



## “Pressing On”

Nehemiah 6-7

Part 3

**Idea:** To finish the work, you must press on in it.

**Intro:** Read Nehemiah 6:15-16.

May we never underestimate what can be accomplished when God has called us to a work...if we persevere to the end. Often times the great things God wants to do in us and through us don't happen simply because we never start doing them, or we don't persevere in them. They never make it out of the hangar, or they die on the runway before catching flight.

And the one issue that prevents you and I from experiencing the great things God desires to do in and through us is fear...misplaced fear. We fear what others may say or think about us. We fear the difficulties and hardships that come with the journey. We fear all the things that might be, yet we fail to fear God. It has been said that fear is the dark room where negatives are developed.

“Men who fear God face life fearlessly. Men who do not fear God end up fearing everything.” – Richard Halverson

There is something... better yet someone to be feared, and His name is King Jesus. This is not the type of fear that has you curled up in the corner shuddering in terror. No, it is a holy reverence that brings confidence and obedience. Nehemiah and many of the people in Jerusalem possessed this type of fear. They believed and trusted in God over and above what their circumstances told them. They believed and trusted in God over and above what the doubters said to them. They believed and trusted in God over and above the accusations of their enemies.

Nehemiah, despite his circumstances, continued to press on in the work God had called him to do. When the months began to pass by after hearing of the terrible state of Jerusalem, he pressed on in prayer and preparations. When the journey to Jerusalem was long and dangerous, he pressed on until he reached the city. When opposition to the work came against the people from Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, Nehemiah pressed on in the work. They prayed, developed a security plan, and continued working on the wall. When moral corruption was found within the Jewish nobles, he dealt with the issue and pressed on in the work. When he became the focus of overt and covert opposition, Nehemiah persevered and pressed on in the work.

Circumstances don't create the man; they only reveal his character. Nehemiah was a man of godly character who possessed a healthy fear of God.

**Inquiry:** As we have seen thus far in Nehemiah's tenure as governor of Judah, Jerusalem was a mixture of self-interest, conspiracy, spiritual devotion, feigned religiosity, faith, and parochialism. Devoted workers as well as unprincipled people surrounded Nehemiah. With the realization that the wall was nearing completion despite the many attempts to halt the work, the focus of intimidation by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem moved from the populace to their leader. They tried to lure Nehemiah away from Jerusalem in order to murder him or to charge him with sedition; they hired prophets to trap and

discredit him. Yet Nehemiah held to his task. He never gave in. He courageously pressed on in the work God had called him to do. Therefore, this is the subject we have been studying the past two weeks...Pressing On.

Nehemiah shows us how to press on in the work regardless of circumstances. It is easy to quit. The ditches of life are full of great ideas and callings that were thrown out when things got too hard. I like what Winston Churchill used to say:

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

– Winston Churchill

Life is tough. This is reality. Therefore, the way to be successful, to win, and to finish the work God has given us to do is simply to plod on through the muck and the mire. It's been said that today's mighty oak is yesterday's little nut that held its ground. We're looking in chapters 6-7 at how Nehemiah pressed on through three different challenges of the work. We have seen him persevering in the face of overt opposition and in the face of covert opposition. Today, we'll see him...

### **III. Persevering through the Project**

Chapter six opens with an encouraging update on the progress of the wall (vs. 1). The work is going forward. The breaches are now closed unlike what we found in 4:7. The gates are the only things left to install. This is a great statement of progress and a realistic notation of the work that remains to be done.

Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and the rest of Nehemiah's enemies realize their window of opportunity is closing, but they could still bring him down. So they change tactics and come after the governor. First, they devise a plot to kidnap Nehemiah and possibly murder him (vs. 1-4). When that didn't work, they formulate a plot to malign his character and intentions (vs. 5-9). They

hope to bully him into abandoning the work on the wall. Neither of their attempts succeeds though, which lead to a new tactic. They move from overt opposition to covert opposition. They plotted to intimidate and undermine him (6:10-19). As we saw last Sunday, their covert opposition failed to stall the work on the wall, for it was completed in fifty-two short days.

Nehemiah's resilience shows us what it means to persevere through the project God has entrusted to you. There are three things that we learn:

- A. Requires total dependence upon God. (6:15)  
Many people have the idea that God won't put on a person more than he or she can carry. In other words, they believe that the Lord will not allow any more stress in a person's life than what he or she can handle on their own. This idea is antithetical to the teaching and examples of Scripture. The truth is God always puts on you more than you can handle yourself.

Biblical examples:

Job – In just a few short weeks, Job lost his family, finances, physical health, and friends. They were stripped from him in a moment. He literally lost everything in his life, but he never lost his faith.

Abraham – God called Abram to leave his home and go to a land that the Lord would show him. God promised to make him a mighty nation through whom the nations would be blessed. The only problem was that he and his wife were childless.

