foreign land. As a matter of fact, he was a government official. He was the king's cupbearer, and he'd met a brother who had recently visited Jerusalem. And, he called the brother aside, and he said, "What about our brothers, our sisters, those who are not carried away captive, the remnants? What about the city, the city of God, and the people of God? My brother, tell me what is the situation?" And, Nehemiah's friend began to...his chin begin to quiver; hot tears welled up in his eyes. And, this is what he said—verse 3: *"The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire"* (Nehemiah 1:3).

Now, what are walls for? Walls are for protection. What are walls for? Walls are for separation. What are walls for? Walls are for conservation. What are walls for? Walls are for identification. But, the walls were broken down. And, what do gates speak of? Gates speak of freedom and liberty; and, in the Bible, the gates of the city of Jerusalem spoke of the glory of God. As you read the psalms, you'll be impressed by how many times the psalmist will refer to the gates of the Golden City, because those gates were symbolic of the glory of God. But now, the walls had crumbled. The gates are burned with fire and are ash. The streets are filled with weeds and trash, and the people of God were in despair.

Can you apply that to the Church of the Lord God today? Walls of protection are broken down, and it's open warfare on Christians today. Walls of separation have broken down. One of the things that grieves me is where pollsters today compare the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ with the average Christian. They say they can find very little difference. And yet, the Bible says, *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 6:17). Walls of protection, walls of separation, walls of conservation. We are losing the legacy that our fathers bought for us. And, freedom by freedom, truth by truth, spiritual riches by spiritual riches are being taken away from us as the devil comes and goes at will. The walls have been broken down, and the glory of God is in ashes. That's where we are in America today.

Now, what do we need to do about it? I mean, what did Nehemiah do? Remember, we have to ask ourselves this question: What did it mean then? Then, what does it mean today, in our day and in our time? And, what does it mean to me personally? I submit to you that Nehemiah did three things: the first thing he did was to visualize, the second thing he did was to agonize, the third thing he did was to organize.

## **I. Nehemiah Visualized the Problem**

Now, notice—has he visualized? He asked his brother—he said, "Tell me, what is the situation?" He wanted to know the truth. A Christian is not a negativist and a pessimist, nor is he is dewy-eyed optimist. He is a realist who must visualize and see the situation

as it is. And, I pray God that He will help me today, by the Holy Spirit, to help you to see the situation as it is.

#### **A. Walls of Defense Have Crumbled**

Remember that walls are for protection, but in America, our wall of defense has fallen. And, today, we are very vulnerable because that wall has crumbled. John Curran wrote these words in 1808—listen to it: “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” Did you know that our walls of defense—and, therefore, our freedom—are crumbling? A wise man said, “There are nine steps to the growth and then the disintegration of any nation, any society, any civilization.” Would you like to know what those nine steps are? Step number one: from bondage to spiritual faith; number two, from spiritual faith to courage; number three, from courage to liberty; number four, from liberty to abundance; number five, from abundance to selfishness; number six, from selfishness to complacency; number seven, from complacency to apathy; number eight, from apathy to dependence (and that’s right where we are right now—this point right here, from apathy to dependence); and number nine, from dependence back to bondage. We are one step away.

#### **B. Domestic Walls Have Crumbled**

The walls of defense have crumbled, and domestic walls have crumbled. America’s homes are in serious, serious trouble. Many of our children today do not live at home with mother and father. And, I know sometimes there are circumstances that are caused that sin doesn’t have anything to do with. But, many homes have a father who has walked out or have never even bothered to marry the girl that he impregnated. Many children today are being raised by one parent who’s doing all he or she can to put bread on the table, but most of the time the kids are latchkey kids, wandering the street or using television with pornography and violence for a babysitter. Many of them do not even know who their natural father is. And, Satan, because the walls have fallen, has leveled all of the artillery of Hell against the homes of America. It’s a tragedy.

#### **C. Walls of Decency Have Decayed**

I’ll tell you what else has fallen: walls of decency have decayed. Almost every corner drugstore today is an outlet for pornography. Pornography in America is a billion-dollar business, and the devil has pipelined pornography into the living rooms of America’s homes. And, many children are sitting there, feeding on pornography. We have ceased to be shocked. What was horrible yesterday is acceptable today and a steppingstone for something worse tomorrow, if it can get worse, because it seems like we’re ripped—we have eaten through the very bottom of the garbage pail. Walls of decency. We have accepted pornography, today, like baseball or taxes; it just seems to be everywhere.

And, the pornographers will say, “What a man sees does not affect him.” Well, then why do people spend so much money on advertising if what people see doesn’t affect them? And, let me show you how low we’ve gotten in decency.

In a recent newsletter (September 1996), James Dobson said this: “A few weeks ago, I was required by the California State Legislature to attend the Continuing Education Class in order to renew my psychologist’s license. The subject that day focused on the latest methods of treating drug abusers and their families. During the class, the instructor mentioned that he was talking to a coworker one day about a prostitute who had contracted the AIDS virus. His colleague immediately chided him in all seriousness for describing the woman—that is, the prostitute—in politically incorrect terms: ‘You must never call someone a prostitute,’ she said. ‘She is a sex worker.’” Dobson said, “The woman was not joking. Her point is a familiar one among the culturally elite: that value judgments are offensive. In this case, the word *prostitute* implies there’s something wrong or immoral about that line of work.” And then, he goes on to say that “recent polling data finds this, remarkably—that 50% of Americans believe that men and women who produce babies out of wedlock should not be subjected to moral reproach of any kind.” That’s more than half who say that there’s no moral reproach to having a baby out of wedlock, and it gets worse. He said that “in the ages between 18 and 34, 70% said there should be judgment about whether or not a person should be married in order to have a baby.” And now, a rock star, a porno queen named Madonna, has planned to conceive and has conceived a child. And, all of the teenagers say, “Isn’t that wonderful?” I’m talking about a child out of wedlock, and they’re celebrating Madonna’s baby with a Madonna fest.

In our public schools, prayer is out, the Bible is out, evolution is in, humanism is in, homosexuality is in, illicit sex is in, abortion is in, venereal disease is in, and God is out. That’s America. Drugs and drinking are ravaging America’s young people. Walls of decency have fallen.

Let me show you how far they have fallen. Do you know what people are asking today? I cannot believe it. They are asking, “Does character make any difference in the election of a public official?” That the question would even be asked! “Does character make a difference?” Well, let me ask you a question: Does God make a difference? Do we want the blessing of God on our nation and on our nation’s leadership? Can God bless debauchery? Let me ask you another question: Does wisdom make a difference? Can a man with a rotten character have the wisdom of God? Let me ask you another question: Does example make a difference? Do we want our boys and girls to have a national leader they can look up to? I can remember as a boy, reading about honest Abraham Lincoln. I can remember reading about George Washington, who knelt in the snow at Valley Forge and prayed for his rag-tag Continental Army. Does trust make a

difference? I mean, if I cannot trust a man to keep his marriage vows to his wife, how can I trust him in other matters? Well, you say, “Pastor, you ought not to talking about him that way.” Well, who’s him? I haven’t mentioned a name. I haven’t mentioned anybody’s name. Does character make a difference? Absolutely! But, walls of decency have fallen.

#### D. **Walls of Doctrine Have Fallen**

Walls of doctrine have fallen. The truths of God’s Word, the basic premise of our faith, is being eroded away, and we are told that we must tolerate “a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age.” But, *if it’s new, it’s not true*. And, we cannot tolerate that which is intolerable.

The walls had come down, and as a result, God’s people were defeated. They were living in a survival mode, not a revival mode. They were just holding on. They were disgraced. Verse 3 says they were in reproach (Nehemiah 1:3). The place where God had put His name was now the name of God’s shame. They were defenseless—no walls. The enemy could come and go, and they were in despair. The gates were burned, and the gates speak of the glory of God. Now folks, if you have the spiritual eyes to see it, that is a picture of America today. We have been taken captive. The walls have decayed; the gates are burned. And, the first thing that Nehemiah did was to visualize. He got this picture in his heart, and it broke his heart.

## II. **Nehemiah Agonized in Prayer**

So, the second thing he did was this: he agonized. He began to pray, because when he visualized the problem, then he agonized in prayer. Look, if you will now, in verse 4: *“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven”* (Nehemiah 1:4). It’s not enough to see the ruins; we need to weep over them. Nehemiah did.

Now, what was his prayer like? Let me give you the four elements of this prayer.

#### A. **A Prayer of Contrition**

First of all, it was a prayer of contrition. The Bible says that what he saw broke his heart (Nehemiah 1:4). Do you know what is wrong with us today? We are more interested in professional football, the World Series; we’re more interested in the latest sports event, golf, or vacations, or money, or flowers, or gardens, or whatever it might be. But, America and the Church has forgotten how to weep. Jeremiah wept salty tears for the people of his day. Nehemiah wept over the people of his day. Jesus, as He saw Jerusalem under impending judgment, convulsed in sobs. When’s the last time you shed a tear over some soul that was mortgaged to the devil? When’s the last time that you broke down and literally wept before God? The things that break the heart of

Almighty God ought to break our heart.

Somebody has described the Church of the Lord God today as “a dry-eyed Church in a hell-bent world.” I suggest that it is time to weep. Our city is worth weeping over. Our children and grandchildren are worth weeping over. Our homes are worth weeping over. This nation is worth weeping over. The lost souls of men are worth weeping over. The glory of God that is being trampled in the dust when the gates have been burned with fire ought to move us to tears. And, if you’re not moved to tears, I suggest you get alone with God and say, “God, break my cold heart and have mercy upon me.”

#### **B. A Prayer of Confession**

But, not only was it a prayer of contrition; it was a prayer of confession. Look in verses 5 through 7: *“And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses”* (Nehemiah 1:5–7). It’s a prayer of confession. And, notice that it was a two-fold prayer: it was a prayer that confessed national sin and personal sin.

Now, you know the problem with many of us? We’re glad to confess the sin of the drug dealer, the pornographer, the Hollywood mogul, the fast-talking politician, but God says, *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways...”* (2 Chronicles 7:14). The Bible says that *“judgment must begin at the house of God”* (1 Peter 4:17). You say, “I’m not a pornographer, Pastor. I’m not a drunkard. I don’t peddle dope. I’m not in favor of abortion.” But, let me say this: the Bible says, *“Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth”* (Romans 14:22). It happened under our watch.

And, let me tell you that the moral situation in America can be laid right at the footsteps of the Church of the Lord God, because we have failed to preach as we ought to preach, speak as we ought to speak, live as we ought to live, give as we ought to give, and go as we ought to go, and it is a monument to our failure. We have lost the moral consensus in America today, and why? Because the people of God have failed. And, in this coming election, it’s going to be a referendum on character, but let me tell you whose character: the character of the American people—the character of the American people. And, we’re going to find out that we have lost our moral character and our consensus, and we need to confess our sins before God. And, when Nehemiah prayed, it was a prayer of contrition; it was a prayer of confession.

### C. **A Prayer of Confidence**

And, it was a prayer of confidence. Look in verse 8, if you will—I love this: *“Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses”*—here’s a prayer that is based on the promise of God. All true prayer is. All prayer has the confidence of Almighty God. We get in the Word of God. And, Nehemiah’s reminding God of God’s own Word—*“Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations”*—and God fulfilled that promise, but notice verse 9—*“But”*—put a circle around the word *but*—*“But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast and unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there”*—and then, Nehemiah says—*“Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand”* (Nehemiah 1:8–10).

What’s he saying? What is he saying? He is saying, “Our Lord God, there’s nothing too hard for Thee.” “Though they be in the uttermost parts, I will bring them back. I will restore them, if they will repent and turn to Me” (Nehemiah 1:9). And, don’t you dare say that we cannot bring America back to God, because what you’re saying is God can’t do it. It’s an insult to God to say we can’t have revival. As long as there’s God, there’s hope. Nehemiah’s day was a desperate day. Think about it. The walls are crumbled. The streets filled with weeds and trash, the gates burned. The people are in despair, disillusioned. But, Nehemiah got the city on his heart, and he visualized and then agonized.

### D. **A Prayer of Commitment**

A prayer of contrition, a prayer of confession, a prayer of confidence—and it was a prayer of commitment. And, this is very important; I want you to see this. Look, if you will, in verse 11 of this same chapter: he says, *“O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king’s cupbearer”* (Nehemiah 1:11).

Now, you say, “Pastor, why did you call that a prayer of commitment?” Because Nehemiah had a job. What his job was is this: he was to bring food to the king, the pagan king. He served in the king’s court. He had a very high job. Don’t think that this is a job of a servant. He was the king’s companion. He’d come in and eat with the king, to cheer up the king. But, before the king would eat, the cupbearer would take a sip and then say, “King, it’s all right.” The cupbearer would take a taste and say, “King, there’s no poison there; it’s good.” That’s the job of a cupbearer—to be at the very highest place, most intimate fellowship with the king. That’s what Nehemiah did, and Nehemiah knew that he was about to take his job—yea, his life—in his very own hands. He was

about to go to the king and ask the king for a favor to return and rebuild the walls. And, he said, “I prayed to God because I was the king’s cupbearer, and I said, ‘O God, give me now favor in the eyes of this man’” (Nehemiah 1:11). He wasn’t content just to see the ruins and weep, but there was commitment.

### III. Nehemiah Organized

Now, here’s the third and final thing: first, you visualize; secondly, you agonize; thirdly, you organize. You see, the Bible teaches that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17). And, the Bible teaches that when we pray, that that prayer should energize us and gear us to action. And, we cannot do more than pray until we pray, but when we pray, then we must act upon our prayers.

Go into chapter 2 and look, if you will, beginning in verse 1: *“And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence”* (Nehemiah 2:1). Why not? Well, you walk in before the king as the king’s cupbearer with a face like it’s been on a bottle of iodine, and with tears in your eyes and a frown on your face, he would remove the tears and frown by removing your head. You didn’t do that. I mean, you’re not to make the king sad. He’s got enough problems of his own without having to have some whiny cupbearer around.

And now, the king sees him, and the king says in verse 2: *“Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart”—and, he says—“Then was I very sore afraid”—*he had committed a social faux pas. He had done something that was very politically incorrect, and the king remonstrates with him. Verse 3—*“And [I] said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?”—*now, notice verse 4—*“Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven”* (Nehemiah 2:2–4). Here was a man who had been praying for four months, and he is still praying. It reminds us of what the Bible says that we are to do: we are to *“pray without ceasing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

And, the king says to him, “Well, Nehemiah, what do you want?” Nehemiah says, “O God, help me to give the right answer to the king.” And, I want you to see something now—that Nehemiah is going to get some help from King Artaxerxes, but he is not getting help from King Artaxerxes. He is really and truly getting help from Almighty God. Why? Because when the king said, “What do you want?” he says, “God, You help me.” He turned to God, and the Bible said that *“the king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of waters: he”—*God—*“turneth [the king’s heart] whithersoever he will”* (Proverbs 21:1). And so, you might think that King Artaxerxes was doing something for

Nehemiah, but it was God doing something for Nehemiah.

And so, notice what Nehemiah had. Nehemiah knew he had to have three things—the same three things that Adrian needs, that you need, and America needs.

#### A. **Nehemiah Needed the King's Permission**

And, this is what he asked for after he prayed: *“And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant hath found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers’ sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me”* (Nehemiah 2:5–6). You need the King’s permission. You need the King’s authority. That’s what we’ve been preaching about. Would you ask God for His blessing, His hand upon you, that you might have the King’s permission, the King’s authority, that the King of kings would use you?

I was speaking to a preacher friend of mine one time about something that needed to be done in the Southern Baptist Convention. He was a very powerful leader in the Southern Baptist Convention. And, I said, “Sir, what do you think about this?” He said, “Adrian, that’s a good plan.” He said, “I want you to do it.” And, he said, “I want you to remember that I am behind you to the last drop of your blood.” I know what many of you are thinking: “You know, God use our pastor. God use Brother Jim. God use Brother Phil.” But friend, God has chosen you. You teenagers here, on the front row: God has a job for each one of you—a job for you; for you, sir; and you, and you. And, what you need to do is come to the King and hear the King say, *“Even so send I you”* (John 20:21). The king’s permission—that’s one thing he had.

#### B. **Nehemiah Needed the King's Protection**

I’ll tell you what else he needed: not only the king’s permission, but he needed the king’s protection. Look in verse 7: *“Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah”* (Nehemiah 2:7). Now, he’s going to be passing through hostile territory, and so are we. This world is not our home. We’re pilgrims. We are living, now, in Satan’s headquarters, Hell’s domain, and we need—we desperately need—in these desperate days, the protection of Almighty God. He said, “King, would you write something? Would you give me something? I want your protection over me.” And friend, you know, God has given me the same thing: God’s given me His Word. God has given me not only His authority, but God has given me His protection—His Word—to see me through. And, nothing can come to me but it come through Him and He allow it for my good and His glory.

#### C. **Nehemiah Needed the King's Provision**

And, the third thing I need and you need is not only the King’s permission and the King’s

protection, but the King's provision. And, here's the third thing he asked for. Look in verse 8: he said, "*And [also I want] a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me*"—now, listen to this—"the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me" (Nehemiah 2:8). That is, it wasn't King Artaxerxes; it was Almighty God who gave him provision.

May I say this: that God's work is never, ever stopped because of insufficient funds—never. Insufficient obedience, insufficient faith, insufficient commitment—but never because of insufficient funds. God will never say, "You know, Adrian, I'd really like to help you, but I'm a little short right now. I just don't have what it takes; and so, I don't have the timber for you to build with. I don't have the stones for you to build with." No! When we line up with God, God lines up all of the universe behind the people of God. Don't you believe that?

We're going to be building a building back here, soon. We're going to be having a Love Offering. And, somebody says, "Well, I sure hope God's got enough to pay for that building." He's got it, and it's right in your pocket. That's right—right in your pocket. You know what we do, so many times? We ask God to give us what we already have. What God is looking for is obedience. What God is looking for is love. What God is looking for is faith. And, when we get serious about serving the God of Heaven, the King of kings, we'll have the King's permission, we'll have the King's protection, and we'll have the King's provision. I believe that. And, we will be able to get back into the job of rebuilding the walls, resetting the gates, reclaiming that which the devil has taken away and laid waste.

## Conclusion

Now, you listen to me today. I am not preaching a sermon. I am talking to you. God brought you here to hear what I have to say to you. I'm not asking you to remember what Adrian said. I'm asking you to ask, "O God, do You have a message for me today? God, what do You want to do in my heart and in my life?"

We're calling this church to fasting and prayer. Tonight, I'm going to be preaching a message on fasting. Now, I know some of you don't want to come and hear a message on fasting. Some don't even want to hear a message on feasting, so maybe you'll stay away. It might be good for you to stay away. *Sometimes we can't reach the goal for stumbling over our own players.* God does business with those who mean business, but I'm going to ask some of you—thousands of you, or a handful of you—to come tonight. And, I want to tell you what the Bible says about fasting and prayer, because in that passage of Scripture, Nehemiah said, "I wept. I fasted. I prayed unto the God of

Heaven.” We give without sacrifice. We pray without fasting. We witness without tears. Is it any wonder we sow without reaping?

Folks, would you listen to this man? America is in trouble—listen to me—serious trouble. You say, “Well, I think I’m going to make it all right.” You don’t understand what’s going on out there. You may not make it all right, but even if you do, what about your children? What about your grandchildren? What about people in pagan lands who will never hear the gospel because the greatest gospel-sending nation in all the world died—not from what someone else did, but of moral suicide? God wants to bless this nation.

O God, stir us and move us. And, God’s people said, “Amen.” Bow your heads in prayer.

# Let Us Arise and Build

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 17, 1978

**Main Scripture Text:** Nehemiah 2:10–17

*“Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.*

NEHEMIAH 2:17

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and be finding the Book of Nehemiah—Nehemiah chapter 2 and verse 11—page 783, if you have one like I have. Well, all right, the Book of Nehemiah—we’re thinking this morning on this particular subject: “Let Us Arise and Build”—“Let Us Arise and Build.” This is the story of the rebuilding of the walls ’round about Jerusalem under the leadership of God’s man, Nehemiah.

And I begin reading now where we commenced our study last Sunday—chapter 2, and verse 11: Nehemiah says, *“So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.”* Now boys and girls, that means his horse. He called his horse a beast. He wasn’t talking about his wife or anything like that: *“...neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of*

*Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass” (Nehemiah 2:10–14).*

That is, there was so much rubbish, and so much debris, and so much rubble, that he could not even get past. Oh, these principles will be true in the building of your lives. You have a family to build, and these principles will be true in the building of your family. You have a business to build, and these principles will be true in the building of your business. We have a church family and a church fellowship to build, and these principles will be true here. These are great eternal, vital principles, and you will remember that, last week, we told you three things to look for when you study any passage of Scripture: number one, what it meant then; number two, what it means now; and, number three, what it means to me personally.

Now keep those three in mind, because if you will take any verse of Scripture and ask, first of all, when you read it, “What did it mean then?” and, study it in its context, and then, ask, “What does it mean now?” and see what it means in our modern day and age, and then, go one step further and apply it to your own life, the Bible will just burst aflame right in your hands. And the truth of it will leap up off the page down into your heart and will fuel you.

Now Nehemiah has received a commission from the Lord to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem that were decayed and broken down and fallen, leaving the people of God without defense, and leaving the people of God in despair. I want you to notice six principles that Nehemiah practiced in building the walls.

## **I. Nehemiah Fixed His Focus**

The very first thing he did was to fix his focus. Look, if you will, in verse 12 of chapter 2—verse 12. Nehemiah says here, *“And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon” (Nehemiah 2:12).*

Nehemiah had a mandate from God. Nehemiah was a man who knew how to get alone with God. And remember—he fasted, he prayed, he wept, and God had told him what to do. Have you done that? Have you gotten a leadership from the Lord? Are you just wandering aimlessly like a ship without a rudder, like a ship without a compass, and a ship without a sail? Are you just putting yourself in neutral and letting life push you around? Or, do you have a focus? Do you have a goal? Do you have an aim?

I want to tell you: God has a plan for your life. God has something that He wants you to do. You are special to God. God made you special just like He wanted you. And God has a job for you to do. And the same God who has called you is the God who’s equipped you. You can’t do what I do. I can’t do what you do. You can’t do what they

do. They can't do what you do. But I want to tell you, God has a job for everyone. God has a plan for every life. And oh, would to God that you would get alone and fix your focus on that plan to find the will of God for your life!

Too many people are simply drawing their breath and drawing their salary. They don't have a plan, a goal. They get up in the morning, gulp down a cup of coffee, read the funny papers, fight the traffic to work, go to work all day, come home, take an aspirin, watch the news, eat their dinner, watch a little television, and go to bed. The next day, it starts all over again. That's their life. O my dear friend, God has something greater for you. God has something more wonderful for you. What are you doing? Have you fixed your focus on the purpose of God?

Nehemiah said, "God had laid something on my heart." And if you'll listen, God will lay something on your heart and I want you to focus on it. I want you to say like the Apostle Paul, "*This one thing I do*" (Philippians 3:13). Do you really have a goal in life? If not, why not? God has a purpose for your life, and your goal ought to be that purpose.

## **II. Nehemiah Found the Facts**

Now the second thing he did. Not only did he fix his focus, but he found the facts. I want you to notice, as he goes out on a tour of inspection—notice here in verse 13: "*And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned*" (Nehemiah 2:13–15).

What is he doing? He's out there reconnoitering. He's out there getting the facts. He wants to see what the condition really is. He's not like an ostrich that sticks his head in the sand. He's saying, "Really, what are the facts?" And once he sees these facts, then he's ready to go do God's work.

And what were the facts that he saw? He saw that God's work was in ruins. He saw that the walls around the city of Jerusalem, that had been a thing of strength, a thing of beauty, a thing that brought glory to God—remember we said that the walls around Jerusalem are symbolic of God's salvation and symbolic of God's glory in the Bible—and, these walls were fallen down.

And oh, today, ladies and gentlemen, let's ask, "What does that mean to us today?" I want to tell you, today, that walls of orthodoxy have crumbled, and Satan, today, has developed a juiceless, polished type of preacher, who has substituted culture for Calvary, and reformation for regeneration. And we have satanic cults today—deadly cults—that have been vomited up out of the pit. These people are going from house to

house, and door to door, using the Master's method and the devil's message. They are set on fire of Hell; they are filled with deadly poison; and, right now, they are systematically working this city. And in every American city, you'll see them in the airports and other places. And God's people are asleep at the switch.

I'm telling you that walls of orthodoxy have crumbled, and walls of decency have crumbled. And with this money-motivated, sex-soaked, distorted age, things that used to break our hearts, we just simply overlook today. And not only have walls of orthodoxy and decency crumbled, but, as we said last week, walls of freedom are falling all around us, and communism is spreading like a cancer.

I don't have time to even talk about those things, but I want you to find the facts. I want you to be a spiritual Nehemiah. I want you to do what Nehemiah did, and go out and make a survey, and look and see for yourself what the situation is.

### **III. Nehemiah Formed a Fellowship**

Now I want you to notice the third thing that he did. Not only did he fix his focus on what God had told him, not only did he find the facts; but then, he formed a fellowship. He got some people to help him. I want you to notice, in verse 17 of this same chapter—look at it: *“Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach”* (Nehemiah 2:17).

Nehemiah did not believe in a one-man ministry. Nehemiah knew that there is strength in numbers, and strength in unity, and he knew that he could not possibly do it by himself. And though God had called him to lead, he said, “Come, let us do it together.” Oh, what strength there is unity! You know, the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 9: *“For we are labourers together with God”* (1 Corinthians 3:9). Oh, how powerful it is when we work together in unity!

You know, I was reading the other day about Canadian Geese, how they always fly in a V-formation. Have you ever noticed them up in the sky, flying like this, in a V-formation? Of course, one leg of that “V” is always longer than the other. Do you know why that is? There're more geese in that one leg than there are in the other. And that's the way they fly—like that. They fly through the air in a formation. But seriously, why do they fly in a V-formation like that? Well, the lead goose is making it easier for all of the rest of them. He is just splitting a way through that air, and he is moving the wind resistance for the rest of them.

And so while he's flapping real hard, the rest of them are cruising. And that's the way they do; that's the way they go through the air. But after a while, the lead goose gets tired. And so he falls back to one end of that thing, and the next goose moves up. And he, for a while, takes care of the resistance. And that's the way they travel. And do you

know what they studied—the engineers—in the wind tunnel experiments? They have found out that geese, flying in a formation like that—listen—geese flying in a formation like that—can fly 72% further than one goose could fly by himself. Isn't that interesting? Seventy-two percent. Now who taught them to do that? God did.

What is God teaching us today? The same thing that He has put into nature, folks: that we can do more together than any one of us can do by himself. Oh, how we need to work together! There's a biblical principal. The Bible says, "While one shall chase a thousand, two shall chase ten thousand" (Deuteronomy 32:30). You know, folks, if you could stand here where I stand on Sunday morning, and see this magnificent place filled with people—not once, but three times—as we have the joy of doing it Sunday after Sunday, I tell you my heart gets enlarged, and almost jumps out of my throat, when I think what could happen, if all of us ever decided to focus our energies together to do something, really together. You think of the power, the spiritual dynamite that's locked up in this place.

Folks, I believe that it is time that we got focused, and, we said, "Together we build." Hey, I like that. Let's just try it. Say it with me together, all right? "Together We Build." That sounds goods—doesn't that sound good? Let's try it again, all right. Say it with me: "Together We Build." Now look, folks—just as your voices took on strength and power, if you could hear it from up here, you'd understand what I'm talking about. Now if we just had one little ol' fellow out there saying, "Together we build," it wouldn't sound so good. But all of us together sang it one time. But won't it be wonderful, rather than just simply saying it, that together we're doing it?

Do you know what Henry Ford, who was a mastermind at organization and cooperation—do you know what he said? Henry Ford said, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Thinking together is unity. Working together is success." Isn't that good? You want to hear it again? Thank you. All right. "Coming together is a beginning." Now that's what we've done this morning. We've just come together. "Keeping together is progress." Let's stay together, folks. "Thinking together is unity." That's what we're doing right now. "Working together is success."

See, there is something about forming a fellowship. No matter what you're doing—look folks—if you're even building your own personal life, you can't do it by yourself. The Bible says that "no man liveth unto himself" (Romans 14:7). Your family—husband, wife, boys, and girls—you've got to do it together to build your family. If you have a business, you need to involve those people who are working for you—do it together. Do it together—form a fellowship.

#### **IV. Nehemiah Fortified His Faith**

Now notice what he did. He fixed his focus; and then, after he fixed his focus, he found

his facts. He went out and he looked at the situation. He didn't just go off half-cocked. And after he did that, he formed a fellowship. He got some people with him, and he said, "Folks, we're going to do it together, and it's going to be wonderful, and it's going to be glorious." The next thing he did was he fortified his faith—he fortified his faith. He fortified their faith also. Look in verse 18, if you will: *"Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me"* (Nehemiah 2:18). I love that verse. I want God's hand to be good upon me. Don't you want His hand to be good upon you? Oh, that's a beautiful verse to me! *"Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me."*

Well, what had the king spoken unto him? Remember the last message. What did he have? First of all, he had the king's permission; secondly, he had the king's protection; thirdly, he had the king's provision. We do too. From the King of kings, we have His permission. We have His protection. We have His provision. And so Nehemiah just simply rehearsed what the king had said unto him. And how the hand of God was good upon him!

Now what was he doing? He knew that they needed to be fortified in their faith. He knew human nature fears the new. And whenever anybody says, "Let us rise and do anything great and noble," there's always a sick feeling in the pit of our stomach that maybe it cannot be done. Well, friend, if God is leading, if God's good hand is upon us, then it can be done. And what he did: He just simply turned around for a little bit and reviewed the past, so that he could face the future. And he's saying, the God of yesterday is the God of tomorrow.

You know, God has done some great things for us at Bellevue, hasn't He? You know, we just take that verse of Scripture that says, *"The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad"* (Psalm 126:3). God has done great things! And during these 75 days, we're tracing our history of what God has done. And friend, He's the God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He's the same great God, and Nehemiah just reviewed the hand of God that had been upon them. I think of the hand of God upon us together as pastor and people.

You know, last Sunday, I started my seventh year with you people; but, I was just thinking about the blessings of God, and—without going into great detail—you just think how God has been so good to us, how we've more than doubled our Bible study attendance together—more than doubled. And how we've more than tripled our budget. And how baptism is at an all-time high. And God is just blessing in such a wonderful way. And what is it? What is it? It's just simply the fact that the good hand of God is upon us. That's all—not that we have done it, not that we deserve it. But isn't God good?

Well, you say now, “Why, then, is God blessing? Does God just bless arbitrarily? Does God just bless sometimes because it’s a whim or a fancy?” No, the God who formed this universe works according to principles, and, if you want to know why the hand of God was upon Nehemiah, or why the hand of God is upon any church, you can find it from the Bible.

You know, I’d like for us just to go to Revelation the third chapter for a moment. I want to show you verses 7 and 8 of Revelation 3. That’s the story of the church at Philadelphia. And I just wonder, sometimes, why some churches do grow and why they’re blessed, and, why God sets before them an open door and others seem to have a closed door. Is it because God has favorites? I think not. I do believe He has intimates, however.

I want you to notice, here, Revelation chapter 3, beginning in verse 7. God, here, is speaking to this church, and it’s the church at Philadelphia. Now not the Philadelphia we know about in the United States, but that Philadelphia gets it’s name from this Philadelphia: *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth”* (Revelation 3:7). I love that verse. Our God is the keeper of the keys. And friend, when He opens a door, there are not enough demons in Hell to shut it. And when He shuts the door, there are not enough angels in Heaven to kick it open. You see, He’s the One who opens doors and He’s the One who closes doors in your personal life, in your business, in your family, in this church. He’s the One that opens, and no one can shut. He’s the One that shuts, and no one can open.

Now does He do this by whim? No, does He do this capriciously, arbitrarily? Certainly not. Why? Well, look at the next verse, and you’ll see. Here’s why God set before that church an open door: Number one: He says, *“I know thy works”* (Revelation 3:7). Here was a church that was activated by the Spirit of God. *“I know thy works.”* It was a working church. You see, God is not going to bless our indolence. God is not going to bless our laziness. God only opens doors for people who want to go through them. And so here was a church that was activated by the Spirit of God.

But I want you to go down to the last part of verse 8. And it says, *“Thou...hast kept my word...”* (Revelation 3:8). Not only were they activated by the Spirit of God; they were saturated with the Word of God. It was a church that loved the Bible. It was a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church. But wait a minute—one more thing: *“...and hast not denied my name”* (Revelation 3:8). They were dedicated to the Son of God. Oh, they loved the Lord Jesus!

You take a church that is activated by the Spirit of God, saturated by the Word of God, and dedicated to the Son of God, and God says, “I will give to that church, that

person, that family, that business—whatever it is—God says, “I will give to them an open door. And when I open that door, no one can shut it. And when I shut it, no one can open it.” And I believe that that’s the reason that Nehemiah, even in the Old Testament, had the good hand of God upon him. God doesn’t just act capriciously. God acts according to certain principles. Don’t you want God to open a door for your personal life, in your business, in your home, in your soul winning? God works and God acts according to principles.

## V. Nehemiah Faced the Foe

All right, now, the next thing he did—not only did he feed their faith and remind them of the good hand of God that had been upon them; but, the next thing he did, he faced the foe; he faced the foe. I want you to notice, in verses 19 and 20 of Nehemiah chapter 2: *“But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem”* (Nehemiah 2:19–20). He told them, didn’t he?

I’ll tell you what: you see—listen, folks—anytime God’s people say, in their personal life, or in their corporate life, “Let us rise up and build,” all the hosts of Hell will say, “Let us rise up and stop them.” And the door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition. Never forget it. And if you think there is an easy way, a cheap way, a lazy way, to do the work of God, forget it. The Apostle Paul said, *“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries”*—many adversaries (1 Corinthians 16:9).

You see, when we have an open door, that doesn’t mean there are not any adversaries. When God calls us to do this thing, do you think it’s going to be easy? Do you think it’s going to be a piece of cake? Well, it’s not. This is not a Sunday school picnic I’m calling you to, but a grim conflict. Now these three wicked men were demon-inspired, and they represent the devil himself, in this story. You see, we are coming against the demonized, mobilized forces of Hell in this city. Whenever we decide to do anything great and noble and good, there will be plenty of people right here in this city who will say, “Let’s stop them. Let’s stop them.” They don’t like anything that’s built for the name of Jesus and the cause of Christ. Think of the names the Bible gives to the devil: deceiver, liar, murderer, accuser, tempter, destroyer, the evil one. These things are enough to tell you something about the character of the one who will oppose us. But you know, opposition ought not to discourage us; it ought to encourage us.

You know, I’ve learned a little secret now. Whenever I come on Sunday morning and

things happen—you don't know what I mean by "things happen"; but folks, things happen every Sunday—they're just things. And boy, I pray over that one, and I bind the devil in this person; and, I do that, and that. We've got some war—listen—and so, I just simply say, "That used to bother me, but that doesn't bother me; that encourages me now," because I know the devil is upset. You know, I'd hate to be a person or a church the devil wasn't after, wouldn't you? I really would. You see, I used to go out soul winning, and sometimes the paper man called to collect, or the kids would cry, or the beans would burn, or something like that. And you're trying to lead someone to Jesus, and the phone would ring. That used to discourage me. Now it starts to encourage me. I say, "Oh, goodie, the devil's worried!" Boy, that encourages me!

You know, *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31). *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). Have you fixed your focus on that thing which God has called you to do? Have you found the facts, dear friend? Have you formed a fellowship? Have you fortified your faith? Have you faced your foe? Don't worry about your foe; let him be an encouragement to you. And if there are people who say something bad about you, don't worry about it. Criticism can't hurt you.

Let me tell you how to escape criticism. They'll criticize you for saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing. And there's not a way you're going to escape criticism: forget it. There will always be Sanballat; there will always be Geshem; there will always be the Arabian there to say, "What do you think you're up to? What do you think you're doing?" Well, face you foe with faith.

## **VI. Nehemiah Fulfilled His Function**

Now the next and final thing I want you to notice that they did: not only did they face their foe, but they fulfilled their function. You see, begin here in chapter 3—and don't get worried. I'm not going to preach another whole chapter, but I'm just going to give you a taste of chapter 3. And I want you to read chapter 3 by yourself, because I don't want to preach from chapter 3. So I want you just to go home and read chapter 3. But I want you to get some ideas about chapter 3, because I want you to see, in chapter 3, after these people have done everything else, this is the story of how they really begin to build.

And the Bible says, *"Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel. And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri. But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof"* (Nehemiah 3:1–3). And on and on, it reads like this: So-and-so built here; so-and-so built here; so-and-so did

this; and, so-and-so did that. And what a wonderful thing it was, as each one of them filled his function, as each one of them found his place along the wall!

Now notice under this last point three sub-points; and then, I'm finished.

#### A. **The Pattern**

First of all, I want you to notice the pattern. I want you to notice how they did it. Each one of them found an organized spot—at least there was a leader. They didn't just all go off and say, "Well, I'm going to do my thing." You see, God had a plan. And God gave this plan through His spiritual leadership to the people. And the people were willing to follow. The people recognized God's chain of authority; and, they were willing to follow God's man, and they were willing to do what He directed them to do.

Each person had a part in the work. Each person had a job to do. You see, no man can do everything. Everybody can do something. I'm only one, but I am one. I can't do everything, but I can do something. And what I can do, I ought to do, and what I can do and ought to do, that by the grace of God, I will do. Have you ever said that? Have you just said, "I'll do what I can do, be it little or be it much"? You see, here was the principle: not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice. That was it: not equal gifts—I can't do what you can do; you can't do what I can do. But as you will notice here, that every man had a job. There was a principle, that everybody was involved.

#### B. **The People**

All right now, not only the principle, but the people. Look—there was a job for everyone. As you study this chapter, just go home this afternoon, and read it over, and you'll find that there were apothecaries there. There were goldsmiths there. There were priests there who were working. Some of them were young, and some of them were old. Some of them were rulers. Some of them were laborers. Some of them were craftsmen. The rich were there, the poor were there, women and men—they were all doing their part. Oh, these are the people that God has working together. Why, some of them were from out of town. Look, in chapter 3, verse 2: "*And next unto him builded the men of Jericho*" (Nehemiah 3:2).

Let me say a word to our television audience. Give me this camera here just a moment, right here—I want to say something to you, some of you who are out of town, some of you "men of Jericho." If you want to help, it's all right. Okay? If you want to help, that's fine; that's good. You know, I think it's wonderful when there were just people all along the wall, people from out of town, and people from all walks of life. They had a job to do. And they were willing to do it.

Now I must say this. We'll never get 100%. Brother Whitmire, do you think we'll get all these folks to working on the wall? No, especially that guy over there, we won't get him, will we? Don't look at anybody. All right now, look—I want you to look at verse 5:

*“And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their LORD”* (Nehemiah 3:5). Oh my! *“Their nobles put not their necks to the work of their LORD.”* There are always some like that, aren’t there? There are always some of you nobles. You just sit back, and you say, “Well, if they want to do it, just let them do it.” But you’re not going to have a part in it, are you?

Well, do you know what? It is forever written in this book that there were certain people, when there was a job to do, they didn’t do it. I pray to God that’ll not be written about you. Almost 3,000 years and it’s still there—it’s still there: *“Their nobles put not their necks to the work of their LORD.”* Friend, these are days of opportunity—golden days, glorious days. Don’t you miss it! Don’t let the final record be written, and it be written of you, that, when these treat days, so rich with opportunity, were here upon us, that you didn’t have a part in it! God forbid that that should be forever written about you!

Some little boys were sitting around being real quiet—and that’s unusual for some little boys—and a man asked them, “What are you boys doing?” One of them said, “We’re playing war.” He said, “You are? You’re awfully quiet for playing war.” He said, “Well, we’re all generals.” Well, listen, generals. We need some soldiers; and, you noble generals, I want you to get into the fray—I want you to get into the battle.

### C. **The Places**

Now the next thing I want you to notice is not only the pattern, and not only the people, but the places. As you’ll find them, you’ll find them, actually, each one, building right near his own house, and then starting out. Each one started right near his own house. You know, you’ve got to start with your family first. And I want you to get your family. I want you to pray together. I want you to ask your mother, and ask your father, and ask your husband, ask your wife, ask your children: What part does God want us to have in this thing? What are we going to do? What is the Rogers family going to do? What is your family going to do?

One woman was getting all mixed up into politics, and she was trying to get a certain man elected to an office. And she hadn’t been doing much housework in the meantime. But when she told her husband, “I believe we’re going to sweep the state,” he said, “I’d suggest you start at the back door.”

Oh listen, folks. Start right next to your own house, in your own heart, in your own life. Get your life straight with God; get alone with God; get on your knees and say, “Oh God, make my heart right! And if nobody else does anything, Oh God, I want to be Your man. I want to be found faithful.” Would you do that? Find your place along the wall. What is your place? Not, what has God called me to do? Not, what is our choir going to do? What are you going to do?

