

Wall, Work, Will

Part # 2:

Endurance Through Adversity

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Nehemiah was a person whose passion inspired him to do mighty things for God and for the nation of Israel. He was an unlikely leader who set an example of determination and problem solving for generations to emulate. His faith and trust in God was crucial in overcoming the obstacles in rebuilding the broken wall of Jerusalem.

The challenges we face in life are tough enough. When we resolve to face them, the work involved is often an uphill climb with little sign of progress.

The toughest obstacle we face in working through our challenges is **adversity**.

Central Point...

The Challenge of Adversity

Adversity comes from challenging circumstances or challenging **people**.

People may challenge you with **constructive** criticism.

Other people will challenge you with **caustic** criticism that can demoralize and destroy.

"The Bible tells us to love our neighbors and to love our enemies. That's probably because they are often the same people." – G.K. Chesterton

Nehemiah 4:1-3 *When Sanballat heard we were rebuilding the wall, he was very angry, even furious. He made fun of the Jewish people.² He said to his friends and those with power in Samaria, "What are these weak Jews doing? Will they rebuild the wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Can they finish it in one day? Can they bring stones back to life from piles of trash and ashes?"³ Tobiah the Ammonite, who was next to Sanballat, said, "If a fox climbed up on the stone wall they are building, it would break it down."*

Focal Point...

Overcoming Adversity

Four ways to overcome adversity:

1. Tell **God** about our struggles

In the face of adversity, like Nehemiah we may be tempted to **retaliate**.

Nehemiah 4:4-5 *I prayed, "Hear us, our God. We are hated. Turn the insults of Sanballat and Tobiah back on their own heads. Let them be captured and stolen like valuables.⁵ Do not hide their guilt or take away their sins so that you can't see them, because they have insulted the builders."*

When adversity comes, we can focus on the **problem** or we can focus on God.

When adversity leaves us frustrated, don't take it out on other people; talk it out with **God**.

2. Maintain healthy **boundaries**.

Boundaries are inner or outer **walls** that protect us from harm.

Nehemiah 4:6-9 *We kept at it, repairing and rebuilding the wall. The whole wall was soon joined together and halfway to its intended height because the people had a heart for the work.⁷⁻⁹ When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the repairs of the walls of Jerusalem were going so well—that the breaks in the wall were being fixed—they were absolutely furious. They put their heads together and decided to fight against Jerusalem and create as much trouble as they could. We countered with prayer to our God and set a round-the-clock guard against them.*

We maintain our boundaries by speaking the truth in love and by learning to say "**no**".

When adversity comes, keep on **praying** and keep good boundaries.

3. Face our **vulnerabilities**.

Nehemiah 4:10-13 *The people of Judah said, "The workers are getting tired. There is so much trash we cannot rebuild the wall."¹¹ And our enemies said, "The Jews won't know or see anything until we come among them and kill them and stop the work."¹² Then the Jewish people who lived near our*

enemies came and told us ten times, "Everywhere you turn, the enemy will attack us."¹³ So I put people behind the lowest places along the wall—the open places—and I put families together with their swords, spears, and bows.

When adversity exposes our vulnerabilities, make the changes we need to make in order to grow.

4. Trust God and keep servicing.

Nehemiah 4:14-15 Then I looked around and stood up and said to the important men, the leaders, and the rest of the people: "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and powerful. Fight for your brothers, your sons and daughters, your wives, and your homes."¹⁵ Then our enemies heard that we knew about their plans and that God had ruined their plans. So we all went back to the wall, each to his own work.

Turning Point . . .

The more we focus on servicing God and others, the smaller adversity will appear.

There is a reason God allows adversity even if you can't see it now.

Our challenge:

Believers – simply ask, "Father God – Am I allowing you to shape my life through adversity?"

Seekers – we can only genuinely encourage others when we respond to the One who ultimately encourages us. To invite Christ into your heart, simply pray,

*Father God, I come before you today, asking you to save me. I invite your Son Jesus Christ into my heart to be my Lord and Savior. Please forgive me of sin in my life; cleanse my heart and my spirit. Father, I want to trust in your promises and accept that they are totally true. And with your help, guide me toward being the person you created me to be.
In Jesus' name -- Amen*