

## When Restoration Faces Opposition

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Date: 28 September 2025

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All right, if you have your Bible, go to the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah, as we continue our series that we've been calling Restored, the big focus of this book is how God brings restoration out of ruin.

And really, we've kind of been taking two perspectives or two different approaches to that topic. One is kind of from the perspective of Nehemiah. I've been asking you for the last few weeks, like, what is it that breaks your heart?

What is it when you look at your family, your neighborhood, our nation? Like, what is it that bothers you? What is it that God has broken your heart about? And what are you going to do about that?

What is God leading you to take action on? Because, listen, God wants to use His people to bring restoration in the middle of brokenness.

[ 2 : 21 ] Amen? I mean, if that's not our mission, what is it? And so how is God using you, like Nehemiah, to bring restoration out of destruction?

The second angle or perspective we've taken is kind of like from the perspective of Jerusalem. That is, you're the one that's in ruin. It's your heart that's been broken.

When you look at your finances or relationships or things like that, like all you see is rubble. And this series is to encourage you, Jerusalem, you can be rebuilt.

God can put your life together. God can restore what's ever been ruined. Amen? Do you believe that? So those have kind of been the two perspectives that we've been taking. And we're going to pick up Nehemiah's story here in chapter 2.

And what you'll kind of see is kind of the rest of the book, I'll be a little bit more overview. Like I'll follow certain themes that reoccur throughout the book now that we've kind of laid the foundation of what the story is about.

[ 3 : 24 ] So I'm going to read verses 9 and 10 of chapter 2, but then walk you through a consistent theme that happens in other chapters. So I'm going to ask you to stand if you're able to do so as we honor the reading of God's Word.

I'm just going to read two verses. Don't get your hopes up. I'm just reading two verses. We're going to talk about a lot. Okay, so Nehemiah chapter 2 and verse 9, we get introduced to something here.

It says, Then I came to the governors of the province beyond the river and gave them the king's letters. That is the authority that he's been given from Artaxerxes. Now the king had sent me with officers of an army and horsemen.

But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

Let's pray together. Father, please talk to us in these moments. I'm convinced that there are things that you want to say to us tonight that will be helpful, that will be encouraging, and will be very practical as we seek to do your work, as we seek to be a part of your mission in this broken world.

[ 4 : 44 ] And so come talk to us by your spirit, I pray. In Jesus' name and God's people said, Amen. Amen. You can be seated. Amen. Marvin Heemeyer was a welder and owner of a muffler repair shop in Granby, Colorado.

Now over the years, Marvin found himself constantly at odds with just about everybody in that town. He was angry with the local government, local businesses.

He was always fighting with his neighbors, even the police. Why? Well, Marvin opposed everything. He opposed the town traffic rules, zoning laws, gambling allowances, the government mandates, the news media.

Just about anybody and everybody that was in authority, Marvin didn't like. But the final straw came when he lost a land dispute that allowed a cement plant to be built on the property next to his muffler shop.

That is when he determined he had had enough. That was the final straw for him. And so for the next 18 months, he collected steel and concrete, and he welded metal together, and night after night, he worked in his shop.

[ 6 : 10 ] His goal was to turn his ordinary bulldozer into a fully armed machine. In fact, it got nicknamed, there's a Netflix special on it called Killdozer.

And what he did is over the course, one day, over the course of about 2 hours and 17 minutes, Marvin took this killdozer into town and started destroying everything in sight.

He caused damage to 13 buildings, including a bank, the police station, the town hall, the newspaper office, the hardware store, even his neighbor's house.

He cost the town millions of dollars in damages. Now, fortunately, no one was injured except for Marvin himself. Marvin actually took his own life after the bulldozer got stuck in one of those buildings.

And what's even crazier than his actions was how he justified it. Marvin said that God called him to do that. In audio recordings he left behind, this is what one of them said, quote, a peace came over me that has only come over me a few times in my life where I knew I was doing the right thing.

[ 7 : 33 ] I was doing this because God wanted me to do it. Close quote. We live in a crazy world.

Amen? Amen. With a lot of crazy people. Double amen? Double amen, right? But I am curious tonight though, does anyone here know someone like Marvin?

You're even, why don't we just shout out names? Ready? Go. I'm just kidding. I'm kidding. Now, I don't mean someone who is mentally unstable enough to take a bulldozer and destroy a town.

What I'm asking is, does anybody here know someone who loves to oppose everything? That no matter what you say, it's never right.