I read something that almost broke my heart. Did you know in 1915, Leon Trotsky,

who was one of the leaders in the Bolshevik Revolution, and the spread of communism, Trotsky was invited to a Sunday School class in Chicago, and he went, because this man was searching, looking for some ideas. And when Trotsky came to that Sunday school class in Chicago, the Sunday school teacher was not even there—he didn't even show up. And furthermore, he had not appointed anyone to take his place. So far as history tells us, that was the last time Trotsky ever attended any kind of a Bible study.

And in 1917, he was in the middle of that revolution, leading the revolution that is changing the world, and damning the souls of men. One cannot help but wonder what would have happened in 1915 if he had come into a Sunday School class and there was a Spirit-filled, Bible-drilled, victory-thrilled, man of God, standing up there teaching that class—if a man with the anointing of God upon him. What may have happened on that day? God knows. But we'll never know, because there was a Sunday school teacher who had missed his place along the wall—and because of that, there was a gap.

In Dallas, Texas, there were two teenage boys—troublemakers, ruffians, juvenile delinquents—both of them had a Sunday school teacher. The Sunday school teacher of one of these boys visited him again and again and again and again. And he wouldn't let up on him. You know, I always get kind of amused when people want to get out of a Sunday school class because they have a group of bad boys. They say, "Those ol' bad boys, I don't want that class." Well, friend, if bad boys don't need a Sunday school class, tell me, who on earth does? I mean, that's the reason why God put you there. But you see, this Sunday school teacher visited this one boy again and again and again, and finally, brought him to Jesus.

Do you know who that boy was? Jim Ponder, the Director of Evangelism in the Florida Baptist Convention. You know Brother Jim, Tom? Jim Ponder: a fine man, a great man, mightily used of the Lord. The other boy—his teacher didn't care about him. His teacher said, "I don't want that kind of a boy in my class," and, forsook him, and let him go. That other boy assassinated John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Two boys; two Sunday school teachers; one teacher with his place on the wall doing the job that God had called him to do. I wonder, if choir members were really in their place, ushers were really in their place, if God's people were tithing, if God's people were giving, if God's people were witnessing, I say, if all of us together were in that particular place where God wants us to be, what do you think would happen? It's thrilling to think about, isn't it? Oh, each one fulfilled his function.

*Isn't it strange  
That princes and kings,  
And clowns that caper  
In sawdust rings,*

*And common people  
Like you and me  
Are builders for eternity?  
Each one is given a bag of tools,  
A shapeless mass,  
A book of rules;  
And each one must make—  
Ere life is flown—  
A stumbling block  
Or a steppingstone.  
—R. L. SHARPE*

You're building either a stumbling block or you're building a steppingstone. Now we must close the message this morning, but I want you to go back and look at chapter 2 and verse 20. Look at it—Nehemiah chapter 2, verse 20. Here were these people who were not interested in the building of the walls. And I want you to notice what Nehemiah said to them: *"Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us..."*—and, friend, He's going to. He is—praise His Holy name—*"the God of Heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem"* (Nehemiah 2:20). Isn't that sad?

## **Conclusion**

Friend, I wonder if the last part of this verse could be spoken of you. Do you have a portion in the work of God? Do you have a right in the work of God? Will your life be remembered when all of the dust is settled for a memorial that you served the Lord? Not if you don't know the Lord Jesus. You see, there are only two classes of people in the world: There are the builders, and there are the destroyers. Either you're for God, or you're not; you can't be neutral. Jesus Christ said, *"He that is not with me is against me"* (Matthew 12:30). And I'm telling you, today, that the God of Heaven wants to save you. And the God of Heaven who saves you wants to call you and give you a job—something worth doing. But you cannot build without a foundation, and that foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ.

# Dealing with Discouragement

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 8, 1978**

**Main Scripture Text: Nehemiah 4**

*“For the people had a mind to work.”*

NEHEMIAH 4:6

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Nehemiah chapter 4—we are talking, today, on this subject: “Dealing With Discouragement,” and we left off last week with verse 6. Verse 6 ends with a wonderful statement: *“For the people had a mind to work”* (Nehemiah 4:6).

Now folks, God has given us a great job here. We’re together in a program called *Together We Build*, and by the grace of God, we’re going to build a marvelous multi-ministry center. This center will provide space for hundreds of children—preschools—so Mom and Dad can come and hear the Word of God preached. Also, it will provide space for literally hundreds and thousands—we trust—of adults who will be able to hear the Word of God preached and taught in seminars. Also, there will be a media center, where books, and tapes, and videocassettes can be seen, and viewed, and checked out. And there will be a counseling center, and all kinds of things to help to get the job

done. This building is not something extraneous; this building is not something frivolous; it is a tool to help us to get the job done that our Lord is calling us to do. And so we're in a program together called *Together We Build*. And we're asking all of our people to give sacrificially, to pray earnestly, and to work tirelessly to get this job done.

And so I have chosen to preach through the Book of Nehemiah, because I don't know of a better book that parallels what we're trying to do or points out needs any greater than the Book of Nehemiah. We said that any work for God is going to be met with opposition from the devil—any work for God. When God's people say, *"Let us rise up and build"* (Nehemiah 2:18), the devil will say, "Let's rise up and stop them." *And when God's people have a mind to work, the devil has a mind to wreck.* And so last week, we talked about one of the ways that the devil tries to stop the work of God—and that is by ridicule. And we spoke last week on this subject: "Reacting to Ridicule."

Now today, we're going to talk about another of the devil's methods to stop the work of God. And the title of the message today is "Dealing With Discouragement," "Dealing With Discouragement." Verse 7: *"But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,"*—now, boys and girls, that means they were really angry—*"and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall"* (Nehemiah 4:7–10).

Here's the first discouraging note in the whole book. Judah says, "We can't do it; it can't be done. We're not able to finish what we started. We're not able to build the wall." And then, verse 11: *"And our adversaries said,"*—that is, our enemies—*"They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease"* (Nehemiah 4:11).

## **I. The Curse of Discouragement**

Now here they could not say they had never heard a discouraging word, because here was one, and it was a big one. Folks, I want us to talk about "Dealing with Discouragement." And first of all, I want us to think very briefly about the curse of discouragement, a little more in length about the cause of discouragement, and then spend most of the message speaking about the cure for discouragement. Very briefly—the curse of discouragement.

**I want to tell you that, next to ridicule, I believe that discouragement is the devil's chief tool. Some people think that it is the chief tool of the devil. There's a legend that**

tells about the devil, one day, who was auctioning off his tools—you know, the tools that he wrecks every work of God with—and he had all of his tools out there. There was pride, and the price on pride. And there was laziness and there was arrogance. And there was hate and there was envy. And there was jealousy and all of these tools. And he had a high price on all of them. But there was one tool that had a sign under it: “Not for Sale”—sort of a strange looking tool. And someone said, “What is that tool, and why isn’t it for sale?” He said, “Well, I couldn’t afford to get rid of that one; that’s my chief tool. It’s discouragement.” And the friend said, “Well, why is it so important?” “Well,” he said, “With this tool, I can get into a heart and pry it open. And once I get into that heart, I can do most anything I want. Discouragement is my chief tool.”

Now folks, I know that more damage can be done by discouragement than almost any other thing. And you know, good folks can get discouraged. Did you know that, if you’re not careful, even you could get discouraged? Did you know that? Look—I want you to notice who it was that got discouraged. Look in verse 10: *“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall”* (Nehemiah 4:10). Who said this? Judah said it. Well, who is Judah? Folks, that was the chief tribe. These were the best of the best. Judah was the cream of the crop. Judah was the dominant tribe. They were the leaders. It was of the tribe of Judah that our Lord would come.

And Judah was the one who said, “It can’t be done.” That would be like the deacons saying, “It can’t be done.” That’d be like our Sunday school teacher saying, “It can’t be done.” That’d be like our staff saying, “It can’t be done.” I’ll tell you, the best of people can get discouraged. And oh, when you’re discouraged, the devil is on your trail—the curse of discouragement.

## **II. The Cause of Discouragement**

I want to leave that, and go on, and talk about the cause of discouragement, in a little more length. Actually, there were three causes of discouragement that are very evident right here in this passage. Look, if you will please, in verse 10: *“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed”*—that is, they were worn out—*“and there is much rubbish”*—that is, they were weighted down. And verse 11: *“And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them”* (Nehemiah 4:10–11). They were wrought up.

### **A. They Were Worn Out**

Now folks, when you get worn out, weighted down, and wrought up, you’re going to get discouraged, too. Now that’s just a fact of the enemy. In the first place, they were worn out. They were working, and they were working hard. And you see, folks, they got worn

out right in the middle of the job. Now they weren't really all that tired; they were more psychologically tired than anything else, because we're going to see, in a moment, that Nehemiah put them right back to work. They weren't as tired as they thought they were, but they lost their zest for work. Verse 6 tells us that the wall was halfway built—the wall was halfway built; it was halfway up.

Now look—when we're getting ready to do anything, everybody gets excited about that. And we say, "Let's build a multi-ministries building. Let's do this. Let's do that. Let's raise four million dollars, and pay for it in cash, and pay off our debt." And everybody says, "Great! That's a great plan! Let's do it!" And we get all excited about it.

And folks, when we come close to getting it done, when we're about ready to get all done, everybody will say, "Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Isn't this glorious?" But you know, the most dangerous time is when it's half-done, when it's half-done. Right when you're in the middle, that's when you get so discouraged. Halfway is always the most discouraging time.

Did you every try and climb a mountain—be out with the kids and out there on vacation somewhere—and they say, "Daddy, there's a little mountain, let's climb it"? It doesn't look very far at the top, but you get about halfway; and, you turn around and look back, and then you look up. And you say, "Kids, I think God's calling us back." You know, it's halfway that's a very dangerous time. You just kind-of get tired halfway. Did you ever buy a new car, and you're so thrilled with a new car? When does the new wear off? When it's about half paid for, about half paid for. And the new wears off. You get right in the middle.

If, in your marriage, you know, when you first married, that's fine. And when the older folks, you know, they get old, they've learned to get along. But oh, those times in middle age, you know, that time: the difference between "I do" and "You'd better." I mean, right there in the middle, when the job is just half-done—that's when discouragement comes.

Middle age in life is a time of discouragement. It really is. Did you know a lot of men and women get in difficulty when they're at that strange period of time known as *middle age*? And I've always kind of laughed at that. You ask a man 52 years old, "How old are you?" And he'd say, "Well, I'm middle-aged." How many 104-year-old people do you know? But anyway, we call it *middle age*, you know. And that's the time—that's the time, folks—when we get in trouble. That's the time when King David got in trouble. At that time called *middle age*.

When the wall is half-built. Oh, friends, listen to me! Here were some people who were worn out. They were physically debilitated. And when you get worn out, when you get physically debilitated, then the devil is going to be on your trail. And it would behoove you to keep yourself physically strong, get your sleep, take your vitamins, eat

right, exercise, and do all those things. Boy, you see me preaching to me. All right, do all those things that you ought to do—really, folks. I like what one man said. He was a French philosopher. He said, “I have so much to do today I simply must go to bed.” Well, you take care of your body; you take care of your body.

## **B. They Were Weighted Down**

Here they were—number one—they were worn out. Number two: They were weighted down. They had a task to do. And rather than seeing it one step at a time and doing as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us to do, to live one day at a time, and, day-type compartments—“*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*”—they saw all of this rubbish, they saw all of this trash, they saw all of this debris, and they said, “We’ll never get the job done. It’s just too big. It can’t be done” (Matthew 6:34). Well, if you look at the total job and think you have to do it in one day, it can’t be done. “Life’s hard by the yard; by the inch, it’s a cinch.” They did get it done, but they were discouraged; they were burdened down. Does it just seem like everything’s piling up on you?

Now I mean, you’re never going to get it done. I’m talking about in your personal life, because we’re not just building a church, and just building a building, folks. You’ve got a life to build; you’ve got a character to build; you’ve got a marriage to build; you’ve got a business to build. We’re all builders. And you see, it sometimes piles up, and we think that we’ll never get it done. There’s just too much.

Some people think we’ve bitten off more than we can chew in this program that we’re in right now. And they just can’t see how on Earth it can ever be done. But it can be done; it will be done; it shall be done. But they were weighted down. And incidentally, it can’t be done until the rubbish is removed. Look again in verse 10. And verse 10 says, “*The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall*” (Nehemiah 4:10). Do you know one of the hardest jobs is not laying the bricks; it’s removing the trash? And most of us don’t want to do that. We don’t want to do the legwork—the dirty work, the hard work. Oh, a lot of us like to see the positive things. But folks, look—the trash has to be removed.

Now what’s he talking about here? It was literally, physical debris. But there are all kinds of trash that have to be removed, then, to work for God. There’s a lot of theological trash that needs to be removed. There’s a lot of moral trash that needs to be removed. There’s a lot of organizational junk that needs to be removed. There’s a lot of traditional trash that needs to be gotten out of the way, so that we can get back down to the bedrock of God’s Word, and do what God would tell us to do.

In an older city in America, there was a land developer who bought a city dump. And for years, and years, and years, the city put their garbage and the trash in that city dump—but, he purchased it. And he hauled in some dirt, and some landfill, and spread

that dirt out over that trash, and just sort of loosely tamped it down. This was back before the zoning laws were real strict in that city. And then, he put in streets and curves and sidewalks—subdivided it. They built beautiful homes, and people moved in, and it was as beautiful a neighborhood as you'll ever see. But then, suddenly, the subsoil began to shift, the window sills began to crack, the roofs began to sag, the sidewalk started to buckle, the streets cracked, the curbs broke, and people just moved out, except for just a few people who continued to live there. The old-timers who had lived in that community just shook their heads, because they knew what had happened. Those people had built their homes on garbage.

Now folks, you can't build your home on garbage. You can't build your life on trash. And sometimes, it's hard to get right down to bedrock—but, we have to do it. We have to do it, if we're going to build anything that will last. And sometimes, it seems tedious; sometimes, we just like to go ahead and do it the cheap way, the easy way. But there is no cheap way; there is no easy way to serve God.

### **C. They Were Wrought Up**

Suffice it to say that they were discouraged, first of all, because they were worn out; secondly, because they were weighted down; and, thirdly, because they were wrought up. In the midst of this, the devil came. Now there was a conspiracy against the people of God. All of these people got together, and they were energized by the devil. And they said to the Jews who were building, "Look, you don't know when we're coming. It may be night, it may be day, but, sometime, somewhere, when you're least expecting it, you're going to hear us say, 'Surprise! The enemy has attacked.'" Now that's exactly what they're saying here in verse 11: "*And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease*" (Nehemiah 4:11).

Now it's bad enough that they were worn out. It was bad enough that they were weighted down; but now, they're wrought up. The enemy is just keeping things in turmoil. I want to tell you the kind of a friend you have in the devil. If you were in quicksand, he'd be glad to pat you on the head. He knows just when you are in difficulty. He knows just when you're physically debilitated. He knows just when you've got more than you can do. He knows when things are about to cave in your business, in your home, in your family. And it's that time that he moves in with some threat to take away your security. I don't know what kind of security he'll take away. Maybe it'll be your physical health. Maybe it'll be your job. Maybe it'll be finances, whatever it is. But he says, "I'm going to strike; and, when I strike, I strike hard."

And oh, dear friend, when that happens, you can get so discouraged—when your security is taken away. These people did not feel secure at any moment. They knew

that there was danger from somewhere. And do you know who added to it? I hate to say this, but did you know that there were some of the people of God who helped the enemy? Look at verse 12, if you will: *“And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them”—*by who? By the adversaries—*“came, they said unto us ten times,”*—they said it over, and over, and over, and over again—*“From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you”* (Nehemiah 4:12). That is, “Look out—they’re going to get you.”

Now folks, who said this? Who were these bearers of bad tidings? Some of the Jews’ own brethren said that. Do you know the hardest thing for me to face as a pastor? It’s not what the enemy does out there; but it is people within the camp, who say, “It can’t be done.” Boy, I’ll tell you, that’s tough. These folks are like a drink of water to a drowning man, when they say, “It can’t be done.” You say, “Brother Rogers, do we have any here like that?” I haven’t heard of one. I really haven’t. I’m just warning you—just getting out ahead of time. I haven’t heard a’ one. This is not a reactionary sermon. I like to do it ahead, before people ever react. You know, I just like doing it ahead of time. But look, folks, there were those who came, and they said, “It can’t be done; it can’t be done.” And the enemy is going to get you.

One pastor was talking to another pastor about committees in the church. And this pastor said, “Do you have any committees in your church—any standing committees?” “Why,” he said, “sure. I’ve got twelve standing. I’ve got six sitting. I’ve got three that are lying down. We even have a bucket committee.” He said, “Well, what’s a bucket committee?” “Oh,” he said, “that’s a committee that, whenever we get ready to do anything for God, these people come in and pour cold water on the idea. Don’t you have a bucket committee in your church?” And the other pastor said, “Well, come to think of it, I do. As a matter of fact, I could tell you who the chairman is.” Oh, listen, folks! Don’t serve on the bucket committee. Don’t you do it! Don’t be these who are coming in saying, “Well, it can’t work; it’s not going to work.” The devil always uses someone within the crowd to discourage, and say, “It cannot be done.” You’ll either be a helper, or you’ll be a hurter. You’ll be part of the problem, or you’ll be part of the solution.

One man said, “How many active members do you have in your church?” He said, “They’re all active. Some are building, and some are tearing down; but, they’re all active; they’re all active.” Don’t be like these guys in verse 12. Well, look. Here was the cause of discouragement. They were worn out; they were weighted down; and they were wrought up. And the devil had them just where he wanted them.

### **III. The Cure for Discouragement**

Now the third and final thing I want you to notice is the cure for discouragement. What a leader Nehemiah was! Oh, what a man of God Nehemiah was! God knew what He was

doing when He called Nehemiah to lead these people to rebuild the walls. And I want you to notice six steps that Nehemiah took—six steps that Nehemiah took—as he wanted to re-encourage those who have been discouraged. And he wanted to give them courage to do the task. I want you to notice what he did.

### A. Nehemiah Armed His People

Number one: He armed his people. Look in verse 13: *“Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows”* (Nehemiah 4:13). Now if there’s an enemy, we need to be armed. And to be forewarned is to be forearmed. And so Nehemiah said, “You take your spears; and you take your swords; and you take your bows; and you arm yourself.”

Now folks, it is sheer insanity to go against the enemy without your armor. The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 11, *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...having done all, to stand”* (Ephesians 6:11). Do you know what your *armor* is? Have you ever learned the weapons that God has given you to stand against the enemy? *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”* (2 Corinthians 10:4). I’m going to be speaking tonight on the weapons of our warfare, so I’ll just skip that a little bit, because I’m going to elucidate and amplify that a little bit more tonight. But the first thing he did—he armed his people. That’s what I’m trying to do right now. I’m trying to arm you, prepare you, and get you ready for the impact of the enemy. Nehemiah was a good leader, and the first thing he did—verse 13—he armed his people.

### B. Nehemiah Assured His People

The second thing he did: He assured his people. Look in verse 14: *“And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD”* (Nehemiah 4:14). Don’t you like that? Oh friend, *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). Don’t be aroused; don’t be dismayed; don’t be full of fear: *“Be...not afraid of them: remember the LORD.” “If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). For he has said, *“The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”* (Hebrews 13:6). *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength”* (Isaiah 40:31).

Friend, are you tired? Are you afraid? Are you wrought up? Think on the Lord. *“Remember the Lord.”* Do you want me to tell you why you get discouraged? I’ll give it to you in a nutshell: You’ve taken your eyes off God. That’s it. That is it. You’ve taken your eyes off God.

Robert Louis Stevenson told about some people who were on a ship, and the ship was tossed into turbulent sea; and, the passengers were afraid that they were going

down. They were all huddled together in a cabin room beneath the decks. It was so rough that no one could stay on the decks, but one passenger made up his mind he was going to really find out the state the ship. And so he made his way out, and just clinging to the railing, and with his face in the teeth of the storm, he made his way up to the pilothouse. And there, he saw the pilot standing at the wheel of that ship, and the pilot saw the passenger and realized how fearful his heart must be; and, the pilot, without speaking a word, just turned and smiled at him. The passenger didn't ask a question; he just went back down, and told the rest of the passengers—he said, "We're going to be all right. I've seen the face of the captain, and he smiled at me."

Friend, have you seen the face of your Lord lately? Have you? Do you know the smile of Jesus in the midst of your storm? Do you know what Nehemiah would tell you? "*Remember the LORD,*" "*Remember the LORD*" (Nehemiah 4:14). Look full in His face. I want to tell you, Jesus Christ is still at the helm, and there is no panic in Heaven—only plans, only plans. And Nehemiah said, "*Remember the LORD.*" And I tell you, whatever we do in this church from this moment on, we must remember our God. "*If God be for us, who can be against us?*" (Romans 8:31).

### C. Nehemiah Aroused His People

Now what did he do? He armed his people. He assured his people. And then, he aroused his people. I want you to look at the next part of verse 14, if you will, here. And he said, "*Fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses*" (Nehemiah 4:14). What a leader he was! How he knew how to stir the hearts of men and women, and how he aroused them one more time to the task! He said, "I want you to get everything in focus. We are not just simply building walls; we're not simply building gates. We're fighting for everything that we hold dear. You remember your wives; you remember your children; you remember your brethren; you remember your homes."

Ladies and gentlemen, you listen to your pastor this morning. We don't have very much more time in America, unless we get busy. I want to tell you that the noose is circling around us. I am appalled, as I read the newspapers, and see even some of the recent developments as late as last week, what our Congress is doing, and what others are doing. And our freedoms are being eroded away. And what Nehemiah was saying is: "You're not building walls; you're building lives."

Somebody says, "Well, I'm not excited about building a building." Well, I'm not either. Somebody says, "I'm not excited about raising money." Well, I'm not either. But I do want to remember our kids. I do want to remember our brethren, our wives, and our homes. We're in the business of transforming lives, not building walls. That's what Nehemiah was saying. You look beyond the walls to the purpose. We've got a job to do.

We're not dealing in brick and mortar; we're dealing in flesh and blood. And Nehemiah arouses people. I pray God, "Oh God, give me the ability to arouse this people!" Man, what would happen—you just look around—what would happen, if all of the people of Bellevue, and all of the friends of Bellevue, are really aroused, and we saw the issues as they are? He armed his people. He assured his people. He aroused his people. It cost to be aroused. A lot of people don't want to get involved.

C. S. Lewis said one of the most poignant things I've ever read. I want to read it to you. Listen: "To love at all is to be vulnerable." Let me say that again: "To love at all"—to love anything—"is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change"—your heart will change. "It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable." The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all of the dangers of love is Hell.

You think on that. Oh, there are some folks who don't want to get involved. They don't want to run the risk. They want to live for self and self-alone, as though Christ had never lived, as though Christ had never died. But Nehemiah says, "You think of other people. And you run the risk of loving, and don't you lock your heart away in some safe little casket, and live in luxuries and pleasures." It costs to love, but it's worth it to love. He aroused his people.

#### **D. Nehemiah Applied His People**

And the next thing he did: He applied his people. I want you to notice, beginning in verse 15: "*And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work*" (Nehemiah 4:15).

Aren't you glad that we have a book that can tell us what the enemy is up to? And the enemy knows that we know. And that makes me feel good that he knows that we know. We know what he's up to. And what did Nehemiah do? He said, "Just get back to the work." Do you know what one of the cures for discouragement is? Work. Just plain work. Look, folks—don't wait 'til you feel like it to do what you ought to do. We talked about this Wednesday night. *You cannot feel your way into a work for God, but you can work your way into a feeling.* Just go to work. And one of the cures for discouragement is not to look at the whole job, but just to take that place, that thing that God has assigned you, and do what God wants you to do, and do it today. And don't think that the burden is too big for you. Your burdens are not too big for you. You may

not be big enough for the burden, but God will make you big enough for the burden. Listen. God's not going to allow you to be tempted above that you're able (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Someone has well said that, "He tempers the wind to the shore and land. The Lord knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. And you just go back to work wherever your place along the wall is, whatever it is that God has called you to do. I don't want you to quit."

*I want to let go, but I won't let go.  
There are battles to fight,  
By day and by night  
For God and the right  
and I'll never let go!  
I want to let go, but I won't let go.  
I'm sick, 'tis true,  
And worried and blue  
And worn through and through  
But I won't let go.  
I want to let go, but I won't let go.  
I will never yield.  
What? Lie down on the field  
And surrender my shield?  
No, I'll never let go!  
I want to let go; but I won't let go.  
May this be my song  
'Mid legions of wrong,  
O God, keep me strong  
So I'll never let go.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

He just applied his people. He said, "Don't let go. Don't stop. You go right back on the wall." And do you know what he told them to do? He said, "You put a sword in one hand, and you put a trowel in the other. You're to be building and battling at the same time." Now that's the kind of church I want. There are some churches that are afraid to speak out against evil. There are some churches that are afraid to take a stand against sin. They don't want to hurt anybody. They try to please everybody, and they end up pleasing the devil most of all. Then, there are other churches. They live to fight while they fight to live. I mean, that's all they do. They fight, fight, fight, fight—attack, attack, attack, attack. And they're negative, and they're unwholesome and unholy. There's a balance in the Bible—and that is building and battling, a sword in one hand, and a

trowel in the other.

And I pray to God He will never make this a negative congregation, but also He'll never make it a soft-headed congregation—where we'll know what's wrong, and we'll stand against it. But the whole time, we'll be building, building, building—and I'm not talking about buildings; I'm talking about building lives—building the kingdom. And so what did he do? He applied his people. He said, "You go right back to work."

### **E. Nehemiah Assembled His People**

Now the fifth thing that he did in order to cure their discouragement is he assembled his people. Look, if you will, beginning in verse 19: *"And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us"* (Nehemiah 4:19–20). And when did God fight for them? When God's people came together. Oh, there's something wonderful about unity! Did you know that? *"How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"* (Psalm 133:1)

There is no substitute for the public assembly. There's nothing like this any place else in the world where God's people meet together like this. How sweet and how pleasant it is! That's the reason the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 25: *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is"* (Hebrews 10:25). And this television ministry is absolutely no substitute for church attendance. And this radio ministry is absolutely no substitute for church attendance. God bless those who cannot get to a church—that's what the ministry is for. But it is never meant to be a substitute for being in God's house on God's day with God's people. For the Bible says, *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."*

You say, "What's the difference, Brother Rogers? I can hear the same message at home." Listen. I'll tell you the difference. Jesus said, in Matthew 18, verse 20: *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). There's a sense in which Jesus Christ is present when His people gather that's not in any other sense. You cannot get it the same way at home. There's something about the Spirit of God where God's people come together. Nehemiah knew that. He said, "We're all spread out on the walls, but, when you hear the trumpet sound, you come together." There's a time when we need to meet together for information. There's a time we need to meet together for inspiration. There's a time we need to meet together for exhortation and organization. We need to get together. It's not the same being out there somewhere.

*I heard about a fellow who courted a girl this way. He wrote her a letter every day for two years. He thought that would be a wonderful way to court her. So he wrote her a*

beautiful love note every day for two years. Do you know what happened? She married the mailman.

There's nothing like being there and nothing like that personal contact. Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Now look—why do we meet together? To exhort one another. Do you know that you can help me when I get discouraged? You say, "Brother Rogers, do you ever get discouraged?" Well, I never get weary of the work; sometimes, I get weary in the work. I do. But you know, when I come and meet you on Sunday, and you say, "Pastor, I love you; I'm praying for you," that helps me. When I see folks get saved, that helps me. When I hear you sing, and I hear this choir, that helps me. Look folks, there's something about it. And as the days get more treacherous, the Bible says we're not to forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another"*—that means "building up one another, encouraging one another"—*"and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:25).

#### **F. Nehemiah Admonished His People**

All right, the sixth and final thing that Nehemiah did: Not only did he assemble his people; he admonished his people. He gave them a warning. I want you to look again, beginning in verse 21: *"So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing"* (Nehemiah 4:20–23).

Now what does all this mean? Well, among other things, it means this: that Nehemiah, after he had armed them, and after he had assured them, and after he had aroused them, and after he had applied them, and after he, dear friends, had done these other things, he admonished them. And he said, "Now you be careful. Don't you go out there wandering around outside the walls after night."

You see, look, there's a beautiful balance to what Nehemiah did. He did the same thing that Peter did when he said, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8). He admonished them. Now look, folks, I know what the devil is up to. I know the devil would like to stop this work for God. I know that. And he's ready for the slightest let up at any time. I like what one man said to his friend. He said, "Don't you let up, shut up, or back up, until your taken up." I think that's what Nehemiah would say to us.

Oh friend, look, be sober; be vigilant. Let's stay on our knees; let's keep our knees

on the floor; let's keep our face in the book; let's keep loving one another; let's be deathly afraid of sin. Let's keep on the whole armor of God; let's not be careless; let's not play loose; let's stay together; let's love; let's believe God. And together, God's people will see great things done.

I tell you, the most thrilling thing on Earth is to be a part of a church—a New Testament church—when the glory of God is on it, a church that has a task—a building—in battling, with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other hand, and the glory of God over them. What a thrill it is! What a mighty weapon in the hand of a holy God is a New Testament church! I don't know about you, but I'm glad to be linked to something that has a cause to it. I feel sorry for so many people—just simply drawing their breath, and drawing their salary.

## Conclusion

Ernest Hemingway, a great prize-winning author, said this—one of the most tragic statements I've ever read. And incidentally, Ernest Hemingway died of suicide. Here's what he said: "Life is just a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness to nothingness. There is no remedy for anything in life. Man's destiny in the universe is like a colony of ants on a burning log."

Jesus said, "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10). I'm no ant on a burning log. I'm a son of God, a child of God, destined for the glories, and I'm having a wonderful time getting there. I'd be a Christian if there were no Heaven and no Hell just to know the Lord Jesus Christ in this life. And if you're tired of feeling like an ant on a burning log, how about feeling like a royal blueblood, a child of the King, a son of God? You can, by receiving Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior. I'd like every head bowed, every eye closed.

# Rebuilding the Walls

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 17, 1994

**Main Scripture Text:** Nehemiah 4–6

*“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.”*

NEHEMIAH 4:10

## Outline

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- A. A Mind to Work
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- C. An Eye to Watch

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## Introduction

Be finding the Book of Nehemiah, would you please—Nehemiah chapter 4. I often tell people, *“If you’ve never met the devil, it’s because you and the devil have been going in the same direction.”* You turn around and begin to live for God, stop being in collusion with the devil, you will be in collision with him. And he will fight you every ounce, every inch, every step of the way. But we have victory in Jesus. But that victory is not automatic. There is a battle. And the message tonight is an alarm, and a call to action, and a warning, because we’re not on a religious playground—we’re on a battlefield. We’re in a grim conflict. Our enemy is Satan. Whether you know it or not, he is arrayed against you. He has malevolent, wicked desires against you. He already has plans to sabotage your life, your family, and your home.

And think about the names that the Bible has given Satan. The names themselves indicate his personality. For example, he's called *the deceiver*. He's called a *liar*. He's called a *murderer*. He's called *the accuser*. He's called *the tempter*. He's called *the destroyer*. He's called *the evil one*. Now that ought to give you enough warning to know that we're not talking about some mere personification of evil, or some figment of the imagination—we're talking about an enemy.

Now Satan's power was broken at Calvary, and Satan's kingdom was ruined when Jesus died, and said, "*Now shall the prince of this world be cast out*" (John 12:31). However, Satan continues to work. But because he has had his back broken, his power destroyed, the only way now that he can work is through deception, deceit, and he's still continuing to do that. He's done that from the Garden of Eden right on through until Jesus comes again.

Ephesians 6:11 speaks of "*the wiles of the devil*." And that word *wiles* is *methodia*. It's the word we get our word *Methodist* from. I don't mean Methodists are devilish. They're methodical. And so is the devil methodical. The Bible speaks, in 2 Corinthians 2:11, about the *devices* of the devil. Paul said, "*We are not ignorant of his devices*." The Bible speaks, in 2 Timothy 2:26, about "*the snare of the devil*." Now just take those words—*wiles*, *devices*, *snares*—and, add those words to the words that describe his personality—*deceiver*, *liar*, *murderer*, *accuser*, *tempter*, *destroyer*, *evil one*. You're going to find out that we are in a battle, and no Christian can afford to be ignorant.

Now you may know that the Book of Nehemiah is the story of the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem. God built a glorious city called Jerusalem. God gave it to His people. And walls were built around that city. Walls are for containment, walls are for defense, and walls are for beauty. But because of the sin of His people, and because of the judgment of God, because of dissipation and degradation, those walls had crumbled.

Nehemiah was God's leader. He wanted a national revival that would be symbolized by the rebuilding of the walls. Now in many ways, America is like the Jerusalem of Nehemiah's day. And while we don't have physical walls as such, walls of decency have fallen, have they not? Walls of orthodoxy have crumbled, have they not? Walls of freedom are being eroded, and have fallen, and need to be rebuilt. And we, as a church—as people, and pastor, as individuals—need to be about rebuilding the walls. And when we do, Satan will come against us with snares, with wiles, and with devices.

Now having said that, we're going to look in the Book of Nehemiah, and we're going to see nine snares of the devil, nine devices of the devil. And these are just as fresh, and just as modern, as tomorrow's newspaper, and much more accurate.

Look, if you will now, in chapter 4 and verse 1: "*But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall,*"—now, Sanballat was an Arabian—"heard that

*we builded the wall, he was wroth,*”—that means, “he was angry”—“*and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice?*”—that is, are they going to begin the temple sacrifices again?—“*will they make an end in a day?*”—and, that is, do they think they’re going to pull this thing off in a few hours?—“*will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.*” “What kind of wall are they going to build?” he says. And they’re getting a big laugh out of it. Now notice what Nehemiah said: “*Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity*” (Nehemiah 4:1–4).

## **I. Derision**

Tool number one of the devil: It is derision—derision. They were being laughed at. They were being mocked. They were being belittled. They were being ridiculed. You’d better learn it, folks. The modern-day whipping boy and laughing stock is the Bible-believing Christian. You’re going to see more and more sit-coms—more and more situational comedies—that make Christians the butt of their jokes. Get ready for it. They love to call you a *do-gooder*, a *bluenose*, a *fundamentalist*, a *puritan*, a *fanatic*. But I tell you this: that the servant is no better than his Lord (Matthew 10:24). And in Mark 5:40 it says of Jesus, “*And they laughed him to scorn.*” Now if you can’t stand laughter, you’re not going to be a victorious Christian. It’s one of the chief tools of the devil—the devices of the devil. Why? Because ridicule has such a sting to it. Many people, who would not be afraid of physical abuse, have been laughed out of a work for God.

Now let me tell you what happens. when you go to your work tomorrow, and they ridicule you for your stand for Christ. Or, when you go to your school, in high school, and you’re mocked for your stand for Christ. I was a Christian in high school. I was captain of my football team, and president of my senior class. But I took a lot of abuse, and a lot of scorn, because of the things I would do, and some of the things I did not do. You’re going to be mocked and laughed at in high school, on the job, in the neighborhood. What are you going to do? Well, do what these people did.

### **A. A Mind to Work**

Let me show you the three things they did. Number one: They had a mind to work. Look, if you will, in verse 6: “*So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work*” (Nehemiah 4:6). Let them laugh. Let’s just keep on doing what God called us to do. I mean, while they were laughing, and saying, “They can’t get it done,” the people just kept on building.

### B. **A Heart to Pray**

But not only did they have a mind to work; they had a heart to pray. Verse 9: *“Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God”* (Nehemiah 4:9). Now if you don’t have a heart to pray, don’t go on working, because work and prayer go on together, and one is not a substitute for the other. But if somebody ridicules you, somebody laughs at you, somebody belittles you, somebody puts you down, somebody is sarcastic about you, just keep on serving Jesus. Don’t quit! And pray.

### C. **An Eye to Watch**

Not only a mind to work, and a heart to pray, but also they had an eye to watch. Look, in the last part of verse 9: *“And set a watch against them day and night, because of them”* (Nehemiah 4:9). Now there’s a very practical side. Our enemies are real. And don’t you get so spiritual that you don’t watch for the enemy. Paul said, in the Scripture, *“Alexander the coppersmith hath done me much harm...be thou ware of him”* (2 Timothy 4:14–15). But if you would be a successful Christian, get ready for ridicule. But be more concerned about the approval of God than the ridicule of men, okay? Satan will bring derision.

## II. **Discouragement**

Now if derision doesn’t work, here’s his second tool: discouragement. Look, in chapter 4 and verse 10: *“And Judah said...”*—now, Judah was one of the chief tribes and leaders—*“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall”* (Nehemiah 4:10). These people were weighted down, worn out, and wrought up.

There are always those in our ranks who say, “It can’t be done.” There were people who told us we couldn’t build this building. Every building program, I believe, that I’ve ever been in as a pastor, there’s always somebody who says, “It can’t be done.” And when you try and do something great, these folks are like a drink of water to a drowning man. I mean, there are always those who say, “Hey, the job is too big. The task is too great. We had better quit.”

And so if the devil cannot keep you with derision from doing what you ought to do, he’ll try to keep you from doing it with discouragement. Some of you are discouraged right now about something that you ought to be doing for God. Satan says to you, “Quit that Sunday School class. Don’t serve anymore in that Sunday School class, because it’s too difficult. It’s too hard. You’ll never get the job done. Those boys that you’re teaching, why, they’re so unruly.” Well, who do you think needs a Sunday School teacher, if it’s not unruly boys?

You know, the devil always wants to discourage you. He’ll discourage you in your

marriage. He'll say, "It's too hard; it's too difficult." But the Bible says, "*They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength*" (Isaiah 40:31). Discouragement is one of the chief tools of the devil. And if you're discouraged, it is because you've taken your eyes off the Almighty, and put your eyes on circumstances. The Bible says, "*And let us not be weary in well doing*" (Galatians 6:9). There are times, I'll have to tell you, in my heart, when I am tired—I mean, tired with a capital *T*—but I don't believe that I get discouraged. And I don't take credit for not getting discouraged. I believe it is of God. The Bible says that, "God is the God of all consolation" (2 Corinthians 1:3–5). And that word *consolation* means "encouragement." God has a monopoly on encouragement. Let the Lord encourage your heart, when the devil would discourage you. The Bible says, in Galatians 6:9, "*Let us not be weary in well doing.*"

### **III. Danger**

Now here's the third device of the devil: not only derision, and discouragement, but danger—actual danger. Look, in chapter 4, verse 11: "*And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease*" (Nehemiah 4:11).

Is the devil behind murder? You'd better believe it. Or, are there those who would like to put you to death and me to death? You'd better believe it—bodily harm. Satan will stop at nothing. Now when you find yourself in danger... and, Christians in these last days may find themselves in danger, because of Satan—not only facing derision, and discouragement, but literal danger.

#### **A. Remember the Lord**

What must you do? Well, again, three things. Number one: Remember the Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 14: "*And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible*" (Nehemiah 4:14). And the word terrible means, He is a "terrifying and awesome" God. When somebody threatens, when somebody comes against you, don't look at how big they are; look at how big God is.

Robert Louis Stevenson told of a ship, which was driven by a violent wind toward a rocky coast. And the people on board that ship were filled with terror. They thought, perhaps, they'd go down. And one man made his way to the pilot's house. He was a passenger. And he went up to the pilothouse to talk to the captain. And he came back, and he had a look of calmness on his face, a smile on his face. And they said, "What put that smile on your face?" He said, "I looked at the captain, and he smiled at me, and I know that all is well." Now what you need to do, when danger comes, and when you're afraid, is go look into the face of the Lord Jesus.

## B. Reflect on the Issue

And so what he says, first of all, is, remember the Lord. And number two: reflect on the issue. Look again, in verse 14: *“And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses”* (Nehemiah 4:14)—*“and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”* Now folks, if there was ever a verse that is pertinent for this church and for your family in this day and in this age, it is, “Remember the Lord,” and, “Fight for your kids.” Fight for your kids. Fight for your wives. Fight for your family. Fight for your brothers and sisters. All that we hold dear and precious is hanging in the balance. See what is at stake, even in the face of danger.

## C. Resist the Enemy

Remember the Lord. Reflect on the issues. And resist the enemy. Many Christians are folding up, when they ought to be standing up. Look, if you will, in verses 17 and 18: *“They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon”—a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. “For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me”* (Nehemiah 4:16–17). Now what they did is this: They took a literal sword and a literal trowel. At least, we can take a spiritual sword, the Word of God. And we can take the tools that are necessary to build up the walls of decency, and the walls of freedom, and the walls of orthodoxy, today. And let’s not give up, no matter what the danger is.

## IV. Discord

The devil—with his wiles, with his snares, with his devices—came against these people. Derision didn’t work; so he tried discouragement. Discouragement didn’t work; so he tried danger. That didn’t work; and now, look what he tried: He tried discord. Look, in chapter 5, verse 1: *“And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews”* (Nehemiah 5:1).

Now there’s dissention inside the ranks. This particular dissention was over money, as it frequently is in some churches. But it could be over anything. Do you know the Bible says that, “God hates *‘he that soweth discord among brethren’*” (Proverbs 6:19)? Satan loves, however, a church fuss. *The devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey or open up a porno palace any day.* One of the great proofs of the deity of Jesus Christ is how we love one another—the unity of the Church. Jesus said—He prayed in John 17:20 and following—that “we might be one, that the world might

believe that the Father had sent the Son” (John 17:20–21).

