**CIC-11-1-26 Nehemiah Chapter 4**

One of the greatest dis-services we can do to young believers is to promise them that following Jesus will automatically make their lives easier, happier, more successful, or free from difficulty. I've seen and heard this from 100s of televangelists and TV preachers.

Likewise, one of the most damaging misconceptions Christians can develop is that when God opens a door, appoints an opportunity, or gives them an assignment, everything should fall into place smoothly simply because it came from Him.

Both assumptions can leave Christians spiritually unprepared for the realities of following Christ. The truth is that God's calling does not exempt us from opposition. In fact, sometimes opposition is encountered precisely because we are walking in obedience to Him.

John 16:33 In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

- He does not say that following Him will eliminate trouble.
- He does not say that obedience will always produce immediate success.
- He does not say that people will always support us.
- He does not say that our lives will become comfortable.

Instead, He tells us that tribulation is part of living in this world, but that we can have peace because He has overcome it.

In fact, NOT anticipating challenges can create more problems:
Unrealistic expectations, shallow faith and being ill-prepared for testing. Because yes, the testing will surely come.
We are in a series and we have seen how God stirred Nehemiah to approach the king to return to Jerusalem to rebuild her walls

Nehemiah 2:
5 and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah … " 7 I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?"
9 So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.
10 When **Sanballat the Horonite** and **Tobiah the Ammonite official** heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.

So who were these guys?
Sanballat the Horonite: (Sanubaleet in Babylonian) was a 5th-century BC official who served as the Governor of Samaria (the region directly north of Judah) under the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire
Tobiah the Ammonite Official: An administrative official or leader from the Transjordan region (Ammon, east of the Jordan River), often described as a servant or high-ranking regional official

who allied with Sanballat to undermine Nehemiah's work. Tobiah also had family and influential ties into the Jerusalem priesthood.

In the Persian period, the massive territory west of the Euphrates River—including Judah, Samaria, Ammon, and Phoenicia—was organized as the Trans-Euphrates
Regional Officials under Persian Authority: Sanballat (as governor of Samaria) and Tobiah (governing or operating in Ammon) were local authorities within or closely tied to the administration of this broader Trans-Euphrates region. [1, 2, 3]

As regional power-brokers under the Persian satrapy system, they exercised considerable sway over a weak and unfortified Jerusalem. Nehemiah's arrival as the newly appointed governor of Judah with a mandate to rebuild Jerusalem's walls threatened to reduce their regional dominance and economic/political control. They leveraged their political standing within the Trans-Euphrates administrative network to accuse Nehemiah of rebelling against the Persian king
But at this point, Nehemiah does not even know about these fellows. He is glowing in the aftermath of walking in an abundance of God's favor - as PRandall preached a few weeks ago.

Nehemiah 2
17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." 18 I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.
Yay for favor But not for long!

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?"
20 I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."
At the end of chapter 2 we see the rise of opposition. Trouble is on the horizon!
And as we are about to see today - there is only one remedy - PERSISTENCE

Persistence is the Spirit-enabled determination and steadfast commitment to continue obeying God even when the journey becomes difficult - trusting His promises and doing His work - despite obstacles, opposition, and discouragement.
Persistence is not simply stubbornness or refusing to quit. It is continuing in what God has called us to do while depending on His strength, following His Word, and trusting His timing.

Biblical persistence is refusing to abandon God's will because of temporary difficulties. Nehemiah provides a powerful example of this truth. He faced ridicule, threats, fear, and exhaustion, yet the work of rebuilding Jerusalem's wall continued.

Let's continue with Nehemiah 4

Nehemiah 4
[1] When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, [2] and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?"
[3] Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!"

There are three specific challenges we see from this passage over which Nehemiah had to persist. We the the first in the opening paragraph - criticism

1. PERSIST over criticism - with prayer

Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed the Jews and mocked their ability to rebuild the wall. But Nehemiah did not abandon the work because people laughed at him. You cannot control what everyone says about you, but you can choose to remain faithful to what God has called you to do. How? Through faith-filled prayer

Nehemiah 4
[4] Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. [5] Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of[j] the builders.
[6] So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

Prayer was not their last resort. It was a vital part of their response to the crisis. Did the problem go away? NO! A persistent Christian keeps seeking God even when the situation remains difficult.

Nehemiah 4:
[7] But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. [8] They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. [9] But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

They continued to pray and trust God. But Nehemiah did not ignore the danger. He stationed guards and organized the people to protect the work.

2. PERSIST over opposition - with strategy

Prayer is not an excuse for passivity, and strategy is not a substitute for faith. Trust God while doing what wisdom requires.  What practical strategies do you need to take while continuing to trust God for the outcome?

When the people remembered the Lord and prepared for the danger, they were able to return to the work with renewed determination

Nehemiah 4
[11] Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work [12] Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”
[13] Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. [14] After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”
[15] When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.

Have faith. Have a strategy.
This teaches us that faith and responsibility belong together.

- Pray for your family, and faithfully care for your family.
- Pray for spiritual growth, and practice God's Word.
- Pray for ministry fruitfulness, and diligently serve.
- Pray for provision, and responsibly manage what God has entrusted to you.

Be prepared, When the threats arise, employ the strategy - and watch God work through your efforts. And efforts/ strategy often requires community  [insert picture]

Each person returned to his own work. Some built, others carried materials, and others stood guard. The rebuilding required cooperation. No single worker could complete the entire wall alone. Likewise, the church needs believers who faithfully serve in different roles. Some preach, some teach, some pray, some encourage, and some serve quietly behind the scenes.

[21] So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. [22] At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and as workers by day.” [23] Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.

The builders worked together in strategic cooperation - building together while carrying weapons for protection. Side by side, guided by a strong leader, they continued their work. Overcoming

criticism with prayer and hostile threats with careful strategy, they adapted their methods without abandoning their mission.

But sometimes it's not about the challenges that come from around us. After some time, it's the challenges within us that can bring us down.  Look at verse 10

[10] Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall."

3. PERSIST over discouragement - with community

Persistance is equally necessary when our own strength begins to fail.
"The strength of the labourers is giving out …
The work became exhausting - The builders faced a growing pile of rubble, a demanding task, and the threat of attack. Their strength began to fail.
Sometimes the greatest obstacle to persistence is not an enemy outside us but exhaustion within us. Christians can become weary in ministry, prayer, parenting, marriage, work, and spiritual growth Discouragement can distort our perspective
The workers began to believe they could not complete the rebuilding.
When we become discouraged, our problems can appear greater than God's faithfulness. We may focus so much on the rubble that we forget why we started building.

But persistence does not mean pretending that we are never tired. It means acknowledging our weakness and seeking the Lord's strength

[19] Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. [20] Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!"

Seek God's strength when yours is failing. Nehemiah directed their attention away from their enemies and the magnitude of the work before them toward the greatness of their God

- Counter Criticism with Prayer: Pursuing God's work or major life changes inevitably attracts critics and resistance (such as Sanballat and Tobiah who used mockery and threats).
- Combine Faith with Action: Nehemiah did not just pray and wait; he paired honest prayer with practical strategies by setting up guards, organizing defenses, and staying vigilant. The "Sword and Trowel" Principle: Workers kept a building tool in one hand and a weapon in the other—showing that spiritual devotion and practical efforts go hand in hand.
- Combat Discouragement with Community:  When exhaustion and negative talk set in, Nehemiah refocused the people's attention away from their fears and onto the greatness and power of God. Stand United in Community: Nehemiah rallied people to protect and fight for their families, homes, and shared purpose rather than retreating into isolation.

- In all things for God - PERSIST