No matter what you do, it's never enough. It's almost as though they take pleasure more in tearing down than they do building up.

[ 8 : 32 ] Again, anybody know someone like that? Don't point. Okay? Yeah, we've all experienced that kid who complains about everything. Nothing ever makes them happy.

Some of you maybe had parents that said no to everything. They never let you do anything at all. Some of you have family members who are always negative.

They don't ever have anything positive to say. We see politicians all the time. They oppose everything the other side puts forward no matter what it is.

Faith family, do you have someone in your life who wants to destroy more than they want to build? If you know that feeling, and my guess is you do, you've experienced that at some level, you know firsthand what Nehemiah experiences here in Nehemiah chapter 2.

Now if you recall, the last we left Nehemiah, everything is going swimmingly. I mean, it couldn't be going any better. When we last left him earlier in chapter 2, he was like the kid that got everything on his Christmas list.

[ 9 : 45 ] Remember? The news comes to him that Jerusalem is in ruin. That breaks his heart to the fact that he has to weep and fast and mourn for days.

Eventually though, he will take his request to the king. And you remember, he asked the king to overthrow an order the king had already given to essentially give Nehemiah a 12 year leave of absence to make Nehemiah ruler over Judah to allow him to rebuild the city, to give him the authority needed to travel back to Judah and to pay for the entire project on the Persian penny.

And you remember, the encounter went something like this. Could you pay me in advance? Are you serious?

Now that's how the conversation should have gone, right? That's how the king should have responded. But you remember, that's not how Artaxerxes responded. Here's how he actually responded.

And the king granted me what I ask. The king gave him everything. The king said yes to everything he wanted. And the only explanation that Nehemiah has for such a thing is that the good hand of my God was upon me.

[ 11 : 14 ] There's no way. Yeah, there's absolutely no way this prayer gets answered this way unless God did it.

God worked in the heart of the king as the biblical writers tell us he's doing throughout the exile. He did in Nebuchadnezzar's heart. He did in Cyrus' heart. He did in Artaxerxes' heart.

So I would imagine at this point, at verse 8, Nehemiah must be thinking, hey, this whole restoration thing is going to be a piece of cake. I mean, it's just going to go easy. Everything I ask for, I get.

Well, as Lee Corso used to say, not so fast, my friend. Now that you come to verse 9 of chapter 2, the story jumps to Nehemiah's arrival in Judah and we're introduced to a few people here who are going to be a thorn in Nehemiah's side the rest of the story.

That like Marvin, these guys are going to try to destroy everything Nehemiah tries to build. They're going to resist him, undermine him, and attack him at every turn.

[ 12 : 25 ] In fact, what I want you to do in your minds is every time you go through this story, every time you read the narrative, and you hear the names, Sanballat and Tobiah, this is the theme music I want in your mind.

Okay? Like, danger's coming. Right? Danger's on the way. The sharks are arriving. Because that's essentially what's happening here. Every time they show up on the scene, something bad is happening.

And now why would they oppose Nehemiah this way? I mean, the text, even the verse that we read to begin the sermon, says that he's doing this for the welfare of Israel.

Nehemiah's doing a good work. He's doing a good thing. So why would these guys oppose what he's doing? Look back at verse 10.

But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

[ 13 : 30 ] Let me give you at least three contextual things that will help you understand this opposition. The first is racial. There is racial opposition here.

The text tells us that Sanballat is a Horonite. That means he's from Beth Horon. Beth Horon. Well, Beth Horon was in the region north of Judah, which is Samaritan territory.

And I don't need to tell you about the racial tensions, the hatred, the animosity, the hostility that exists in the Bible between Jews and Samaritans. There are racial tensions between these groups that make this a very hostile situation.

Not only is there racial opposition, there's political opposition. Shocker. Sanballat's the governor of the Samaritan province in north of Judah.

In fact, if you notice on this map, Nehemiah goes back here to Jerusalem. Everybody with me say yes. Sanballat's the governor of the Samaritan region. Tobiah's the governor of Ammon.

[ 14 : 39 ] That's why he says he's an Ammonite. So he's governor over here. And then we're going to meet another guy, Geshem, who's the governor over the providence of the Arabs or the Edomites.

In other words, these are all individuals who have political power in surrounding regions. Well, Sanballat has control over the Judah province.

So listen, when the king appoints Nehemiah as the governor of Judah, guess whose power base just got cut in half? Sanballat.