Do you know what makes Bellevue Baptist Church the wonderful church she is? The unity of this church; this church has a wonderful, glorious unity. And the unity is the unity of the Spirit. Now we don’t build that unity. We only protect that unity. It is the unity of the Spirit. It’s not the unity of a club. It is a spiritual unity, and we must watch, watch, watch that nothing ever divides the unity of our church. God help us. And one of the great reasons is found in chapter 5, verse 9, on why we need to be so on guard. Nehemiah said, *“Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?”* (Nehemiah 5:9). Do you know there are a lot of people who love to see churches divide? The Heavens and the world are watching. Nehemiah said, *“We’ve got to stay together.”*

Now what happened is simply this: Because of this division, something needed to be done. And thank God, it was done. And you can read it, in chapter 5, verses 11 and 12—Nehemiah said, *“Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. hen said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest”* (Nehemiah 5:11–12). This was wonderful. There was repentance, there was restoration, and there was the resumption.

Did you know *there are no problems too big to solve, only people too small to solve them*? And when we do have difficulty, when we do have division, let’s not let the enemy get the advantage. But go to the Word of God, go to the man of God, the plan of God, and get back on the track, rebuilding the wall.

## V. Distraction

The devil is defeated again; so now, he tries his fifth method. And what’s the fifth one? It’s distraction. I think that’s a better word. Nehemiah 6:1–4: *“Now it came to pass when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein;”—that is, Nehemiah just kept building, and kept battling—“(though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.”*

Now learn this about the devil: He’s very clever. He’s come to these people as a roaring lion, and that didn’t work. So now, he’s coming to these people as an angel of

light. Sometimes, Satan comes to terrify us, and sometimes he comes to entice us. And so since the more he tried to terrify these people, the more they worked, the devil thought he'd try something else. So he inspired his henchmen to say to Nehemiah, "Nehemiah, we've come to respect you. We'd like to invite you down to one of the villages, to the plain of Ono. We're going to have a love-in; we're going to have a friendly conference, on neutral ground, down in some beautiful valley."

I've learned this: Beware of the world's friendship—just beware of the world's friendship. This vile world is no friend of grace. And Satan's motives never change. They're right there in verse 2: "*They thought to do me mischief*" (Nehemiah 6:2). Don't get all excited, if the newspapers say something good about us. The world, per se, is no friend of grace. Now be nice, be courteous, and publish glad tidings, wherever you can; but, don't ever think that this world, no matter how kind they may seem, is a friend of grace. Somewhere there is mischief in the making. And many times, we want to pow-wow and parley with the world.

One of my favorite old stories is of a hunter who was out hunting for a bear one time. He saw a bear in the woods, drew a bead on the bear, and the bear stuck up both paws, and said, "Oh, hold it. Don't pull that trigger. Now be reasonable about that thing. I want to talk with you about this thing." Now the bear said to the hunter, "It seems to me that the reason you're trying to shoot me is you want a fur coat. Is that right?" And the hunter said, "Well, that is right. I want a bear coat, a bear-skin coat." And the bear said, "You know, everybody's got his needs. I've been out here in the woods. I'm just looking for a good meal. I have needs. You have needs. Lay that gun down, and come out here in the middle of road, and let's talk about it." So the hunter laid the gun down. And they went out in the middle of the road to talk about it. And when it was over, the man had a fur coat, and the bear had a good meal.

That's exactly what the devil is trying to do right here. And you know what Nehemiah said? "Hey, why should I come down? I am doing a great work."

Does God have a plan for your life? Indeed, He does. Then, find God's plan, whatever it is, stay with it, and don't you get derailed. I had a man ask me the other day, "Have you thought about going into politics?" I told him this: "*I had rather be a Baptist preacher than to be the President of the United States. I mean that with all of my heart. I would have to step down to be the President of the United States. Don't forsake your calling.*" You mothers, you're doing a great job raising your children. And the devil will come to you with a very attractive offer that has a lot of glamour to it, and you'll think, "Boy, I won't have to be a homemaker. I can move up." And you come down off the wall, and you forsake your calling from Almighty God.

Church workers, deacons, and Sunday School teachers—I've seen them—they're doing a great work, and the world comes, and says, "Oh, Mrs. So-and-so, you're so

gifted; you're so talented. We want you to be the first vice president of our club, The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Grandmothers with Athlete's Foot." And so you say, "Oh, they want me to be the vice president." And you step down off the wall, and give up your Sunday School class. Don't do it. Churches can get sidetracked. We have people who want us to get into this thing, and that thing, and do this, and all of these things. And many of them are good. But I'll tell you what God has called this church to do: to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ till He comes—till He comes. And if the devil cannot get you with derision, if the devil cannot get you with discouragement, if the devil cannot get you with division, if the devil cannot get you with danger, the devil will try to get you with distraction—to get you to come down off the wall. That didn't work, so he keeps on going. He doesn't give up easily, does he?

## VI. Defamation

Now look, in chapter 6 and verses 5 and following, and you'll find out that his next tool is defamation. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *"Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;"*—that's like a letter to the editor—*"wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it..."*—who in the world is Gashmu?—*"Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou..."*—that is, Nehemiah—*"that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart"* (Nehemiah 6:5–8).

Now what is this? The devil is backing off, and trying another tactic. It is to defame God's man. It is defamation. A dirty rumor is started. And here's the rumor: Nehemiah, the leader, is charged with pride and self-seeking. And what they said is, "Nehemiah, we've already written it down. We've got an open letter. We're publishing it everywhere, that what you're doing, Nehemiah, is you're building a kingdom for yourself. We know that your motive is wrong."

And did you know that there are always people who are ready to attack your motive, to defame you? And if you're a pastor, they'll do that. And there are people who would say, "Well, you know, Rogers there at Bellevue Baptist Church, he's building himself a kingdom, isn't he?" Do you know they'll say that about you, if you join a church? They'll say, "Well, he's going there for business reasons." Do you know what they said about Jesus? They said, "Jesus was a winebibber and a glutton; that He was in league with the devil" (Matthew 11:19). You will get criticized—your motives will be criticized—if you do something worthy.

Now the way to escape criticism is to say nothing, do nothing, and be nothing. But then, they'll criticize you for saying, doing, and being nothing. But what I'm trying to say is, defamation is of the devil. And never, never, never defame and slander a servant of God. And if the devil does defame you, don't feel that you always have to defend yourself. Just as you have to learn to live with ridicule, you have to learn to live with criticism and slander. And your best defense is a pure life, and a clear conscience—a pure life, and a clear conscience. When you have a pure life, and a clear conscience, you can deal with criticism. Now if you don't, it's very hard.

Henry Ward Beecher said—and I quote: “Life would be a perpetual flea hunt, if a man were obliged to run down all the innuendoes, the inveracities, the insinuations, and the misrepresentations that are uttered against him.” And Abraham Lincoln said—and I love this: “If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed down for any other business. I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep on doing so until the end. If the end brings me all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end bring me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.” Don't pay attention to what the enemy says. Those unsigned letters, those criticisms, those people who would defame you—it is of the devil.

## VII. Dismay

Well, that didn't work, and so here's the next thing the devil does. Look in chapter 6 and verse 9. It's called dismay—dismay. Verse 9: *“For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in”* (Nehemiah 6:9–11).

Now the devil reaches into his bag of tricks, and he tries something else. This time he tries to get Nehemiah dismayed. He says, “Come, let's hide in the temple. Run for your life.” And Satan *is the* sinister minister *of* fear. And fear has the ability to weaken our hands, as we see in verse 9. The Bible says that, *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7).

Now what do you do, when the devil comes to you, and says, “Run”? Well, just do exactly what Nehemiah did. Face your fear with faith. Face your fear with faith. Fear comes from *the sinister minister of fear*, the devil.

## VIII. Deception

Now here's the next thing he did. Dismay didn't work; so, he tries deception. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, beginning in verse 12: *"And lo, I perceived that God had not sent him..."*—he said he had a message from God; but, Nehemiah's antenna was up, and he said—*"I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him."* He was a hireling. And so he goes on to say, in verse 13: *"Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works,"*—what he does now is he just tells God on them—*"and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear"* (Nehemiah 6:12–13).

Now you have to understand what was happening here. They said, "Nehemiah, we've got a message from God. God wants you to run; hide in the temple." Nehemiah said, "I knew it wasn't of God." You see, the devil is a deceiver, and he disguises himself as an angel of light. And these were merchants of fear, and disciples of dismay. And many times, they come within the ranks.

Now folks, the devil is very clever. And so he joins us, if he can't beat us, from the outside. And you'd better walk with the Lord, or the devil is going to deceive you. *The servant of God in these days is going to have to keep his knees on the floor and his face in the book.*

When I was in Hawaii one time, I visited the grave of Charles Lindbergh. I've tried to read about Charles Lindbergh. I've been interested in him and *The Spirit of St. Louis*. I read something about Charles Lindbergh that was interesting. When Charles Lindbergh tried that transatlantic flight, he got in that little airplane, which, by the way, you can see in the Smithsonian—a little thing, about as far as from here to you, Bob. He got in that little airplane to fly solo across the Atlantic. He didn't have altimeters and other radar devices like people have today. He did have a compass. And he started out. And when he got over Newfoundland, he got in a dense fog. He had no idea—couldn't check ground speed—he didn't have any idea as to how high he was. He couldn't tell really what was happening. He looked out on his wing tips and he could see ice forming, and he thought, "If I stay in this mist, this ice is going to form on my wings, and I'm going to gradually get heavier and heavier, and sink into the Atlantic, and be destroyed; or else, I'm going to have to turn back." And then, Charles Lindbergh had an idea. He said, "No, I'll not do that. This fog can't be everywhere." And he nosed the nose of that little airplane upward, and that engine began to strain; but, he went up, and up, and up. And he said, "It seemed like I climbed for eternity." But then, he burst out of that cloud into dazzling sunlight, and made the rest of the journey, and made history.

Now the devil is a deceiver, and he'll get you in a fog. There's only one thing for you

to do, friend, and that's to go higher. Just go higher. Just get up there with your Lord, and, suddenly, He is going to appear to you, and you're going to see things, and understand things that you could not know any other way.

## **Conclusion**

Well, I'm finished, but I want you to see the glorious conclusion. Look, in Nehemiah 6:15: *"So the wall was finished."* Did you know there are not enough devils in Hell or out of Hell to beat us, if we just keep our eyes on Jesus? We're not ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). And everything that Satan did against Nehemiah to keep him from building the wall, he'll do to keep you from building your home, from building your life. *"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Father, thank You for Your Word. Seal it to our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# Reacting to Ridicule

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 1, 1978

**Main Scripture Text:** Nehemiah 4:1–6

*“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.”*

NEHEMIAH 4:6

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, now, and turn to Nehemiah chapter 4, and we will read together the first six verses of Nehemiah chapter 4. Now, remember that Nehemiah is God’s man. He’s going back to his homeland, back to Israel, back to Jerusalem to help the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem that are in disgrace and disrepair. And, we read here in chapter 4, verse 1: *“But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said”*—and I can just see old Tobiah popping his knee as

he says it—“*Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall*”—and then, Nehemiah speaks, and he says—“*Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders. So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work*” (Nehemiah 4:1–6).

We’re speaking today on this subject: “Reacting to Ridicule.” Now, the devil wants to stop any work for God. And, when God’s people say, “Let us arise and build,” all the hosts of Hell say, “Let us arise and stop them.” And, you would be, perhaps, amazed to know that one of Satan’s chief tools is ridicule. Now, you think that ridicule is something we can just toss off, but let me tell you something, folks: ridicule is one of the hardest things you’ll ever face as a Christian. Did you know that? Did you know that there are men who can face a den of lions who will fall and wither under ridicule? They really will.

I remember as a young Christian myself that it was so hard for me when people would laugh at me for being a Christian. I worked my way through college, and one of the things that I did was to work in the summertime at construction jobs. And, I tried to witness to those men there that I worked with. They found out that I was a Christian; and furthermore, they found out God had called me to preach. And, you talk about having to take a ribbing and a ragging! And, they would tell dirty jokes and cut their eyes over at me to see if I was laughing. Or, they would blaspheme God, and they’d say something horrible or terrible about the Bible, or sometimes bring some old filthy pictures and try to pass them around—and all of these things, and just ridicule, and scorn, and ridicule. And, I want to tell you something, folks: I loved the Lord, but it was hard to take—hard to take.

Some of you wives—you’re Christian, and you’re married to an unsaved husband. And, he ridicules your faith, and that’s probably the hardest persecution that you ever face. It’s what that husband does to you. Some of you guys in college—your professor ridicules your faith. And, there he is with an earned degree, and he’s the professor up there; and he’s mocking and making fun of you. Sometimes these professors have a way of ferreting out those who are Christians, and they mock them. Some of you businessmen—when you go out and you won’t go out with the ladies, and you won’t drink, and you won’t gamble, and you won’t do these other things they do, what do they do to get even? They point the finger of scorn at you, and they ridicule you, and they laugh at you. What a powerful weapon ridicule is! And, I’m going to tell you something else: any true Christian is going to face some ridicule. And, if you’re not facing ridicule, don’t get too proud. The servant’s not better than his master. And, if they ridiculed the Lord Jesus Christ, they’re going to ridicule you.

## I. The Nature of Ridicule

Why did they ridicule in this day? Look here in Nehemiah chapter 4. I want you to notice the nature of the ridicule.

### A. The Feebleness of God's People

The first thing they ridicule is the feebleness of God's people. Notice in verse 2: *"And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews?"* (Nehemiah 4:2). And so, they ridicule the feebleness of God's people. And folks, really, we are a feeble people if you look at it according to the world's standards, when the world measures things by numbers, by size, by prestige, by finances, so forth.

"Oh," you say, "Brother Rogers, we've got a big crowd here today." This crowd is but a drop in the bucket. Don't just look around here and see these people who are here. I tell you, if you want to know where the people are, you go out and drive up and down the lanes of this city, and you'll see where the people are, friend. They look at us, and they think of the Church. And, the Church worldwide is just a feeble little group. They're not much impressed with us, because the world is impressed by size and by prestige. And, here is old Sanballat, saying, "Look at them—feeble people! Feeble people." But, don't you make a mistake, dear friend, if you're one of those who's laughing. Don't you measure Christianity by the size of the people.

Brother Tom Clayton told me about a little fellow, one time, in the northern woods who applied for a job as a woodchopper (a woodsmen, an axmen). And, they looked at the little runt—about *this high*—and said, "Hey, fella, you can't chop down trees. This is a man's job." He said, "I can do it." And so, they took one of those big broad blade axes, and put it in his hands, and said, "Chop down that sapling there." He went snirkety-snack, and down it went. "Well," he said, "that was a sapling." He said, "Try it over here on this redwood." He went hackity-hack, whackity-whack, choppity-chop, and down it went. The man said, "I've never seen anything like that. You're such a little fella! Man, where did you learn how to chop wood like that?" He said, "In the Sahara Forest." He said, "The Sahara Forest? You mean Sahara Desert." He said, "Yeah, now." We may not look like much, but I want to tell you, the Bible says, *"God hath chosen the weak things of [this] world to confound the wise...[and the] mighty"* (1 Corinthians 1:27). And, *"not many mighty, not many noble, are called"* (1 Corinthians 1:26). But, we're laughed at sometimes because of our feebleness.

### B. The Futility of the Task

And then, sometimes not only did they laugh at them because of their feebleness, but they laughed at them because of the futility of the task. Look at it again. It says here in verse 2: *"will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish [that] are burned?"* (Nehemiah 4:2). That is, "They'll never do what they say

that they're going to do; it just can't be done." I've got a secret, folks: it may look like we have a futile task, but we're going to win. Just mark it down: we're going to win. We cannot lose; we must prevail. Woodrow Wilson said, "I had rather temporarily lose with a cause that must ultimately succeed than temporarily succeed with a cause that must ultimately fail." We will win. And so, they mocked—oh, they mocked—their feebleness. They mocked their futility.

### C. **The Foolishness of Their Faith**

And, they also mocked the foolishness of their faith. Look again in verse 2, and it says, "*Will they sacrifice?*" (Nehemiah 4:2). Now, he's mocking their religion; he's mocking their very faith. And, people mock our very faith. First Corinthians chapter 1, verse 18: "*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness*" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Oh, they laugh at the things I preach—the high muckety-mucks. They hear us preaching about a crucified Christ and our dear Savior, and they laugh.

Harry Ironside, one time, a great preacher of yesteryear, was with some Christians, and they were on a ferryboat going from Oakland to San Francisco across the bay there. And, they were singing and praising the Lord, singing choruses like Christians like to do when they get together. And, a man was standing out there on the periphery of the crowd, and that man said to Dr. Ironside—he said, "Who are you? What is this group?" "Oh," he said, "We're some Christians." And, he said, "What are you doing?" Dr. Ironside said, "We're just singing and praising the Lord." And, the man began to mock them, and he said, "You're a bunch of fools. That's what you are." He said, "You're quite right. We are fools." But, he said, "We're fools for Christ's sake. Whose fool are you?"

### D. **The Frailty of Their Work**

They laugh at the foolishness—what they call the foolishness—of our faith. Oh, and then, they laughed at the frailty of their work. Look again in verse 3: "*Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall*" (Nehemiah 4:3). That is, "A little old fox crawling over their stone wall's going to break it down." That is, "It's not going to last." And again, the world mocks and laughs. That's what the world says: "it won't last." And, they mock us.

One of the things that I remember more than anything else out of my youth, after God called me to preach as a young boy... And, I didn't come from a household of preachers. My dad was not a preacher. My dad and I were saved the same night. I didn't come from a particularly religious, Baptist type of family. But, God reached down, and God called me to preach. And, I told my folks, and everyday I knew that God had called me to preach. And, I remember being, one time, in my bedroom, and my father had a friend of our family's—they were sitting out there on the patio talking. This was a man that I admired and respected very much. And, this man said to my father,

“What’s Adrian going to do when he gets out of high school?” And, my dad said, “He wants to go off to college to study to be a preacher.” And, that man just laughed, and he said, “He won’t make it; he’ll never stick it out. He’ll quit.” That went into my heart like a poison arrow. I almost felt like crying. “He won’t make it.” And, they just laughed. My dad didn’t laugh, but this man laughed. You know, friends, that hurts. That’s what the world says, you know: “they won’t stick it out; they won’t make it.”

And so, they mock. What do they mock? They mocked the feebleness of the people. They mocked the futility of the task. They mocked the foolishness of their faith. They mocked the frailty of their work.

## **II. The Reaction to Ridicule**

You see, the devil hasn’t changed his tactics—not at all! He’s still mocking; he’s still laughing. And, you, if you’re doing a work for God, you might as well get ready. You’re going to face some ridicule. Now, there are three things that Nehemiah did that you need to do in your reaction to ridicule.

### **A. Practical Consideration**

First of all, a practical consideration—notice in verse 4: “*Hear, O our God; for we are despised*” (Nehemiah 4:4). Now, you might as well put it down, friend: Christians are despised. Just consider it with me for a moment. And, when you are despised and when you are mocked, just consider several things.

#### **1. The Cause of the Ridicule**

First of all, I want you to consider the cause of the ridicule. Do you know why the world laughs at Christians? I’ll tell you why: ridicule is a substitute for reason; laughing is a substitute for logic. Now, if they cannot reason us out of a work for God, they will try to ridicule us out of a work for God. If they cannot logic out of a work for God, they will try to laugh us out of a work for God.

#### **2. The Character of the Ridicule**

But, not only consider the cause of it—consider the character of those who do the ridiculing. You see, folks, we’re known not only by the friends that we make—we’re also known by the enemies that we make. There would be something wrong with me if some people were not laughing at me. There is something wrong with you if some people are not laughing at you.

Do you remember there in Acts 5, verse 41, where those disciples had been persecuted? And, the Bible says that “*they departed from the presence of the council, [and rejoiced] that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*” (Acts 5:41). You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, nobody ever laughs at me.” Well then, keep it a secret, would you? You haven’t been counted worthy. There is not enough in your life to make

any difference.

I'm looking into the face of some medical men, and some businessmen today, and some lawyers, and I want to tell you that there's no way that you can live for Jesus Christ in your profession without some of your compatriots and your peers looking down on you and laughing at you. I'm looking in the face of some college students—there is no way that you can live a separated, godly, righteous life, carry your Bible to class, bow your head in the cafeteria and pray without somebody pointing the finger of scorn at you. There is no way that you can take a testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ—no way on this green Earth—without somebody laughing at you. And, if they don't laugh at you, it's just simply because you've not been counted worthy. You just consider those who do it—they're the enemies of our Lord and of our Christ. And, you might as well put it down and put it down big—that when you go for God, you're going to face the godless gang and the Christless clique. All right?

### **3. The Company You Are In**

I want you to consider something else: not only the cause of it and the character of those who did it, but I want you to consider the company that you are you in—the company that you're in. You see, Jesus was also scorned. And, the servant is not better than his master. Let me give you some verses today that ought to break your heart and encourage you at the same time.

Turn, if you will, to Mark chapter 5, verse 40. Jesus Christ is getting ready to perform one of His most notable miracles. Every time I read this I can hardly believe that it literally happened, but I know it did because it's in the Bible. In Mark chapter 5, verse 40—this is talking about the Lord of Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, Truth incarnate—and notice what it says here in Mark 5, verse 40: *“And they laughed him to scorn”* (Mark 5:40). Who? Jesus. *“They laughed him to scorn”* (Mark 5:40). They laughed in the face of the Son of God. *“They laughed him to scorn”* (Mark 5:40).

Turn to Luke chapter 22, and look at our Lord Jesus Christ there at the hands of those soldiers. In Luke chapter 22, I read in verse 63: *“And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him”* (Luke 22:63). And, I believe with all of my heart that it was easier for Jesus to take the fisticuffs and easier for Him to take the clubs that beat upon His head than it was to take that laughter and that ridicule in His face. They *“mocked him, and [they] smote him”* (Luke 22:63).

I want you to look in Luke chapter 23 for a moment. Here's the Lord Jesus Christ hanging in agony and blood upon the cross. And, look in verse 35: *“And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be [the] Christ, the [Son] of God”*—do you know what that word *derided* means? It means they “ridiculed” him. They laughed at him; they scorned him. Look in verse 36—*“And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him*

*vinegar*” (Luke 23:35–36). Oh, what a field day they had! How they laughed. How they scorned him. Friend, if Jesus Christ was laughed at upon the cross, surely you’re going to be laughed at, if you live for God.

Don’t you let the devil laugh you out of a work for God. It’s one of his chief tools. How do you react to ridicule? Listen—you consider the cause of it; you consider the character of those who do it; you consider the company that you’re in when you’re laughed at: you’re with the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **4. The Compensation That You’ll Get**

I want you to also consider the compensation that you’re going to get for being laughed at. The Lord’s going to pay you. Don’t you worry about it. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5, verse 11, that “when men will persecute you, and revile you, and say all matter of evil against you falsely, for His namesake, just rejoice and be exceeding glad” (Matthew 5:11–12). If people laugh at you all day, you just go home and laugh all night. You just rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

#### **5. The Conclusion of the Whole Matter**

There’s something else I want you to notice: not only the compensation, because he says, “*Great is your reward in heaven*” (Matthew 5:12), but the next thing I want you to notice is the conclusion of the whole matter. You know what we say: he who laughs last—hmmm?—he who laughs last has the best laugh. Who’s going to have the last laugh? You say, “The Church.” No. God Himself—God Himself. You can laugh your way right into Hell, but you can’t laugh your way out.

I’m going to tell you something else: it is God, not man, that will have the last laugh. I want you to look here in Proverbs chapter 1, and verse 24: this is God speaking, and God says, “*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me*” (Proverbs 1:24–28). God says, “Now, it’s My turn to laugh.” This is not the laugh of some fiend who’s getting even. This is one of the cases in the Bible of the irony of the wrath of God.

Thomas Payne, the old skeptic and infidel, asked Benjamin Franklin, “Ben, what do you think of my book, *The Age of Reason*?” It was a book that ridiculed the Christian faith. You know what Ben Franklin said to Tom Payne? He says, “Tom, when a man spits against the wind, he spits in his own face.”

Agathan was a young Roman. He had a boyhood friend named Julian. And, Agathan and Julian grew up together, and they played together. But, Julian grew up to be the Emperor of Rome. He was known as the “apostate emperor.” And, he was cruel,

and he hated Christ. And, he hated Christians, and he did all he could do to put down Christianity. One day, after both men were grown, Julian met Aagathan. And, Julian, trying to taunt Aagathan for his faith, said to Aagathan, “Aagathan, how is the carpenter of Nazareth doing these days? Is he getting plenty of work? Is there enough work for your carpenter to keep him busy?” Aagathan said, “Yes, Julian. The carpenter is getting plenty of work. And today, he’s nailing together a coffin to put your empire in.” He served to be a prophet, for in two years, Julian was slain by the Persians and his empire was crumbling. I want to tell you, it is God who will get the last laugh. You just consider the conclusion of the whole thing.

Now, whenever you’re ridiculed, just consider some things—just consider some things: why you’re being ridiculed; who’s doing the ridiculing; who, along with you, is being ridiculed; what is God going to pay you for being ridiculed; and what is the conclusion of the whole matter. And, don’t you let any body laugh you out of a work for God.

## B. Prayerful Supplication

Now, the second thing—not only is there to be some considerations (some practical consideration), but some prayerful supplication. Look again here in Nehemiah chapter 4, and begin in verse 4—here’s what old Nehemiah does: he says, *“Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders”* (Nehemiah 4:4–5).

Now, this is a prayer—not for personal recrimination against them. He’s just saying, “God, it is You that they dishonor, and God, You’re the righteous Judge. And God, You get glory to Your name. Lord, they have provoked You to anger. When they are despising us, Lord, when they’re laughing at us, Lord, they are laughing at You.” And, I want you to notice what Nehemiah did: Nehemiah did not get into a name-calling contest with them. He didn’t do it, and don’t you do it. A bulldog can whip a skunk, but it’s not worth it. Nehemiah just simply told God on them; he just told God about it. Here they are laughing. Here they are mocking. Here they are scoffing. Here they are ridiculing. And, you know what Nehemiah says? He says, “Hear it, O God. God, You listen. And God, You take action!” And, He will.

I want you to jot this verse down in the margin—Proverbs 3, verse 34: *“Surely he”—“God”—“[scoffeth at] the [scoffers]: but he giveth grace unto the lowly”* (Proverbs 3:34). It is God who scoffs at the scoffers. And then, I want you to put right under that “1 Peter chapter 2, verse 23.” And, it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this is what it says: *“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; [and] when he suffered, he threatened*

*not; but committed himself [unto] him that judgeth righteously”* (1 Peter 2:23). Isn’t that great? Oh, Peter surely was impressed by the way the Lord Jesus reacted to ridicule. *“When he was reviled, [he] reviled not again...[and] he threatened not”* (1 Peter 2:23). He just told God on them. “Hear, O Lord!” That’s what we need to do, folks—just carry it to God in prayer, and tell the Lord about it.

### C. **Physical Perspiration**

Now, not only should there be some practical consideration, and not only should there be some prayerful supplication, but, if I may use the word, there needs to be some physical perspiration. That’s the third thing that he did. I want you to notice here in verse 6: *“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work”* (Nehemiah 4:6). I like that! Not that they did have a mind to cry, or a mind to criticize, or a mind to gossip—but they had a mind to work. And, in spite of all of the threats of the enemy, in spite of all of the ridicule and all of the scorn, they just started to do what God had called them to do.

*Somebody said that it couldn't be done,  
But, he, with a chuckle, replied  
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one  
Who wouldn't say so 'till he'd tried.  
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin  
On his face. if he worried, he hid it.  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it.*

—EDGAR ALBERT GUEST

## **Conclusion**

Folks, listen: we’re not saved by work; we’re saved by the grace of God. You know that, don’t you? The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8–9). We’re not saved by works. Good works can’t save us. Salvation is in the mercy of God, not in the merit of man. It’s in the grace of God, not in the goodness of man. Salvation is not a prize that you receive at the end of the race; it’s a gift that enables you to run the race. You see, the minute I trust the Lord Jesus Christ, that moment, God saves me. Isn’t that wonderful? It’s *“not of works”* (Ephesians 2:9).

*I cannot work my soul to save.  
That work my Lord has done.  
But I will work like any slave*

*For the love of God's dear Son.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Won't you? There's no cheap way, there's no easy way, there's no lazy way to do a work for God. "*The people had a mind to work*" (Nehemiah 4:6). My heart almost jumps off my throat as I look at all of you folks and say, "O God, what would happen if everyone had a mind to work and a heart to pray as old Nehemiah did?" "*The people had a mind to work*" (Nehemiah 4:6).

# The Devices of the Devil

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 17, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Nehemiah 4:1–6, 16**

*“But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?”*

NEHEMIAH 4:1–2

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you would please, to the book of Nehemiah—Nehemiah chapter 4. I want to talk to you tonight about his majesty the devil—his satanic, infernal majesty—who is the god of this age, the prince of this world. And, the message tonight really is to sound an alarm to warn you that you have an enemy and you need to know about him. Now, this morning I spoke on warfare, but the real warfare is a spiritual warfare: *“we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:12) Now,

our enemy is very deceitful. The Bible tells us in the book of the Revelation that he deceives the whole world, (Revelation 12:9) and he's very cunning and crafty.

#### A. **His Wiles**

For example, in Ephesians 6:11—don't turn to it, but just stay there in Nehemiah—but in Ephesians 6:11, the Bible says that we're to "*stand against the wiles of the devil.*" And, the word *wiles*—*methodeia*—is the word we get our word *methods* from. That is, the devil is very methodical. He doesn't work by happenstance, not willy-nilly. He has a strategy to stop this church. He has a strategy to ruin your life. The Bible speaks of "*the wiles of the devil.*" (Ephesians 6:11)

#### B. **His Snares**

And, in 2 Timothy 2:26, the Bible speaks of "*the [snares] of the devil.*" That is, he has laid a trap for you. Now, remember that a snare is hidden. When you want to snare somebody, if you're going to snare a wild beast, for example, you put the snare on the ground and then you cover it with leaves and straw or whatever. So, somewhere, some time—like *Candid Camera*—when you least expect it, there is the snare of the devil. His methods—the wiles, the snares.

#### C. **His Devices**

And then, the Apostle Paul said, however, in 2 Corinthians 2:11: "*for we are...ignorant of his devices.*" That's the third word—wiles, snares, and then devices.

Now, thank God we don't have to be in ignorance concerning what Satan is up to. You see, dear friend, in our war, our intelligence department, the Holy Spirit, tells us exactly what our enemy is up to. We don't have to be ignorant. And yet, so many people are saturated with ignorance concerning the word of the devil. Now, in the book of Nehemiah, we're going to see what I'm going to call tonight "the devices of the devil." And, I want to mention some things that Satan will do to try to hinder my minister, to try to hinder your service, to try to stop the work of this church and all churches. Now, these are not fantasies, and the book of Nehemiah is not written as mere history; it is biblically recorded truth, and it is more than an episode of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. It is, indeed, didactic in that God has given us this book to teach us that we would not be ignorant of Satan's devices.

Now, what had happened is this: that God called Nehemiah as a builder. God called Nehemiah to go return back to Jerusalem and build the walls—rebuild the walls—of Jerusalem that had broken down. And so, Nehemiah has gone back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Now, any work for God will receive satanic opposition. Satan has worked since 1903 against Bellevue Baptist Church, and he will keep working against our church until Jesus Christ comes. Satan works against your life. You say, "Well, he

doesn't work against me." Well, don't congratulate yourself. *If you haven't met the devil, it's because you and the devil are going in the same direction. You turn around, my dear friend, and you'll have a head-on collision with Satan.* He stands against anything that is good, and godly, and holy. But, thank God we do not have to be ignorant of his devices. To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and I thank God for this book of Nehemiah.

Now, Nehemiah is rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and today, we're rebuilding walls: walls of orthodoxy have crumbled, and Satan today, in the world, has developed an educated, polished, juiceless, anemic brand of preacher and minister—preachers today with humanistic tendencies that deify man and deny the Lord and defy the law and defile the land. Walls of orthodoxy have crumbled. And, walls of decency have crumbled. Not since Manhattan Island was sold for twenty-four dollars has so much filth been sold so cheaply as right here in America. And, the demon-possessed, sex-crazed, money-mad world that we live in is ripe for judgment. And, walls of freedom are crumbling, and the noose is getting tighter and tighter as totalitarian regimes around the world are flaunting power. And, what we need today in this city, in this church, and in our world is some modern-day Nehemiahs. Now, let me mention what the devil did to try to stop Nehemiah and what the devil will do to try to stop this church or to try to stop you. I'm going to mention some things.

## I. Derision

The very first thing is what I want to call "derision." Look, if you will, in chapter 4:1: *"But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews"*—do you see that? Just underscore it. He mocked them. That is, he derided them. That is, he laughed at them. That is, he ridiculed them—*"And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"* (Nehemiah 4:1–2) Can you hear the sarcasm? Can you hear the biting, withering scorn in the mouth of this man named Sanballat who hated the work of Christ?

Now, what is happening is this: that the devil is trying to laugh God's people away from a work for God. Have you ever been laughed at for your faith? Have you? I have. I've had people since I was a high-school kid to laugh at me because of the things I do and would not do. You see, you might as well admit the fact that true Christians are going to be the laughing stock of this world. I mean, have you noticed any of the situational comedies on television where they make fun of Bible-believing Christians? Have you noticed that if there is a minister of the gospel—I mean, if he is a Bible-believing preacher—he's made to look like some fool, some freak, some fanatic? All

true Bible believers, in the eyes of the world, are going to be do-gooders, blue noses, puritans, fundamentalists, fanatics—whatever it is. They’re going to try to laugh us away from a work for God. My dear friend, I want to tell you that that scorn is the work of the devil.

Now, do you say, “Brother Rogers, there must be something wrong with us if they laugh at us. They don’t respect us”? My dear friend, the servant is not better than his lord, (John 13:16; 15:20) and they mocked and laughed and ridiculed the Lord Jesus. One of the most poignantly sad verses in all of the Bible is found in the book of Mark, 5:40, when the Lord Jesus was getting ready to raise a little girl from the dead. And, the Bible says—listen to it: *“they laughed him to scorn.”* (Mark 5:40) I’m talking about Jesus. They’re holding their sides. They’re laughing—literally, mocking—the Lord of Glory. Can you stand up under that kind of ridicule? Can you carry your Bible to work and let them laugh? Can you pray over your meal and let them laugh? It’s hard. Ridicule has its sting, and the devil knows it.

Now, the response of Nehemiah and his crowd was a wonderful response. Notice what they did in chapter 4:6: *“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work”*—now, let me tell you what you ought to do when people begin to laugh at you for what you believe: just go to work for the Lord Jesus Christ, and before long, you’ll wipe that laughter off their face. Notice—*“But [when] it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth”*—no laughter now. My dear friend, there are people in this city who would laugh at the faith that we hold as a church, but we just need to have a mind to work. Just keep on doing what God has called us to do, and before long, when they see what God is doing, their laughter will turn to anger. Notice in verse 9—*“Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.”* (Nehemiah 4:6–7, 9) I love it. Here’s the laughter, and the people had a mind to work in verse 6. They had a heart to pray in verse 9. They had an eye to watch in verse 9. And so, they went on and built the work, because they were more concerned about the approval of God than they were the ridicule of men. I just thank God for men who are not ashamed of Jesus Christ, and I want some of you lily-livered, so-called “Christian men” out here to be bold for the Lord Jesus Christ. Don’t you let the devil laugh you out of a work for God. They laughed at Jesus. Let them laugh, and just go to work.

## **II. Discouragement**

Now, the devil tried derision, and that didn’t work, so he’s not finished yet. Now, he tries discouragement. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“And Judah said”*—this is Nehemiah

4:10—“*And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish*”—and oh, listen to this next phrase—“*so that we are not able to build the wall.*” Now, Judah was inspired of the devil, because they were able. But, here’s a man who says, “We are not able.” It seems that the devil always puts some into the ranks of the believers who say, “It can’t be done.” God, deliver us from the Judahs. It will be done, but no thanks to them. These people are like a drink of water to a drowning man.

I mean, dear friend, I’ve seen them in every church I pastored. I remember down in the little church that I pastored on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, we decided we needed a little educational building. I was pastoring that church as a seminary student. And, we cleared off a spot and poured a slab of concrete to build an educational building on. I remember one of the members of that church who came to me and looked at that—that foundation—and was literally angry—angry. And, that person said, “What foolishness is this? What foolishness is this? Look at that. We will never build a building on that slab. What a waste of God’s money.” Now, you go down there today, you’ll see that building on that slab, my dear friend, because here was an individual who said, “It can’t be done,” and God said to my heart, “It will be done,” and it was done. I remember the same thing in Fort Pierce, Florida—the first church I took after seminary. We decided we needed some space. We needed to raise some money. I remember a dear man—bless his heart, he loved God—but he came to me. He had an expression: “Law me.” That’s the way he’d say it. His voice would crack: “Law me,” he would say. He looked at that. He said, “Law me. We’ll never do it.” I said to myself, “By the grace of God we will.” And, my dear friend, we did—we did. When we got ready to move this facility from downtown out there, there were those—and some in our ranks—who said, “It can’t be done!” But friend, it has been done—it has been done. I don’t take the credit for it. I’m not boasting; I’m not swaggering. I am giving God the glory.

But, the devil will try always to put someone around who says that it can’t be done, and some of you get discouraged. Some of you are Sunday School teachers. You’re ready to quit that Sunday School class. You’ve got a class of bad boys. You say, “Those boys are incorrigible.” Well, who do you think needs a Sunday School teacher if it’s not incorrigible boys? I mean, dear friend, that’s why God put you in that class. You say, “There’s so much rubbish.” Well, you can’t build on rubbish, but remove the rubbish of anger, and pride, and temper. “*They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.*” (Isaiah 40:31)

Discouragement is one of the greatest tools of Satan. I read somewhere years ago of the fact that Satan—it’s just a parable—but Satan was auctioning off some of his tools. There was one tool well worn. It wasn’t for sale. They said, “What is that tool, Satan?” He said, “That tool is discouragement. It’s my best tool. I can’t sell it.” He said, “I use discouragement to pry a man’s life open, and once I get in with that tool, I can do

whatever I want once I'm on the inside." Discouragement is of the devil. If you're discouraged tonight, may I tell you that the devil is on your trail? And, God deliver us as a church from those ministers of discouragement, those human wet blankets. The Bible says in Galatians 6:9: *"be [not] weary in well doing."*

### **III. Danger**

Now, let me give you a third device of the devil. These are not just things that Satan has done. My friend, these are things that Satan is doing to stop the work of this church. If derision would not do it and discouragement would not do it, then he uses actual danger. Look in verse 11: *"And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease."* (Nehemiah 4:11) Now, the devil is not against physical intimidation. The devil is not against actually causing bodily harm to the children of God. And, every child of God who will stand up for the Lord Jesus will have someone who will say, "I am going to do you bodily harm." It's one of the devices of the devil. Well, what did these people do? How did they react to what the devil said that he was going to do? Well, they did several things.

#### **A. They Remembered the Lord**

First of all, they remembered the Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 14: and the Bible says here, *"And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not...afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible."* (Nehemiah 4:14) That's the very first thing you need to do: when somebody intimidates you, remember the Lord. He is greater than the enemy.

A little boy asked his dad, "Dad, how big is the devil?" His dad said, "Well, I really don't know." He said, "Well, is he bigger than I am?" And, the dad said, "Well, Son, I reckon he is." He said, "Well, Daddy, is he bigger than Mommy?" He said, "Yes, Son, I think he is." "Well, Daddy, is he bigger than you?" The dad said, "Yes, Son, I believe he is." The little boy is getting pretty frightened. He said, "Daddy, is he bigger than Jesus?" And, the dad said, "No, Son, he's not." And then, the little fellow said, "Then I'm not afraid of him." I like that. *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* (1 John 4:4) And, what does Nehemiah say to these people who make threats? He says, *"Remember the LORD"—"remember the LORD."* (Nehemiah 4:14)

#### **B. They Remembered Their Loved Ones**

But, not only remember the Lord; remember your loved ones. Look in verse 14: *"And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and...the rest of [them], Be not...afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses."*

(Nehemiah 4:14) Now, my dear friend, that fits in so well with what I had to say this morning. Remember the Lord, and not fight in order to be pugnacious, not fight in order to take more ground—but fight for your loved ones. *“Be not...afraid...remember the LORD, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”* (Nehemiah 4:14) All that we hold dear is at stake and in the balance. And, don't you let the devil intimidate you; you need to intimidate him. And, the Bible says in James 4:7: *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*

#### **IV. Discord**

Well, the devil is not finished yet. Let me give you another of the devices of the devil: not only danger, but discord. Look in chapter 5:1: *“And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.”* (Nehemiah 5:1) Now, the devil says, “Well, if I can't get at them with derision, if I can't get at them with discouragement, if I can't get at them with danger, then I'll get at them with discord. I will divide up the body, and I will put discord in the ranks.”