Moses – God called to Moses from a burning bush on the backside of Midian and instructed him to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Moses's calling was to free his people from the most powerful empire in the world at that time.

The testimony of Scripture is that God always put more on you than you can handle yourself. He loads you down with a weight you can't carry because He never intends for you to carry it.

*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*  
– Philippians 4:19

The project of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem was an impossible task for the cupbearer to the king. But nothing is impossible with God (Matt 19:26).

So we learn that persevering through the project requires total dependence upon God. Secondly, we learn that it...

B. Results in God receiving glory. (6:16)

When the wall was completed in just fifty-two days, everyone realized that God had done it. There was no denying the fact that the God of Israel had been at work in the rebuilding of the wall. The fame of God's name spread throughout the region.

When the apostle Paul was thanking and celebrating the Philippians partnership with him in the gospel, he pointed out how they had supplied his ministry and sent him gifts. The church had heard God's call to partner with the apostle and provide for the gospel work at great expense to them personally. Paul reminded them that the Lord would supply all their needs, and then pointed out the purpose behind it all.

*To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.* – Philippians 4:20

The project God calls you too and the journey He puts you on are impossible for you to complete on

your own. But He has never intended for you to complete the project or finish the journey on your own. He intends for you to depend on His power so that He and He alone receives the glory.

Persevering through the project requires total dependence upon God that results in Him receiving the glory. Thirdly, we learn that it...

C. Reproduces faith and holiness. (7:1-73)  
Read Nehemiah 7:1-5.

Now that the walls were rebuilt, Nehemiah's concern turned toward those who were to live within the city. Would it be non-Jews from the land or God's holy people returning from exile? The ones to live within the walls of Jerusalem were to be Jews. They were to be the ones to reestablish a faithful and holy people set apart for God. Therefore, Nehemiah looked to the genealogy of the returnees who were the first to return from exile. This genealogy in chapter 7 is almost identical to the one in Ezra 2. He purposed to repopulate the city with those who would look to God in faith and serve Him in holiness. This list of authenticated Jews, was the first step taken to validate the identity of the true people of God so that Jerusalem could be purified.

In this project of the rebuilding of the wall, God's purpose was to reestablish faith and holiness among His people. The true Israel was delineated, and the worship of God was declared through the proclamation of the Word of God (Neh 8). In response to the preaching of the Word, Israel confessed their sin and pledged their renewed commitment to God (Neh 9).

Likewise, God's purpose for the project He has called you to and the purpose for the journey you are on are to deepen your faith and broaden your holiness.

*And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

– Hebrews 11:6

*"Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. – Leviticus 19:2*

If you are in relationship with Christ, God has called you out to live by faith and to walk in holiness. He has called you out to live separate from the world. Your spiritual journey with the Lord and the projects God calls you to do along the way are His way of deepening your faith by giving you a task that is impossible without Him. They teach you to trust and rely upon God. They teach you to give God all the glory because you realize that He is one who made it happen. As a result your faith in God grows, and you trust God more.

The journey and the projects also drive you toward holiness. As you walk with God in faith, you are drawn to greater levels of holiness that infiltrate new areas of your life. Your sanctification is broadened.

There is another thing that takes place along your spiritual journey and through the projects God gives you. The Lord uses your story and work to draw others to faith and holiness. He uses you to introduce lost people to Jesus and His gospel. He uses you to encourage other believers to press on in faith. He uses your story to draw others to holiness.

Your story is never about you. It is about the Lord, and it is for the blessing of others.

**Conclusion:** What is your story today? What kind of story is God writing upon the pages of your life? Is it one of deepening faith? One of my young adult small groups at my previous church understood what it meant to persevere through the project. The leaders and those in the group believed the Lord had brought them together for more than just a Bible study. They believed that as they studied Scripture and lived in biblical community with one another their story would become one of life transformation. They believed the Lord would strengthen and restore brokenness in their marriages, heal wounded hearts, bind up financial ruin, and awaken many to life in Christ. They saw their personal spiritual journeys and the project of their small group as the work of God in and through them. They weren't satisfied to go through the motions; they wanted to experience and accomplish all God intended for them. As a result, God was gloried through each new profession of faith, each new restored family, and each new changed life. Their faith was deepened and their holiness broadened.

When you decide to press on and persevere through the project God has called you to, life usually becomes more difficult. The enemy's opposition increases. He wants you to quit. And so, it is here that you will learn what you are made of. Circumstances don't create the man; they only reveal his character.

Are you a person of faith? Do you have a never given-in perspective of life? Are you the type of believer who presses on with Jesus regardless of circumstances, or do you give up when things get tough? The difficulties you're facing are opportunities to look up, lean in, and watch God do in the impossible.

Like Nehemiah, let's spend time with God in prayer, in His Word, and in His work, watching Him do the miraculous.