So here not only do you have racial tension, you've got political struggle. You've got a struggling for political power. And there's nothing new under the sun.

And all God's people said, Amen. It is politics everywhere. And thirdly, there's financial opposition. Financial opposition.

[ 15 : 36 ] Go back to our map here. You notice, does everybody see how Jerusalem is in the center? That was a good place for you? Yes, alright. Jerusalem's in the center. So in the ancient world, when you had all these trade routes, almost all of them went through Jerusalem.

And so listen, listen, when Jerusalem was a thriving city, man, the money was rolling in. But now that Jerusalem has been destroyed by the Babylonians, well, people took their business elsewhere.

So think about it. If Jerusalem gets restored, guess who's going to feel it in their wallets? Sanballat and Tobiah.

And the only thing that prevents Jerusalem from becoming a booming town again? The rebuilding of the walls. And so for racial reasons, political reasons, financial reasons, when these guys hear that Nehemiah has come with the authority of the king to rebuild the wall, ba-dumt, ba-dumt, the sharks attack.

Verse 19. Notice what it says here. It says, when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem, so now we see this fellow, the Arab, heard it, they jeered at us, they despised us, and said, what is this thing that you're doing?

[ 17 : 06 ] And I wish you could kind of, like, people don't talk about sarcasm in the Bible. Well, this is sarcasm with a dig. Are you rebelling against the king? Now the reason why I say that's sarcastic is because these guys know, they know that Nehemiah is not rebelling against Artaxerxes.

He's got the papers to prove it. They know that he has shown up with the authority of the king. This is not a genuine question. Listen, it's intimidation.

It goes a little something like this. You wouldn't want us to get the word back to the king that you're undermining his authority, would you? You wouldn't want us to spread a rumor?

You wouldn't want us to call dad? Oh, faith family, this is the ancient Near Eastern surfacing of gossip and rumors and slander and cheap shots and accusations and threats, which teaches us something that's so, so important.

Here it is. Listen, faith family, the enemy always wants destruction. God wants restoration. You'd better say amen for that. Like, listen, listen, this is a lens through which we have to view people and view the world.

[ 18 : 26 ] If you are out to destroy, if you are out to tear down, sorry Marvin, it's not of God. Because what God's heart is about is restoration and reconciliation and building up.

And so with this understanding, there's some things I think that are so helpful. I said it in my prayer. So practical for us to learn. Here's the first, faith family. Know this. Restoration requires the right expectations.

Restoration. If you're going to be a Nehemiah or if you're going to be a Jerusalem that gets rebuilt, you're going to have to understand that restoration requires the right expectations. You see, Nehemiah is doing the ministry that God has called him to do.

Nehemiah is doing a good work. But as I've told you before, faith family, listen to me. Listen, just because the work is holy doesn't mean it won't be hard.

Just because the work is holy doesn't mean it won't be hard. You see, this teaches us that the path to restoration will always include opposition.

[ 19 : 36 ] Always. And listen, we have got to come to terms with this. Are you all with me? I'm just telling you tonight that there are people that do not want you to heal. There are people that do not want the church to grow.

There are people that do not want you to be successful. Life is full of Marvins and Sanballats and Tobias. People who are hell-bent on ruining whatever it is you try to restore.

Amen? It may be an ex-spouse. It may be a former employer. It may be an angry family member. It may be an enemy from your past. And sadly, it may be another Christian.

It may even be another church. And some of them, like Marvin, will do it in the name of God. Oh, my dear friends, if we learned anything over the summer in our armor series, did we not learn that life is war?

And if you are doing the Lord's work, there will be opposition. You remember, surely you haven't forgot since then. I showed you how in Genesis, both in the garden and at the flood, and specifically at the Tower of Babel, what did evil spiritual powers try to do?

[ 20 : 49 ] Divide. Destroy. Dissect. To bring about a lack of unity among the people. And what does God want to do?

Remember, we talked about it in the book of Ephesians. Is that Jesus has come to make a new, one new man. To bring us together. To reconcile us, a Jew and Gentile into one body.

Do you see? Evil spiritual powers want to divide. God wants to restore. So I say that because this is what we need to know. It's helpful.

Do not think opposition means you're not on mission. If opposition means you're not on mission, Nehemiah quits in chapter 2.

But Nehemiah understands. Listen, of course this mission is going to have opposition. It just comes with the territory. Here's the second thing. I hope this will encourage you. Is that the path of restoration is never a straight direction.