Now, in this particular chapter, if you'll read, the discord was over money, and many churches have been divided over discord over money. But, it could be over anything. The devil loves a church fuss, but the Bible says, *“[God hates him] that [sows] discord among brethren.”* (Proverbs 6:16–19) One of the great proofs of the deity of Jesus Christ is the unity of the Church. Jesus prayed in John 17 that believers would be one, that the people of this world—O-N-E, one—that the people of this world would believe that God the Father had sent the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 17:20–21) Hear the plea of a pastor.

I thank God that I have had the joy of pastoring a church that has walked together in unity for the eighteen years that God has let me be the pastor of this church. I was talking to another man in another city, and I said, “How's your church doing?” He said, “So-so.” I said, “How is thus-and-such a church doing?” He said, “So-so.” I said, “Well, how is another church doing?” He said, “Oh, that church is doing well.” He said, “They're continuing to grow.” I said, “What is the difference?” He said, “All of the other churches have had division, but this church has not had division. They have stood steady, and they have stayed the course. And, because of that, they have continued to grow and to prosper.” And, I thought how the good hand of God has been upon our church. The devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey any day, and the devil is that minister of division who tries to divide.

Now, the reason we must stay together is very easily seen if you'll look in chapter 5:9. Here's what Nehemiah said to these brethren—these brethren who were at one another's throat: *“Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of*

*our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?”* (Nehemiah 5:9) Nehemiah said, “We must—we must, we must—stay together.” And, my dear friend, as your pastor, I want to say to you, we must—we must, we must—stay together. Now, I’m not going to divide with you, and you’re not going to divide with me, and we’re not going to divide with one another over the color of the carpet, or the placement of the organ, or the size of a building, or the budget, or anything else. The only thing that we would ever, ever have to take division would be Bible doctrine and moral standards. My dear friend, we cannot ever let Satan in any way drive a wedge into our fellowship. And you guard our fellowship with your very life. The devil is so divisive. The Bible says, “[*God hates him*] that [*sows*] discord among brethren.” (Proverbs 6:16–19)

Well, what happened? How—how—did they handle this? Well, look, if you will, in chapter 5:11: Nehemiah said, “*Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, [and] the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. [And] they [said], We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. [And] I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise.*” (Nehemiah 5:11–12) Now, what happened is this: there was a problem that could have caused even greater discord. They had spiritual leadership. They got together, and there was repentance, there was restoration, there was resumption of the work. Let me tell you something, dear friend: *there are no problems too big to solve—just people too small to solve them.* We can solve almost any problem if we attack the problem rather than one another.

## V. Diversion

Well, the devil is not finished yet. So, if discord did not stop them from building the wall, he tried something else; and it’s what I want to call “diversion”—“diversion.” Look, if you will, in chapter 6:1: “*Now it came to pass when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors [or] the gates;) That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, [while] I leave it, and come down to you?*”—don’t you just love that? Look in verse 4—“*Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.*” (Nehemiah 6:1–4)

Now, the devil—he’s so wily, he is so methodical, he is so divisive in his devices. So, when he sees these other things are not working, he says, “Nehemiah, what we need to do now is to have a conference. I want you to leave the work. I want you to stop what

you're doing and come down here to one of the villages, and we're going to talk it over." Now, notice the devil. The Bible says he appears either as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8)—or what?—an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14) He roared against them, and they kept on working. So now, no longer is he roaring; now, he says, "Hey, let's be gentlemen. Come down here, and let's just talk this over." And, my dear friend, when you do the work of God, you beware of the snare of the world's friendship. Satan's motivation has never changed.

I've seen so many churches, so many Christians, so many pastors who are doing a good work for God, and the devil, who cannot stop them in any other way, makes a friend out of them and diverts them from what God has called them to do. And, the good becomes the enemy of the best. You beware of any conferences that cause you to compromise. We have to make certain, dear friend, that all that we do is of the Lord and that we don't get diverted from doing a good work, what God has called us to do. I remember talking with Dr. Billy Graham. He told me how they tried to make a United States senator out of him. He told me how Hollywood came to him. He told me how some business people came to him. But, God said, "Billy, you keep on doing what I have called you to do." Nehemiah said, "*I am doing a great work...why should [I] come down...?*" (Nehemiah 6:3)

The devil is very clever. I heard of a man who was on a bear hunt one day; and he went out into the field, and he saw just the bear he wanted. He leveled his gun on the bear, and the bear put up both paws and said, "Wait a minute. Hold it. Don't pull that trigger. I mean, listen, man, we need to sit down and have a talk about this thing." And, the man said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, be reasonable. Now, evidently you want to shoot me because you want to skin me; you want a fur coat. And, I'm on the prowl because I'm hungry; I'm looking for a good meal. Now listen, we both have our own personal interests. Let's sit down and talk it over." So, the man laid down his gun, went out in the middle of the road, and the bear and the man had a conversation. And, when it was over, they both had what they wanted: the bear had a good meal, and the man had a fur coat. Dear friend, these are the methods of Satan.

Some of you are going to get sidetracked. I've seen deacons and soul winners—they get in a church like this, they have a Sunday School class, they go to work for the Lord, and then some civic organization comes along and taps them, and they stop serving the Lord, and they stop working in the church, and they get in some organization and become the First Vice President for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Orphaned Grandmothers with Athlete's Foot. And, they're no longer working for Jesus—sidetracked, diverted, from the work. Nehemiah wouldn't buy it.

## VI. Deformation

The devil is not finished yet. Let me show you what else he does: it's deformation. Listen, what a bag of tricks he has. Look in chapter 6:5: *"Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to all these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported [unto] the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart."* (Nehemiah 6:5–8) What is the next thing the devil does? Deformation—deformation. The devil started a dirty rumor, and what the devil said was this: that Nehemiah is filled with pride and self-seeking; the only reason that Nehemiah wanted to rebuild the walls was that he was building a little kingdom for himself. And, that will be said about any man of God and any church. We will be accused of building a kingdom for ourselves. I, as the pastor of this church, will be accused of self-serving, and the devil is not too dirty to do that.

As a matter of fact, the Bible says that Sanballat came with an open letter. (Nehemiah 6:5) What does that mean? Very much like a letter to the editor. Have you ever read some person who will sit down and write an open letter for everybody to read and it's a letter slandering the people of God? May I tell you that you're never more like Satan when you slander. "Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, what can we do to keep from being slandered?" Nothing—nothing. You live for Jesus Christ, and they will slander you. Remember again that the servant is not better than his lord. (John 13:16; 15:20) Jesus was called a winebibber. (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34) He wasn't. He was called a glutton. (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34) He wasn't. They said of Jesus Christ, "He was in league with the devil." (Matthew 12:24) You expect to be defamed if you live for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I heard about a little four-year-old boy who said his prayers, and he thought he was praying what he heard everybody else pray in church; and he prayed this: "Lord, forgive us our trash baskets." And, some of us need to pray that prayer, because we've allowed our ears to be trash baskets, and we listen to the dirty insinuations of the devil. Don't you let somebody use your ears for a trash basket. There are always those who will attack the people of God. I heard about a pastor of a church. He had two people in the congregation—two men—who called on him and said, "Pastor, we think your work here at this church is finished, and we think it's time for you to move on." The pastor said, "Well," he said, "I'll pray about it." They came back later and said, "Did you pray about it?" He said, "I sure did. The Lord said He'd never heard of you two guys." My dear

friend, there are always those who want to slander God's people.

How are you going to deal with slander? Well, the more you protest, sometimes the more guilty you sound. The best way is to simply do what Nehemiah did—is just to state the truth and go on. Your best defense is a pure life and a clear conscience. Henry Ward Beecher said, “Life would be a perpetual flea hunt if a man were obliged to run down all the innuendoes, the inveracities, the insinuations, and the misrepresentations which are uttered against him.” I like what Abraham Lincoln said—Abraham Lincoln, the great President of the United States who was criticized. And, by the way, the way to escape criticism is to say nothing, do nothing, and be nothing. Abraham Lincoln said, “If I were to try to read, much less answer, all of the attacks made on me, this shop may as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep on doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.” Well, that's good, isn't it? I'm just going to keep on serving the Lord. Be careful that you're not in the business of defaming the people of God. Oh, you're never more like the enemy himself when you do that.

## VII. Dismay

Then, again, what does the devil do? Well, he's not finished yet; and so, he tries another trick: not deformation—by attacking people's motivation and character—but dismay. Look, if you will—he actually tries to put fear in your life—chapter 6:9—look at it again: and the Bible says, *“They all made us afraid”*—*“For they all made us afraid”*—*“saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. [And] afterward I came [to] the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of [the Lord], within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night [they] will...come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, [who] would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.”* (Nehemiah 6:9–11)

Now, what the devil had done here now is to bring his sinister minister of fear out, reach into his bag of tricks, and pull out another weapon that's almost as good as discouragement, and it's fear. What he said to Nehemiah was, “Run for your life!” Fear has power to weaken, according to verse 9. And, the Bible says in 2 Timothy 1:7 that *“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”* The Bible teaches when a man truly fears God, he has to fear no man. Nehemiah said, “Why should such a one as I flee?” (Nehemiah 6:11) Now, the devil will shoot his poisoned arrow of fear, and if you let him get that arrow into your heart, it'll do several things. It'll degrade the Father, because it's saying, “Father, you're not able to

take care of me.” It’ll disturb your friends. You see, fear is infectious, and it will make you a stumbling block. It will delight your foes. The devil loves to see you intimidated. We play into the devil’s hands when we are afraid.

## VIII. Deception

Now, last of all, I want you to see the very last thing that the devil wants to do, and it’s deception. How very devilishly deceptive the devil is! Look in chapter 6, beginning in verse 12. Now, this man had said to Nehemiah, “Listen, buddy, they’re after you, and what you need to do is to flee into the temple and shut the door; and there, you’ll be safe.” But now, notice in chapter 6:12: *“And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him”*—now, you see, he came in the name of the Lord, but Nehemiah says—*“I perceived that God had not sent him; but...he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid”*—that is, here was a trap of the devil. Here was a man who was a hireling, not a true prophet of God, who came, supposedly, to give advice to Nehemiah that was good advice, but it was meant by the sinister minister of fear, the devil, to cause fear. And, he says—*“Therefore...he [was] hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin...that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.”* (Nehemiah 6:12–14)

Now, what Nehemiah did was just tell God on them. You see, here’s what the devil did: he disguised himself as an angel of light, and he got some merchants of fear and he said, “Now Nehemiah, this is a message from God. You’re in real danger, and what you need to do is to go into the temple and hide yourself.” Nehemiah knew the Word of God. It would have been a sin for Nehemiah to go into the holy place because he was not a priest, and Nehemiah knew that. But, you see, Nehemiah was the kind of a man who had his antenna up. Now, the devil will, many times, comes to you with “religious advice.” And, how are you going to know the difference? Well, my dear friend, you’d better know the Word of God and be filled with the Spirit of God. You’d better keep your knees on the floor and your eyes on this book or you’re going to be deceived.

## Conclusion

Now, in all of these things, can you not see the hand of the devil? And, my dear friend, that devil is as alive and well in this twentieth century as he was centuries ago when Nehemiah was doing a work for God. Well, how does this story end? Do you like stories that have a happy ending? Then, look in chapter 6:15. I love it—I love it: *“So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month [of] Elul, in fifty and two days”*—in

less than a year, they built the wall—*“And it came to pass...when our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes”*—and now, listen to this—*“for they perceived that this work was wrought [by] our God.”* (Nehemiah 6:15–16) Don’t you like that? Don’t you like that? The wall was built. And, do you know what the people did? I don’t know whether they had this song or not, but surely if they had it, they would have sung, “To God be the glory. Great things He hath done.” (Fanny Jane Crosby)

Wouldn’t it be wonderful for us to so love God and so love one another that together we would do something that all hell can’t stop, and something that will shut the mouth of the devil, and something that cannot be explained apart from the good hand of our God? And, they had to confess that God was with them. My dear friend, we get our hearts right with God and keep it right with God, and the work of God will go through Satan’s devices like a white-hot cannonball through a crate of eggs. Let’s believe God, and let’s stand together. We are not ignorant of Satan’s devices.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Father God, I pray tonight that you would cause none of us to swagger, because, Lord, to you be the glory. You would cause none of us to be intimidated by Satan because from you comes the power. Lord God, help us to so believe your Word; to so love one another; to so, dear God, be bound together in a fellowship of love and trust that what is done by the work of your people will have so unmistakably the hand and mark of God upon it that even the enemies of our Christ will have to confess that the work is of you. Lord God, bless people tonight who are in this place—many who are fighting battles. Lord, I know that Satan has tried these same things to wreck homes, to wreck businesses, to discourage individuals here, as well as the corporate Church. But Lord, help us to get a word from you and to believe you. In the name of Jesus.

# Overcoming the Devices of the Devil

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: January 9, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: Nehemiah 4:1–14, 6:1–6**

*“And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD.”*

NEHEMIAH 4:14

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Satan Will Attack Us with Derision
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      - 1. They Ridiculed the Feebleness of God’s People
      - 2. They Mocked the Futility of the Task
      - 3. They Laughed at the Foolishness of Their Faith
    - B. Be Ready for Ridicule
      - 1. Consider Their Character
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  - II. Satan Will Attack Us with Discouragement
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    - A. Remember the Lord
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- Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Nehemiah chapter 4. We’re in a series of Bible studies—things that I want to say to the Church concerning the future of Bellevue Baptist Church: what kind of a church should this church be, what kind of a church have I been trying in these past years to allow God to lead me to make this church to be. Last Sunday, we talked about

a unified church, that we might be one in the bond of love. Today, I want to talk to you about a steadfast church, one that can overcome the devices of the devil.

Now, may I tell you that it is obvious that Satan does not want Bellevue to succeed, to be mightily used of God? And, Satan has all kinds of machinations, and devices, and tricks to stop, or to slow down, or to discourage the people of God. “Now,” you say, “Pastor, I don’t feel any satanic opposition.” Well, don’t brag about it. If you and the devil have never met head on, it’s because you and the devil are going in the same direction. You turn around, and rather than being in collusion with him, you’ll be in collision with him. Now, there is always the opposition of Satan, and that doesn’t mean when Satan opposes that God is not for us. Paul said, “There is a great and open door, but,” he said, “there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9). And, *the door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition*. There’s no cheap way. There’s no easy way. There’s no lazy way. And, when you try to do something for God—endeavor to let God use you—you’re going to meet satanic opposition.

I was thinking of the words that the Bible uses to describe the devil. He is described as a deceiver, as a liar, as a murderer, as an accuser, as a tempter, as a destroyer. Now, he has many aliases, like other criminals, but he has one desire, and that is to dishonor, discredit, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and every member of it.

And, I was looking, this morning, in some of the scriptures that describe his activity. In the Bible, for example, it speaks in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 11 of “*the wiles of the devil*” (Ephesians 6:11). Think of that: “*the wiles of the devil*” (Ephesians 6:11). That word in the Greek is *methodia*. It’s the word we get *method* from. Satan has sinister methods—“*the wiles of the devil*” (Ephesians 6:11).

And then, in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 11, the Bible speaks of “*his devices*” (2 Corinthians 2:11). Get that word in your mind now: “*his devices*” (2 Corinthians 2:11). Satan has all kinds of devices to come against Bellevue Baptist Church.

And then, again, the Bible mentions there in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 26: “*the snare of the devil*” (2 Timothy 2:26). Now, put those words together—wiles, devices, snares, liar, temptation, destroyer, evil one—put them all together and that will give you some idea of who is against us. So, therefore, it’s all the more important that we remember who is for us.

Now, in this message on the devices of the devil and overcoming his devices, I’ve taken the Book of Nehemiah as the basis for our study. And, I want to take what applied to Nehemiah so long ago and apply it to Bellevue today. Nehemiah was a man of God. Nehemiah saw that the walls of the city of Jerusalem had fallen. The Jews had been carried away into captivity, and Nehemiah got a message about the terrible condition of Jerusalem. Now, Jerusalem is a city with beautiful walls, but those walls had fallen. And, Nehemiah was heartbroken because the wall symbolized protection, and separation,

and beauty—what God has for His people. But, the walls had fallen, and Nehemiah wanted to rebuild the walls. Nehemiah said, *“Let us rise up and build”* (Nehemiah 2:18). But, there were some enemies, some locals, who did not want it to happen. And so, when God’s man said, *“Let us rise up and build”* (Nehemiah 2:18), they said, “Let us rise up and stop them.” There’s always satanic opposition. I remind you again that *the door to the room of opportunity always swings on the hinges of opposition.*

And, Satan is going to take this particular period of time in the life of Bellevue Baptist Church to use his wiles, to use his snares, to use his devices. And, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. And so, what we’re going to do here in the Book of Nehemiah is we’re going to see what Satan did to discourage Nehemiah, and to stop Nehemiah, and to destroy the work of Nehemiah, and we’re going to apply that to Bellevue Baptist Church. Now, I want to mention some ways, therefore, that the devil will try to stop Bellevue Baptist Church. Are you ready?

## **I. Satan Will Attack Us with Derision**

Number one: Satan will attack us with derision. Write down the word *derision*, and look here in Nehemiah chapter 4, verses 1 through 3: *“[And] it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth”—*kids, that means he was hot, angry, steamed—*“he was wroth, and [he] took great indignation”—*now, underscore this phrase—*“and mocked”—“mocked”—“the Jews”* (Nehemiah 4:1). That means he ridiculed them; he had them in derision. And, this church will be in derision if we stand for Christ.

Do you know what a Christian is in today’s society? He’s called a “do-gooder.” He’s called a “bluenose Puritan.” He’s called a “fundamentalist.” He is called a “fanatic.” Recently, those of us who’ve taken a stand for righteousness here in the heartland of America have been renamed “Jesus land”—“Jesus land.” Yeah, I think it’s a pretty good title myself, but it was a term of derision by these who are mocking those of us in America who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now listen, there is no way—are you listening, church?—there is no way that you can stand for Jesus without becoming the laughingstock of this world. Do you think you’re better than Jesus? Listen to this—Mark chapter 5, verse 40 (concerning Jesus): *“And they laughed him to scorn”* (Mark 5:40). Can you imagine any body mocking the Lord Jesus? *“They laughed him to scorn”* (Mark 5:40). Luke 22, verse 63: when Jesus was being crucified, the Bible says, *“[they] mocked him, and smote him”* (Luke 22:63). Not only did they mercilessly beat Him; they are laughing while they are doing it. *“[They] mocked him, and smote him”* (Luke 22:63). In Luke 23, verses 36: *“And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself”* (Luke 23:36–37). Now, you’re not better than Jesus. If

they mocked the Lord Jesus, they're going to mock you.

And, ridicule has a sting. There's not a' one of us that wants to be laughed at. A Christian wife who tries to live for Jesus may be mocked for her faith by her husband. Some of you college students, if you go away to school and stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ, and let the banners unfold and stand on the Word of God, I can promise you you're going to be laughed at. You're going to be mocked at any college today that is not a Christian college. If you're a businessman and you try to stand for the principles of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, this world is going to mock you.

## A. **The Nature of Their Ridicule**

Now, what was the nature of their ridicule?

### 1. **They Ridiculed the Feebleness of God's People**

First of all, they ridiculed the feebleness of God's people. Look, if you will, here in verse 2: "*And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews?*" (Nehemiah 4:2)—"What are these feeble Jews trying to do?" In other words, they said, "Look, they're insignificant. They are weak. Therefore, we laugh at them." And, from the world's viewpoint, we don't have any strength. The world boasts of its power, its education, its erudition, its influence. And, they look at us, and they just sort of tolerate us. They feel, basically, that we're "those feeble Baptists."

I heard about a man one time who applied for a job as a lumberman to cut down trees, and this man was about 120 pounds about 5 feet, 6 inches. And, they said, "Look, being a lumberjack is a hard job. You've got to have great strength to be a lumberjack." He said, "I can cut down trees." They said, "Oh, can you? You look pretty feeble. There's a sapling. Cut it down!" He took his axe and went *whickety-whack*, and the sapling fell." They said, "Well, that's all right, but try this on a larger tree." *Whickety-whack*, and that one fell. He said, "All right, try it on this great big tree." *Whickety-whack*, and that one fell. They said, "Good night! Where did you learn to chop down trees?" He said, "The Sahara Forest." He said, "You mean the Sahara Desert." He said, "Yeah, now!" You know, it's easy to underestimate the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus started out with 12 unlettered fishermen and turned the world upside down. Jesus went out against the imperial might of Rome, against the religious bigotry of His day, and turned that world—He and His disciples—upside down. They mocked the feebleness of God's people.

### 2. **They Mocked the Futility of the Task**

Secondly, they mocked the futility of the task. Look in the last part of chapter 4 and verse 2: "*will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish [that] are burned?*" (Nehemiah 4:2). They said, "Look, there's no way you can do it. It is futile." They were looked upon as dreamers, visionaries—impractical,

wasting their time with an impossible task. And, therefore, they laughed at them.

### **3. They Laughed at the Foolishness of Their Faith**

They laughed at the feebleness of their strength, the futility of their task, and they also laughed at the foolishness of their faith. Look in Nehemiah chapter 4 and verse 2: “*will they sacrifice?*” (Nehemiah 4:2). Now, what he’s saying is this: “Are they going to worship their God?” Their devotion to the God of Heaven was a source of ridicule.

May I tell you that what we believe—the old-fashioned, old-time religion; the truth of God’s Word, its inerrancy, its impeccability; the deity of Jesus; His blood sacrifice (the things that we hold dear)—people laugh at. They mock. It has always been that way. First Corinthians chapter 1, verse 18: “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness*” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Now, I’m going to tell you something, folks: they’re going to laugh at you if you believe this old-time religion.

Harry Ironside used to be the pastor of Moody Memorial Church. And, he and some friends were out in Oakland, California, and they were on a ferry crossing that bay. And, they were singing choruses and praising the Lord, and a man standing there said, “Who are you?” He said, “Well, we’re some Christians.” “What are you doing?” “Well, we’re praising the Lord.” And, the man said, “You’re fools.” Ironside said, “Yes, that’s true. We are fools, but,” he said, “we’re fools for Christ’s sake. Whose fool are you?”

## **B. Be Ready for Ridicule**

Now, the world thinks that we are fools, and we have to be ready to be ridiculed.

### **1. Consider Their Character**

Why do they ridicule us? Think of their character. You know, the reason a person laughs at holy things is he’s a wicked person. The Bible says, “*There [are going to] come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts*” (2 Peter 3:3). You show me a scoffer—you show me somebody like Sanballat and Tobiah, who laugh at God’s work and laugh at God’s people—and I will show you, beyond the shadow of any doubt, someone who has the devil’s initials carved in their heart, someone who is covered with the slimy fingerprints of sin, “*scoffers, walking after their own lusts*” (2 Peter 3:3). That’s the reason they do it—is the character that they have.

### **2. Consider the Company That You’re in**

And then, I want you to consider the company that you’re in when they laugh at you. You’re no better than Jesus; I’ve already told you that. If they mocked the Lord Jesus, they’re going to mock you. Now, nobody is laughing at you—if you haven’t been ridiculed—perhaps Satan doesn’t think that you’re worthy of any worry. But, if you’re getting some flack, it just may be that you’re over the target. Just consider the company that you’re in.

### 3. Consider the Reward That is Yours for Being Laughed at

And, consider the reward that's yours for being laughed at. Jesus said, "*Blessed are [you], when men shall [persecute] you, and [revile] you, and...say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice*"—now, listen—"and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward" (Matthew 5:11–12). If somebody laughs at you because of your faith, you ought to go home and throw a party. Say, "How wonderful it is that people can see a difference in me!" Satan will attack you personally. Satan will attack this church with derision.

## II. Satan Will Attack Us with Discouragement

Now, secondly, Satan is going to attack us with discouragement—with discouragement. Look in Nehemiah chapter 4, verse 10: "*And Judah said*"—now, Judah was one of the leaders—"And Judah said, *The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall*" (Nehemiah 4:10). That's sad. They were discouraged, and the discouragement did not come from the outside. This time Satan used somebody from the inside. Do you ever get discouraged? Discouragement is one of life's most deadly diseases. It's universal, and it's recurring. But, thank God, it can be cured.

Now, what are the causes of discouragement?

### A. They Were Worn out

Well, number one: They were worn out. There's the problem of fatigue. Look in Nehemiah chapter 4, verse 10: "*The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed*" (Nehemiah 4:10). Sometimes we get tired. Vince Lombardi, the famous former coach of the Green Bay Packers, said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all." Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is go to bed. Did you know that?

Here these people were worn out. And, when did this come? When did this discouragement come? When they were half done, right in the middle. Look, if you will, in chapter 4, verse 6: "*So built we the wall; and the wall was joined together unto the half*" (Nehemiah 4:6). They were half done. Do you ever start to climb a mountain—even a molehill—and get about half way up, and you decide it's not a good idea? Have you ever heard of midlife crisis, when you come to a certain stage in your life when you say, "I'm not going to be able to do the things that I thought I ought to do. I'm not going to be able to make it"? Do you ever buy a new car? It's so wonderful. Then, the newness wears off about half the time the car is paid for. You see, this always happens to us—when we can get discouraged because we're worn out.

### B. They Were Weighted Down

And, not only were they worn out; they were weighted down. Look, if you will, in

Nehemiah chapter 4, verse 10: *“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed”* (Nehemiah 4:10). Why, he said that “There’s much rubbish so that we’re not able to build the wall.”

Bellevue will face rubbish. You will face rubbish. Serving the Lord Jesus Christ is not always glamorous. Now, you can’t build without stones, but those stones sometimes are buried in rubbish. But, you can’t build on rubbish, either. Church, listen to me: it’s not going to be just all easy, all honey and no bees. If the devil cannot laugh you out of service to the Lord Jesus Christ and your personal life and corporate life, then he will try to discourage you, and he’ll come when the job is half done and say, “It can’t be done! You are worn out. You are weighted down. It cannot be done!” And, it’s sad when this comes from within.

I’ve had people to discourage me—try to, anyway. Some people are like a drink of water to a drowning man. I’ll say that again; that was a good line: some people are like a drink of water to a drowning man. I pastored a little church on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi when I was in seminary. It was a little church. We met in a barracks building. The whole building was not as big as this part of this auditorium—the whole thing. I’d have to go up in the orchestra to show you the size of that little building. It was a little army barracks building. We had a church there—had about 50 members. Twenty-five of them were crooks. I’m serious. It wasn’t much now. We kind of got the crooks straightened out after a while, but it was a hard little church to pastor. And, I knew that we needed to grow. I knew that we needed more buildings. We didn’t have any money, hardly any leadership in that church. But, I went to Nashville to our Sunday School Board and got some architectural plans that I thought would fit that church. We needed a building, had no money. I got three shovels. I got two other young men and myself, and I said, “Let’s mark off the foundation of this building, and let’s begin to dig.” We had no money. We had no builders. We had no help. We got out there in the blazing sun and began to dig the footing of that building.

One of the leading members of that church came by. She was a woman. Her husband was a contractor. Little did he help. She came by, and she stood and said, “What are you doing?” We said, “We’re building; we’re digging the footing for our new building.” She said, “It will never be done!” I said to myself, “Oh yes, it will!” And friend, that building is built today. There are those who tell you that it cannot be done, but it can be done. Don’t you let the devil discourage you and talk you out of a work for the Lord Jesus Christ!

### **III. Satan Will Attack Us with Dismay**

Now, here’s a third way that Satan will come against you: not only will he come with derision to laugh you out of the work for God, or not only will he come with

discouragement to cause you to lie down and quit, but he will also come with dismay. He will try to frighten you out of a work for God. Look now in Nehemiah chapter 4 and verse 11: *“And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease”* (Nehemiah 4:11). You see, terrorism is not new. He says, “When they walk, working on the wall, we’re going to pounce them. They won’t know where we’ve come from, and we are going to kill them.”

Now, you see, Satan is not always dainty. Satan is not above taking your life, killing you, inciting somebody to do that. In my ministry, I’ve had not a few death threats. I have been the target of wicked people who would like to put me to death. You say, “Pastor Rogers, I thought you were a better man than that.” No. Friend, if they sought to put our Lord to death, don’t you think they’ll want to put us to death? Jesus said, “The time will come when they who slay you will think that they have done God a favor” (John 16:2). Satan will stop at nothing.

Now, what do you do when Satan comes to give you dismay, to frighten you away from a work for God? If he can’t laugh you away, and if he can’t discourage you away, he’ll try to threaten you away. Well, do what Nehemiah did.

#### A. **Remember the Lord**

Number one: Remember the Lord. Nehemiah chapter 4, verse 14—look at it: *“And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD”* (Nehemiah 4:14).

I got a call from the Sheriff’s Department. They said, “Pastor, we need to tell you there’s a man with a rifle who said he’s coming down there to kill you. We don’t know where he is, but we just need to tell you.” I’m sitting in my study. I said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” I thought, “Well, first of all, I’m going to get a word from the Word.” And, I went over there—and I keep my Bible open to Psalm 119 there in my study—and tried to get a word out of that. It’s about the Bible, and it’s about preaching. Before I step out here, many times I’ll just glance and get a word from that. So, I walked over there, and I said, “Lord, I want a word from the Word,” and I put my finger down. But, it wasn’t Psalm 119; it was Psalm 118. I put it down on the wrong page, but the right page—one verse! I put my finger on it and looked down to see what it was, and it said, “You will not die, but live, and declare My Word” (Psalm 118:17). And, I said, “Well, that’s a good verse.” Amen?

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, haven’t people been killed for serving Jesus?” Of course they have. Does that mean they lost? No, that means they won! We overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and by not loving our lives unto the death (Revelation 12:11). Do not let Satan terrify you. *“In nothing [be] terrified by your adversaries”* (Philippians 1:28). Now, the time’s going to come when to be a Bible-

believing Christian will be dangerous. And so, what Nehemiah says to his people: “Look, remember the Lord” (Nehemiah 4:14).

### **B. Reflect on the Issues**

“And then,” he says, “number two: Reflect on the issues.” Look, if you will again, in Nehemiah 4, verse 14: “*remember the LORD, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses*” (Nehemiah 4:14). Remember what’s at stake! Remember your sons, your daughters, your wives, your houses! “Stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross” (George Duffield, Jr.)

### **C. Resist the Enemy**

Satan will attack with derision. Satan will attack with discouragement. Satan will attack with dismay. Now listen, folks: resist the enemy. Look, if you will now, in Nehemiah chapter 4 and verse 18: “*For the builders, every one of them had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me*” (Nehemiah 4:18). They were building and battling at the same time—and so must you be! The devil would like to terrify you, but the Bible says, “*In nothing [be] terrified by your adversaries*” (Philippians 1:28). To the contrary, James chapter 4, verse 7 says, “*Resist the devil and [he’ll] flee from you*” (James 4:7). It’s not enough for you to say, “I’m not afraid of the devil.” The devil ought to be afraid of you, a man armed in the power and the anointing of Almighty God.

## **IV. Satan Will Attack Us with Discord**

Now, again, number four: Satan will attack Bellevue with discord. Look, if you will, in Nehemiah chapter 5 and verse 1: “*And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews*” (Nehemiah 5:1). Now, Satan, if he can’t intimidate us with bodily harm, or humiliate us with laughter, he will try to sow discord among the brethren. That’s why I preached last Sunday on a unified church. And, here these people are supposed to be building. They turn against one another. There was discord in the ranks. And, I remind you that the devil had rather start a church fuss than to open a porno palace. Are you going to let Satan divide you as a church? No!

But, here’s what happened: there was a discord. Do you know what it was over? It was over finances, and some people didn’t like the way the finances were being handled. And, very frankly, they were not doing the best job of handling the finances. But, you have to watch people who sometimes get upset over finances in a church. Now, there’s a time, obviously, when people need to be held to account. But, there’s another category of people who nitpick. Those of you who are from smaller churches and country churches know that every one of those churches has its kind of self-styled watchdog.

One man in this particular church opened a broom closet, and there were five brand new brooms in that closet. He got all upset. He asked the janitor, “Whoever authorized anybody to buy five new brooms at one time? We’re not meeting our budget, and there are five brand new brooms.” The janitor said, “I don’t know.” He said, “Maybe you ought to ask the pastor.” So, the man, very irate, came in to talk to the pastor. He said, “Why do we have five brand new brooms in the closet?” The pastor said, “Well, I don’t know. Maybe there was a sale on brooms. I don’t know.” Later, the pastor was having coffee with the church treasurer, and he mentioned this to the treasurer. The treasurer just smiled and said, “Oh Pastor, that’s easy to understand: How would you feel if you saw everything you’d given to the church in the past year tied up in five brooms?” It was over money. But, they solved the problem, and they got the answer to the problem.

Now Bellevue, I want to tell you something: *there are no problems too big to solve, only people too small to solve them.* And, Satan will attack this church and any church with discord.

## **V. Satan Will Attack Us with Distraction**

Now, next, Satan will attack us with distraction. Look, if you will now, in Nehemiah chapter 6, verses 1 through 4: “[And] it came to pass when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of the enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief” (Nehemiah 6:1–2). Now, they couldn’t stop the work, so they said, “Let’s come down here and talk about this thing. Stop building. The gates are not there. But, come; let’s have a little conference.” But, Nehemiah said, “They sought to do me mischief. They really did not want to help me. What they wanted to do was to distract me from the work.” Satan will try to distract this church.

Why are we built? Why are we here? What is our purpose? What is it? *To magnify Jesus through worship and the Word, to move believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry, to make Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations.* And, the devil will try to distract us and to get us to do something else, to come aside and sit down and talk about these things. Nehemiah said, “I can’t do it. I’m doing a great work, and I will not come down.”

Don’t ever let Bellevue get distracted. We’re here to glorify Jesus and to win souls. Now, say, “Amen.” Oh, the late, great Dr. Vance Havner said, “Every now and then, a church says, ‘We’re going to major in evangelism.’” If you ever heard Dr. Havner speak—kind of a nasal voice. He said, “Well, for me, for a church to major in evangelism would be very much like a railroad majoring in transportation.” Now, it’s a

no-brainer.

Now, we are doing a great work. Some of you mothers are doing a great work as a mother to your children. But, somebody says, “Well, you need to stop that and go out into the job market and get a job.” Now, if you have to do that to put food on the table or covering over the heads or clothes on the back, fine—if you have to do it. But, if you are a mother raising little children, you are doing a great work! And, the devil will say, “Oh, step down.” Some of you who used to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in Bellevue Baptist Church are now not serving the Lord, but you’re members of other kind of clubs and organizations. Why is that? Why have you allowed the devil to distract you? You become the First Vice President for the Society of Prevention to Cruelty to Grandmothers with Athlete’s Feet. You get out in some of these things that don’t really matter. Stay with the church. You’re doing a great job. Do not come down!

## **VI. Satan Will Attack Us with Defamation**

Now—and I must finish—but Satan will also attack us with defamation. Nehemiah chapter 6, verses 5 through 8: *“Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in [the] like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for [the] which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to their words”* (Nehemiah 6:5–6). Now, here was a rumor—a vicious rumor—to defame them. They said, “You’re building these walls. We know why you’re building these walls. You’re building a kingdom for yourself.” Have you ever heard any body say that Bellevue is building a kingdom? Have you ever heard any body say, “That pastor is motivated by personal gain, or pride, or ambition?” That’s what they said about Nehemiah: “He doesn’t really love God. He’s really not doing a spiritual thing. He is trying to set himself up as some kind of a king.”

And, notice how he did it. Some individual—*“Gashmu saith it”* (Nehemiah 6:6). Who in the world is Gashmu? And, there was an open letter, very much like a letter to the editor, to defame God’s people. There are always those. Listen, you’re never more like the devil—never more like the devil—when you spread rumors about godly people—never! When you defame the good and the godly, you’re doing the work of the devil.

A little three-year old had heard the model prayer. She didn’t get it right, but I think she said, “And forgive us our trash baskets, as we forgive others who put trash in our baskets.” Don’t let somebody put trash in your basket! I’ve just got to finish this message. But, there are people who say things that they have no business saying.

A godly pastor was doing a good job, but two men in the church didn’t like him. They came to him, and they said, “Pastor, we think you should be the pastor no longer in this church, and we’re going to ask you to step aside and resign.” He said, “Well, gentlemen,

thank you for coming to me.” He said, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do: I will take it to the Lord and pray over it, and I’ll get back with you.” They said, “All right. We’ll meet next week.” Next week came, and they met. And, the men said, “Well, what did God say to you?” The pastor said, “God said He’d never heard of you two guys.” Now, what I’m trying to say is this: there are always people who will be used of the devil to defame the good.

## **Conclusion**

Well, I’ve got to quit. I’ve got another point. I’ll shorten the message. You come in the next service.

Now church, you listen to me. Soon—and very soon—you’re going to have a new pastor. In this interlude, in this time, Satan will do everything he can do to get you to come down from the wall. And, by God’s grace, you’re not going to do it—you’re not going to do it! You’re going to be God’s people, and you’re not going to let derision, or discouragement, or division, or dismay, or defamation, or any other thing, keep you from being a steadfast church. And, God’s people said, “Amen.”

Now, bow your heads in prayer. If you’re a child of God and you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, would you pray God’s blessing upon this church? Would you say, “O dear Lord God, bless us as we build walls of defense, and walls of doctrine, and walls of decency. Bless Bellevue. Send us a godly pastor. Help us to be one in the bond of love”?

Now, while we have our heads bowed, if you have never, ever given your heart to Jesus Christ, you’re wasting your life, and you’re headed for a terrible eternity. But, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you have a purpose for living, and you have a hope in dying, and you’re saved by believing that Jesus Christ died on the cross and paid your sin debt with His shed blood. And, when you put your faith where God has put your sins, you’ll be saved. Would you pray, “O Lord Jesus, I need You, and I want You. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin, and save me”? Father, I pray that many will do that today. In Jesus’s holy name. Amen.

Now, look up here. We’re going to have a gospel invitation, and I’m going to ask the ministers of our church to stand here across the front at the head of each of these aisles to welcome those of you who’ll be coming forward. If you’re in the balcony, there’ll be a minister standing under that banner over there that says, “Redeemer,” and under this one over here that says, “Messiah,” to welcome those in the balcony who’ll be coming. And today, if openly and publicly, gladly, you’ll give your heart to Jesus Christ, I want you to leave your seat, and come forward, and say to that minister, “I am trusting Jesus,” or, “I need to be saved.” Put it in your own words. We’ll take an open Bible, and guide you in this decision, and seal it in prayer. If I could do it for you, I would, but I cannot. I have preached as best I know how, but this is your decision. But, thank God,

the Bible says, “For whosoever will, may come.” (Revelation 22:17) So, if you need Jesus, when we stand and sing, you come forward.

If you have been saved and you’ve never followed Jesus in believer’s baptism, you need to come and say, “I’m saved. I want to make an appointment for my baptism.”

Now, if you’re saved and baptized and need a church home, maybe your membership is elsewhere—this is where God speaks to your heart—you need to come and say, “I want to place my membership in this glorious church.” And, what a grand time to be a member of Bellevue in this time of new frontiers!

Now, don’t look around to see what any one else is going to do. You step out and do what Jesus Christ would have you to do right now.

Let’s stand together, bow our heads in prayer. “Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus for those who need to answer You and say an everlasting ‘yes’ to You and Your Church. Help them, Lord, to step out and come now. In Jesus’s holy name. Amen.” Let’s sing together as people come.

# Overcoming the Devices of the Devil

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 9, 2005

**Main Scripture Text:** Nehemiah 4:1–14, 6:1–6

*“And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD.”*

NEHEMIAH 4:14

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Satan Will Attack Us with Derision
  - A. They Ridiculed the Feebleness of God’s People
  - B. They Mocked the Futility of the Task
  - C. They Laughed at the Foolishness of Their Faith
- II. Satan Will Attack Us with Discouragement
- III. Satan Will Attack Us with Dismay
  - A. Remember the Lord
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Conclusion

## Introduction

The music this morning has been glorious, and I praise the Lord for that. Take God’s Word. Turn to Nehemiah chapter 4, and look up here. And, may I tell you that we’re in a series of messages called “Milestones and New Horizons.” We’re looking backward, but primarily looking forward, and getting the church ready for this transition period. So, we’re in a series of Bible messages on Sunday morning, and I don’t want you to miss a’ one of them, telling us together from God’s Word what God wants this church to be. Last Sunday, I talked about a unified church. This Sunday, I want to talk about a steadfast church because, you see, this church will be under attack. Now, that ought not to surprise you. It’s very clear that we will be under attack. *The door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition.*

Now, when you try to say we’re going to do something in the name of the Lord,

you're going to raise up the ire of the devil. This church has an enemy; he is the devil. The Bible calls him a deceiver, a liar, a murderer, an accuser, a tempter, the destroyer, the evil one. All of these speak of the same person. He's like any criminal—he has many aliases. But, he has one purpose, and that is to come against you, your family, and, corporately, to come against this church. And, he's very good at it. The Bible speaks of his methods in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 11: there the Bible calls that *"the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:11). The Greek word is *methodia*; it means "the methods of the devil." He is methodically set about to ruin your life and to stop the work of this church.

Now, not only does the Bible speak of *"the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:11), but in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 11, the Bible speaks of "the devices of the devil" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

And, in 2 Timothy 2, verse 26, the Bible speaks of the *"the [snares] of the devil"* (2 Timothy 2:26). Now, put his character together with those words. Think about the wiles. Think about the devices. Think about the snares that Satan wants to bring against this church and against you.

