

GETTING PAST THE WALL OF HALFHEARTEDNESS

Next Steps Devotional Guide — Nehemiah 4:7-23

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Sermon Series > Nehemiah: Repair, Rebuild & Restore

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1. In [Luke 14:25-33](#), Jesus discusses counting the cost before deciding to become His disciple. It is an internal process we work through to see if we are up to the task. Sometimes we often do not count or attempt to anticipate what will be required to do something. We over commit and that leads to additional frustration, unnecessary stress and discouragement. It is like going to war with a musket in a jeep and you're facing an enemy who has M4A1, FN SCAR, M27, M14, and M39 rifles being led by M1 Abrams tanks. It will be a massacre. Sometimes we face these kind of weapons verbally and emotionally. People fire their verbal assaults at us and we're done. Take a moment to reflect on when this has happened to you. Who was it? What did they say? How did you respond? What was the impact it had on your life?
2. Read [Ephesians 6:10-13](#) and [Ephesians 6:16](#) in your sermon outline. God makes it clear that our real enemy is not human, but demonic, devilish and diabolical. Why do you think people, even Christian people, either underestimate or overlook or ignore or do not even think we are in a spiritual warfare against demons, the demonic and the devil?
3. [Ephesians 6:16](#) commands us to take up our shield of faith because it reminds us of God's presence. Read [Psalm 3:3a](#) in your sermon outline. How ironic that the "shield of faith" reminds us the presence of God. When have you experience the presence of God as a shield?
4. Read [Ephesians 6:16](#) again in your sermon outline. How does the "shield of faith" remind you of God's promises? When you have experienced the promises of God by utilizing your "shield of faith"?
5. A third reality of the "shield of faith" is that it reminds us of God providence. In your sermon outline, you were given a definition of providence. Read it.
 - a. Providence is about the sovereignty of God. When life is falling apart, especially your own life, it is hard to see that God is in control and working His will in the world with the cooperation of people and sometimes in spite of people's lack of cooperation. When and where have you seen and/or experienced this?
 - b. In the Old Testament, we are given the story of a man named Jospheh. He had 11 other brothers who were so jealous of him, they faked Jospheh's death, sold him as a slave to Midianite traders, where he ends up as slave to man named Potiphar in Egypt. Years later due to God's providence, Joseph is elevated from a slave to Potiphar to Prime Minister over Egypt just under the Pharaoh.
 - c. Years have gone by and Joseph finds himself facing his brothers again due to a famine. They have come to buy food because God had used Jospheh to stockpile food for the 7 years of prosperity for the following 7 years of famine. Read [Genesis 50:20](#) in your sermon outline. How was it possible for Joseph to say this to his brothers after all they did to him?
 - d. Read [Romans 8:28-29](#) in your sermon outline. Where do you see the providence of God in the suffering, horrible experiences, and pain in own your life based on [Romans 8:28-29](#)? Do you really believe that God is working everything out for your good and for His glory? Why?
6. One of the benefits for taking up the "shield of faith" is you get protection against the "spiritual arrows" of the enemy — the devil. The shield that [Ephesians 6:16](#) is referencing is called a "thureon." This was the large rectangular shield that could be planted in the ground and provided protection from flaming arrows. It was overlapped with leather and soaked with water so flaming arrows from enemy archers would hit the shield and simply fizzle out. It protected the soldier and his armor. How does this help you to take up your "shield of faith"?
7. A second benefit of taking up the "shield of faith" — the "thureon" — it help united the Roman army. How? The Romans had invented this shield to be used collectively. The edges of the shields were beveled and notched so that they could be locked into place with the soldier next to them. You could actually have a row of men that made a wall of metal advancing against the enemy. This a fantastic picture of who the church should be — marching together with a unified purpose, passion and heart by joining together the shields of our hearts to advance the Gospel through enemy territory. How could you use this picture in your own life?
8. A third benefit of taking up our "shield of faith" is it helps to "reflect the sun." On each Roman "thureon," right in the middle was a round piece of brass that was polished before going into battle. As each Roman soldier marched into battle, he could use it to reflect the sun into the eyes of their enemy, thus blinding their enemy's ability to see what was coming. Read Jesus' words in [Matthew 5:14](#) in your sermon outline. If we are the "light of the world" according to Jesus, does your "shield of faith" reflect the light of Christ in your life to others in enemy territory?
9. Read [Nehemiah 4:6a-8](#) in your sermon outline.
 - a. The people got the wall halfway built all around the city. Then they received word the enemies of Judah were planning to attack them. Judah was totally surrounded on all 4 sides by their enemies. They faced what seemed an impossible scenario — total defeat on finishing the wall as well as the real fear that their own lives and the lives of their loved ones could be taken. When have you ever been at the halfway point and experienced some kind of fear? How did you deal with it?
 - b. Read [Nehemiah 4:10-13](#) in your sermon outline. People love to complain. We complain about the weather, traffic, costs and etc. What do you typically complain about spiritually in your life? Why?