[ 21 : 50 ] It's never a straight direction. In other words, the path to restoration, whether you're restoring something or you're the one being restored, it is never a continuous uphill climb to the top of the mountain.

It looks far more like this. A zigzag of up and down and back and forth. You've experienced this, right? In fact, how many of you know this tonight?

Sometimes the greatest highs are followed by the greatest lows. That was certainly the case for Nehemiah. I mean, right here, right here. Everything is going great for Nehemiah.

He's a cupbearer of the king. You don't get a more authoritative position than that. And then he hears about Jerusalem being ruined and it breaks his heart. It devastates him for months.

He's weeping and mourning. And then he goes to the king and the king gives him everything on his Christmas list. Says yes to everything and it's the best of times. And then, Sanballat and Tobiah.

[ 22 : 50 ] It's up and down and up and down and so is life. Amen? The path to restoration is never a straight direction. So, notice it on the screen.

Whether you're the one seeking to restore something, again like Nehemiah, or you're the one being restored, Jerusalem, the path is never straight.

The path is never straight. Now, I say all this because expectations matter. For the same reason that a weatherman gives a forecast, an employer gives a job description, a doctor outlines a procedure, the Bible warns you there will always be opposition to the mission.

It's like that great, it's not so theological, but that scene where Luke Skywalker is convinced he can do it and he's not going to be afraid, he doesn't have any fear whatsoever, and Yoda reminds him of this.

I'm not afraid. Yeah. You will be. You will be.

[ 24 : 07 ] That's so wise. Right? That's so wise. Like this idea of everything's going to be fine and I'll never be afraid and there won't be any opposition. Yes, there will. Yes, there will.

You need to expect that there are going to be times when people try to tear you down. Now let's apply this quickly and we'll move on to the next point.

Again, I've been given two main objectives throughout the week. One has been congregational. One has been personal. Let's quickly hit the congregational. I've asked you these questions. I hope you've been answering this, by the way, Faith Family.

First is, what breaks your heart? Nehemiah is broken hearted over Jerusalem in ruin because it's a disgrace to the glory of God. That breaks his heart and he's just not going to be the person who just sits and does nothing.

He's going to get involved. He's going to roll up his sleeves. He is going to be in some way a part of restoring God's glory to Jerusalem. And so I'm asking you, what breaks your heart?

[ 25 : 05 ] And what are you going to do about it? And you need to be answering these questions if you haven't already. Continue to make that a matter of seeking God. God, what is it that you're stirring in my heart?

And what is it that you want me to do? And what I'm here to tell you tonight is this. Here's what you need to know. As you move forward with God's call in your life, you're going to have to expect criticism.

People that will tell you no. People that won't volunteer. People that will not support you. But here's what, are you listening and say yes? Don't let them, or don't let that, deter you from what God has called you to do.

Okay? Learn from Nehemiah and endure that opposition knowing that it's a part of the mission. The second application has been personal.

That is, your heart is broken. You're like Jerusalem and you're in ruin and you've got to start moving forward. I mentioned this last week. Like, there comes a point. I don't know if you're there yet. Maybe you are. Maybe you're not.

[ 26 : 13 ] But at some point, you've got to start moving forward. Yeah, you need restoration with the Lord and you need time with Him. But at some point, you've got to get back out there. You've got to start living again.

Right? And if that's you, then what I want to say to you is this. Just know that as you start to put your life back together, as God begins to work restoration in your life, there will be people that will try to take you back.

That is, the people that put you on the mat will want to keep you there. And so you just need to expect that there's going to be that emotional struggle, that difficulty, that opposition as you begin to move forward and heal.

Listen, the path to restoration will not be easy. Amen? Alright. But Nehemiah teaches us something else. It's not just you've got to have the right expectations, but notice again in verse 20 here.

Notice what happens. Then I replied to them. So he says to Sanballat and Tobiah, the God of heaven will make us prosper and we his servants will arise and build.

[ 27 : 25 ] You love the confidence of this guy, right? Like Nehemiah here responds in a very appropriate way to the opposition. And I'm going to give you four. I'm going to try to do it quick.

Four ways that Nehemiah responds that we need to respond to opposition. Here's the first. Is you've got to have confidence in the sovereignty of God. You've got to have confidence in the sovereignty.

If God has called you to do this, if He's broken your heart over this, and you're going to move forward, then you've got to be confident that God is the one who grants success. I mean, that's literally what Nehemiah says in verse 20.

He says, the God of heaven will give us success. Not the critics. Not those in power. But God, the one who's in ultimate power.