Now, I've taken the Book of Nehemiah—and I hope you have your Bibles open to Nehemiah chapter 4—I have taken the Book of Nehemiah as a template that we can study to see how Satan would try to stop any work for God, because Nehemiah was attempting to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem that had decayed. And, somehow, in a very wonderful way, the Bible tells us what the devil did to stop Nehemiah—but he did not stop him—and what Satan will do if we would allow him to stop the work of Bellevue, which he will not stop. Now, what Satan has tried before, Satan will try again.

Now, let me give you the background. The Jews had been carried away into captivity. During that time, the city of Jerusalem had fallen into ruins, and the beautiful walls around the city had crumbled. And, Nehemiah's heart was broken. He wanted to go back to the city of God and rebuild the walls. And, when he wanted to go back and rebuild the walls, Satan wanted to stop the work. And, Satan raised up two men—one named Sanballat, and the other, Tobiah—who were agents of the enemy to stop Nehemiah from building the wall. Now, what does that have to do with us? Well, in today's society, walls of decency have crumbled and decayed, and walls of conviction have crumbled and decayed. And, we have a job; you have a job—all of us do—to rebuild the walls. We are wall builders. Now, when we say, "Let's rise up and build," the devil will say, "Let's rise up and stop them."

Now, I want you to notice seven of the devil's devices—seven of the devil's dirty tricks. And, he does have some dirty tricks. I heard about a man in the last political campaign. Somebody did a dirty trick on him: they sneaked into his office and let all of the air out of his speeches. What a dirty trick! Well, I want to talk to you today about

what Satan is going to do to Bellevue—how he’s going to attack Bellevue.

## I. Satan Will Attack Us with Derision

First of all, Satan will attack this church with derision. That is, he’ll try to make us a laughingstock. Now, read here in Nehemiah—Nehemiah chapter 4, verses 1 through 3: “[And] it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, [that] he was wroth”—that is, “he was angry”—“and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews” (Nehemiah 4:1). I’m going to stop right there. He mocked the Jews. That is, he ridiculed them; he made them a laughingstock. And, may I tell you today that if you take a stand for the old-time religion, you’re going to be mocked? Did you know that? You’re going to be laughed at. There will be derision.

I noticed after this last election, because some people in the heartland wanted some decency, they called us “Jesus Land.” Did you catch that? Well, I think it’s a pretty good name, really, but it was given in derision; it was given in mockery. And, we’re going to be mocked. But, we’re not better than Jesus. Did you know that Jesus was mocked? They laughed at Jesus. Mark chapter 5, verse 40, says, “They laughed him to scorn” (Mark 5:40). Luke 22, verse 63, says when they were beating them, “[they] mocked him, and smote him” (Luke 22:63). Luke 23, verses 35 through 37, says, “And the soldiers”—when He was on the cross—“also mocked him...offering him vinegar [to drink]” (Luke 23:36–37). Now, you think about it: when He was doing miracles, they laughed at Him. When He was being abused, they jeered at Him. When He was on the cross, they ridiculed Him. Now, you’re no better than the Lord Jesus. And, if you stand up for Christ, you’re going to be mocked; you’re going to be ridiculed. And, a church like Bellevue that has a high profile is going to be ridiculed.

But, not only are we going to be ridiculed as a church; you’re going to be ridiculed as an individual. If you live for the Lord Jesus Christ, if you are a college student today on a secular campus—you stand up for Jesus—I’ll promise you, you’re going to be mocked. Is that not true? You may be a godly wife married to an ungodly husband, and he’ll make fun of your faith, and ridicule your faith, and mock your faith. You may be a businessman trying to live the principles of Jesus in an ungodly society and business world, and they will laugh at you.

Now, what did they ridicule here?

### A. They Ridiculed the Feebleness of God’s People

Well, first of all, they ridiculed the feebleness of God’s people. Look at it there—Nehemiah chapter 4 and verse 2: “And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews?” (Nehemiah 4:2). Who are these people, these weaklings? What do they think they’re doing? Now, the world puts an emphasis upon military strength, physical strength, intellectual strength, societal

strength, but they look at us as weaklings. They're really not much afraid of this church or anything else because they think of us as being kind of feeble. And, in the eyes of the world, that's true. God says, concerning the world, that they look at us... *"Not many mighty...are called"* (1 Corinthians 1:26). And so, they laugh at our feebleness. But, you see, strength can be disguised. Nehemiah was not feeble. Really, he was very strong, but outwardly he looked feeble.

I heard about a man who applied for a job as a woodcutter, a lumberman, and he was about 110 pounds, about 5 feet, 6 inches tall. And, they said, "This is a man's job. You can't be a lumberman. You can't cut down trees." He said, "Oh yes, I can." They said, "Well, prove it," and gave him an axe. They said, "Cut down that sapling." He went *whickety-whack*, and the sapling fell. They said, "Well, okay, but that's a sapling. Try this bigger tree." *Whickety-whack*—that tree fell. He said, "All right. Try this great big tree." *Whickety-whack, whickety-whack*—and down it came. He said, "That is amazing! Where did you learn to chop down trees?" He said, "The Sahara Forest." He said, "You mean the Sahara Desert." He said, "Yeah, now!" Appearances can be deceiving.

I want to tell you, a church with God's power on it is not feeble. We are mighty through God.

### **B. They Mocked the Futility of the Task**

But, not only did they mock the feebleness of God's people; they mocked the futility of their task. Look, if you will, in verse 2—the last part: *"will they revive stones out of the heaps of the rubbish that are burned?"* (Nehemiah 4:2). They said, "You guys can't do this. Here the walls have been burned. The stones are buried under garbage. You just can't do this. You are daydreamers." And, you know, the world wants us to think we can't do anything great. They want us to have an inferiority complex. And, they say not only are we feeble, but our task is futile.

### **C. They Laughed at the Foolishness of Their Faith**

And, they also mocked them for the foolishness of their faith. He says there in Nehemiah chapter 4, verse 2: *"will they sacrifice?"* (Nehemiah 4:2)—"Are they really going to worship their God?" And, the world thinks what we're doing today is foolishness. They think you are making a colossal waste of your time when you attend and a waste of your money when you give. *"Will they sacrifice?"* (Nehemiah 4:2). Well, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:18: *"For the preaching of the cross is to them [which] perish foolishness."* Now, you show me somebody who mocks at the Bible, mocks at the cross, mocks at the Word of God, and I'll show you somebody who is wicked. The Bible speaks *"in the last days [of] scoffers, [who are] walking after their own lusts"* (2 Peter 3:3). They have the devil's initials carved in their heart. They're covered with the slimy fingerprints of sin. Now folks, people mock at our sacrifice. They mock at our

worship.

Now, beware when all men speak well of you (Luke 6:26). If you've not been laughed at for your faith, there's something wrong with you. Ever since I became a Christian, I have been mocked for my faith. When I played football, I was mocked by other teammates for standing up for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what should you do? Well, just remember that you're no better than Jesus, and just remember, if you're laughed at, don't be laughed out of a work for God. To the contrary, the Bible says in Matthew chapter 5, verse 11, that when this comes, when we are persecuted, "*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and...say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake*"—listen—"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad"—go home and have a party if somebody laughs at you for serving the Lord Jesus Christ—"for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11–12). And, the greater the ridicule, the greater their reward, your reward.

## **II. Satan Will Attack Us with Discouragement**

Now, not only is Satan going to come against you with derision and try to laugh you out of a work for God, but Satan will also come against you with discouragement. And, Satan will attack Bellevue with discouragement. Look, if you will, in Nehemiah chapter 4, verse 10: "*And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish*"—now, listen to this—"so that we are not able to build the wall" (Nehemiah 4:10). Now, the sad thing is that it was Judah, the dominant tribe, that said this. They said, "We're not able. Our strength is gone, and there's too much rubbish. And, we can't build on rubbish, and we can't build without stones that are buried in the rubbish. It just can't be done." God have mercy on us when there are those who discourage us and say, "It can't be done." They're doing the work of the devil.

God is the God of all consolation; that means "all encouragement." There is a gift in the Bible called "the gift of exhortation"—that is, "to encourage." And, we need to encourage, not discourage, one another. And, so many times this discouragement comes from within—human wet blankets. When you try to do something big, something great, something glorious for Jesus, they will say, "It cannot be done."

I pastored a little church when I was in seminary on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, a little town called Waveland. And, I went back and forth from seminary, made a 60-mile trip one way and back, to go to school and pastor that little church. Well, that church was a very small little building. It was a little barracks building. Maybe it would seat (crammed) 100 people, and had maybe a membership of 50. And, I pastored that little church, and I wanted it to grow. And, I knew that it was limited, number one, by a lack of space. But, we had no money; we had no leadership. The people... We had no real mature Christians as members of that church and no one with a real vision. Well, I went

to Nashville and got a plan for a church building. I looked through a little book and found a plan for an educational building and so we could have restrooms, and a nursery, and a little dining hall, a little fellowship hall. And so, I got those plans, and I couldn't get any one excited about them. No one thought it could be done.

So, I got me two buddies—two young men (teenagers). I got three shovels. And, we went out there in the hot, blazing sun with those three shovels and began to dig the footing for that building—no money, no encouragement. And, one of the ladies in that church, whose husband was a building contractor, pulled up in her big car. And, she looked at us and said, “What are you doing?” I said, “We’re digging the footing for a new building.” She mocked, and she said, “It will never be done.” At that moment, I knew it would. At that moment, when she said that, I said, “Yep, we’re on track.” Friend, I want to tell you that building is there today. Now, there are people who will discourage you and try to discourage you, but you don't let them do it.

And, the discouragement comes when the job is half done. Verse 6 says, *“The wall was joined...[to] the half”* (Nehemiah 4:6). You know, any of us can get all excited when we just begin a work. It's like trying to climb a mountain: halfway up you decide it wasn't such a good idea. Or, about halfway through life you get what is called a “midlife crisis” in your business, in your marriage, and “I do” turns to “you'd better.” We get discouraged sometimes. You buy a new car, and it smells so good and so forth, but when it's about half paid for, then you get discouraged again. Friend, the devil will try to discourage you.

They were discouraged because of their fatigue: *“The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed”* (Nehemiah 4:10). They were discouraged because of the problem of frustration. All of these stones were down there. But, Nehemiah encouraged them, and may God help you always, always, always to encourage your children, encourage your mate, encourage your brothers and sisters here in the church. We are able to build whatever it is that we are building.

### **III. Satan Will Attack Us with Dismay**

Now, here's the third thing Satan will do: if he cannot get you to stop with derision and discouragement, the third thing that he'll bring against you is dismay. Satan is going to attack Bellevue with dismay, with fear. Look in Nehemiah chapter 4 and verse 11: *“And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease”* (Nehemiah 4:11). Now, Satan's not always dainty. Sometimes Satan will shed blood to stop the work of God. He may shed your blood; he may shed mine. “In the last days,” the Bible says, “those who kill you will think they do God service” (John 16:2). And, you cannot be intimidated by physical intimidation—should not be. The Bible says, *“In nothing [be] terrified by your*

*adversaries*” (Philippians 1:28).

I could tell you of the death threats that I’ve had against me, and all I’ve known to do is to carry them to the Lord. To tell you a specific death threat—the sheriff said, “There’s a man down there on his way to kill you.” He said, “We’re trying to intercept him. We just need to let you know.” I was in my office. I went over. I had a Bible there where I keep it open to Psalm 119, because I’ll read a word from the Word before I come out to preach, many Sundays. And so, I said, “Lord, I want a word from Your Word.” And, I walked over to put my finger on a verse on what I thought was Psalm 119, and it was in Psalm 118. Here’s what the verse said: “You shall not die but live, and declare My Word” (Psalm 118:17). I said, “Well, amen—amen.”

Now friend, sometimes we do die. You say, “Well, if we die, did Satan win?” No, Satan failed. *“They overcame him by the blood of the lamb...the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death”* (Revelation 12:11). Do not let Satan laugh you out of work for God. Do not let Satan discourage you out of a work from God, and don’t let Satan frighten you out of a work for God. Now, what did Nehemiah say when these people said, “We’re going to kill you”?

#### **A. Remember the Lord**

Well, look, if you will, in verse 14: *“And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD”* (Nehemiah 4:14). Is that not great? What is the answer to fear and dismay? It is to remember the Lord.

A little boy was given to fear, and he said, “Daddy, how big is the devil?” He said, “Well, I don’t know.” He said, “Well, is he bigger than I am?” His dad said, “Well, I suspect he is.” “Well, Daddy, is he bigger than you are?” He said, “Well, he could be.” “Daddy, is he bigger than Jesus?” And, the dad said, “No, he’s not bigger than Jesus, Son.” The little boy said, “Then I’m not afraid of him.”

#### **B. Resist the Devil**

Remember the Lord and resist him. Notice in verse 18: the Bible says they took a sword and trowel (Nehemiah 4:18). They’re building and battling at the same time, and that’s what the child of God is always doing—building and battling at the same time.

But, remember the Lord. Don’t be terrified by your adversaries. The Bible says in the Book of James, *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). Have you ever thought of Satan fleeing from you? You say, “Well, I’m not afraid of the devil.” The big question is, is the devil afraid of you? He will flee from you.

Now, what did they do? First of all, there was derision: they tried to laugh them away. Secondly, there was discouragement: they tried to get them to quit. Next, there was dismay: they tried to stampede them, but they kept on working. And, Satan’s going

to try all these things against Bellevue.

#### **IV. Satan Will Attack Us with Discord**

Number four: Satan will attack with discord to try to get a division in the church.

Nehemiah chapter 5, verses 1 through 4: “*And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews*” (Nehemiah 5:1). Now, here a furor had begun; here was a fuss among the people, a discord. You know, the Bible says, “God hates him that sows discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:19). I’ve told you before, the devil had rather start a church fuss than open a porno palace on any day. Never, never, never, never be a part of discord in a church. Oh, there are times when you have to stand for things; there are times when points have to be made—but you do it in a right purpose, in the right spirit, at the right time.

I generally read a verse of Scripture before I go to bed at night just to kind of meditate on it. I saw one the other day in the Book of Proverbs I’d never seen. It was the night before last, I believe, before I went to sleep. And, it says, “A wise man causes strife to cease,” and it says, “Any fool can start an argument” (Proverbs 20:3). Isn’t that good? “A wise man causes strife to cease; any fool can start an argument” (Proverbs 20:3). If you’re wise, you’ll always be a part of the solution, never a part of the problem.

Now, in this particular case here in Nehemiah chapter 5, it was over money. So many times in a church, or in a family, or between friends, the problem is over money. And, many times, those who say the most about money are those who, perhaps, are the poorest stewards.

I heard of a church—a small church. You know, every small church has its self-styled watchdog. And, this man, who thought he was God’s appointed and anointed person to keep the church straight, opened a broom closet and there were five brand new brooms in that broom closet. Oh, he was upset. He went to the janitor, and he said, “Why? What are we doing with five new brooms at one time? We’re not even meeting our budget. Five brooms at one time?” The janitor said, “Well, I don’t know. Maybe there was a sale on brooms.” The man went to the pastor. He was still irate. He said, “Look,” he said, “I just don’t like the way we’re handling the finances here in this church. That’s not good stewardship—five new brooms at one time.” Well, the pastor tried to placate him. Later, the pastor was having coffee with the church treasurer, and he told him about it. And, the treasurer just smiled and said, “Now Pastor, that’s easy to understand: How would you feel if you saw everything you’d given to the church in the past year tied up in five brooms?” Amen? It was over money; it was a discord over money. But, they solved the problem.

I want to tell you again: *there are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them.* Do you believe that? Any church is going to have problems, but God will

help us to stay together. That's the reason I preached last week on unity in the Church.

## V. Satan Will Attack Us with Distraction

Number five: Satan is going to attack with distraction. Look now in chapter 6, verses 1 through 4: “[And] it came to pass when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of [the] enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief”—they were saying, “Let’s just have a little love-in.” There wasn’t going to be a love-in. Old Nehemiah was too wise to leave the wall and go out to the plains of Ono. And so, he says—“But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, [while] I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them in the same manner” (Nehemiah 6:1–4).

Now, if Satan cannot come against the church as a roaring lion, and his fear tactics didn’t work, then he’ll try to come as an angel of light. And, he’ll say, “If I can’t beat them, then I’ll join them. Let’s have a little love-in. Hey, Nehemiah, come on down from the wall, and let’s just go out and talk.” And, Nehemiah said, “There’s mischief in the making—I know it. I’m not going to come down from the wall.” You know, the devil wants to negotiate with us, and sometimes it tickles our ego when that happens.

I heard of a bear hunter who wanted a fur coat, and he wanted a bear fur coat, so he got his gun and went out in the woods. And, he spotted a bear and was ready to pull the trigger, and the bear held up both hands and said, “Now look, don’t shoot—don’t shoot.” He said, “Let’s come out here in the middle of the road and talk this thing over. Put your gun down, and let’s talk.” So, the man put the gun down, and the bear said, “Now, let’s be reasonable about this thing. What you want is a fur coat. Is that not right?” The man said, “That’s right.” And, he said, “What I want is a good meal. Can you understand that?” The man said, “Yes.” And, you know, when it was over, the bear had a good meal, and the man had a fur coat. That’s what the devil wants to do: he wants to distract us; he wants us to come down from the wall, and get out there, and somehow get away from our purpose.

What is Bellevue’s purpose? Why do we exist as a church? Bellevue Baptist Church exists for magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word, for moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry, for making Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations. Folks, we’re doing a great work, and we will not come down—we will not come down! And so, Satan tries to derail us, to distract us. We must keep on serving the Lord and keep our eyes upon the Lord.

You know, it's so easy to get distracted. I see pastors sometimes turn from their calling. I'm going to tell you something—and there's a God in Heaven who is listening: I'd rather be a pastor than to be the President of the United States. I mean that. I'd have to step down—not that there's any danger of me being the President—but I'd have to step down to step out of the high calling of God, which He's put upon my life. And, many times, I have faced distractions, but I've kept my eyes upon Jesus, not upon anything else, and I intend to continue to do that. Don't let the devil distract you.

Some of you women—you have little children, and God has given you these precious babies. And, you get distracted, and you leave your motherhood to go out there and get a job in the world, and leave those little babies in the care of somebody else. Now, I want to be very careful here. My heart goes out, my hat comes off, to mothers who have to work to put food on the table, shelter overhead, and to do those things that are necessary to keep a family going—only so long as they have to do it and then they quit. But, I'm telling you that any mother who lets the devil distract her from being a mother, perhaps the highest calling on earth, to step down and come from the wall, is making a poor, poor decision. Don't let the devil distract you and bring you away.

Some of you who used to be Sunday School teachers, some of you who used to be deacons, some of you who used to serve on committees in this church—you don't do it anymore. Do you know why? You've gotten out into something else that may be good in your own sight, but it is not what God called you to do. We have members of our church now who are joining societies, and clubs, and causes, and so forth—in themselves not bad, but they have come down from the wall to do something else. I don't know why—maybe flattery. They become the First Vice President of The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Grandmothers with Athlete's Foot; and so, they come down from the wall. You need to be a part of this church with all of your heart—every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber. And, don't let the devil distract you, and we will not let him distract this church.

## **VI. Satan Will Attack Us with Defamation**

Now, next, the devil's dirty trick is he'll come against us with defamation. He'll defame us. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verses 5 through 8: *"Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand"—you know what an open letter is? That's like a letter to the editor. You want everybody to read it—"Wherein [it] was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel"—that is, "you're going to build your own little kingdom"—"for [the] which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king"* (Nehemiah 6:5–6). "Nehemiah, you're on an ego trip—you're on an ego trip. You don't really care about the walls of Jerusalem. You don't really care about the glory of God. All you're doing is

trying to build for yourself a little kingdom.” Now, they will defame you. They’ll criticize your motives. They’ll say, “Well, you go to that church for business reasons,” or whatever.

I had a football coach. I wouldn’t practice on Sunday. He told his Psychology Class—he said, “The reason that Rogers won’t practice on Sunday is that he wants to get out of practice. He’s using religion as a crutch.” Well, I finally got nose to nose with this coach about that. But, there are people who will impugn your motivation—why you do what you do—and they will try to defame you. They accused Jesus of being a winebibber and a glutton (Matthew 11:19). Never, ever listen to any defamation, any slander, about a child of God. You make certain that if you hear anything like that, that it is not in the mouth of one witness, but more—that it is true—and be very, very careful.

Here’s what they were trying to do: they were trying to say, “Now, this Nehemiah—he doesn’t really love God. He’s building his own little kingdom. He has another purpose for that.” Don’t let people use your ears for that kind of garbage.

A little girl who heard the Lord’s Prayer—she was three years old—didn’t quite understand it, but she prayed it back: “and forgive us our trash baskets, as we forgive others who put trash in our baskets.” Don’t let people put this kind of trash in your basket. Now, there are those people who will do just like they did to Nehemiah: they’ll try to defame you.

I heard of a pastor who was doing a good job in his church, but two men out of the church came to him and said, “Pastor, we think your work is finished here. We think it’s time for you to retire, and we think your work is finished.” Well, the pastor was not an old coot like I am. He was a young man. He was doing a good job. And, they said, “No, we think you need to retire.” He said, “Well, I’ll tell you what, gentlemen: I will pray about it. You come back next week, and I’ll tell you what God says.” They came back next week and said, “Well, what did God say to you?” He said, “God said He’d never heard of you two men.” There are those who will impugn you for wrong motivation.

## Conclusion

Now, I’m going to close the message there. But, these are the devil’s dirty tricks. The Bible says, *“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. [For] this is the heritage of the...LORD, and their righteousness is [from] me, saith the LORD”* (Isaiah 54:17).

Now, what I want this church to be when I step aside—I want it to be, number one, a unified church; number two, a steadfast church. And, you’ll say, “By God’s grace, we’ll stay on the wall. We are not coming down. We’re doing a good work.”

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And, if you don’t know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, today is the day that you need to

receive Him. You need to step from a life of darkness to a life of light, from a life of fearfulness to a life of faith, from a life of condemnation to a life of salvation. Jesus has suffered, and bled, and died for you. And, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you today—I mean, really save you. Not just make you a nicer person—He'll save you. He'll give you a new nature. He'll transform you. He really will, if you'll trust Him. Now, you're not going to sprout wings and get a halo, but you will have a change of nature that will help you to grow into the grace and likeness of Jesus Christ. Believe that Christ paid your sin debt on the cross; believe that He is the Son of God risen from the dead, and put your trust in Him. And, the Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you will] be saved*" (Acts 16:31). Would you pray and ask the Lord Jesus to come into your heart, forgive your sin, and be your personal Savior? And, will you do it this morning? Will you?

Father, I pray that many today will say an everlasting "yes" to Jesus Christ. In Your name, Savior, I pray. Amen and amen.

Now, look up here. In a moment, we're going to sing an invitational hymn. I'm going to ask the ministers of our church to stand here at the head of each of these aisles to welcome those of you who'll be coming forward. For those of you in the balcony, there'll be one standing under that banner to my right in the corner that says, "Redeemer," and this one over here. And, I'm going to ask you if you have a decision to make, if you're saying, "I'm giving my heart to Jesus Christ," I want you to leave your seat and come and say to the minister, "I am trusting Jesus," or, "I want to be saved." We'll rejoice. We'll give you some scripture to stand on. We'll answer any questions, and we will seal it with you in prayer. And, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that Jesus will save you instantaneously, He'll be with you continually, and He will keep you eternally, if you'll put your faith where God has put your sins: upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Do it today. Oh, do it now! Come to Jesus. You'll be so glad you did.

Now, others of you have already given your heart to Jesus, but you've never been baptized as a believer in Jesus Christ. You've not given Him the glory. You've not given yourself the joy. You've not given your brothers and sisters the blessing. To that degree, you're disobedient, and that can hinder your Christian growth. If you are saved and not a baptized believer, you need to come this morning and say, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism," and we'll make an appointment and baptize you in the name of Jesus.

Thirdly, there are baptized believers who are members of various churches, and you worship here now. This is where God speaks to your heart. Well, you're always welcome as a guest, but God's plan is that you be a part, a member, of a local New Testament, Christ-honoring, Bible-preaching church. And, I want to invite you to come down any of these aisles and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here,"

and he'll tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful, wonderful church.

Some are coming, saying, "I want to be saved." Others are coming, saying, "I want believer's baptism." Others are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here."

Let's stand together. And, bow your heads in prayer, and let's pray that God will have His way in your life and in this invitation. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed for just a moment, if you have a friend here that you feel may need to make a decision and you're concerned about that friend, would you call them silently before the Lord? Maybe it's one of your children. Maybe it's a husband, a wife, a neighbor, a friend, an associate. Just call their name before the Lord now.

And Father, I pray that you'll help all of those who need Jesus to come today. O Lord, help them to say to Him an everlasting "yes." And, Lord Jesus, for these who need to follow you in baptism, help them, Lord, to be obedient. And, for those who need to be part of the fellowship of Bellevue, help them, Lord, to come. Amen and amen.

# Dealing with Discouragement

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 11, 1994

**Main Scripture Text:** Nehemiah 4:6–15, 21–22

*“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.”*

NEHEMIAH 4:10

## Outline

Introduction

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## Introduction

Would you be looking for Nehemiah—about halfway through the Old Testament. I want you to turn to chapter 4. The Book of Nehemiah is about a building project. Actually, Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls that crumbled around Jerusalem. God’s work had fell into disrepair, and disrepute, and decay. And God raised up a man whose name was Nehemiah, and God told Nehemiah to rebuild the wall.

Now all of us—all of us—are wall builders. Walls, in our lives, speak of something. They speak of protection; they speak of separation; and they speak of identification. You need some walls. You need some walls to protect your family, to protect your faith. You need some walls to protect your future. We need walls of defense, and walls of doctrine, and walls of decency, and walls of duty. But when you rise up to build, the devil will try to stop you; and, the way the devil will try to stop you is with

discouragement.

I want you to take God's Word, and look, if you will, in verse 6. Nehemiah says, "*So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work. But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped,*"—that is, the open places began to be filled in—"then they were very wroth,"—in plain English, they were angry—"and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall" (Nehemiah 4:6–10).

Right in the middle of the whole thing, there was somebody that came with a report, and said, "We can't do it. We're tired. We're worn out. The job is too big," and they got discouraged. Look up here, and let me ask you a question: Do you ever get discouraged? Of course you do. I mean, discouragement is a disease, and it's a bad disease. And it's universal; it's recurring; and it's contagious. But it's curable. And I'm so grateful for the Book of Nehemiah, which has been a constant encouragement to me as a pastor and a leader through the years. As a matter of fact, I stayed in the Book of Nehemiah, in my heart and mind, as we were making the move coming out here, and I want to show you, today, from the Book of Nehemiah, what to do when discouragement comes. Now if you feel so low that you could sit on the curb and dangle your feet, I want you to pay attention, because there is a way up. We could entitle this message: "How to Get Up When You are Down."

Now *the devil is the sinister minister of discouragement*, and, whenever God's people say, "Let us rise up and build," the devil will say, "Let us rise up and stop them." And *when God's people have a mind to work, the devil has a mind to wreck*. And one of the ways Satan will keep you from being what you ought to be to your family, being what you ought to be in your business, being what you ought to be in your physical health, being what you ought to be in your Bible study, being what you ought to be in your soul-winning—wherever it is, in your romance, whatever it is—Satan will come against you with discouragement. And let me say this: that all discouragement is of Satan or self; it is never of God. God is called "*the God of all comfort*" (2 Corinthians 1:3), and that word *comfort* means "cancellation" or "encouragement." God has cornered the market on encouragement; and the devil, who works against God, works with discouragement.

There's an old fable that says that, one day, the devil was auctioning off his tools, but there was one tool marked "not for sale." And he was auctioning off fear; and, he

was auctioning off hatred, and pride, and envy, and lust; but there was a strange looking tool there that was well worn. And somebody said, “Why is that not for sale?” He said, “I can’t afford to sell that one. That’s my most valuable tool. That’s discouragement.” He said, “It’s so worn, because I use it often to slip in. And when I pry a man’s heart open with discouragement, then I can do almost anything I want to do.” Discouragement has always been one of Satan’s chief tools.

Now if you’re discouraged—discouraged with your child; discouraged with your marriage; discouraged with your job, with your service, with your health—I want you to pay attention, now, because I want to show you the cause and the cure for discouragement. And it’s right here, in Nehemiah chapter 4.

## I. The Causes of Discouragement

Now think with me about the causes for discouragement. Actually, there are four simple causes of why we get discouraged, and they’re right here, in the Word of God.

### A. Fatigue: They Were Worn Out

The first reason that these people got discouraged is simply this: They were worn out. It was a problem of fatigue. Look, if you will, in verse 10: “*And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed*” (Nehemiah 4:10). That is, they were tired; they were tired of carrying a load. Now you might as well admit it: You’re a human being, and, as a human being, you’re going to get tired. Jesus Christ Himself got so tired He sat on the curbing of a well when His disciples went out to get food. Jesus Christ, the very Lord of Glory, got so tired, one time, that He went to sleep in the back of a ship in the midst of a storm. You can get tired no matter who you are. The Bible says, in Isaiah 40, “*Even the youths shall faint and...utterly fall*” (Isaiah 40:30). And if you get physically tired, you’re set up to be discouraged. Sometimes, the most spiritual thing is to go to bed. I’m serious. These folks that think that they don’t need the rest—they’re a little more spiritual than our Lord. *You burn the candle at both ends, and you’re not as bright as you think you are.*

Now when does discouragement come? Look, if you will, in verse 6: “*So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof*” (Nehemiah 4:6). When the job is half done—that’s when you tend to get discouraged, and that’s when your strength seems to wear out.

I mean, if you ever decide you want to climb a mountain, you get halfway up, you feel led to go back. When the new wears off. You buy a new car—and boy, that new car smell, that’s just wonderful—but when you get it half-paid-for...you know. And you know what an “auto” biography is? Thirty- six payments, and I’m junk. And you get it about half-paid-for, and then, you say, “I wonder if I ought to have done this at all.” When you get married—Joyce and I have been married; we’ve just celebrated our 43rd wedding

anniversary—but sometimes, when folks are just in the middle of their marriage, and the honeymoon seems to be over—and, as Brother Jim said, just a few moments ago, “I do turns to you’d better”—then, sometimes, our strength seems to go out of us, and we get weighted down.

These people were worn out—the problem of fatigue. One of the great football coaches of all time, Vince Lombardi, said this: “Fatigue makes cowards of us all”—fatigue. And so—number one—here’s one reason why you might get discouraged: You just may be worn out.

#### **B. Frustration: They Were Weighted Down**

Number two: not only were they worn out; they were weighted down. Look, in verse 10, also—the Bible says, *“The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish”* (Nehemiah 4:10). Now we can tell from the earlier part of this chapter that, in order to rebuild the walls, they had to use the old stones that the first walls were built out of. But they had to dig through the rubbish to get those stones, and they had to remove the rubbish to rebuild. And so they’re digging through all of this. They’re worn out, and they’re weighted down. I mean, the task was not glamorous. It’s not glamorous to dig through rubbish looking for stones. And all of us have lives that collect rubbish. There’s organizational rubbish, and moral rubbish, and theological rubbish, and traditional rubbish, and emotional rubbish. And in order to build, we’ve got to sort through all of that. And you may be facing a situation that just seems absolutely too big, and your problem is not fatigue; it’s frustration. You’re not only worn out, but you’re weighted down. And you just seem like you’ll never get it done. “The job is too big; it can’t be done.”

#### **C. Fear: They Were Wrought Up**

Now here’s the third cause of discouragement: not only were they worn out—that’s fatigue; not only were they weighted down—that’s frustration; but they were wrought up. Look, in verse 11: *“And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease”* (Nehemiah 4:11). Now there was actual physical danger. And so not only were they worn out and weighted down, but they were wrought up. I mean, they were emotionally disturbed. There’s the problem of fear.

And again, I want to say that Satan *is the* sinister minister *of* discouragement. And if it seems like you’re getting a lot of flack, it just may be that you’re over the target, because Satan will come against you. And Jesus said, in John chapter 15 and verse 20: *“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you”* (John 15:20). And if you’re not being persecuted, I just wonder why not.

Now Satan is very clever. He knows when you're worn out and when you're weighted down. It's at that time that he comes to get you wrought up. It's that time that he makes those threats against you. You're going to find that you're going to have the problems of fatigue, frustration, and fear; and, those begin to get together. And when they begin to get together, you get discouraged.

#### D. **Failure: They Were Written Off**

But there's one other cause of discouragement: not only were they worn out—that's fatigue; not only were they weighted down, and that's frustration; and not only were they wrought up—that's fear; but they were written off—that's failure. Look, if you will, in verse 11: *"And our adversaries said, They shall not know..."* Now verse 12: *"And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you"* (Nehemiah 4:11–12). Now it's bad enough when your enemies say it can't be done, but when your friends say it can't be done, that's the *coup de grâce*. Ten times, the Jews—I mean, their fellows, those that are supposed to be on their side—said, "You can't do it." And they said it over and over and over again—that is, "You are a failure, Nehemiah; you will never get it done."

I've been in the ministry for a long time, and I know that, perhaps, the hardest thing for me to bear is when those within the camp say it can't be done. It seems like every church I've been in, we've had a building program. And in every building program, there's always been someone that says it can't be done. I remember the little church I was pastoring in seminary, down there, on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, near Bay St. Louis, in a little town called Waveland—a wonderful little town. And we had a little building there that was then an army barracks building, and we needed some educational space. We didn't have two nickels to rub together, but I figured God wanted us to build a building; and so, I got some people, and I said, "Let's just dig the footing." And they said, "But we don't have..." I said, "I know. But let's just dig the footing anyway." And we didn't have any contractor, or anything like that. We didn't have anybody to put in the footing, but we walked it off. And I got some shovels, and we got out there, and started to dig. And I can see it in my mind's eye. I can remember the individual who came up, and looked at us, and said, "What are you doing?" I said, "We're going to build a building. We're digging the footing." And I can remember that person saying, "It will never be done," but it was—it was.

We needed a building in Fort Pierce after I got out of seminary, and we started to build. And I remember the man... He was a good man—I mean, one of the leading men. He loved me. But he was a precious man, and he said, "How you gonna do it?" "Well, I believe God wants us to do *da ta da ta da ta da*." He said, "It'll never be done," but it

was—it was.

I remember Merritt Island—the next church. We decided we were going to do something, and we were going to build some buildings and enlarge the program greatly. And I remember one of my dear preacher friends, when I told him what we were going to do, he says, “Oh, ha hah, Adrian, let me feel your shoulders. I don’t believe that you’re able. I don’t believe that you can do it.” Of course, I could. It’s God that does it. But you know, always, we have those friends that come to us, and tell us, “You just can’t do it.” Friends like that are like a drink of water to a drowning man. They’re just negative. And fatigue, frustration, fear, and failure, and these things together... I mean, when we get worn out and weighted down, when we get wrought up and written off, we get discouraged.

## II. The Cure for Discouragement

Well, what is the cure for discouragement? If you’re discouraged today—I mean, if you are discouraged with your children, discouraged with your marriage, discouraged with your schedule, discouraged with whatever—what is the cure for discouragement?

### A. A Physical Cure: Renew Your Strength

Well—number one—there’s a physical cure: renew your strength. Now look, if you will, in verses 21 and 22: “*So we laboured in the work:*”—now, you have to keep on working—“*and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. Likewise at the same time I said unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day*” (Nehemiah 4:21–22). That is, “Go lie down, and get some rest.”

If you’re discouraged, your problem may be as simple as this: that you just need to rest. You need to change your diet. You need to get some exercise. You maybe just need to go to the doctor and get a checkup. It may be physical; it may be emotional. Maybe you need a checkup from the neck up. But go and get a checkup physically. When you get worn out physically, and the problem of fatigue comes, you can get discouraged.

There’s an interesting story in the Old Testament about another man—a prophet whose name was Elijah. Elijah was a man of God, but he got so discouraged, one time, he wanted to die. And put in your margin: “1 Kings 19”—and let me read that to you. First Kings chapter 19, beginning in verse 4—it speaks of Elijah, and it says, “*But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.*” Evidently, he thought he was somewhat better than his ancestors, and he found out he was just the same,

that he was a human being. And now notice in verse 5: *“And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God”* (1 Kings 19:4–8).

Now Elijah had a pity party. He got so discouraged that he said he wanted to die. Of course, he really didn't mean that. He'd just run cross-country to get away from Jezebel. If he'd wanted to die, all he had to do was stand still, and Jezebel would have taken care of him. She'd already said, “I'm going to make you a foot shorter at the top. I'm going to take off your head.” But he's just drinking from the intoxicating cup of self-pity. But he's worn out. I mean, he's been without food; he's been without rest; he's been without sleep. And he gets under the juniper tree, and he says, “Oh, I wish I could die.” And he even prays to die. Now we thank God for answered prayer. Have you ever thanked God for unanswered prayer? Did you know we'd be in the soup, if God answered all our prayers? Thank God He doesn't! He said, “God, I want to die.” God said, “You're not going to die; you're going to sleep. Lie down, son, and sleep.” And then, He said, “Wake up, and eat.” And then, He says, “Lie down, and sleep.” And then, He says, “Wake up, and eat.”

You know, probably, you just might need a vacation. You might just need to take some time off, and let some things go. And you know, Elijah thought he was the only prophet of the Lord. The Lord said, “You know, I've got a lot around here besides you, Elijah. I've got 450 people who haven't bowed their knee to Baal. Go to sleep, and get some rest.” The Bible says, *“It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep”* (Psalm 127:2). And maybe that's what you need; maybe you just simply need some rest.

Let me give you some advice: Never make a major decision when you're fatigued—just don't do it; when you're depressed—just don't do it. And you know, what we need to do, all of us in this church—Brother Bob, you and I have been talking about it—we're going to try to get our people in this church healthy—physically and financially. I mean, you know—God's people, you know—what the big sin would be? Baptists, you know, we don't drink, we don't gamble. So what do we do? We gorge.

I heard about a preacher who saw an Indian, and he thought he'd have some fun with the Indian. And he said to the Indian, “You heap big Indian; me heap big preacher.” The Indian said to him, “Me heap big Indian; you just big heap.”

I'm serious, folks. The reason that some of us may be depressed is, we just don't

take care of the temple that God gave us. And God said, to this man who wanted die, “Hey, lie down, and sleep.” Nehemiah said, to those people who said, “We can’t build the wall,” he said, “Work in the daytime; sleep in the nighttime. You need some rest.” There was a French philosopher who said, “I have so much to do today, I simply must go to bed.” Think about it.

## **B. An Organizational Cure: Rethink Your Strategy**

All right now, listen. There is the physical cure—renew your strength; and there’s an organizational cure—rethink your strategy.

Now look, in chapter 4, verse 13. When they said it can’t be done, and everybody was saying that, the enemy was saying, “We’re going to kill you.” And your friends are saying, “Yeah, you’re going to get killed.” Look, in verse 13—Nehemiah’s saying, *“Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD”* (Nehemiah 4:13–14). And then, he gets the whole thing reorganized. He says, “Evidently, we’re doing it the wrong way.”

Now let me say this: that, if you are discouraged in a task, it may not be that you’re doing the wrong thing; it might be that you’re doing the right thing in the wrong way, and you need to just simply to rethink your strategy—renew your strength, and rethink your strategy.

Brother Bob Sorrell said something to me about 15 years ago that I have never forgotten. He said, “Pastor, you need some more *think-time*—some *think-time*.” And that was so true. Did you know that, if you’re discouraged, that, if you would just set aside an hour or two just simply to think through the whole thing—I mean, just think it through, and find out what is the rubbish, and where are the stones that I need to build with.

There’s an Italian named Parieto, and he’s a leader. And he has a thing called *The Parieto Principle*. And here’s *The Parieto Principle*: He says that 20% of what you do produces 80% of the results—20% of what you do produces 80% of the results. Now so many times, we’re dealing with things that don’t really matter. We’re just simply dealing with the rubbish, rather than the stones.

Nehemiah didn’t give up the goal; he just refocused. Do you have a God-given goal? I mean, is it clear? Have you ever really just sat down—not only to renew your strength, but to rethink your strategy? I want to challenge you. I want to challenge you to spend some time alone. I do this from time to time. I keep a notebook. Where I just open the notebook, I write down those things that I think I ought to do, and I refocus. And that’s one of the great cures for discouragement.

### C. A Spiritual Cure: Revive Your Spirit

Now here's the third thing. For fatigue, you renew your strength. For frustration, you rethink your strategy. Now not only, however, is there a physical and an organizational cure; there's a spiritual cure. You need to revive your spirit.

Look, in verse 14: *"And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them..."*—now, what is the cure for fear? Look at it—*"Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD..."* (Nehemiah 4:14). That's one of the greatest verses in all of the Bible. I suggest you take out a pen, and underline it: *"Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible"* (Nehemiah 4:14). The word *terrible* means, "terrifying to your enemies." Now there's a physical cure, and an organizational cure. There, friend, is a spiritual cure. Just remember the Lord. Renew your strength; rethink your strategy; and revive your spirit. How do you do that? Just remember the Lord.

The Bible says of King David, *"David encouraged himself in the LORD"* (1 Samuel 30:6). You get discouraged; encourage yourself in the Lord. How are you to encourage yourself in the Lord? Let me tell you how to encourage yourself in the Lord.