10. In the sermon you were given several reasons why we get discouraged. One reason is due to physical exhaustion. These people are moving stone blocks that weighed between 2,000 pounds up to 16,000 pounds — all without modern cranes and machinery. Take your Bible and read [Exodus 20:8-11](#) and [Hebrews 4:9-11](#). In both the Old & New Testament, God commands us to take a day of rest. You are not to use your Sabbath Day to catch up on unfinished tasks? Why would God command us to do this? Do you take a Sabbath Day to rest?
11. A second reason we get discouraged is our lives are full of distractions. Read [Nehemiah 4:10b](#) in your sermon outline. The people working on the wall look around and there is all this debris that needed to be carried off to the rubbish dump. If you work all day and then come home, you see “debris” as well. There is laundry to do; floors and carpet to clean and vacuum; furniture to be dusted; meals to cook and dishes to clean and etc.. Do you find these “distractions” with work, home, church discourage you? What could you do differently?
12. A third way we get experience discouragement is due to hopelessness. Read [Nehemiah 4:10c](#) in your sermon outline. Hopelessness kills motivation, enthusiasm and energy. When was a time you experience discouragement due to hopelessness and how did you deal with it?
13. A fourth way we can experience discouragement is due to fear. They say, “*Fear is a liar.*” If you are staring down the barrel of a gun or a terminal illness, that fear is real. Read [Nehemiah 4:11-12, 14](#) in your sermon outline. All of us find ourselves in predicaments that are overwhelming. The answer to dealing with them is to remind yourself that God is omnipotent (i.e., all-powerful). What ways can you remind yourself of this when facing a fear?
14. A lot of people, when they find themselves discouraged, fearful, hopeless, and overwhelmed, they turn to a substance or a person or hobby or sports or something to cope. Read [Nehemiah 4:9](#). The first choice Nehemiah and the people did was they turned to prayer. How would you rate your prayer life and why?
15. When Nehemiah and the people were battling the beast of discouragement, a second choice they made was they prepared for battle. Read [Nehemiah 4:16-20](#) in your sermon outline. Why would it be necessary for Nehemiah and the people to prepare for battle? Someone has said, “*Petition without precaution is presumption.*” Do you agree?
16. To deal with their discouragement, Nehemiah and the people made a third choice; continued to work on finishing the wall. Read [Nehemiah 4:21a](#) in your sermon outline. How could this help them and you with discouragement?
17. A fourth choice Nehemiah and the people overcame their discouragement was they all agreed to protect and defend each other. Read [Nehemiah 4:20](#) in your sermon outline. While some worked on the wall, others guarded. Then they switched. Who do you do this for and who does this for you in the spiritual war you are in today? If you have no one, who could you partner with to do this?
18. Discouragement and halfheartedness is a tough wall to get over. First, it requires a godly spiritual perception or godly spiritual discernment. Read [Nehemiah 4:14b](#) in your sermon outline. When you experience these two emotions, do you rely upon godly spiritual discernment and perception to keep your eyes on Christ, or do you keep your focus on your circumstances? We all know we should keep our eyes on Christ and not on our circumstances, especially when they are bad. So, why do you think we focus on circumstances and not on Christ?
19. Discouragement and halfheartedness is a tough wall to get over. Second, it requires a stubborn faith. Read [Nehemiah 4:14b](#) and [Isiah 57:3-4a, 5, 6b-8](#) in your sermon outline. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus’ prayer was so intense and His body under so much stress, He experienced what is called medically — Hematidrosis — a rare medical condition that occurs when the body is under so much stress that you literally begin to bleed out through the pores of your skin. Jesus did not quit. He pushed forward with a stubborn faith. How stubborn would you say your faith is? If it is not, what do you need to do to get it “stubborn” and how would this help you?
20. Discouragement and halfheartedness is a tough wall to get over. Third, it requires a determination to deny yourself certain privileges so that you can help others. Read [Nehemiah 4:21-23](#) in your sermon outline. Jesus talked a lot about self-denial in the Gospels. How did Nehemiah and the Jews deny themselves certain privileges and help others? How does this help you get past discouragement and the wall of halfheartedness? These people were into self-denial so much they did not even change their clothes. What would such self-denial look like in your own life? (You’re free to take showers and change your clothes for the record. Ha!)
21. Biblical scholar Stephen Davey writes this: “*Did you know that even to this day, everyone is involved in building one wall or another? Some people build a wall between themselves and others. Most tend to build walls around themselves. They build those walls high and thick, so no one can ever break through. They are satisfied with their lives behind the walls—no compassion for others, no ministry involvement in the lives of people. They are protected from the enemy. The truth is these people are not protected from the enemy; they have become their own enemy.*”¹ What do you think of what he writes and why?
22. John Bunyan, who wrote, [The Pilgrim’s Progress](#) in 1678, said this: “*If Satan cannot win the believer by flatteries, he will endeavor to weaken him by discouragements. There is no man that goeth to heaven but he must go by the Cross; the Cross is the standing way-mark, by which all they go to Glory must pass by.*”² Since the Cross is the means, what would it take for you to do what Jesus says in [Luke 9:23](#)?

¹Stephen Davey, [Wisdom Commentary Series](#), “Nehemiah,” p. 100-101.

² Raymond Brown, [The Message of Nehemiah](#), p. 82.