And notice that Nehemiah had this perspective in the good times and the bad. If you go back to chapter 2, verse 8, when he's getting everything he wants, the king granted me what I ask for the good hand of my God was upon me.

[ 28 : 28 ] And now, later on in the same chapter, he's facing opposition, and he says this, the God of heaven will make us prosper. Is everybody with me? When the king is giving him everything he wants, and when everybody's out to get him, God is in control.

I'm going to trust him to give me what he needs from the king, and I'm going to trust him to get me through these num-nums. Right? Right? God is sovereign over all of this. See, I think Nehemiah knows something that Gamaliel knows.

And by the way, Gamaliel wasn't a believer. He was a Jewish leader. But even Gamaliel knew this when it came to the early church in the book of Acts. Notice Acts 5. Remember when Gamaliel says this?

Everybody's like, what are we going to do with these Christians? We need to shut them down. We need to shut them up. And Gamaliel says, listen, listen. If this plan, or this undertaking is of man, it's going to fail.

But if it's of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. Because God will build His church.

[ 29 : 38 ] God will do His work. God is the one, Nehemiah, who says will grant success. It is amazing the amount of attack people can endure when they're convinced that what they're doing is called of God.

That they are doing the work that God has called them to do. Let me remind you of Romans 8.31. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, say it with me, faith family, who can be against us?

Amen? Hey, let me show you something else just really, really quick. This doesn't count against my time, alright? But go back to verse 20. One little note. I just don't want to skip over this. After He replies, the God of heaven will make us prosper.

We His servants will arise and build. Look at what He says. You have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.

I love this. I love this. Here's the quick point. I've got to move on, faith family. 99% of the opposition that you face will come from people who share no interest in what God has called you to do.

[ 30 : 46 ] Now, there are some criticisms that we can take from people that do. And that's criticism that we should listen to, right? But most of the opposition will come from people in the balcony who have absolutely no portion, no sweating the game, or no interest whatsoever in the thing God has put on your heart.

Nehemiah, trust the sovereignty of God. And this kind of leads us to the second point. Look at verse 16 in chapter 2. So he gathers the officials and he gets together the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest of those that were doing the work.

And I said to them, you see, the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Now come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer suffer derision.

And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also for the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, let us rise up and build.

So they strengthened their hands for the good work. Okay, I'll make this point quick. Not only confidence in the sovereignty of God, but comfort in the people of God. Is everybody tracking with me here?



[ 32 : 08 ] What I'm saying here is that instead of listening to the critics, Nehemiah focuses on community. Oh, preacher, listen. Instead of listening to the critics, he focuses on his community.

That is, he leans on those that share the same mission, the same purpose, and the same calling. Notice this on the screen. Listen, no one accomplishes restoration and isolation.

Right? You've got to have, I'm not saying yes, men. I'm just saying you've got to have people around you that will encourage you, do the work with you, share the same mission, purpose, and calling as you do, because critics are going to come, and you need community.

You need those people who are willing to stand with you. Those like-minded people that will encourage you when you want to quit.

Everybody with me say yes. So Nehemiah's response when the sharks come is, listen, God is the one who gives success, and he calls those people close, and they commit.

[ 33 : 15 ] They're unified, and they're going to do this thing together. Well, let's push this story forward. Chapter 2 is not the only time Sanballat and Tobiah seek to destroy everything Nehemiah is building.

In fact, this will preach, the closer they get to completion, the greater the opposition gets. The closer they get to completion, the greater the opposition.

By the time you get to chapter 4, the wall is halfway finished, and the sharks return. They come back. They swim away for a little while, but now, Sanballat and Tobiah have returned, and their threats go from verbal to now physical.

Look at what happens in chapter 4. When Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdites, when they were repairing the walls of Jerusalem was going forward, and that breaches were beginning to be closed, they became very angry.

Man, this thing is moving along, and they plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and cause confusion in it. Now look at verse 11.

[ 34 : 29 ] And our enemies said, they will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work. In other words, do you see how they've raised the ante?

They've raised the opposition? At first, it was, you know, you wouldn't want this getting back to the king, would you? You wouldn't want us to tell dad. Now it's, we're coming in a much more organized way, and we're going to kill you.

We are going to attack you. And as you can imagine, Israel gets scared. Isn't, like, aren't you with me? Isn't this a great story? Like, verse 10. I love it.