#### 1. Think of God's Goodness in the Past

Number one: Think of God's goodness in the past. If you're discouraged, just think of all that God has done for you. Count your many blessings. See how faithful God has been. Psychologists tell us that gratefulness is one of the healthiest emotions that you can possibly have. It's almost impossible to be grateful and discouraged at the same time. Count your many blessings. Remember God's goodness in the past.

#### 2. Think of God's Closeness in the Present

And then, remember God's closeness in the present. You're in the midst of a problem—remember the Lord. Is your problem greater than God? Our Lord says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). And I want you to know, friend, if you're discouraged right now, God has been good to you in the past, and He is with you, right now. Remember the Lord. Remember the Lord.

#### 3. Think of God's Faithfulness in the Future

And then, think not only of His goodness in the past, and His closeness in the present, but think of His faithfulness in the future. He said, "I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). And He says, "You can do all things through Christ who will strengthen you" (Philippians 4:13). Encourage yourself in the Lord. Do you know what *fear* is? Let me tell you what *fear* is: *Fear* is forgetting God. That's all it is. It's just forgetting God. He says, "Don't be afraid. Remember the Lord" (Nehemiah 4:14).

Let me give you some verses. 2 Timothy 1, verse 7: *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"* (2 Timothy 1:7). Psalm 27

and verse 1: *“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”* (Psalm 27:1).

Fatigue—renew your strength. Frustration—refocus your strategy. Fear—remember the Lord. I’m telling you, if you’re afraid, it’s because you’ve taken your eyes off of the Lord. Nehemiah said, “We serve a great God.” We sang it already, this morning: “What a mighty God we serve.”

Robert Louis Stevenson told a story—I read it many, many years ago—about some passengers who were on a ship. It looked like the ship may be going down. It was a tumultuous storm, and the passengers were below. And they were whispering one to another, “Will we go down? Are we safe?” One of the passengers said, “I’ve just got to find out,” and he made his way across those heaving decks, and up to the pilot house, where the pilot of that ship was there, with his hand on the wheel. And he looked at him. The pilot knew he was afraid, and just turned and smiled at him. The man didn’t say a word, but he just went back below, and he said, “We’re going to be all right.” He said, “I’ve seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled at me.” What you need to do is to see the face of God. You need to find the smile of God. And I can tell you, friend, that He has sailed rougher seas than the one that you’re in, right now.

Corrie ten Boom said this: “Look at the world—you’ll be distressed. Look within—you’ll be depressed. Look at Christ—you’ll be at rest.” Remember the Lord.

#### **D. A Psychological Cure: Resolve Your Success**

Now the last thing: not only is there the spiritual cure, but there’s the psychological cure; not only should you renew your strength, but resolve your success. Look, now, in verses 14 and 15: *“And I looked...and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us unto the wall, every one unto his work”* (Nehemiah 4:14–15).

Folks, psychologically, just resolve your success. Just say, “I will, by the grace of God, succeed.” Now that’s not positive thinking; I’m talking about faith. First of all, you remember the Lord when you say this, and then, you say, “I have victory in Jesus.” If you’re discouraged today, it’s always—always—too soon to quit. Don’t give in, and don’t give up. And why? Because, remember what’s at stake. Look, in verse 14: *“Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses”* (Nehemiah 4:14). The moral situation looks bleak, and our enemies are laughing. And the hounds of Hell are marching. But remember the Lord. And let’s stand up for our children. They

went right back to the task, and Satan's plan had failed.

I read these words one time:

*I want to let go, but I won't let go.*

*There are battles to fight,*

*By day and by night*

*For God and the right*

*And I'll never let go!*

*I want to let go, but I won't let go.*

*I'm sick, 'tis true,*

*And worried and blue*

*And worn out through and through*

*But I won't let go.*

*I want to let go, but I won't let go.*

*I will never yield.*

*What? Lie down in the field*

*And surrender my shield?*

*No, I'll never let go!*

*I want to let go, but I won't let go.*

*May this be my song,*

*Mid legions of wrong*

*O God keep me strong*

*So I'll never let go.*

—PAMILLA DE LEON

And that's what Nehemiah said; he said, "We're going to do it." And they just kept on building, and they built the wall. Don't try to make yourself feel encouraged. *You will never feel your way into a work, but you can work your way into a feeling.* I mean, just simply get yourself back to the job.

Listen again. Get your rest. It may be just as simple as that. Change your diet; get some exercise; resign from being the sovereign of the universe; and let God have it back again. He gives His beloved sleep. That deals, friend, with this fatigue. And then, just give yourself some *think-time*, and say, "What am I doing? I mean, am I doing a right thing the wrong way? Do I need to reorganize my life, as I get these stones out of all of this rubbish that surrounds my life?" Then, put your eyes on the Lord; remember God. And you cannot look into the face of God and harbor fear in your heart at the same time. "*God has not given us the spirit of fear*" (2 Timothy 1:7).

And then, say, "By the grace of God, I will not give up, and I will not give in. God did not cause me to fail. God did not call me to fail." The Bible says, "*Thanks be unto God,*

*which always causeth us*”—listen now—*“to triumph in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 2:14). If you think I’m just giving you a positive thinking pep talk, you’re wrong. I am talking about spiritual principles out of the Word of God. And my faint-hearted friend, don’t give in to discouragement.

## **Conclusion**

Let’s bow in prayer. Heads are bowed. Father God, I just pray, now, for that businessman who’s discouraged; help him, Lord God, to get his rest. I pray, dear Lord, for that housewife who doesn’t know how she’s going to make all those ends meet. Maybe that single mother—Lord, I just pray that you’d help her to rethink her strategy, to pray, and to know that there is a way, there is a plan. Father, I pray for that student who’s filled with fear, Lord, that she might remember the Lord. Lord, I pray for the one who’s about to quit, about to throw in the towel, Lord, that even right now—even right now—they’ll hear You say, “You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you” (Philippians 4:13). In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

# God's Formula for Financial Freedom

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 15, 1978**

**Main Scripture Text: Nehemiah 5**

*“Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.”*

NEHEMIAH 5:7–8

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### Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, now and turn to Nehemiah chapter 5. Nehemiah is the story of *Together We Build*, and I would say that the theme of Nehemiah is found in Nehemiah chapter 2 and verse 20: *“Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build”* (Nehemiah 2:20). But every time God’s people say, “Let us arise and build,” the devil’s crowd says, “Let us arise and blast.” And when God’s people have a mind to work, the devil’s crowd has a mind to wreck. And the devil inspired certain philosophies and problems to keep Nehemiah, the leader and the man of God, from leading his people—at least, tried to keep them from building the walls.

And you remember some of the things that we’ve already talked about. First of all, the first thing that the devil tried was derision. He tried to laugh them out of the work for God. That didn’t work. Then, he tried discouragement. He tried to discourage them, and that didn’t work. Then, he tried danger. He tried to threaten them, and that didn’t work. And now he is trying division—division—just simply to divide the people. And you know, right in the middle of the program, in the middle of the building program, there came a division—and guess what it was over. It was over money matters.

Look here, in the first five verses, if you will. This is Nehemiah 5, verse 1: *“And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.”* Now I’ve said before, *“The devil had rather start a church fuss any day than to sell a barrel of whiskey—just to get God’s people divided.”* And here’s what happened: Here was a division of the people and of their wives against their brethren, the Jews: *“For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth”—that is, there was a famine in the land. Inflation was running away, and material goods were hard to get—“There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king’s tribute”—that is, taxes are mighty high—“and that upon our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards”* (Nehemiah 5:1–5).

I want to speak today on “God’s Formula for Financial Freedom.” Someone said that, “The most sensitive nerve in the human body is the one that runs from the heart to the pocketbook”—and that may be true. I know that, when we talk about finances, people listen, and they listen very carefully. And well we might.

Now I believe there's a message for us in the fifth chapter of the Book of Nehemiah. I believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and I believe that all of it is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16). But in order for it to profit us today, we must ask those three questions. Do you remember them? Question number one: What did it mean then? Question number two: What does it mean now? Question number three: What does it mean to me personally? And I believe, in the fifth chapter of Nehemiah, we're going to see at least two things: Number one, the problems of financial bondage; number two, the principles of financial freedom. Number one, the problems of financial bondage; number two, the principles of financial freedom.

## **I. The Problems of Financial Bondage**

Now you talk about financial bondage. I want you to see the financial bondage these people were under in Nehemiah's time. Some people say, "The Bible's out-of-date." Dear friend, what I just read to you reads like *The Wall Street Journal*. I mean, it reads like the headlines of today's newspaper. I want you to look at verse 3: there were "*strife, and divisions*" (1 Corinthians 3:3). Now of course, we living in Memphis, Tennessee wouldn't know anything about that, would we?

### **A. Strife and Divisions**

All right, number one: There were "*strife, and divisions*" (1 Corinthians 3:3). And it was over money; it was over finances; it was over wages.

### **B. Shortage of Humans Needs**

Number two: There was a shortage of human needs and very high prices. And you see that in verse 2, when he talks about how difficult it was even to get the wheat and the corn that they needed to eat.

### **C. People Mortgaged Their Property**

Number three: It was a time when people had mortgaged their property to the hilt. Look in verse 3: "*Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses*" (Nehemiah 5:3). And why have they done that? In order to buy food. Now folks, you talk about a depression; you're talking about financial bondage, when you start mortgaging your house in order to feed your family. That's what they had done.

### **D. Deep Debt**

And then, go on—not only that, but they were in deep debt. Look in verse 4: "*There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute*" (Nehemiah 5:4). They had gone to the finance company to borrow money to pay their taxes. My goodness! Borrowed money to pay taxes. You see, high taxes are not something new; there have been high taxes around for a long time.

I kind-of feel in sympathy with the tourist who said he wanted to visit Washington, because he wanted to be near his money. Well, high taxes, and then, deep debt. We've borrowed money. You know, debt is a terrible thing—to be under the bondage of deep debt—and there are so many people who are under the financial bondage of debt. It's because they're just spending so much, and they can't keep up.

*Theirs was a perfect marriage,  
but for one feminine flaw:  
He was quick on the deposit,  
but she was faster on the draw.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

And that's what happens so often when we get into financial debt.

All of this resulted in bondage—verse 5, look at it—financial bondage, in verse 5. Well, let me say, folks, that financial bondage is not God's plan for His people. In the margin, by Nehemiah chapter 5 (Nehemiah 5:5), I want you to write "Deuteronomy chapter 28, verses 1 through 14." I want you to read that when you get home. And you're going to find out that God doesn't want you to be the borrower; God wants you to be the lender. You're going to find out that God doesn't want you to be the tail; God wants you to be the head. God wants to bless His people above all the nations of the world, and God wants to give His people financial freedom. But so many people don't have financial freedom; they are in financial bondage.

### **E. Financial Bondage Test**

And I believe, dear friend, that it is the devil's plan to keep God's people in financial bondage, when they don't understand certain spiritual principles—and we're going to talk about the spiritual principles of financial freedom. The devil wants to keep you in bondage, and the devil doesn't care what kind of bondage you're in, as long as you're in bondage. The Lord Jesus said, "I have come that you might be free": "*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*" (John 8:36).

Let me give you ten marks of financial bondage. Let's just take a test, and find out whether or not you're in financial bondage. Listen to them.

Number one: when you charge daily expenditures because of the lack of funds. Now I'm not talking about buying your gas on a credit card; but, when you have to charge it, because you don't have enough money for your daily expenditures, you're in financial bondage.

Number two: When you put off paying a bill until next month, you're in financial bondage. When there's too much month at the end of the money, you are in financial bondage.

Number three: when you borrow to pay fixed expenses such as taxes, and

insurance, house payments.

Number four: when you become unaware of how much you owe.

Number five: when you have creditors calling on you, and writing you about past due bills.

Number six: when you take from your savings account to pay current bills.

Number seven: when you make new loans to pay off your old ones—you take all your little loans and consolidate them into one great big backbreaking loan.

Number eight: when you and your spouse argue over finances. You know, “‘Til debt do us part.”

Number nine: when you begin to entertain the idea about being dishonest or unscrupulous about some financial dealing.

Number ten: When you find it difficult to return God’s tithe to God’s house on God’s day, you, my friend, are in financial bondage. And God doesn’t want His people to be in this kind of a place.

Now I’m not saying that a person who is doing these things is wrong with God. Don’t misunderstand me. Oh, no, not at all! There are a lot of people who love the Lord, who are caught in this kind of a trap—some of the finest people on the face of the Earth; but the devil would love to keep them in financial bondage, even though they love the Lord. And these people in Nehemiah’s time were under financial bondage; and, because of it, they got so frustrated that they turned on one another.

Did you know that, even when we talk about a program like *Together We Build*, there’s someone who may be in financial bondage and might get irritated? When we talk about doing something great and big for God, their frustration over their own personal finances could cause them to turn on a brother or sister and criticize. That’s what happened in Nehemiah’s day. They were in a work, and the work was of God; it was God’s plan—God’s will. And yet, here were some people who were under financial bondage; and, they got so irritated, and they got so frustrated, that they turned on one another, and they started to devour one another. That wasn’t God’s plan. That wasn’t God’s way. But it was the devil’s way to divide God’s people and to keep them from doing the things that God had called them to do.

## **F. The Poor and the Rich Can Be in Financial Bondage**

But let me tell you something, folks: Not only poor people can be in financial bondage; rich people can be in financial bondage. You continue to read here, in this fifth chapter of Nehemiah, and look in verse 6—you’ll find out it wasn’t these poor people that upset Nehemiah; it was some of the rich ones. Look here, in Nehemiah chapter 5, verse 6. And Nehemiah says, “*And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with myself*”—that’s a pretty good committee: three, with two absent—

*“Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer”* (Nehemiah 5:6–8).

You see, it was written in the law of Moses that no Jew could charge interest to another Jew. Now he could to a Gentile, but he couldn't to another Jew. That was the law of the Jews. But these people had transgressed that law. And they were taking the people, and they were squeezing the life out of them, charging exorbitant interest, putting them under financial pressure and bondage. And boy, I'm telling you, it just made old Nehemiah angry. He got hacked off at them. He called them together. He read to them the Word of God. He said, “Now you quit this. It's caused by your greed.” Now let me tell you something, folks: Those people who were wealthy and those people who were taking advantage of that situation were just as much in financial bondage as those people that were poor. *Money is a wonderful servant, but it's a poor master*, and some people who have a lot of money are still in bondage.

You want me to give you some little question to find out whether or not you are in financial bondage, as a wealthy person, or as a person who's kind of well off? Let me ask these questions:

**1. Do You Have More Faith in Your Money and in Your Material Goods Than You Have in God?**

Do you have more faith in your money and in your material goods than you have in your eternal God? If so, my friend, you are in financial bondage. If you want to know how rich you really are, you add up everything you have that money can't buy and death can't take away. Do you have more faith in your money and in your material goods than you have in Almighty God? If you do, you are in financial bondage of the worst kind. I don't care how rich you are.

**2. Do You Have Ambitions That Are Not Square with the Will of God?**

Number two: Do you have ambitions and goals in your life that are not square with the will of God? Are there things that you want to do with your money—financial ambitions, financial goals—that are not in the will of God? Then you, my friend, are in financial bondage.

**3. Do You Have a Burning Desire for Money?**

Number three: Do you have a burning desire for money and a desire to get rich quick? If you do, you're in financial bondage.

#### 4. Do You Compromise Your Christian Ethic?

Number four: Do you compromise your Christian ethic and fail to honor a moral obligation? If you do, you're in financial bondage. I thank God for a leading citizen of Memphis, Tennessee, who resigned from a certain business institution, because he didn't believe in gambling. I thank God for that man.

You see, it was legal for these people to do what they were doing, in a sense. There was no civil law against it; and so, therefore, they were doing it just because they could get away with it. But I want to tell you, friend, a person who loves money more than he loves God, and a person who will do what he can do just simply because it is legal, is under financial bondage. Money has become his god. Somebody says, "What is wrong with gambling?" I'll tell you what's wrong with gambling: It is profit and pleasure at the expense of somebody else's pain and loss. It's absolutely contrary to the Scripture that says we're to love our neighbor as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). But I don't want to get sidetracked on that. I'm just simply saying that there are so many people who are in financial bondage.

Some people are very poor, and they're in financial bondage. Some people are very rich, but they're still in bondage. The devil has them. And I wish I had more time to talk about that, because, folks, I could just pull over in this neighborhood and visit for a long time, but I don't have time to do it, because of the other long announcement. I'm going to lay the enemy out, here, right now.

## II. The Principles of Financial Freedom

Now I want us to think, primarily, not only about the problem of financial bondage, but I want us to see the principles of financial freedom. And I believe we see them, beginning in verse 14. Nehemiah really read them the riot act. He's talking about these people who were taking advantage of other people, and then, he begins with the statement in verse 14: "*Moreover*"—*moreover* (Nehemiah 5:14). That is, "In distinction to this, in contradistinction to this, I want you to notice the way I live," Nehemiah said. He wasn't the kind of a leader who said, "Don't do as I do; do as I say do." He was the kind of a leader who could say, as the Apostle Paul said, "You follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). "Do as I do." "Moreover," Nehemiah says, "I'm going to tell you the way I lived with my finances."

I want you to see how this great leader, this man of God, lived. And there are about five or six principles I want you to see here that I think are wonderful principles, because they are the principles of financial freedom. And everybody in this congregation has a right to be financially free, because the Bible says, "*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:19).

## A. The Principle of Priority

First of all, there is the principle of priority, the principle of priority. In verses 14 and 15: *“Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor”* (Nehemiah 5:14).

Now what does that mean? He says, “I was the governor of all of this area. I was appointed governor by the king, and I had every right to tax the people. I had every right to have my needs supplied, because I, as the governor, ought to draw a certain salary as the governor.” But notice what he says in verse 15: *“But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God”* (Nehemiah 5:14–15). Nehemiah was a remarkable man. Nehemiah had certain rights and certain prerogatives, but he would not exercise those rights; he would not exercise those prerogatives. He said, “I refused to take what was rightfully mine, because I feared God.”

Now what did he mean by that? He meant that “we were in such a state of emergency, and there was such a turmoil, that I was willing to forego my rights, that God might be glorified.” The bottom line was this: He was just simply putting God first. He had his priorities right. He was putting God first. Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to lay aside all of your financial rights, and put God first? Are you willing to do that? Do you want financial freedom? I’ll tell you how you’ll have it. Rather than that, let Jesus tell you how you’ll have it. Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). I want to tell you God Almighty will not work in second place. And as long as you put your business, your plans, your desires, your ambitions, your goals first, you will never, no never, no never, no never, never, never know financial freedom. But Jesus has made a promise that, if we get our priorities straight, if we will *“seek...first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto [us]”* (Matthew 6:33).

There is the principle of priority. Nehemiah looked at the things he could have done, but he said, “I didn’t do them, because I want to glorify God.” The will of God meant more to him than anything else. And if money is your god, if money is your goal, you will never know financial freedom. Whether you be rich or whether you be poor, you’ll be in bondage.

Now have you gotten your priorities straightened? You see, folks, if you don’t put God first, you’re foolish, because you’re playing the losing game. A man says, “Well, it’s hard for me to trust; I deal in reality.” Reality is what’s real. Is this pulpit real? Is this

microphone real? Are these clothes real? Are those flowers real? They are not real, because they're not lasting. Listen to this scripture. In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 18, the Bible says, "*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal*" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Do you know what that means? That reality is not in something you can see, taste, touch, smell or feel. Reality is in God. Reality is in God. And friend, if you're putting your trust in things that you can see, and touch, and taste, and smell, and feel, and count, you are living in a world of illusion. The things that are seen are temporal; the things that are not seen are eternal.

I believe Nehemiah would say,

*My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

—EDWARD MOTE

You see, folks, it's only when we put God first that we come in contact with reality.

## **B. The Principle of Industry**

Not only is there the principle of priority, but there's the principle of industry, industry. I want you to look in verse 16. He goes on to say, "*Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall*" (Nehemiah 5:16). Just draw a circle around that word *work*: "*I continued in the work of this wall.*" You see, look, if your goal is to get enough money in the bank so you won't have to work any more, you don't even understand what life is all about. Did you know that there are thousands of people who would like to have it arranged where they won't have to work any more? Did you know the Bible says, "*Six days thou shalt work?*" (Exodus 34:21). Do you know the same Bible that tells us to rest is also the Bible that tells us to work? And do you know why some folks don't have financial freedom? Because, they think that *work* is a dirty word.

Somebody handed me this after the eight o'clock service, and I appreciate people handing me these little things. "Some people don't recognize an opportunity, because it comes dressed in overalls, and it looks like work." Amen? It's an opportunity, but it came to them dressed in overalls; and so, they don't think it's an opportunity. There are a lot people who want a position; they don't want a job. But Nehemiah, who was well off; and Nehemiah, who was the governor; and Nehemiah, who had a high government job, got down there, put on his overalls, took his trowel, took his sword, and continued to build a wall.

Do you know what's wrong in America today? Do you want me to tell you why we have so many people who are living on government handouts—not everybody—but so

many? Because, they refuse to work. Now listen to me. In the economic realm you cannot legislate some people into freedom by legislating other people out of it. You cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of it. You cannot multiply wealth by dividing it. You cannot do it. The government cannot give to anybody what it does not, first of all, take from them, and keep a little bit on the side in doing it. That for which one man gets without working for, another man must work for without receiving. And there is nothing that will discourage Americans more than this (and kill the initiative of a people more quickly), than for half of the people in America to get the idea that they need not work because the other half will feed them; and, for the other half to get the idea it does no good to work, because they're not able to keep the fruit of their labor.

Now folks, let me tell you something: We, in America, better get back to this idea of work. The principle of financial freedom is spelled W-O-R-K—industry. Was Nehemiah such a free man financially? Number one: priority—he put God first. Number two: industry—he knew what it was to go to work, and he was not afraid of work. He wasn't trying to get out of work.

### **C. The Principle of Integrity**

Now let me give you the third principle. The third principle is integrity, integrity. Look in chapter 5, verse 16, again: *“Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land”* (Nehemiah 5:16). Now what does that mean? He had integrity. You see, this was a time of economic distress, and Nehemiah had a bank roll, and he could have gone in with his bank roll, and bought this distressed property, but he refused to do it. You see, just because it was legal didn't mean it was right. Nehemiah refused to take advantage of someone else, and he refused to participate in a get-rich-quick scheme.

Proverbs chapter 28, verse 20 says, *“A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent”* (Proverbs 28:20). Here was a man who practiced integrity. Are you honest in your business? Are you honest with God about your tithe? Are you honest in your income tax? Some say, “Honesty pays”; but, friend, it may cost. Are you honest, when it costs? Are you willing to walk circumspectly, to walk in integrity? No wonder Nehemiah was such a man of God. He knew the principle—folks, listen to me—of priority: He put God first; of industry: He knew what it was to work. The Bible says, *“If any would not work, neither should he eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10). And he knew the principle of integrity. He lived an honest life, a life of integrity. There are so many Scriptures I'd like to give, but the time is gone. I'm just going to skip to the next principle.

### **D. The Principle of Generosity**

There's the principle of generosity. Begin reading in verse 17: *“Moreover there were at*

*my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers*”—you know how many he had for dinner every night? One hundred-and-fifty. I mean, how’d you like to have 150 for dinner every night for 12 years? Who footed the bill? The government? Nehemiah footed the bill. Listen—*“Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us”* (Nehemiah 5:17). Besides the 150, they were always bringing guests with them. They said, “Oh yeah, my brother Throckmorton needs to come.” And so they were bringing him.

Now look—and what did they eat? Well now, he didn’t just give them a sloppy joe. Look: *“Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people”* (Nehemiah 5:18). Wasn’t Nehemiah a great man? Listen. Nehemiah took the best. He didn’t just give them those old cast-off things. He took the very best, and he set these people down—several hundred people a day. Man, you talk about a wealthy man! He must have been very wealthy, and he fed them, and fed them, and fed them; and, he refused to take the salary that a governor might have. Why? Because, he had learned the principle that *“it is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35).

You say, “Where did he get all this stuff?” God kept giving it to him. Why did God keep giving it to him? Because, he kept giving it away. You see, he had learned to be just a point of distribution. He had learned what Jesus said, *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom”* (Luke 6:38). You can’t out-give God. Nehemiah found that out. Why did God take care of Nehemiah? Because, Nehemiah put God first, and because he walked in integrity, and because he had generosity. The Bible says very clearly, in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 6: *“He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly”*—you want a small crop? Just plant a few seeds. You want a big crop?—*“and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully”* (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Now then, you want me to tell you how to give? Pay attention now. Let’s talk about generosity. Here’s how to give. Let me give you seven principles of spiritual giving. We’re talking about the principle of generosity here, and you think about these things and see if they’re not true.

### **1. God Knows What the Need Is**

Number one: God knows what the need is. Now you’d agree with that, wouldn’t you? Just nod your head. God knows—God knows what the need is. So if there’s a need, God knows it.

### **2. God Knows How Much He Wants to Make Available Through Me**

Number two: God knows how much He wants to make available through me. Don’t you

believe God knows how much He wants you to give in any situation? He knows all things. So God knows what the need is. God also knows what He wants to make available through you. God knows what He wants you to give. Who could disagree with that: that God knows the need, and He knows what He wants to make available through you? No one can disagree with that.

### **3. God is Pleased to Let Me Know What He Wants Me to Give**

All right, number three: God is pleased to let me know what He wants me to give. Is there anybody who thinks that God has a will about something, and He refuses to let us know it? Now God knows what the need is. God knows how much of that need He wants to meet through me. God is able to let me know it. Now is there anybody who can argue with those three things?

### **4. God Will Enable Me to Be Sufficient to Do Anything He Leads Me to Do**

All right, number four: God will enable me to be sufficient to do anything He leads me to do. Is God going to ask me to do something I cannot do? Is God going to say, “Adrian, jump over this building. If you don’t jump over it, you’re a sinner?” Well, I can’t worship a God like that, because I wouldn’t be able to jump over this building. You see, anything that God tells me to do, He enables me to do. God knows what the need is. God knows what part He wants me to have in meeting that need. God is able to show me what part He wants me to have in meeting that need. And because of that, God is able to supply the need—the needs that I have to do that He’s told me to do. God doesn’t ask me to give of my resources. *“Of thine own have we given thee”* (1 Chronicles 29:14).

### **5. God’s Resources Are Not Limited**

Now look—number five: When I give from God’s resources that are unlimited, rather than from my limited resources, then I am not limited in what I can give. When I give from God’s resources, all I have to do is just find out what God wants me to do. If God says, “Adrian, I want you to give \$500,000, I’d gulp about 40,000 times, but I’ll guarantee you this: If God told me He wanted me to give a half-a-million dollars, He’d have to give me a half-million dollars that I could give—and He would, if I’m walking in the Spirit. You see, look, God knows what the need is. God knows how much He wants to make available through me. God is pleased to let me know what He wants me to give. And God will enable me to be sufficient to do anything that He leads me to do. And then, I’ll give from His resources rather than mine.

### **6. Spiritual Giving Requires the Presence and the Power of God**

Number six: This kind of giving requires the presence and the power of God. You see, you can take an unsaved man and talk about any kind of giving, and he’ll say, “All right, now let me see—I’ve got the house payment; I’ve got Sears; I’ve got this; I’ve got that. We’ve got so much in the savings; we have so much income—I believe I can give so

and so.” What’s spiritual about that? Any pagan can do that. But this kind of giving requires the presence and the power of God.

Now folks, you understand what I am saying? This kind of giving means that I must get on my face before God and say, “God, what do you want me to do?” And then, “God, if You’ve laid it on my heart, You’re going to enable me to do it.” And then, last of all, this is the only kind of giving which really glorifies God and causes a believer to grow. The other kind of giving doesn’t glorify God, but this kind of giving glorifies God. I believe that’s the kind of giving that Nehemiah was doing. Nehemiah was so in touch with God, there was a need, and God allowed Nehemiah to meet it; and he did it, day after day, after day, after day. And I believe, as God gave to him, he gave; and God gave to him, and he gave; and God gave to him, and he gave. Wouldn’t you like to be operating like that? That’s financial freedom.

### **E. The Principle of Dependability**

The last principle that I want to give is the principle of dependability. Look in verse 19: *“Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people”* (Nehemiah 5:19). Do you think God forgets it when you’re generous? He doesn’t, my friend. Nehemiah depended upon God to reward him. He wasn’t looking to some man. He was looking to God, and he was depending upon God to supply his every need. He said, “Oh God, now You think upon me. Lord, I’ve put You first. Now God, You’re going to put me first.” And God will do it. He will do it. As surely as there’s a God in Heaven, He will do it. You put God first, and God will think upon you for good and take care of you. Folks, look, it pleases God when His people are blessed.

### **Conclusion**

Let me give you a verse of Scripture, and with that I’ll close. Psalm 35, verse 27: *“Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant”* (Psalm 35:27). Don’t you love that verse? *“Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of His servants”* (Psalm 35:27). Did you know that God enjoys your prospering? He really does. He really does. God doesn’t want you in financial bondage. He wants to set you free. Oh, friend, you listen to me. There’s the principle of priority. There’s the principle of industry. There’s the principle of integrity. There is the principle of generosity. There is the principle of dependability. You can trust God—you can; you can; you can.

# Devices of the Devil

*By Adrian Rogers*

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**Main Scripture Text: Nehemiah 6:1–16**

*“And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.”*

NEHEMIAH 6:15–16

## Outline

Introduction

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- B. Discouragement
- C. Danger
- D. Discord
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- A. Distraction
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Conclusion

## Introduction

I believe that Halloween is one of the masterstrokes of Satan to make us believe that all of this is just so much of a fairy tale. And I want to tell you that the devil is real. He’s not something to be laughed off, and not something to be caricatured, and not something to be joked about. The devil is a decided fact. The devil is a destructive force. But thank God, the devil is a defeated foe. And *“greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”* (John 4:4)

Now the book of Nehemiah is the story of the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem, and the people of God saw a task that ought to be done and they said, “Let us *‘arise and build’*” (Nehemiah 2:20). Now I want to say that the idea for the building of the walls of Jerusalem did not originate in the brain of Nehemiah, but in the heart of God. And they were simply thinking God’s thoughts after Him. And it was not Nehemiah’s program; it was God’s program. And therefore, Nehemiah could say, *“If*

*God be for us, who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31). And so he said, *“The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build”* (Nehemiah 2:20). But every time the people of God say, *“Let us ‘arise and build”* the forces of the evil one say, *“Let us arise and blast.”* *When the people of God have a mind to work, the enemies of God have a mind to wreck.* And the Book of Nehemiah—the first six chapters—tell of the devices of the devil, the things that the devil did to try to stop the people of God.

Now the Bible is not out of date; the Bible is not old-fashioned. It’s just as modern as today’s newspaper, and a whole lot more accurate. So if you want to know what the devil is going to do, find out what the devil has done. There is no need for a child of God who has a Bible to be ignorant of the devices of the devil. Paul said, *“We are not ignorant of his devices”* (2 Corinthians 2:11).

## **I. The Dirty Tricks the Devil Had Already Used**

By way of review and recapitulation, I want us to see some of the poisoned arrows that the devil had already shot at Nehemiah, and some of the tools that the devil had already used to wreck the work of God, and some of the dirty tricks that Satan had already pulled from his bag of tricks.

### **A. Derision**

I want us to list the things, and let’s just go back, for just a moment, and look in chapter 4—the first three verses. And there, we find out, in Nehemiah chapter 4—the first three verses—that the first thing that the devil tried was derision. He tried to laugh them out of a work for God. Chapter 4, verse 1—the Bible says that *“Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews”* (Nehemiah 4:1). And he tried by ridicule to drive them away from a work for God. But thank God, Nehemiah did not wither up—he did not fold up—because they laughed him to scorn. He realized that any true servant of God is going to be laughed at; but he would not be laughed away from a work for God.

### **B. Discouragement**

And so the enemy comes with another trick. This time he tried discouragement. Look in chapter 4, verse 10: *“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall”* (Nehemiah 4:10). The job was halfway done, and they got discouraged. And I know the devil would like to discourage me, and I know the devil would like to discourage you. It’s all right, dear friend, to be weary in the work, but we mustn’t get weary of the work. And here, these people were just simply getting weary of the work. They were weighted down; they were wrought up, and they got discouraged. And Nehemiah gave the battle

cry, *“Remember the LORD,”* and the people went on (Nehemiah 4:14).

### C. Danger

And since that trick didn't work, the devil pulled out another one, and this was danger. Look in verse 11: *“And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease”* (Nehemiah 4:11). The devil, now, has stopped playing cute. Now the devil threatens bodily harm. And friend, he's not above threatening you with bodily harm—physical harm—if you take a stand for God. Don't you think that the devil is some soft person; *“The devil”*—Jesus said, is—*“a murderer”* (John 8:44). And so that didn't work; Nehemiah's not going to be intimidated by physical, bodily harm. He put a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. And he said, *“Let us continue to build.”*

### D. Discord

Well, the devil's not finished yet, so he tried something else. He tried discord. Look in chapter 5 and verse 1: *“And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews”* (Nehemiah 5:1). Now the devil said, *“If I can't beat them any other way, I'll get them arguing among themselves. I'll get discord—dissent in the ranks—and my motto will be ‘Divide and conquer.’”* Oh, the devil loves to start a church fuss. Don't you know he'd love to divide the people of Bellevue? He would, but friend, he cannot; he will not; he shall not, because we belong to our Lord. And Nehemiah taught his people there are no problems too big to solve—just people too small to solve them. And Nehemiah found out what the problem was that was causing dissent. He faced it; he fought it; he solved it; and the work of the building of the walls went on.

### E. Depletion

But the devil had tried dissent; he had tried discord; he tried division, and that didn't work. The next thing the devil tried was depletion. He tried to take away their resources. Look, if you will please, in chapter 5, verse 3: *“Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards”* (Nehemiah 5:3–4).

The devil got them in debt, and they were in hocked up to their ears; and, they were facing financial bondage. And Nehemiah taught them the principles of financial freedom. It is not God's will for His people to be in financial bondage. And Nehemiah refused to let finances stop the work of God, for

*[Our] Father is rich in houses and land,  
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands!*

—HARRIET BUELL

The devil tried depletion, but God's treasuries are still full—thank God—if we know how to tap into them.

## II. Four More of the Devil's Dirty Tricks

And so these are the things that the devil had already tried, if you've been with us thus far; but now, I want you to notice four more of the devil's dirty tricks. And all of that, believe it or not is by way of introduction. Now the message:

### A. Distraction

All right now, I want you to notice some new things that the devil tried. The next thing the devil tried was distraction, distraction. Begin now in chapter 6, verse 1: *"Now it came to pass when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner"* (Nehemiah 6:1–4).

Now what were they trying to do? Well, you see, if the devil cannot defeat us as a roaring lion, the devil will try to defeat us as an angel of light. And what Sanballat invited Nehemiah to was sort of a Camp David, sort of a love-in, out there, in a beautiful verdant valley, the plains of Ono. He said, "Well now, Nehemiah, don't be so obdurate; just come on out here and sit down, and we'll talk this thing over."

Now friend, Nehemiah was a man of God. And he was wise enough to know that, while the world may sometimes pretend to be friendly to the work of God, the motives and the method of the world have never ceased. And you notice that Nehemiah said, in chapter 6, verse 2, that, *"they thought to do me mischief"* (Nehemiah 6:2). Nehemiah wasn't fooled. Nehemiah knew that there was mischief in the making.

Do you know one of the dangers of any successful work? When a church or a work for God becomes successful in the eyes of the world, and the world can no longer whip it, then the world tries to join it. And the world wants to get in on the good side of the people of God, when it looks like their work is going to be successful. At first the world will try to stamp us out, and, if the world cannot stamp us out, then the world will try to neutralize us by entangling alliances. They will try to distract us from the main work that God has called us to do. And we need to be aware of that.

I told you a long time ago about a bear hunter who was out hunting—a big game

hunter. And he wanted a bear, because he wanted a fur coat made out of bearskins so badly. Finally, he saw his bear. He took aim and was about to squeeze the trigger, when the bear said, “Now wait a minute; hold it. Don’t shoot me; there’s no need for you to shoot me. Let’s go out here in the middle of the road, and sit down, and talk this thing over. Let’s have a little conference. Now,” he said, “be reasonable. After all, all you want is a fur coat, and all I want is a good meal.” They had a talk, and, when it was over, the bear had a good meal, and the man had a fur coat. That’s exactly what Sanballat was trying to do to Nehemiah. He said, “Now come on—let’s sit down out here in the plains of Ono, and let’s just simply talk this thing over.” But Nehemiah would not be distracted. I like what he’s saying. He said, *“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot...”* (Nehemiah 6:3).

You know that the devil would love to get you distracted, the devil would love to divert this church from the work that we’re doing, and the good can sometimes become the enemy of the best?

A very noted preacher was asked by President Lyndon Johnson to be his press secretary. And that preacher became Lyndon Johnson’s press secretary. And now that man is sort of a news commentator. And everybody says, “What an honor for a mere Baptist preacher to be right there in the President’s office.” I want to tell you, Mr. Moyers did not step up. He stepped down, in my estimation. And I want to tell you something, friend: I had rather—and God in Heaven knows this—I’d rather be the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church than to be the Governor of the State of Tennessee or the President of the United States of America. I mean that with all of my heart.

The devil would love to get somebody, sometimes, distracted, and get them to step down. Why, some of you mothers, you’ve been called to raise your family. What a grand and glorious opportunity it is to be a mother and to raise those children for the Lord! But now, the world beckons and says, “You just come out here. You can be successful in the business world.” And that lady steps down; she doesn’t step up. She leaves her baby and goes out there to be a success.

Now my hat is off to any woman who has to work to put bread on the table. My hat is off to any woman who has to work to put a roof over the head of her kids. But oh, what a tragedy, when a mother will leave her babies in the hands of someone else, and leave the work to which God has called her! She ought to say, “I am doing a great work, and the devil’s not going to distract me.” Somebody said, “It used to be that children learned at mother’s knee. Now they learn at some other joint.”

I see, sometimes, church workers, and they’re good church workers—they’re deacons; they’re Sunday school teachers; they’re choir members—and they’re doing a great work, because it’s the work to which God has called them. And then, the world comes along and beckons, and the world gives them some honor. And there’s some

fraternity, some club, some civic organization that says, “We need you.” And those people are so foolish as to be flattered by this world, and they leave the work to which God has called them; and, they do something that someone can do, and leave the work that God has called them to do. They’re so honored because they’ve been elected the first President of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Orphan Grandmothers with Athlete’s Foot, and they’re just so honored that they can now do this. And they get out here, and they get neutralized; and, they leave the work that God has called them to do. God has a plan for your life. God has something He wants you to do, and you had better not substitute the good for the best. You’d better find out what God wants you to do, and refuse, refuse, refuse to be distracted by the devil. You need to say, as the Apostle Paul said, “*This one thing I do*” (Philippians 3:13). Know what it is that God wants you to do, and do it—do it.

Sometimes churches get distracted. Do you know what the job of Bellevue Baptist Church is? It’s not building buildings. It’s not raising money. It’s the Great Commission—to win this world to Jesus Christ, to preach the gospel. It’s amazing how many churches have lost the task of evangelizing. They think that, every now and then, they might evangelize, like that’s something nice. Dr. Vance Havner said, “For a church to major in evangelism, it’d be like a railroad majoring in transportation.” Friend, that is our major. God has called us, and we dare not—we must not—be distracted. We have a job to do, and by God’s grace, we’ll do it. And if these buildings will help us to do that job, then, to that end, they’re good.

## **B. Defamation**

All right now, the second thing: Not only did the devil try with distraction—Nehemiah wouldn’t be distracted; they said, “Come on down to Ono.” Nehemiah said, “No, no,” to Ono; he just was not coming. “I’m not coming,” he said. “I’m doing a great work, and you’re not going to sidetrack me.” And so if the devil could not win with distraction, the next thing he tried was defamation, defamation—slander. Begin now in chapter 6, and look in verse 5: “*Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together*” (Nehemiah 6:5–7).

Never underestimate the devil. Do you know what Sanballat was saying to Nehemiah? Nehemiah wouldn’t come down and have a little love-in with him; and so, Sanballat sent an open letter. Now before, the letters had been sealed, but this was

more like a petition; it was more like a letter to the editor. It was meant to embarrass Nehemiah. And this is what it said: It said, “Nehemiah, it is reported”—it is reported. Now it’s just a rumor; the rumor is working, see; but—“it is reported that what you’re doing, Nehemiah, is, you’re trying to set yourself up as king. You’re not really interested in these people. You’re not really interested in rebuilding the walls. What you’re doing Nehemiah is this: You’re simply trying to feather your nest. What you’re doing, Nehemiah, is, you’re building a little kingdom for yourselves. You intend to set yourself up as king.” And what he did was to slander the motives of the man of God.

