

WHEN OUR FAITH MEETS DISCOURAGEMENT!

Nehemiah 4:1-23

INTRODUCTION: Our question for today is: "When life brings us discouragement, as it often does; how can we respond in hope?"

I. LOSING OUR HOPE!

Have you learned the secret of not only being content, but having hope in the low points of your life? Philippians 4:12-13. Discouragement is defined as "being deprived of courage, to deter, to dishearten to hinder." Fathers are warned not to discourage their children: Colossians 3:21. Even ministers are prone to becoming discouraged: 2 Corinthians 4:1. As we age it is even easier to become disheartened: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Jesus even warns us that it is easy to get disheartened when our prayers don't get answered on our time table: Matthew 18:1-8. The book of Nehemiah has a liberating lesson for us about the renovation of hope from the rubble of the discouragement in our lives.

II. SOME BUILDING BLOCKS OF HOPE!

Nehemiah was a gifted organizer and he arrived in a chaotic situation in the Promised Land. With the walls of Jerusalem destroyed the people who had returned were not safe. The Israelites were under constant fear from their enemies that surrounded them and the primary tool used was fear and discouragement. The wall is halfway up in the text for today and the people can smell victory, but half way finished is not finished. Nehemiah 4:6-8.

III. DISCOURAGEMENT MUST BE RECOGNIZED!

Often our discouragement starts with fatigue. Nehemiah 4:10. The total time needed for this job at a back breaking pace would only take 52 days. Halfway finished, the workers had been going at it for a month Nehemiah 4:10. Burnout is not caused just by hard work, but by working on the wrong things. Burnout is working hard on a project you no longer feel you can achieve. Nehemiah 4:10: here the workers are ready to throw in both the towel and the trowel. What makes all the difference is how we chose to handle those failures. Fear can also cause us to become discouraged: Nehemiah 4:11-12.

IV. A GODLY RESPONSE TO OUR DISCOURAGEMENT!

What should be our response when we become discouraged? First we need to cry out to our God! Nehemiah 4:4-5, 9; Matthew 11:28-30. Second: continue the work the Lord has called you to: Nehemiah 4:6. Third: realize that conferences and committees slow down God's work: Nehemiah 6:1-4. Remember the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing! Forth: Concentrate on the big picture! Nehemiah 4:13-14. Matthew 16:18. Fifth: claim the encouragement of God's promises! Nehemiah 4:14: in our times of discouragement we need to turn to God's Word. Psalm 46:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 3:13; Hebrews 10:35-36; Galatians 6:9-10.