Do you know it’s always true—when any church tries to do something for God, there are always those who say, “What about their motives? Their motives are wrong”? Any preacher who tries to lead his church in a great program, they’ll say, “Well, he’s trying to feather his nest. He’s trying to build a little kingdom for himself. He’s trying to set himself up.” The devil’s very clever, isn’t he? And the devil knows how to use slander. And what did Nehemiah do, when they began to slander him, and even wrote an open letter about it? What did he do? Well, friend, he just kept on building the walls. I like that. He said, “You’re wrong. What you say is not true.” He simply answered it clearly and plainly, and then he went on. Notice verse 8: *“Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart”* (Nehemiah 5:8). In other words, “They’re lies, and I’m not going to run around trying to stamp out every lie.”

I like what one great man of God, Henry Ward Beecher, said. He said this—and I quote: “Life would be a perpetual flea hunt”—I like that—“a perpetual flea hunt, if a man were obliged to run down all the innuendoes, the inveracities, the insinuations, and the misrepresentations that are uttered against him.” And Nehemiah just said, “I refuse to be on the flea hunt.”

Abraham Lincoln was a man of God. Abraham Lincoln, I believe, was led of the Lord in what he did. But he had his critics. And here’s what Abraham Lincoln had to say—and I quote: “If I were to try to read, much less answer, all of the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep on doing it until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won’t amount to anything. And if the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing that I was right would make no difference.” That’s pretty good advice.

You see, you can’t be sidetracked, and you need not be frightened away, by slanderers. Anybody who serves God is going to be slandered. The servant is not better than his master (Matthew 10:24). Do you know what they said about Jesus? They said that Jesus Christ was a winebibber, and a glutton, and in league with the devil himself. Now if you live for God in your business, in your school—wherever you are—you might

as well get ready for them to impugn your motives. They'll say, "You go down to the Baptist Church for business reasons. You're just trying to make something big—this thing, that thing." But listen. Don't you let the devil keep you away from work for God by defamation, by slander. God's people always have been slandered, and they always will be slandered.

### C. Dismay

Now for the third of these dirty tricks that we find in chapter 6: After he tried distraction, and after he tried defamation, the third thing he tried was dismay. He tried to make Nehemiah dismayed—to make him afraid, to fill him with fear. Notice, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 9: *"For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee"* (Nehemiah 6:9–10).

The devil came to Nehemiah and said, "Nehemiah, they're after you. Run for your life; run for your life," and tried to put dismay into the heart of the man of God. Isaiah 41, verse 10 says, *"Be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness"* (Isaiah 41:10). But the devil wants us to be dismayed. The devil is the sinister minister of fear, and, if he cannot stop us by slander; and, if he cannot stop us by distraction; then he will try, sometimes, to fill our hearts with fear, because fear weakens us. It does indeed. Look in verse 9, if you will: *"For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened"* (Nehemiah 6:9).

Fear will weaken a church. Fear will weaken a preacher. It's hard to serve the Lord with the icy fingers of fear on you. Fear turns your blood to ice water. It weakens your knees, and it stops you from the work of God. Are you afraid? Are you afraid that the work might not prosper? Are you afraid of what the devil may do to you, if you take a stand for God? Friend, don't be afraid. Over 365 times—one time for every day in the year—God has said, in the Bible, *"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee"* (Isaiah 41:10).

The devil loves to make us afraid. He loves to get people cowering. I want to tell you what fear will do: Fear will degrade our Lord. Fear is an insult to God, who said, "I will be with thee." Fear will destroy your life. You become like the man who jumped on a horse and rode off in all directions. You won't get anything done. Fear will disturb your friends. Fear is infectious, and fear will delight your foes. When they see you afraid, it will nerve them. But friend, when they see you full of courage, it will unnerve them. "Be

thou full of courage” (Joshua 1:9).

We need some people, today, who are not afraid of the devil, amen? I mean, people who are not going to be intimidated. And the devil tried to strike a chord of fear. Did you know that the devil has a special demon who is a demon of fear? Second Timothy chapter 1, verse 7: *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7). There is a spirit of fear—a demon spirit of fear. It does not come from God. Are you a worrywart? One lady said, “Don’t tell me it does no good to worry; most of the things I worry about never come to pass.” My, how the devil wants to make us worry, and to fill us with dismay!

*Be not dismayed whate’er betide,  
God will take care of you.*

—CIVILLA D. MARTIN

Find out what God wants you to do. What has God called you to do? If God has called you to do it, don’t let the devil intimidate you.

#### **D. Deception**

And so when the devil could not win with distraction; and so, when the devil could not win with defamation; and so, when the devil could not win with dismay, he tried one more thing. He doesn’t give up easily, does he? This time the devil tried deception. Perhaps this was the hardest thing of all for Nehemiah to spot. But I want you now to begin reading in verse 12: “Now,” they said to Nehemiah, “Now you go in the temple and shut the doors behind you, and close the doors to save your life, because they’re coming for you.” But notice what Nehemiah said, in verse 12: *“And lo, I perceived that God had not sent him”*—just underscore that phrase, “I perceived”—*“I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him”* (Nehemiah 6:12).

He was not a true prophet of God, but he pretended to be prophesying for God. And he pretended to be on Nehemiah’s side. And he said to Nehemiah, “Nehemiah, I love you so much. And Nehemiah, I’m so concerned about you, that God has given me a message for you, Nehemiah. And this is hot from Heaven. You go into the temple; flee in the temple; shut the doors. God wants to preserve your life, Nehemiah. And God sent me to tell you this.” But it wasn’t God at all. He was a hireling. And Nehemiah said, *“I perceived that God had not sent him.”* Nehemiah was not going to be deceived by the devil. The devil is the master of deceit. In the Bible, it says, *“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God”* (1 John 4:1). Gentlemen, you might as well learn today that a lot of people who pretend to be speaking for God are not speaking for God; and the devil has his deceivers all over the city of Memphis, Tennessee, as in any other city.

I want you just to put a bookmark in Nehemiah 6, and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and look in verse 13. Paul speaks here of the devil's deceivers, and this is what Paul says about them—2 Corinthians 11 and verse 13: *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ”*—and listen to this next verse—*“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). Ministers of Satan, who appear as ministers of righteousness—false apostles, deceitful workers. *When you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpits of America.*

I was preaching on the devil one time, and afterwards, a little boy—I suppose he meant well—but he came up to me after the sermon and said, “Brother Rogers, when you were up there preaching, I could see the devil just as plain.” Well, let me tell you something, friend: Don't forget to look in the pulpit, when you look for the devil—false apostles, deceitful workers, transformed as angels of light. And I believe that there are pulpits here in this city and every city where people go to worship God, and they have a false apostle as the minister. You say, “That's harsh.” It's true, because they don't believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. They don't believe in the blood atonement, and they do not believe in the veracity, in the infallibility, of the Word of God. In this day and in this age, how are you going to know if it is the devil—who is so clever and so deceptive—when he doesn't appear as a bogeyman, but as an angel of light?

How did Nehemiah know? The Bible says that he perceived that this man was not of God. Two ways—you know, the Bible says, *“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God”* (1 John 4:1).

Number one: What this man told Nehemiah didn't square with the Word of God. You know what he told Nehemiah to do? He said, “You go into the temple and shut the doors behind you, and you'll be safe there.” Nehemiah said, “I'm not going to sin.” He was asking him to sin. Why? Because, Nehemiah was what we would call a *layman*, and that part of the temple was reserved for the priest only. Thank God Nehemiah knew the Bible. Thank God he knew the Word of God, and he could take what this man was saying and know it did not square with the Word of God.

I'll tell you there's another way: not only the outward, objective evidence of the Word of God, but there's something subjective in me, mister. The Bible says we have no need that anyone teach us: *“Ye have an unction from the Holy One”* (1 John 2:20). Now there's just a little bell in me that tingles when I'm hearing the Word of God, and there's something that jingles when I don't. And I just believe that the Holy Spirit of God—when we're walking close—will help us to perceive whether a man is a man of God, or whether he's not a man of God. And oh, dear friends, the Bible says, *“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God”* (1 John 4:1).

And so here, the devil tried deception. And oh, how easy it is to be deceived, if we're not walking in the light of God's Word! You'd better keep your knees on the floor, and you'd better keep your face in this book, in these days in which we are living.

I was reading, again, something of the life of Charles Lindbergh, who just about 51 years ago flew solo across the Atlantic Ocean in that little airplane, that little old twiggy-like airplane, *The Spirit of St. Louis*. Seems like it should have been longer than that ago, but he was flying across the Atlantic. And Lindbergh was telling about how when he had just gotten started—well, on his trip, he was out over Newfoundland—and he was flying in dense fog. There was a lot of moisture, and, of course, he had only a compass. He didn't have the sophisticated instruments that our pilots have today. He didn't have an altimeter to show him at what height he was flying, and some other things. But he knew the direction he was going.

But he could see that condensation beginning to freeze on his wings, and realizing that that ice would build up, and, sooner or later, that little plane would sink, sink, sink into the sea, unless he turned around and went back, Lindbergh said he thought to himself, "And this great adventure is going to come to an untimely end." And then, he thought, "What shall I do?" He had a moment of inspiration, and he pulled that stick back, and that little plane started to climb up, and up, and up—it seemed like an eternity. He kept climbing, and climbing, and climbing, and suddenly he burst out into the dazzling sunlight. No more fog, no more moisture. And he flew all the way in the sunlight. Friend, we don't have to fly in the fog.

Oh, let me tell you, we can get near to the heart of God. We don't have to stumble in the darkness; we can walk in light. We don't have to be deceived by the devil; we have the Word of God, "*a light that shineth in a dark place*" (2 Peter 1:19). And the devil would try to deceive us and keep us from doing a work from God. I want you to listen again to what the devil did now, just by recapitulation, because, ladies and gentlemen, he's going to try it on you. He's going to try it on you, this week, so you pay attention. He tried derision; he tried discouragement; he tried danger; he tried discord; he tried depletion; he tried distraction; he tried defamation; he tried dismay; he tried deception—but none of it worked.

## Conclusion

Go back to the Book of Nehemiah, as we close, and I want you to see something that will set the joy bells ringing in your heart. Nehemiah chapter 6, verses 15 and 16. Now folks, here's something sweet. Put a big star by this: Nehemiah chapter 6, verse 15: "*So the wall was finished*"—and, the devil didn't stop them—"So the wall was finished"—look at the last part, verse 16—"*And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast*

*down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God”* (Nehemiah 6:15–16).

You want me to tell you what I want as a pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Mr. Architect? Do you want me to tell you what I want, Mr. Deacon? Do you want me to tell you, Mr. Song Leader, what I want as the pastor of this church? The kind of a church I want to pastor? I want to pastor a church that does things in such a way that the people of this world will have to say, “That was of God. That was of God. They didn’t do that by themselves.” “*They perceived*”—the Bible says—“*that this work was wrought of our God*” (Nehemiah 6:16). It could not be explained by promotion. It could not be explained by propaganda. It could not be explained by personnel. It could not be explained by psychology. It could only be explained by the power of God.

Aren’t you hungry for people to see something that they say, “This is the work of God. What’s happening down there?” God is in business. The world is hungry to see something that cannot be explained. What is there about my life that cannot be explained? What is there about your life that cannot be explained? What is there, in your heart and in your life, that cannot be explained apart from God? That’s what we need.

These are days for us to be supernatural and not superficial. These are days for us to be walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. These are days for the people of God to get a message from God and say, “Let us arise and build; and all of the dirty tricks of Hell will not stop us, so help us God.” And one day, it’ll be done, and people will say, “We perceived that this is the work of God.” And the people of God will sing, “To God be the glory great things He has done.” Let us bow our heads together in prayer.

# Building on the Word of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 5, 1978**

**Main Scripture Text: Nehemiah 8**

*“And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.”*

NEHEMIAH 8:1

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Nehemiah chapter 8. Our message this morning: “Building On The Word”—“Building On The Word.” Now if you’ve been following along in our messages on the Book of Nehemiah, remember that we’ve been preaching, now, for several weeks on the theme: “Together We Build.” And last week, we came to a climax in the story, because the walls were completed, and all that the dirty devil could do had not stopped the people of God, and they did build as God told them to build. And we ended with chapter 6.

Now chapter 7 tells how the people got organized, and how they got all registered, how they got all housed, and how they were all fed; and it tells how they had a wonderful love offering. It ends telling about their love offering, and their commitment to *Together We Build*—that’s the last few verses of chapter 7—and, a very wonderful offering that they took, and how God blessed, and how everybody had a part in the offering, from the highest to the least, from the more wealthy to those who didn’t have

much. Everybody had a part. And it's a wonderful story.

But wait a minute; wait a minute. There they were, now. The walls were up; the offering was given; the job was completed. There they were secure; there they were housed; there they were organized; there they were led. But there was a spark missing. There was something yet that needed to be done. And I thank God for Nehemiah and his crowd that they did not have the monument mentality. They were not interested merely in building the walls. What went on inside the walls was more important than the walls themselves.

Now are you paying attention to me? The building is not the most important thing. Amen? It's what goes on inside the building that's going to really count. And you're going to find out that God blessed His people with a real, genuine, Heaven-sent, Holy Ghost, devil-defiant, earth-moving, mountain-rattling revival. And that's the kind of revival that I want us to have. And you're going to notice that it happened of all places at the Water Gate. It happened at the Water Gate—a real genuine Holy Ghost revival. And I tell you, that's what we need in America, and that's what we need in Memphis. That's what we need in Bellevue. And this revival was based on the Word of God.

Nehemiah chapter 8 is a great chapter of the Word of God. And I want you to notice the elements of this revival at the Water Gate. I want you to notice the elements of this revival that took place when the buildings were built and when the walls were up.

## I. A Hunger for the Word

First of all, it was rooted in a hunger for the Word. Look in Nehemiah chapter 8, verse 1: *“And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel”* (Nehemiah 8:1).

They said, “We want to hear the Word of God.” There was a famine for the Word of God, and there was a hunger for the Word of God. And all of the people gathered as one man, and said, “We want to hear something from the Word of God. Bring the book of the law, Ezra; you be the preacher, and tell us what God has said.”

Oh friend, do you have hunger for the Word of God? Do you really? A little boy asked his daddy, “Daddy, is this book God’s book?” And his dad said, “Why, Son, of course it is.” He said, “Well then, we’d better send it back to Him, because we never use it.” Oh friend, do you have a hunger for the Word of God? Do you love the Word of God?

Listen to these scriptures—don’t turn to them; I’ve jotted them down. Psalm 19, verses 9 and 10: *“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb”* (Psalm 19:9–10).

When you get a desire for this Word as you have a desire for money, then something wonderful is going to happen in your life. Do you desire this book more than gold? Be honest, now; really be honest. Do you want to know what's wrong with your Christian life? Perhaps you don't have a hunger for the Word of God.

Listen, if you will, to Job 23, verses 10 through 12. Job says, *"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined."* How could a man say some thing like that? I'll tell you how: he says, *"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food"* (Job 23:10–12). Do you know what? Listen to what Job said. Job said, "This book, God's Word, is more important to me, more precious to me, more needful for me, than the food that I eat." *"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food"* (Job 23:12). When this book gets as important to you as your physical food, then you're going to start to grow in your Christian life.

Do you ever try to fast? Have you ever noticed just how important food gets to you? Just miss three meals. You want to find out what a sissy you are? You want to find out how chained to that refrigerator you are? Just miss, just go one day, just three meals without eating. And yet, some of you can go one, two, three, four, five, six days without really feasting on the Word of God. Job said, *"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food"* (Job 23:12).

Listen to Psalm 119, verse 162. David said, *"I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil"* (Psalm 119:162). Have you ever dreamed of just one day just discovering a buried treasure somewhere? You know, and just a little box full of rubies, and diamonds, and gold bullions, and all of that. David said, "Oh, to me, to go into the Word of God is like a treasure hunt, just to dive down deep into the Word of God." *"I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil"* (Psalm 119:162).

And here, in Nehemiah chapter 1, verse 8, the people had a hunger for the Word of God. They said, "Bring us the Bible. Read to us from the Word of God." And I want to tell you, in that day, somebody had to stand up and read it, because they couldn't go down to the department store, the Bible bookstore, as you can, and buy a Bible for a dollar and a half, two dollars, three dollars, five dollars—they couldn't do it. I wonder if one day the dust on our Bibles is not going to testify against us.

*These hath God married, and no man shall part:  
Dust on the Bible, and drought in the heart.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

## **II. A Hearing of The Word**

Now this revival at the Water Gate was marked, first of all, by a hunger for the Word of

God. Have you got that? Nehemiah 8:1—a hunger for the Word of God. It was marked number two, by a hearing of the Word of God. Begin now, in verse 2, and read on down through verse 4: *“And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood”* (Nehemiah 8:2–4).

The people here heard the Word of God. They came to the worship service for this purpose: to hear the Bible, the Word of God. And these people were not time-conscious. Notice—look in verse 3: *“And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday”* (Nehemiah 8:3). It was a long service. And I don’t see anything about anybody being in a hurry to get out and be number one in the cafeteria line. They were there; they stayed there to hear the Word of God.

I want to tell you something, folks: We spend too much time doing other things, and not enough time in the Word of God, and not enough time worshiping the Lord. Now I don’t need to say it to this congregation as much as I need to say it to the other congregation, but you would be amazed how people get time-conscious, when they get in church. At every service, I have to tell certain individuals, “Please, don’t leave yet. The service is not over; the service is not over.” I ought not to have to say that. And it grieves me, because, if I say it, it seems like I’m being negative. And if I don’t say it, there will be a host of people that just get up, and leave right at the climax of the service. That’s a shame; that’s a crime. I don’t know what they think, but evidently they think, “God, You’re going to get a certain amount of my time, but no more.” They say, “Well, I’ve been here an hour.” Well friend, I start at eight o’clock, and I don’t leave ’til one. And I’m on my feet, standing, talking, preaching, thinking, praying, pleading most of the time. It’s a job, but it’s a thrill. These people had a revival, because they were not clock-watchers.

One of the lines that I’ve read somewhere that stuck in my mind for a long time has been this: “The clock chimed twelve, and the church gave up her dead.” And I think that’s so often what takes place, as people are time-conscious. Listen. I don’t believe that we ought to drag the services out—I really don’t; but I don’t believe that we ought to rush them up, either. I believe we ought to let God the Holy Spirit work. And when we get in a hurry, when God is blessing, when souls are being saved, when the Word is being preached, when lives are being blessed, and people are being born again, we say to the Holy Spirit, “We’re not really interested, God, in what You want; we’re interested in what we want.”

Now the point of the matter is this: that I came to preach; I trust you came to listen; and you ought not to get finished before I do. Now the people were attentive. They were attentive. They were not time-conscious. And notice, again, the last part of verse 3: *“And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law”* (Nehemiah 8:3).

### III. An Honor Given to the Word

Now the third thing in this revival: not only was there a hunger for the Word of God, not only was there a hearing of the Word of God, but there was an honor given to the Word of God—an honor given to the Word of God. Begin here, in verse 5, and continue to read: *“And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground”* (Nehemiah 8:5–6).

The people were so enthused about this book. When they heard the Word of God, they lifted their hand, and said, “Amen!” Now today, if we lift our hands, and say, “Amen,” somebody will think there’s something wrong with us. There’s nothing wrong with getting excited in church. There’s nothing wrong with saying, “Amen!” There’s nothing wrong with saying, “Praise the Lord,” if you mean, “Praise the Lord”—if you mean, “Amen,” if you’re caught up in a service. Now look, folks, don’t tip your cup over; but if it overflows, let it overflow. That’s all right. Some of you say, “Well, what if someone gets carried away?” Well, every now and then, we do have someone carried away. But I’ll tell you what: *It’s easier to cool down a zealot than it is to warm up a corpse.* It really is.

I want to tell you our biggest danger: Our biggest danger is not that this time, by next week, we’re going to become a congregation of howling fanatics. That’s not our biggest danger. Our biggest danger is that we’re going to be so cold, so lukewarm, so lackadaisical, so indifferent, that we will not get enthused and excited about the Word of God. These people were excited about the Word of God. Either this book is the Word of God, or it’s not the Word of God. And if it is the Word of God, oh, how we ought to give honor to it! How we ought to get excited about it!

I was studying some, this week, about the Word of God. I was interested in Isaiah chapter 40, verse 8: *“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever”* (Isaiah 40:8). And this word *stand*—*yakum*—is a Hebrew word, which means “it rises to stand.” That is, it keeps getting knocked down, but it keeps standing up. It keeps rising to stand; it keeps coming up again and again. And I thought through history of all of the things that men have done to put the Word of God down, but how it keeps rising to stand forever.

I think about that Roman Emperor, Diocletian, who hated Christ, who hated the Bible, who hated churches, who hated Christians. He made all the laws against the Bible, and outlawed the Bible, and beat the Bible down. Christians died and suffered agonizing deaths under the regime of Diocletian, that Roman Emperor. And Diocletian even said that he had completely done away with Christianity. He even built a monument, and on that monument he wrote these words in Latin: *Extincto Nomine Christianorum*—that is, “the name of Christian is extinct.” That’s what Diocletian said. But the next Emperor that followed Diocletian, Constantine, in 312, declared himself to be a Christian.

Oh, Thomas Paine, in the early history of the United States of America, wrote a book called *The Age of Reason*. And in that book, ol’ Tom Paine tried to blacken the character of the Bible. And this is what Thomas Paine boastfully said—and I quote: “I have gone through a wood with an axe and felled trees. Here they lie; they will never grow again.” But this man, on his deathbed, cried out, “God, help me! Oh Lord, help me! Jesus Christ, help me!” Somebody asked him if he “had a wish to believe in Christ.” He said, “I have no wish, but to believe on that subject.” Oh, Tom Paine was wrong. The Bible lives on.

Voltaire said, “My single hand will destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear.” But Voltaire is dead and gone—the brilliant French skeptic and atheist; and the old book lives on. Because, the Bible says, in Psalm 119, verse 89: “*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven*” (Psalm 119:89).

The people honored the Word of God. Do you honor the Word of God? Do you get excited about the Word of God? Do you?

I heard about a man who came to one of these cold churches, sat in the back, and the preacher got up, and preached. And I really don’t know what the man got so excited about, because it was kind of a liberal church; but, evidently, it must have been something in one of the hymns, or maybe just his own meditation. But the preacher said something, and the man said, “Amen.” Everybody turned around and looked at him. And then, after a while, he said, “Praise the Lord!” Then, people arched their eyebrows. And finally, he said, “Amen” again, and an usher went to him, and tapped him on the shoulder to quiet him down. He said, “What is wrong with you, anyway?” He said, “Well, nothing. I’ve just got religion.” He said, “Well, mister, you didn’t get it here.”

Well, I can believe it. I can believe it. The people said, “Amen.” They praised the Lord. I tell you something, folks: We need to praise the Lord.

Do you know what so many people think that real worship is? They think that Dr. Tommy Lane, and Adrian Rogers, and this choir up here are putting on a performance, and that they come to watch the performance. And they think of us as sort-of like participants or actors in a drama; and that you’re the audience, and God up in Heaven

is standing in the wings—He’s what they call *the prompter*—and that God prompts us, and He tells us what to say; and we say it, so you can see it and enjoy it. Well, that’s the concept that a lot of people have of worship. That’s not Bible worship.

Let me tell you how different it is. Listen. It is God who is the audience. You are the participants. We are the prompters. See, that’s the way it’s supposed to be. Worship is to be as unto God. We praise the Lord. You’re not here to come and watch us put on a religious extravaganza, some sort of a show. My job as a minister is to encourage you to praise the Lord. We meet here together to worship the Lord. Our worship is to be going upward to God the Father at this very moment. So it won’t hurt you every now and then to say, “Amen.” Amen?

All right now, listen. What made this such a great service on that day? Why was there a revival at the Water Gate? Look at it: number one, a hunger for the Word of God; number two, a hearing of the Word of God; number three, an honor to the Word of God—when the book was opened, the people rose and stood, and said, “Amen.”

#### **IV. A Handling of the Word of God**

Number three: a handling of the word of the Word of God, a handling of the Word of God. Notice chapter 8, beginning in verse 7: *“Also Jeshua, and Bani”*—and a lot of other fellows—*“and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading”* (Nehemiah 8:7–8).

Now folks, not only must we read the Word and honor the Word, hear the Word, and hunger for the Word, but we must properly handle the Word. Oh, you know, it’s not just enough to read the Word of God. Somebody has to explain it. Look again in verse 8: *“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading”* (Nehemiah 8:8).

I tell you something that really hacks me off is to go to church, hear somebody stand up, and preach without an open Bible. Or, maybe he’d quote a text, and close the Bible, and then make an oration, make a speech—and it may be a wonderful oration; it may even be inspiring—but the people are not learning the Word of God.

Now listen. What we need to do is to read the book, take the book. If we’re going to do it the way they did it in the Bible, read it distinctly, and explain it. Do you want me—you preacher boys—for me to tell you what I think preaching the Word of God is? I think it is taking a passage of Scripture, read that passage of Scripture, analyze it, organize it, illustrate it, and apply it. That’s what I think preaching the Bible is. And I believe there’s a famine in the land, today, for that kind of preaching. But I believe that is the kind of preaching, ultimately, that will build great Christians, where people can understand the Bible. Now if I preach, and you don’t understand the Bible, frankly, I have failed. I don’t

care how great the message may be, you ought to come away, saying, “Yes, the Bible says so-and-so”—not, “Adrian Rogers says it”—“It’s there in the Word, and I’m able to understand it.”

Sometimes, we go hear a preacher preach, and we say, “Man, he must be brilliant. I didn’t understand him.” Don’t kid yourself. Just ’cause a river is muddy, doesn’t mean it’s deep. You know what is said about the Lord Jesus Christ? *“The common people heard him gladly”*—the plain folks, the common folks (Mark 12:37). You didn’t have to have a Ph.D. to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, because Jesus took the Word of God, and analyzed it, organized it, and expounded it, where people could understand it. Oh, how we need Sunday school teachers who will do this and deacons who will do this! Actually, verse 7, I believe, is talking about the Old Testament counterpart of our New Testament Sunday school teachers and training workers. And notice what it says: This group of men *“caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place”* (Nehemiah 8:7). That’s so wonderful! Not only was Ezra the scribe of their teaching it and preaching it, but also he had a group of workers who were out there in smaller groups, teaching and explaining the Word of God.

Oh, the power in people getting together, after they come to one great service, and someone stands up, and preaches, and then they break down in smaller groups, and they study the Word of God together. Oh, the power of the Sunday school!

Did you know that John Dillinger—John Dillinger, the great notorious outlaw—got in trouble, as a little boy, really, and his mother, and his daddy thought, “Well, maybe if Johnny could go to Sunday school, it might change his life”? And they got Johnny Dillinger in Sunday school. But do you know what happened? When some of the parents found out that John Dillinger was going to Sunday school, they said to the teacher, “We don’t want that bad boy in the Sunday school class with our children. And if little Johnny Dillinger is coming to that Sunday school class, then our kids can’t come anymore.” And when John Dillinger’s mother heard that, she was heartbroken, and Johnny Dillinger dropped out of Sunday school. And in 20 years, he was the most notorious outlaw, died in a hail of gunfire—the most notorious outlaw in the United States. I just wonder what would have happened if little Johnny Dillinger had stayed in Sunday school, and some Sunday school teacher would have explained the Word of God to him and made known the Bible to him. But there was a Sunday school class that was more like a club than it was like a Sunday school class.

Oh, I want to tell you, friend, there needs to be a proper handling of the Word of God. I want you teachers to learn how to take the Word of God and study it to show yourselves workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). A handling of the Word of God (verses 7 and 8).

## V. A Heeding to the Word of God

Now next—verses 9 and following—there was a heeding to the Word of God. Notice here, in Nehemiah chapter 8, and beginning in verse 9: *“And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha”—that means “the governor”—“and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our LORD: neither be ye sorry”—now listen to this next phrase—“for the joy of the LORD is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them”* (Nehemiah 8:9–12).

Oh, there was a heeding to the Word of God, a heeding of the Word of God. You see, when folks hunger for the Word, when folks hear the Word, when folks honor the Word, when folks handle the Word, then they begin to heed to the Word of God, and it produces a transformation. What took place when they began to heed to the Word of God?

### A. Mourning

Well, first of all, there was mourning; there was heartbrokenness. Look again, if you will, in verse 9 of this chapter: *“And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law”* (Nehemiah 8:9).

The first effect of hearing the Word of God was mourning. They were brokenhearted. And I thank God they were. And they should have been. And we ought to be. Our sins ought to break our heart. And there’s no revival without mourning; there’s no revival without repentance. But you see, there is a time to weep, and there’s a time to laugh. There’s a time to be filled with sorrow, and there’s a time to be filled with joy. And Nehemiah, and Ezra the scribe, and others saw that the people had mourned sufficiently. And so they came to them, and said, “Now it’s time to stop your weeping; it’s time to stop your crying.”

You see, the devil—pay close attention, now—the devil can use your heartbrokenness against you, if you’re not careful. I’ve seen Christians who think that they have a broken spirit, who have a morose spirit, and they go around always negatively. Jesus didn’t say that, “I have come that you might have death.” Jesus said, *“I am come that they might have life”* (John 10:10). Jesus didn’t say, “that you might

have sorrow.” Jesus came that, “*ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (1 Peter 1:8). And so be careful; be careful. I know there are some people who want to see the Church of the living God continually on it’s face, continually weeping, continually crying; and, they say, “Oh, if we could only do that, we’d have revival; we’d be strong.” No, we wouldn’t.

Now listen. There’s a time to weep; there’s a time to be brokenhearted; there’s a time to mourn; but it is only a means to an end. And thank God for the wisdom of Nehemiah, and the wisdom of Ezra. And so they told the people—they looked at the people, and saw their broken heart—and said, in effect, “Don’t weep anymore.”

## B. Joy

Now listen. *The devil will bring you down to keep you there. The Holy Spirit will bring you down to lift you even higher.* And so the Word of God, first of all, produced mourning; but secondly, it produced joy. And this is really where we are aiming. Notice, beginning in verse 10: “*Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength*” (Nehemiah 8:10).

Now listen. There’s nothing sweeter than being a part of a church, when the joy of the Lord is upon that church, when God’s people meet together, and they have a good time. Now I want to tell you something, mister, and I want to tell you something, madam: If you don’t like being at a church where God’s people are happy, then you ought to go join another one. There is nothing that makes a church stronger than the joy of the Lord; there is nothing that is more appealing than the joy of the Lord. And the one thing that ought to mark our services above all others—oh, yes, there will be mourning; oh, yes, there will be seriousness—but, the one thing I want more than anything else to characterize the services of Bellevue Baptist Church is joy, joy.

Do you know most folks are not even worried about going to Heaven or Hell? They want to know how to hack it on Monday. Did you know that? Did you know that most people are just longing for some joy, something real in life? Nehemiah was so wise. He said to these people, “*The joy of the LORD is your strength.*” Jesus Christ said, in John 15, verse 11: “*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*” (John 15:11). The Bible says that we’re to “*rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice*” (Philippians 4:4).

Do you know what revival is? First of all, you make folks mad; then, you make them sad; then, you make them glad. That’s what revival is. You know, I know of some folks who come, and they listen to me, and the first thing, they get mad. They swell up like a poison pup. They say, “I don’t agree with him. Who does he think he is? That guy hacks

me off.” But somehow, by the grace of God, they keep coming. And then, no longer are they mad—they get sad. They say, “Oh, what a sinner I am!” And they begin to cry, and they repent of their sin. And then, God moves in. And then, they get filled with joy. And that’s where God wanted them all the time. First mad, then sad, and then glad. And they just go on. *“The joy of the LORD is your strength”* (Nehemiah 8:10). That’s what it’s all about, ladies and gentlemen.

Somebody wrote this about life:

*A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,  
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,  
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,  
And never a laugh but the moans come double;  
And that is life!*

—PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Not if you know Jesus, not if you know Jesus. If you know Jesus, you know *“joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8).

I kind of feel like that country preacher down in Florida, Brother Tom. We had that evangelism conference down there, in Orlando, and we had a preacher up there preaching about the Lord Jesus Christ, and the glory of the Lord, and all of the things that are going to happen. And all of the fellows were sitting around; they were getting happier and happier—and, there’s nothing like being in a bunch of preachers, when Jesus is being exalted. But there was a big ol’ country boy sitting on the second row. After a while, he just simply said, “Hot dog!” He got so excited about the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, sometimes, I just feel like saying, “Hot dog!” It’s just so great, so wonderful, to know the Lord!

You see, we’re to serve the Lord with gladness. We’re not to creep in to our work; we’re to leap into our work. *“The joy of the LORD is your strength”* (Nehemiah 8:10).

### C. **Obedience**

I wish I had more time, but let me say, not only did it produce mourning, and not only did it produce joy, but it also produced obedience, obedience. I want you to continue to look here, in the Word of the Lord, for just a moment, in verse 13: *“And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written”*—as it is written (Nehemiah

8:13–15).

They found there, as they were studying the Bible, that the work the people—the Jews—were supposed to keep once every so often is a feast called *the feast of booths* or *the feast of tabernacles*. And they hadn't been doing it. And so when they found out they were supposed to do it, they said, "All right, fellows, look what we found in the Word. This is the time for us to be having a certain feast. Say now, ya'll go out there, and get some sticks, and some palm branches, some olive branches, some myrtle branches, and bring them in here; and, I want everybody to make a little brush arbor. And you're going to leave your house, and your going to stay in those little booths; and, that's going to remind you of your pilgrim characters; it's going to remind you of what God did for you. But it's going to be a wonderful time." It was something like Christmas, something like the Fourth of July, something like Thanksgiving, something like Easter. It was sort of a religious ceremony, but it was also sort of a national ceremony. And it was a time when the kids would have a good time. They'd get to camp out, so to speak. And you know, the people said, "Well, all right, Lord, if You said to do it, we're going to do it."

And you know, I can see ol' Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem, and the rest of them, and see the children of Israel out there, and they say, "What are you doing?" "We're picking up sticks." "What for?" "Going to build a shack." "What for?" "We're going to camp out in it" "You're what? You folks, out here picking up sticks—why?" "Cause God said to. God said to." "Well, it doesn't make sense to me." "It doesn't make any difference." He says, "God said to do it."

Listen, folks. Pay attention to your pastor now. When you heed the Word of God, it's going to produce three things: first of all, sorrow; then, joy; and then, obedience. Obedience—just obey the Word of God.

A father and his two children were swimming off the coast of New Jersey. The little boy was eight. The little girl was ten. They were all good swimmers, but they got out there; and, they noticed the tide was carrying them out. And they were being swept away from the shore. The father was the strongest swimmer. He knew he could not save both of his children. He took the little boy back to the shore with him. He said to the little girl, "Honey, your a good swimmer. You can float on your back all day long, if you'll just try. Now honey, don't get frightened. Just lie over on your back, and float, and swim, and float. I'm going to the shore for help. And honey, Daddy will come back for you. Don't you forget: Daddy will come back."

And he swam with that little eight-year-old boy to the shore. And then, he told the people. And before long, all of that Atlantic was covered with boats, and people, and swimmers, looking for that little girl. Four long hours later, they found that little ten-year-old girl out there miles from the shore, floating on her back. Someone said, "Honey, weren't you afraid?" She said, "No. Daddy said I could float all day on my back. And he

said he'd come for me. And I'm just doing what he told me to do until he came."

Friend, that's what I want to be doing when Jesus comes. Oh, He said He'd come! He said He would come. And,

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
Oh, may I then in Him be found.*

—EDWARD MOTE

And if God tells me to pick up sticks, then I want to pick up sticks. If God tells me to build a shack, I want to build a shack. But I want our church to be built on the Word of God, on the Word of God. Do you know the Lord Jesus? Friend, *until you know Jesus, you will never really understand this book; and, until you understand this book, you're not really ready to live.*

## **Conclusion**

This last thing, and I am finished: A wife borrowed her husband's car, and she wrecked it. It didn't hurt her; but she just demolished the car. And it was a brand new car. She felt so bad. She reached in the glove compartment where they kept the insurance papers, and she got the insurance papers out; and, when she opened the insurance paper, there was a note right in the middle written by her husband, and this is what it said—I think it's one of the sweetest things I've ever heard—he said to her, "Remember, Sweetheart, it's you I love"—isn't that great?—"it's you I love. ("This car is not important, Honey, you're the important one.") Isn't that great?

I want to tell you, you may have wrecked your life; but God says, "It's you I love; it's you I love." God loves you.

# It Happened at the Water Gate

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** May 27, 1973

**Main Scripture Text:** Nehemiah 8:1–8; 9:24–26

*“And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.”*

NEHEMIAH 8:1

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles, and turn to the book of Nehemiah—Nehemiah chapter 8. We’re speaking on this subject: “It Happened at the Water Gate.” And I’m reading the first three verses, and we’ll read portions later on in Nehemiah 8 and Nehemiah 9.

Nehemiah’s a little hard to find. I hear the pages still a’ fluttering. All right, it says, *“And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and*

*the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.” (Nehemiah 8:1–3)*

Now, America is heartsick over Watergate. And I don't have any political pronouncements to make, and I'm not about to stand up here and tell you who is guilty and who is innocent. And I'm not about to stand up here and tell you what ought to be done about it politically, because I don't know and you don't know. We will wait and see. But I am here to tell you that I know the answer for our nation—and it is not a political—it is a spiritual—answer. And it is very interesting to me that the Bible mentions and records a national revival that took place in Ezra and Nehemiah's time at a place called “the water gate,” and it's so interesting to me that God sent revival at a place called “the water gate.”

We have some questions we want to ask today. I want to ask: Will the great American dream become a national nightmare? I want to ask: Is the grand old ship of state going to decay with moral dry rot and sink? I want to ask: Is the grand American eagle going to be replaced by the vulture of judgment of death and destruction? Is America going to survive, or will America join the graveyard of the nations? That's what we want to ask today. And I believe, ladies and gentlemen, that the answer is not yet settled in heaven, nor here. I believe that God is giving America another chance, and I believe that the issue is not yet completely settled. I believe America may not survive, but I believe America can and should survive.

## **I. God Caused Them to Reflect upon His Goodness**

Now, in Nehemiah's time, they had just rebuilt Jerusalem, they had rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and now they are coming for a time of moral and spiritual revival. They have gathered together at the water gate, and the first thing that Ezra the scribe does is to remind them of their glorious heritage, of the past that they've had. This also happened at the water gate. If you'll turn to chapter 9 and look with me, please, at verses 24 and 25—and these are only selected verses out of many, for in most of chapter 9 God is recounting His goodness to that ancient nation—this is what the Bible says: “*So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.*” (Nehemiah 9:24–25) God was saying to these people at the water gate so long ago, “I have been good to you as a nation. I have blessed you. I have given you more than your heart could desire.” God gave them a beautiful and a bounteous land.

And we would have to say exactly, precisely, the same thing about America: God has been good to America. I want us to reflect a little bit about the goodness of God to America. I want you to think with me a little bit on this Memorial Sunday about our rich spiritual past and our heritage. Do you know when Columbus set sail from Spain in 1492 to come to America, do you know what he did? He bowed his head in fervent prayer and asked God to lead him. He put a cross upon his lead ship, and when he came to these shores, he took that cross and planted it in American soil and kneeled in that soil and dedicated this country to God. Did you know that Columbus did that? And when the English came to Jamestown so long ago, their first act was to kneel and dedicate themselves and this new continent to the God who created it. When that little Plymouth colony came to Plymouth Rock, the very first thing they did when they got off their ship at Plymouth Rock was to kneel in prayer and to place a cross upon Plymouth Rock, as though to say, "This new country belongs to our Lord and His Christ." The very first public building our forefathers erected was a church building—the first public building here on these shores. The very first public act by that Plymouth Colony was an act of worship. I tell you, we have a spiritual background; we come from spiritual roots.

Why, the writers of that Declaration of Independence realized this. And while they believed in separation of church and state, they never believed in separation of state and God. Listen to some phrases out of the Declaration of Independence. They speak of "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God," that "all men are created equal" and "they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." They weren't afraid to mention God in the Declaration of Independence: "...appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions...with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence."

You see, it is written into the warp and woof of our Declaration of Independence that we ought to be a God-fearing nation, a God-fearing people. When that Continental Congress was meeting to draw up the Declaration, Benjamin Franklin, the wise man, said, "Gentlemen, we must stop and pray." And they recessed for prayer that God would guide them. I'm saying these sturdy people, these early people who came to America, came not to find soil for their plows but to find freedom for their souls.

A Frenchman came to America 150 years ago to find out what made America the great land that America is, and I want to quote what this noble and intelligent Frenchman said. He said, "I sought for America's greatness. I found it not in her fields and forests. I found it not in her mines and factories." He said, "I found it not in her fleets and commerce. I found it not in her Congress and great tribunals. It was only when I entered her churches and heard her pulpits thundering against sin and preaching righteousness that I discovered her greatness." And then, he added these words: "America is great because America is good. If America ever ceases to be good,

America will cease to be great.” Those are prophetic words indeed.

I’m saying, just as God caused the nation Israel to recount the blessings that He had given to them at the water gate so long ago, it would be good for us to stop when we have Watergate in the headlines and to turn around and to look back and to see something of the pit from whence we were dug and something of what God has done for us. Oh, how God has abundantly blessed America!

We talk about our poverty problem, but I want to tell you that the poorest people in America are rich compared to most of the people in the world. Some folks were complaining. They were saying, “We’re not getting enough to take care of our families, and we need some more welfare assistance.” And they said, “Why, even our baby has to sleep in the cardboard box that our television came in.” You see? And I’m not against welfare for those who need it. God bless them. We ought to do more for those who are in need, and it’s a crying shame in this nation that God has blessed with so much abundance that anybody should go hungry. And don’t you misinterpret what I’m saying; but I’m saying, friend, if you compare America to the other nations of this world, God has so abundantly blessed America that even our poor people are rich by comparison to most of the other people.

You think of how God has protected America in a war-torn world. Think of what’s happened to England. Think of what happened to France. Think of what happened to Germany. Think of what happened to Italy. Think of what happened to Japan. Think of what has happened to Indochina. My, how good—how good—God has been to us! Oh, we’ve not had to suffer the things that they’ve suffered. The national anthem expresses it:

*Blest with vict’ry and peace, may the Heav’n-rescued land  
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!*

—FRANCIS SCOTT KEY

I’ll tell you something else. Not only has God been good to America, but I’ll tell you something that makes me glad to be an American: America has been good to her enemies. And I believe that. There are people who like to badmouth America, but at the end of three major wars—World War I, World War II, and the Korean Conflict—it has been proven by any student of history who wants to find out that America is not—I say, is not—an imperialistic nation. We are not! No nation has ever been as good to its defeated foes as America has been. I tell you, at the end of World War II, before the guns were cold, we were shipping millions of dollars worth of goods into West Germany and rebuilding that nation. Why, the Japanese, who attacked us with a dastardly sneak attack at Pearl Harbor, a day of infamy and shame, were defeated; and yet American dollars and American knowhow and technology have helped to rebuild Japan to such a great nation that today American businessmen are being hard put to keep up with the

nation that we defeated in war! We've been good to our enemies. And I know that God—though He has much that He can blame against America—I know that God has blessed us. And one of the reasons that God has blessed America is because of America's heritage and the background and her goodness.

## **II. God Delivered Some Solemn Warnings**

And so God caused these ancient people so long ago to reflect upon the goodness that He had given to the nation Israel. But then, at the water gate, He caused them not only to reflect upon the goodness that He had given them, but then God went on at this ancient water gate so long ago to give them some solemn warnings. And I want you to see it in the Word of God. He mentions in chapter 9, verses 24 and 25, about His goodness; but then, He says in verse 26, *“Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.”*

(Nehemiah 9:26) They provoked the Lord. God was so good to them, but it seemed like that in spite of the fact that God was so good to them they turned their backs upon God.

God has been good to America; but, you know, somehow the fact that God has been good to us may cause God to sit up in heaven and say something like this: “I was so good to America. I've blessed America. I've given them more than any other nation has ever had in the history of the world. I've kept them from being torn by war. I have given them victory in their battles. I've done all of this. And do they love me? Do they serve me? No, they don't serve me. They're going deeper and deeper into immorality and sin. They've provoked me.” You see, God has blessed America, and America has been blessed.

Now, perhaps God is going to change. We have been perhaps cursed with blessing. Now, maybe God is going to bless us with cursings. I believe that the problems that we're having around the world and problems that we are having in America are God's way to bring us back, to draw us back. You read this ninth chapter of Nehemiah. God said, “I was so good to you, but then you provoked me.” And then God said, “I had to send you famine. I had to send you war. I had to send you strife. I had to send you internal difficulties to draw you back.” (Nehemiah 9:27)

What are some of the things that America is doing today that provoke the Lord our God? What are some of the dangers that face America?

### **A. The Danger of Materialism**

I would say number one is the materialistic soul of America. We're such a materialistic nation. We are living today in a cesspool of vice and immorality and greed. And the great threat to America is not what some other nation is going to do to us; it's what God is going to do to us if we don't repent.

## B. The Danger of Liberalism

I'll tell you another danger of America is not only the materialistic soul of America, but the liberalism in her churches—the liberalism in her churches: the prophets and the preachers and the priests who no longer preach the Word of God. There used to be a time in America's pulpits when a man of God would stand up and say, "Thus saith the Lord God..." Then, he started to say, "The Church says..." And then, he started to say, "Well, it seems to me..." Well, we don't want to know what it seems to you; we want to know, is there a message from God?

## C. The Danger of Permissiveness

And not only is there the materialistic soul of America, and the liberalism of her churches; but another grave danger that we are facing this very hour is the permissiveness of her courts—permissiveness of her courts. *I believe with my soul that if the Supreme Court of the United States of America could vote on it, they would outlaw hell as cruel and unusual punishment.* They would say that God has no right to punish men in hell. The Bible says, "*Evil men understand not judgment.*" (Proverbs 28:5)

And I want to say something—and I know I'll probably get some letters about it, and I know there are a lot of people who will tell me, "Now, Brother Rogers, you're not loving"—but I believe in capital punishment. I want to tell you why I believe in it. I believe in it because the Bible teaches it. You read in Genesis chapter 9, verse 6, the Bible says, "*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.*" (Genesis 9:6) His own blood should be shed. Let me read it to you in the Living Bible that I said some of you ought not to bring to the services—Genesis 9:6: "Any man who murders shall be killed, for to kill a man is to kill one made like God." You say, "Well that's Old Testament." Friend, the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. God hasn't changed.

Do you know we live in a strange age? A people that shrinks from punishing its criminals is an insane people. It is a lamb defending the lion's right to eat it. One of the dangers that America faces today is the permissiveness of her courts.

## D. The Danger of Rebellion

Not only the liberalism of her churches, and the materialistic soul of her people, but the liberalism of her courts, and the rebellion of her youth. What a danger we are facing today! We have so many kids in America today who have not been raised by what the Bible says. They've been raised by Spock rather than spank. And so, no longer today do they have any respect for their parents. And one of these young anarchists said this about Uncle Sam—and I'm not going to dignify his name by mentioning him from this pulpit, but you'd know his name if I mentioned it—he said, "If you keep hitting 'the man'

from every side...”—now “the man” means “the United States”; it means “Uncle Sam”—“If you keep on hitting ‘the man’ from every side, punching him, laughing at him, ridiculing him, he will eventually collapse.”

And that is what is going to happen to America. We have a group of young people today—and older people, for that matter—who are militantly intent on dragging this nation down. And this is a part of the provocation I’m certain that is provoking the Lord.

#### **E. The Danger of Complacency and Apathy**

And I’ll tell you something else that is one of our national dangers—and it is the complacency and apathy of our citizens. Somebody has written this out: “The history of all democratic society has been, number one, from bondage to spiritual faith; two, from spiritual faith to courage; three, from courage to freedom; four, from freedom to abundance; five, from abundance to selfishness; six, from selfishness to apathy; seven, from apathy to dependency; and eight, from dependency back to bondage.” We are now at the apathy stage.

It has been said that, “While the Communists are out to win the world, Americans are out to enjoy the world.” And we have a generation of gutless wonders who won’t take a stand much for anything, because they don’t want to get involved. They have no backbone and a soft underbelly. And it is the tenet of communism today that Americans are so soft that they won’t put up a fight about anything anymore and that America will fall into the hands of the Communists like a piece of overripe fruit, because we are so complacent and we’re so apathetic.

“Oh,” we say, “well, the Supreme Court can’t outlaw pornography.” I tell you—I’ve said it before; I’ll say it again: There are enough citizens—Baptists alone, for that matter—in Memphis, if they would rise in moral indignation, they could make it so hot for that crowd they’d have to get out of town—law or not law. I’m not talking about lynching—don’t get me wrong. I’m just talking about going into where you buy your drugs and picking up that magazine, or walking up to the proprietor of that store and saying, “What do you mean?” It would scare him to death. Why don’t you try it? Why don’t you get a little backbone, a little nerve? Oh, we’ve become so apathetic, so soft, so spineless. We’ve had so much. God has been so good.

#### **F. The Danger of Communism**

And I want to mention another provocation: Of course, that’s the threat of communism. I didn’t mention it first, on purpose—not because I feel that it’s any less evil; communism is unspeakably immoral. But, again, I’m not afraid of what the Communists are going to do to us nearly so much as I’m afraid of what we’re going to do to ourselves.

One man, because of the high price of meat, decided he’d raise some of his own animals. And so he fenced in part of his acreage there and got him some cows and

some hogs and so forth. Later on, he went back to the butcher, and the butcher said, “I haven’t seen you for a long time. Where have you been?” “Well,” he said, “I’ve been butchering myself.” Well, I think America is butchering herself. I think that’s exactly what we’re doing. We don’t have to have anybody else to butcher us.

### **G. The Danger of Democracy Without Goodness**

And then, I want to say, dear friend—please listen to me—one of the real threats to America, as we consider this Memorial Day, is that we have democracy without goodness. Now, please consider what I say. I believe in democracy. I don’t believe there’s another form of government upon earth other than theocracy, the rule of God that will take place in the Millennium, that can surpass democracy. Don’t anybody misinterpret what I’m saying. I believe in democracy. Don’t you label me anything else. But I want to say that democracy without good people is always a miserable failure. Do you understand what I’m talking about? That Frenchman said so long ago that “America is great because America is good. If America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

Let me illustrate what I’m talking about. If the majority of the people are corrupt, then what will the majority of the people do in a democracy? They will pass corrupt laws, you see. If the majority of the people believe in pornography and want pornography, in a democracy, then you’ll have it. If the majority of the people want wide-open liquor laws, in a democracy, if that’s what they want—if the majority of the people have been taught that drink is the proper and the acceptable thing—then we’re going to have wide-open liquor laws. If the majority of the people want easy divorce, in a democracy, that’s what you’ll have. If the majority of the people want free and easy abortion, in a democracy, that is what you’re going to have. If the majority of the people want government give-away programs that are going to take money from those that work and give it to those who will not work—I say, if you get more of that kind than the other kind—then what kind of laws are the majority going to pass?

What I’m saying is that a democracy is not an answer in itself. A democracy is no better than the people that have it. And so we talk about democracy, but democracy without a moral foundation, without a spiritual revival, without the power of God is not going to save America. Oh, these are the things that God had to warn His ancient people about so long ago.

Now they had a revival at the water gate. Let’s go back to Nehemiah chapter 8 and find out what happened. Well, “*the people*”—the Bible says in verse 1 and 2—“*gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and of women, and all which could hear with understanding.*” (Nehemiah 8:1–2)

And then, notice in verse 5: “*And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen,*”—by the way, there’s nothing wrong with saying *amen*, church, is there? Amen? Oh, you’d think *amens* cost fifty dollars a piece. “Oh,” people say, “well, we believe in dignity.” And they don’t know the difference between dignity and rigor mortis. They’re dead. Oh, people got excited, and when they read the Word of the Lord, the people said, “Amen! Amen!”—“*with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.*” (Nehemiah 8:5–6) This happened at the water gate, friend. Notice in verse 8: “*So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*” (Nehemiah 8:8)

That’s the kind of preaching I believe in. I believe in the kind of preaching that takes the Word of God and reads it where people can understand it and then explains it. We have too many people who want to be cute and clever rather than preaching the Word of God. *We have too many folks who want to be orators when God wants them to be expositors. We have too many men who want to be editors when God calls them to be newsboys.* The gospel is good news, and we’re to preach it. We’re to read the Word of God—make it plain and distinct. *I have a feeling in my soul, down deep in my bosom, there is absolutely nothing wrong with America that could not be solved if we had preachers across America who would start preaching the Word of God in power.* We still have enough people; we still have enough churches. The Word of God is still powerful. “*Is not my word...like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*” (Jeremiah 23:29) “*The weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but [spiritual and] mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*” (2 Corinthians 10:4)

What, then, is our hope? The same hope that took place so long ago at another water gate. It is a nation coming back to the Word of God, back to the pit from whence they were dug, back to the Rock, back to the Lord God, the God of their fathers.

### **III. God Is America’s Only Hope**

Let me tell you why God is America’s only hope. Will you listen just a few more moments? Why God is America’s only hope: a new kind of water gate.

#### **A. God Is the Only One High Enough to Deliver Us**

God is America’s only hope—listen to me—for God is the only One high enough and lofty enough for a freeborn American to bow down to. We’re not going to bow down to anybody else but God. Americans just won’t do that. Americans are made out of a different kind of stuff. And if we’re looking for somebody to worship, He’s got to be God, because Americans won’t turn to anybody else and bow down—not a freeborn American.

## **B. God Is the Only One Wise Enough to Deliver Us**

Secondly, God is our only hope for God is the only One wise enough to deliver us from our problems. I honestly believe that the majority of our leaders are doing the very best they know how—I really believe that. They just don't know how—they don't know. Winston Churchill, a brilliant man, before he died, said, "Our problems are beyond us." Sure, only God can guide us. Only God has the answer. And that's the reason we sing, "Stand beside her, and guide her through the night with a light from above." That's what we want: for God to guide us; for God to put His blessings on us; for God to help us out of the mess that we're in.

## **C. God Is the Only One Strong Enough to Deliver Us**

And I tell you, not only is God the only One big enough, high enough, lofty enough for a freeborn American to bow before; not only is God the only One wise enough to extradite us from our problems; but God alone is the only One strong enough to deliver us. And *"if God be for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31)

And I want to say something else, friend: I'm not entirely a pessimist in this area. I look around and I say, "I don't know which way the thing's going to go," but I see some encouraging signs. And do you want me to tell you where I see most of these signs? It's in the hearts and lives of young people. Now, most of you older folks here, your minds are like concrete. You've made up your minds, and your values are already fixed. But, oh, these young people! You may not like the way they look. You may not like the way they dress. You may not like some of their songs, and you may not like some of their rhythm. But I'll tell you, these kids are on fire for Jesus Christ, and it blesses my heart.

I was walking through the airport the other day and I saw a young man and young woman with a big black Bible buttonholing everybody they could find telling them about the Lord Jesus Christ. They're going around, and do you know what they are saying now? "Uncle Sam, Jesus wants you." Isn't that beautiful. Do you know what they are doing? And this just tickles the fire out of me. They're going to these rallies where the politicians are getting up to campaign for office and in the question and answer time a young person walks up to the platform and says, "Sir, do you love Jesus?" You talk about blowing a politician's mind: not, "Do you believe in God?"; "Do you love Jesus?" Man, the image-makers don't know what to do with that. They don't know how to figure that out—how to answer that. And I see a great rising tide of young people in Campus Life, Campus Crusade, Youth for Christ. And, oh, just the BSU's on our campus and other things are coming alive. And young people are getting so encouraged and so on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, "Well, yes, but they are just a few of the young people." I want to remind you of something, friend: We don't need great numbers. Lenin started with several thousand in 1917. Castro started with a band of eighty cutthroats in 1956. Jesus started

with twelve apostles. The Bible says in Joshua chapter 23, verse 10, “*One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised.*” (Joshua 23:10) I believe that America can come back to God, and I believe that as God brought this ancient people back to Him at the water gate so long ago America can come back to God. And God is longing, through Watergate today, to bring us to our knees.

## **Conclusion**

Now, let me in conclusion say this. Let me talk to you. I know some of you are saying, “Well, he’s just like the rest of them: he’s just a Bible-thumping, flag-waving, super patriot.” But let me say this to you: True patriotism is not just waving a flag on the Fourth of July. That’s pretty easy. True patriotism is not just standing up and sticking out your chest and saying, “My country, right or wrong.” The most patriotic thing you can do, and the most sensible thing you can do for yourself, for your family, and for your country is to make a full, wholehearted surrender to God. It must never be country first. It must be God first. And America will never be any greater—nothing less, nothing more—than the sum total of her people. America will be as strong as you are strong. America will be as pure as you and I are pure. America will be as godly as you and I are godly. America will be as Christ-like as you and I are Christ-like.

# Not Forsaking the House of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 12, 1978**

**Main Scripture Text: Nehemiah 10:39**

*“For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.”*

NEHEMIAH 10:39

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me to the Book of Nehemiah, please—the Book of Nehemiah chapter 10 and verse 39. I am speaking today on this subject: “Not Forsaking The House Of God”—“Not Forsaking The House Of God.” Nehemiah 10:39: *“For the*

*children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God” (Nehemiah 10:39). Just put a big star by that: “and we will not forsake the house of our God.”*

Bellevue is celebrating 75 years of history. I tell you, the devil has not liked the fact that Bellevue Baptist Church has been here, in midtown Memphis. I tell you that he would like it if he could to remove this church. This church has been a thorn in his side. This church has been a blockade to his progress. This church has been against all that the devil is for 75 years. And he would like to see this house of God forsaken. But all of the people of Bellevue Church, all of those of us who know the Lord, and all of those of us who love His church, will say together, “We will not forsake the house of our God. We will not. We will not. We will not.”

I want to tell you that Jesus Christ loves the Church. Jesus Christ died for the Church. In the Old Testament, the house of God was the temple. In the New Testament, the house of God is the Church—not the church building; the church, the people. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people. In the New Testament, He has a people for His temple. And that people is called, in 1 Timothy 3 and verse 15, “*the house of God*” (1 Timothy 3:15). We are the household of God. And we will not forsake the house of God.

Well, how are we going to see to it that Bellevue Church, glorious as she has been for 75 years, will not one day be forsaken? May I give you three words today? The first word is the word *examination*. The second word that I want to give you today is the word *contemplation*. And the third word, the word *determination*. Have you got them? Examination, contemplation, determination: for that is what these people did so long ago to see to it that the house of God would not be forsaken.

## **I. A Personal Examination**

Now the verse that I just read to you in chapter 10 is the climactic verse of several chapters. So go back, if you will, please, to chapter 9, and let’s look at the first three verses, as we think of the word *examination*. These people, so long ago, made an examination of their lives. I’m reading Nehemiah chapter 9 and the first three verses: “*Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God*” (Nehemiah 9:1–3).

## A. **Elements of the Examination**

Here was a time when God's people went through a personal examination. I want you to notice the elements of this examination.

### **1. Humiliation**

First of all, there was humiliation. They did it with fasting, with sackcloth, with dirt upon their heads. In Old Testament times, when they would humiliate themselves, they would take dust, and throw it up in the air, and let it come down upon their heads. We don't do that any more; but oh, the spirit of these people we certainly ought to emulate.

You see, humiliation means getting low to the earth. Our very word *humus* means, "dirt." They put dirt upon their heads to show how low they were, how humiliated before God. I want to tell you something, folks, there's one thing wrong with many churches in America, and it is this: that we sit in church as haughty, unbroken, unbent. And God says, "*A broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God*" (Psalm 51:17).

### **2. Separation**

There was brokenness, there was humiliation; and, not only was there humiliation, there was separation. Look in verse 2: "*And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers*" (Nehemiah 9:2). What does that mean? It means that they got alone by themselves; they got quiet; and they came out from the world; and they were separate. The Bible says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 6: "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

You know, we don't hear much today about separation. Everything is just sort-of muddy; it's not separated anymore. We sort of have a "good Lord, good devil, take-it-or-leave-it" type of Christianity. The church seems to be becoming more worldly and the world seems to be coming more churchy. And I tell you, if that happens very much longer, you're going to find houses of God forsaken all over America. These people separated themselves. They refused to be chloroformed by the spirit of the age.

### **3. Confession**

But not only was there humiliation, not only was there separation; there was confession. They confessed their sins to the Lord. Now folks, don't you look around and see what anybody else is going to do today. Let me tell you something. You need to ask yourself this question today, and ask it well: If every member of Bellevue Church were just like me, what kind of a church would our church be? If everybody sang as you just sang in the song service, if everybody prayed as you prayed in the invitation, if everybody were to give as you will give during the offering, if everybody invited people as you will invite people next week, if everybody studied their Bible as you study your Bible, if everybody witnessed as you witness, what kind of a church would our church be? You know, sometimes we're prone to look around and ask questions, like "What's wrong with the

church?” Do you want to know what’s wrong with the church, sir? Go look in the mirror.

There’s a modern parable called “They.” I want to read it to you—it’s a parable for our time: “There was a man who lived in the twentieth century. His house was new. Two cars and a boat graced his garage and carport. Color television gleamed in his den. His family was healthy and lo, good fortune did smile upon him. As was his custom, when he was in town, when the fish were not biting, when he was not on the beach or at the lake, when company did not come, when he could get up on time, when he was not too tired, and when there was nothing else he could do, he regularly went to church.

On these occasions, once every five or six weeks, he spent his time deploring the decaying state of the church: the Sunday school was low in attendance; the choir was scanty; the congregation was small; the offering was poor; the preacher was discouraged; and something called *church training* was about shot. ‘They ought’—oh, listen to this—“‘They ought to do better,’ he said. ‘What do *they* think this thing religion is about, anyway? Surely, *they* could do better than this.’ And so vacations and days off came and went, until many moons had passed. As is the way of the world, this man’s children grew up. He knew that they did not go to church, because *they* down at the church had not interested them in religion.

The man’s health failed. One day, he noticed something strange. *They* down at the church came by no more. *They* did not visit him in the hospital. Verily, verily, he was angry. But being a great heart, he decided he would forgive them, and go to church once more. But behold, when he arrived, there was no church—only a 711 store. ‘Where is the church?’ he demanded. ‘Dead,’ was the answer. ‘Oh,’ he moaned, ‘*they* should not have let it die.’”

## B. **Our Duty to Our Church**

Let me tell you something, folks: It is not *they*; it is *we*. We have a duty to our church, to the house of our God. And I want you to go through a personal examination, and I want you to ask yourself this question: If every member of Bellevue were just like me, what kind of a church would our church be? Do you want me to tell you your duty to Bellevue Church, that the house of God be not forsaken?

### 1. **Attend Church**

Number one: It is your duty to attend your church. And radio and television have never been meant to be a substitute for church attendance. We use radio and television as an outreach to those who are not saved, and as a help to those who are sick and shut-in, and those who cannot come for providential reasons, but never as a substitute for the attendance in the house of God.

The Bible says clearly and plainly, without a shadow of any doubt, that we are to attend the house of God. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 25, the Bible says we are not to

forsake *“the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25). The closer we get to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we ought to be in the house of God.

You know, some folks come to the church three times: when they're hatched, when they're matched, and when they're dispatched. That's about the only time they come. And yet, they talk about belonging to the church. They don't belong to the church. They talk about the church belonging to them. The church doesn't belong to them. It's the Lord's church.

And you're to be faithful in attendance. We are to attend church. The Bible says we are not to forsake *“the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is”* (Hebrews 10:25). You say, “Well, I can get the message by tape; I can get the message by reading; I can get the message by radio or television.” You don't just come to church to get a message. You come to church to meet with the brothers and sisters in Jesus.

There is a sense in which the Lord is present when His people gather that He's not present in another way. The Bible says, *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). There is no substitute for church attendance. It ought to be faithful; it ought to be regular.

I want to tell you, there is nobody too bad to come to church and not one too good that he need not come. We all need to be in the house of God. It is your job to attend your church.

## **2. Defend the Church**

But not only is it your job to attend your church; it is your job to defend your church. I want to tell you that, as the time comes and the days get shorter, that the churches of God in America today are going to be under bombardment as they have never been before. I can see the noose as it is beginning to tighten. I can see this secularist, humanistic value system of our world as they are plodding to destroy Bible-believing, not-compromising churches. And we're going to find ourselves a generation of twice-born people in a world of once-born people, and we're going to be going against the tide. And the church is going to come under attack. And it is not only our job to attend our church; it's our job to defend our church.

## **3. Extend the Church**

It's also our job to extend our church—to go out and to bring others in. Jesus said, *“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled”* (Luke 14:23). Have you ever won a soul to the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, why not? Do you invite people to church on Sunday? Or, do you just come sit down, and sit here, and think you've done God Almighty a favor?

This is a day of good tidings. We sin against the Lord, if we fail to invite people to the

banquet, to the feast, to the fellowship that we have every Sunday. How can we say that it means more than anything else to us on the face of this Earth; and yet, we don't invite others to come?

#### **4. Commend the Church**

You must attend your church; you must defend your church; you must extend your church; and, you ought to commend your church. You ought to love the Church. Let the criticism come from the devil's crowd. Let it come from those outside the Church. Don't criticize the Church. Love the Church. The Church is not perfect. As a matter of fact, it's a society of sinners who finally realized it. Did you know that? It's the only organization I know of you have to profess to be bad before you can join, unless it's the Hell's Angels. You just say, "I am a sinner." That's the qualification for coming. It is a society of sinners, who have realized that they're sinners, and have banded themselves together to do something about it.

#### **C. Why Should We Love the Church?**

But we ought to love the Church. Why do we love the Church? Because, Jesus Christ loves the Church. Listen. The Bible says, "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). Not these buildings—these people; you're the object of His love. And what He loves, we ought to love.

I read a story years and years ago. I may not have all the details correct, but it went something like this:

Dr. Fuller, a pastor in Georgia—Ellis Fuller, a well-known man—was visiting in the household of some of his members. It was a lovely house, and these were cultured people, deeply dedicated to the Lord. They seemed to have all of the amenities of life, all of the accoutrements of intellect that made them just such fine people, but they had a little dog—just a little poodle dog—in that house. And they showered their affection on that dog: the dog had a special place to sleep, and ate the finest of foods, and they petted, and cuddled that little dog.

This pastor said to them—and we'll call them John and Mary—"John and Mary, may I ask you a personal question? I'm your pastor, and I don't mean to intrude, and I don't mean to meddle; but I have noticed the affection that you shower on this little dog. And I've noticed that this lovely house has no children in it. And of all of the people that ought to have children, it would seem to me that you ought to have children. It seems unnatural that you would show all of this love to a little animal when surely God wants to give you a little baby that you might shower that love upon. Why is it that there's not a child in this home that you might love?"

And when he said that, the women buried her face in her hands, and began to weep copiously. And out of the room she went. And the pastor said, "Oh my! What did I say

wrong?” and, turned to the husband, and said, “I’m so sorry; I must have bumbled. Somehow, I struck a sensitive nerve. I’m so sorry.” He said, “That’s all right, Pastor. You had no way of knowing that we did once have a son—a child, the very apple of our eye, a handsome little fellow. But he was taken with sickness. The doctors said he could not live. We loved him more than life. It was the only child, physically, my wife was able to bear. The doctor said she can never have another. We wish that we could, but this little dog that runs about our house was his dog. And Pastor, our boy loved that dog so much that we just love him, because our son loved him so.”

And you know, that’s why I love the Church. You can point out all of the characteristics, and faults, and flaws, and foibles, and failures of the Church you want. But I want to tell you, if Jesus loves the Church, I love it. And there’s something wrong with a person who doesn’t love the Church, and yet he claims to love the Lord Jesus. I want to tell you something, friend: When you love Jesus, you love the Church.

When a man loves football, he loves the pigskin; he loves the gridiron; he loves the bleachers; he loves the stands, ’cause he loves football. When a man loves fishing, he loves rods, and reels, and boats, and motors. When a man loves Jesus, he loves the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can’t say that “I love Jesus, and I don’t love what Jesus loves.” If you love Jesus, you love what Jesus loves.

When Saul was on the road to Damascus, going to persecute the Church, Jesus arrested him on the road to Damascus, and appeared to him, and said, “*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me*” (Acts 26:14). I can imagine Saul thought in his mind, “Whoever You are, I’m not persecuting You; I am persecuting the Church.” But I want to tell you something, friend: The inference is clear that, when you persecute the Church, you persecute Jesus. When you forsake the Church, you forsake Jesus. When you honor the Church, you honor Jesus. When you love the Church, you love Jesus, for the Church is the Body of Christ. He is the Head.

It’s time we had a personal examination. It’s time that we stop taking the blessings that we enjoy at Bellevue for granted. I thank God that for 75 years this church has been on this spot, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And friend, these early people said, in the Book of Nehemiah, “We’re going to do certain things, that the house of God will not be forsaken.” And they started with a personal examination.

## **II. A Prayerful Contemplation**

But not only was there a personal examination; secondly, there was a prayerful contemplation. Notice, if you will, in chapter 9, there begins a long prayer—notice in verse 4: “*Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites*”—and the last part of verse 5—“*and...said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art*

*LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee” (Nehemiah 9:4–6).*

And this is the preamble—listen to it, to the longest prayer in the Bible. You want to know where the longest prayer in the Bible is? Right here, in Nehemiah chapter 9. And in Nehemiah chapter 9, they begin to contemplate the blessings of God. They looked back at the past. That’s what we’re doing right now. We’re looking back at the past. We’re contemplating the blessings of God. It’s marvelous the way they contemplated the blessings of God. For example, in verses 19 through 31, they spoke of the provisions of God; verses 22 and 23, they spoke of the promises of God; verses 24 and 25, they spoke of the power of God; verses 26 through 28, they spoke of the patience of God; verses 29 through 30, they spoke of the punishments of God. They talked about God’s blessings and their failures; and, they just reviewed the past.

I already tried to preach this message once, so I know I can’t get into this, ’cause I ran out of time in the first service; and so, I’m just going to let you look up. There’s a good little outline for you, if you want it—you just take it, and put your meat on those bones—but they had contemplation. They just looked backward, and they said, “Oh, oh, how good God has been! But how we fail the Lord!”

And folks, listen. That this house of God be not forsaken, not only must there be personal examination; there must be prayerful contemplation. Think of the blessings of God, would you? Think how good God has been to this church. Think how many homes have been put back together. Think how many teenagers have been rescued from sin. Think how many blessings have come to elderly people. Think how many people have been snatched from the jaws of Hell and been made citizens of Heaven. Think of the multiplied thousands, and thousands, and thousands who have come to Jesus, through the ministry of Bellevue Church.

How I thank God for it! How I praise the Lord for God’s goodness on His people! How I thank God for His provisions! How I thank God for His promises! How I thank God for His power! How I thank God for His patience! Think on these things—how good God has been to us. Friend, can we forsake the house of God? God forbid that we do!

### **III. A Purposeful Determination**

First of all, there was a personal examination. Secondly, there was a prayerful contemplation. And thirdly—this is where I really want to pull over and park for just a moment—there was a purposeful determination.

#### **A. A Covenant Before God**

After they had prayed this prayer, after they had contemplated the goodness of God,

after they had examined their own lives, and their own failures, and then, after they had reminded themselves of the goodness and the greatness of God, they made a solemn, holy vow, and a covenant before God.

I want you to look at the end of chapter 9, would you please? Nehemiah chapter 9, verse 38: *“And because of all this”—that is, because of all of the blessings of God—“we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it”* (Nehemiah 9:38). And then, the Bible says, in verse 28 of chapter 10: *“And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding,”* and all these people sign this covenant (Nehemiah 10:28).

## **B. Pledges and Commitments**

You know, sometimes, when we say, “Together we build,” and we give people a pledge card, and people say, “I don’t believe in making a pledge. I don’t believe in signing a commitment,” I want to thank God that I’ve got a book here that is full of God’s pledges and commitments to us. Every one of them was “yea and true” in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). And these people in the Bible, as they saw what God had done for them, and as they thought about the blessings of God, they made a covenant—they signed it, they sealed it, and they said, “There are three things that we’re going to do.”

And I want you to see what they are right here. What was there purposeful determination? First of all, they made a determination concerning their faithfulness. Secondly, they made a determination concerning their families. And thirdly, they made a determination concerning their finances. That’s what they did, that the house of God be not forsaken. I want you to see it.

### **1. A Commitment Concerning Faithfulness**

First of all, their faithfulness. Look in verse 29: *“They clave to their brethren”—this is in Nehemiah chapter 10, verse 29—“They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God’s law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes”* (Nehemiah 10:29).

They said, “We are going to live by the Word of God. We enter into a covenant. We enter into an oath, that we are going to be subject to the Holy Scriptures.” Bellevue will continue to be a great church, and Bellevue—we will continue to minister to Memphis, and the Mid-South, as long as this book is exalted, and preached, and obeyed. Ladies and gentlemen, will you enter into that covenant? Will you say, “Pastor, yes, we will; by the grace of God, we’ll live by His book; we’ll do it all. Whatever God says, we’ll do. We’ll trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey?”

## 2. A Commitment Concerning Families

And they made a commitment concerning—number one—their faithfulness; but—number two—their families. I want you to continue. Here's what they signed—here's what they said, in verse 30: *“And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, not take their daughters for our sons”* (Nehemiah 10:30).

Now what do they mean by that? They meant that “our family life is going to glorify God. We are not going to lose our children to the world. We're not going to let our children marry unsaved people.” For the Bible says, *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers”* (2 Corinthians 6:14). We're going to bring our children up in the fear and the nurture and the admonition of Almighty God (Ephesians 6:4).

And I'll tell you, Bellevue Church will soon be forsaken, if we don't bring these kids—and other kids—up to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, and as their Lord. One of the things that blesses me about Bellevue Church is this: that I can see children's children's children in this church. I see generations of people who have loved the Lord. They have loved the church, and they taught their children to love the church. And those children have taught their children to love the church, and they're still in the same church. That's what makes Bellevue the great church that it is. And oh, may it keep on going on! You know, sometimes, people lose their children to the world, and then they want to blame the church. Listen. It's not the church's responsibility; it is primarily your responsibility.

Let me just give you a story of a young married couple who was contacted and invited to the services of a particular church. Here's what the record reads: On the first call, this is what they said: “We're going to start coming to church as soon as the baby gets old enough to come.”

One year later, they were contacted again, and this is what they said: “Yes, I know we promised, but the baby's in the stage where she cries a lot, and I don't get anything out of the services, and I know she disturbs other people. Maybe, when the baby gets older.”

Now three years after that, this is what she said: “I know you think we're awful, but we're not coming to church, because Julie doesn't want to go to church. Why do you think she's different from other children her age?”

Eleven years after that, here's what the lady said: “I'm so glad you called. I want you, or some of the deacons, to see if you can talk with Julie. She's running around with the wrong crowd. Perhaps, if the church would provide some kind of entertainment for the young people, she might get interested.”

Two years after that: “Yes, Julie is married. They were awful young, and he's not a member of a church; but we hope it works out all right.”

Ten years after that: “Well, Julie has finally married a man who can give her the

better things of life. This is her third husband, but she couldn't get along with the others. I had hopes that this one would become a member of a church; but the preacher preached a sermon on marriage and divorce, and he says that he will never attend that church again. There must be something wrong with that church, or else it would have a better influence on Julie." Huh?

One woman said, "I can't imagine what on earth got into my daughter, Mary." I think her mother got into her daughter, Mary.

Oh, listen. You had better make a solemn vow before God that you're going to bring those children up for God. You say, "Brother Rogers, it's not easy." I know it's not easy. Don't tell me; I've got four. I know it's not easy.

Let me give you ten little hints on how to make your home the kind of a home where you can bring your children up for God. And if you're grandparents, take notes. If you're prospective parents, take notes. If your parents, take warning.

All right, number one: Make your home the brightest and most attractive place on the face of the earth. Make your home a little bit of Heaven.

Number two: Let your child invite his friends to your home and your table so that he had rather be there than any other place on the face of the earth.

Number three: Make your child responsible for the performance of certain daily duties. Never do anything for your child that he's capable of doing for himself.

Number four: Never punish him in anger.

I heard about a man pushing a baby carriage one day, and he was saying, "Now Albert; careful, Albert; easy Albert; there, there, Albert." And a lady said, "Oh, that's so wonderful, the way that you have all that patience with little Albert." He said, "No, he's Harold; I'm Albert." "Easy, Albert." Never punish him in anger.

Next, number five: Talk about the Lord. Oh, I love this—listen to it. Talk about the Lord in His Word, not as something far into life; talk about the Lord and His Word as the natural outflow of your life as a family, so that the Lord is seen as the very heart, and center of your thoughts, and your actions. Don't go around preaching sermons. Just let the Lord be so real, so normal in your life.

Number six: Do not criticize the child as a person, but rather encourage his abilities and help him in his weaknesses and discouragements. Be generous with your praise.

Number seven: Live uprightly before him at all times. Do not hesitate to confess your weaknesses, and ask forgiveness of him, when you fail. It's very hard for a child to confess a mistake, if he never has an example.

Number eight: Let him hear this: "I love you." Let him not only hear you saying it to your wife, but also to him.

Number nine: Be careful to impress on his mind that making character is more important than making money, and prove it by your example.

And number ten: Be much in prayer that the Lord would overrule your mistakes and work in accordance with the very intent of your heart. A contrite and humble heart before God accomplishes much.

### **3. A Commitment Concerning Finances**

These people made a solemn declaration—number one—concerning their faithfulness—they'll live by the Word of God; number two—concerning their families—the devil will not get their children; and, number three—concerning their finances. Look in verse 31—this is another thing that they signed to—they said, in verse 31, *“And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day”* (Nehemiah 10:31).

Now what do they mean by that? They said, “We’re not going to transgress God’s laws in business.” Now he’s talking to Old Testament people, to Jews who live by the Old Testament Jewish Sabbath, which was Saturday. But what does that mean to us? It means to us, today in this day, and in this age, that, in our gaining of money, and in our business transactions, if we’re Christians, our money is going to be rightfully gained and also rightfully given. Notice, in verse 32: *“Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God”* (Nehemiah 10:32). We just made a law for ourselves. We just wrote it down. We made a solemn commitment. We made a pledge that we were going to bring of our substance; we were going to bring of our finances; we were going to bring of our money to the house of the Lord.

I want you to know—go on down to verse 38: *“And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God”* (Nehemiah 10:38–39).

Ladies and gentlemen, these people had enough gumption to understand that it takes money to carry on God’s work. Don’t you get so heavenly-minded that you are no earthly good, where you just say, “Oh well, I’m just interested in spiritual things. I’m not interested in material things.” I want to tell you that Jesus Christ had more to say about a man’s relationship to his material goods than he had to say about Heaven or Hell. Don’t forget it. Jesus said, *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matthew 6:21).

And Bellevue—this church—will be forsaken, if we do not make a solemn commitment—number one—of our faithfulness to obey the Word of God; number two—of our families, to bring them up to Jesus; and, number three—of our finances, that the

house of God be not forsaken.

You know, sometimes when you talk about money, people say, “Well now, tithing—you don’t understand, Brother Rogers, that’s the Old Testament that you’re reading. Tithing was for Jews under the law. We’re Christians under grace.”

Let me tell you something: *Anybody who would let a Jew do more under the law than he will do under grace is a disgrace to grace.* Just mark it down. You see, the righteousness of the New Testament never goes below the righteousness of the Old Testament. Don’t ever get the idea that, in the Old Testament that, you know... Some people say, “Well, in the Old Testament, a tenth belonged to God; in the New Testament, everything belongs to God.” Friend, everything always has belonged to God—in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Don’t come around with that stuff. It all belongs to God—always has, and always will. And the tithe is the minimum where we show our love and our fidelity to God.

God said, *“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it”* (Malachi 3:10). I would not be your friend, if I did not tell you how you could be blessed through tithing.

But the main thing I want to say is this, folks: that, when we bring God’s tithe to God’s house on God’s day, and our Love Offering on top of that, we’re making certain that Bellevue Church will not be forsaken.

## Conclusion

Notice the climax of all of this. Look at it, how sweetly it says it: *“And we will not forsake the house of our God”* (Nehemiah 10:39). I want to plead with you. I want to pray for you. I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, that you’ll do these three things. Number one: Make a personal examination. What kind of a member are you? Don’t look around and see what they’re doing. Make a personal examination. Number two: Make a prayerful contemplation. How good God has been! Number three: Make a purposeful determination, oh, concerning your faithfulness, concerning your family, concerning your finances; and, say it with me—say it, “We will not, we will not forsake the house of our God.” Bellevue’s had a past, 75 years, and if Jesus tarries, I want her to have 75 more—even more glorious. Don’t you? Oh, you do. I know you do.

Let me tell you something, friend: In order to be a part of a church, you have to be saved; you have to be born again.

*Billy Sunday was a great evangelist. Billy Sunday preached in tent meetings. One time after a tent meeting had ended, Billy Sunday was helping the workers take the tent down, and the young man who’d been in the services the night before, and had been*

under deep conviction, came hurrying up as they were taking the tent down. He found Billy Sunday, and he said, “Oh, Mr. Sunday, I need to be saved. What can I do to be saved?” And Sunday said, “I’m sorry, you’re too late,” and kept on taking the tent down. He said, “Oh, but I wanted to be saved, I should have been saved.” He said, “What must I do to be saved?” And Billy Sunday said, “I’m sorry, you’re too late.” He said, “Why am I too late?” He says, “You’re too late to do anything to be saved, for Jesus has already done it all. It’s finished. All you need to do is receive what He’s already done.” And he led him to Jesus.

And oh, I want to tell you something, friend: There’s nothing you need to do. Jesus has done it all. Jesus died for you on the cross, and all you need is to receive by faith the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you, today, that if you will pray a prayer like this: “O God, I’m a sinner, and I’m lost, and I need to be saved, and I can’t save myself. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I’d only trust You. Lord Jesus, I do trust You, right now, with all of my heart, once and for all, now and forever. Jesus, I trust You. Save me, Lord Jesus,” He’ll save you. For the Bible says, “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Romans 10:13).

You say, “Brother Rogers, I can’t remember all of that prayer you prayed.” Well, then, why don’t you just say, “Lord, save me?” He knows your heart. He’s far more interested in the attitude of your heart than He is the words of your mouth. And just say, “Lord, save me, now. I trust You to save me.” And when He saves you, He will forgive your sins. When He saves you, He’ll give you a new nature. One day, He’ll take you to Heaven, and you can be a part of the Church of our Lord. Don’t you want that? Let’s bow in prayer.