In Judah, it was said, so now, so who's talking here? It's not Sanballat. It's not Tobiah. This is the people of Judah. This is the very people that Nehemiah has rallied.

And they say, the strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There's too much rubble. By ourselves, we will not be able to rebuild the wall.

[ 35 : 36 ] In other words, Israel starts getting discouraged. Man, the work is too hard. The task is too great. The cost is too much. The sacrifice is too demanding. And Nehemiah knows this, as does every pastor.

You don't win with whiners. You do not win with whiners. Oh, it's never going to happen and we can't do this.

And it's not a... It's like, no, no, no, no. Man, you've let the opposition get you to a point of discouragement. And notice Nehemiah's response here in verse 13.

The lowest parts of the space behind the wall in the open places, he stations people by their clans and swords. They have spears and bows. Love this dude. Let's fight. Let's go.

And I look and rose and said to the nobles and the officials and the rest of the people, don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and, here's our word, awesome.

[ 36 : 37 ] Not Dotson's. God. God is awesome. Two of you, remember that joke. And fight for your brothers and your sons and your daughters and your wives and your homes.

Here, let me tell you what Nehemiah is doing here. Here it is. Not only confident in the sovereignty of God, comfort in the people of God, but sometimes you've got to keep coming back to the vision of God.

You've got to keep reminding yourself and reminding others, this is what God has called us to do. This is what God has put on our heart. This is what's at stake.

If we give up, we don't give up on our now, we give up on our future. Amen? Because He talks about this is for your children.

This is for your sons. That is, He's bringing in generations. This is about the future of the land. This really is Nehemiah's brave heart moment.

[ 37 : 35 ] Will you fight? Fight against that? No! We will run!

And we will live! Aye? Fight and you may die. Run! And you'll live! At least a while. I'm dying in your beds many years from now.

Would you be willing to trade all the days from this day to that for one chance, just one chance to come back here and tell our enemies that they may take our lives but they'll never take our freedom!

God's love! God's love! Don't you want to like run through a wall or something, right? It's like, yeah! Yeah! Like, what's happening here?

He's saying, listen, yeah, you can give in to the now or you can fight for something bigger. A future you've never had. A future for your sons, for your families.

[ 38 : 48 ] A legacy. Like, don't get so consumed in the now of the opposition that you lose sight of the vision. Notice this on the screen. Oh man.

Opposition can often distract us from the greater vision. Amen? And you're just so consumed in, man, how am I going to get through this that you forget where you're going?

And so Nehemiah brings them back and reminds them, this is bigger than walls. This is bigger than walls. When the wall is rebuilt, the future will be better.

Amen? Well, the drama continues. Now we're into chapter 6. And the opposition shocker gets worse. Chapter 6, verse 1. When Sanballat and Tobiah, everybody, ba-da, ba-da, all right, the sharks are coming.

And Geshem and the rest of our enemies heard that the wall and that there was no breach left, although at that time I still had not put the doors on the gates. Now that might seem, oh, we just have the doors left.

[ 39 : 53 ] That was kind of a big task in terms of how big these walls were, but still, we're almost done. We're almost complete. Sanballat and Geshem sent to me saying, come, let us meet together the plain of Ono.

But they intended to do me harm. Let me explain what's going on here. This is essentially an assassination attempt. Which I know, I mean, we've literally seen this like recently in the news and how there are people that will try to lure people out or position in a certain way to attack.

That's literally what is happening here. What Sanballat and Geshem are essentially doing is, Nehemiah, let's have a summit. Let's let bygones be bygones.

And Ono was a beautiful, lush, green valley that was way more attractive than dirty Jerusalem. And if you've ever done a restoration project, you know there's dirt everywhere.

And so I'm sure Nehemiah at this point needs a vacation. And so come on out. Come and meet us. Five times they ask.

[ 41 : 05 ] And five times Nehemiah says, oh no, to Ono. Did you see what I did there? That was pretty clever. Alright, verse 3. Verse 3. And I sent messengers to them saying, I'm doing a great work.

Man, this is so, I love this guy. And I can't come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?

Listen, I love Nehemiah's response. Listen, are you listening? If you've zoned out, what do you do? He refuses to have the summit not because of pride, but because of priorities.

Why should I give up this work to come and meet with you? Nehemiah knows what his mission is and what it is not.

Now it keeps going before we make the point. If they can't kill him, they try to destroy his reputation. What they're going to do is they're going to send out an unsealed letter publicly.

[ 42 : 11 ] And an unsealed letter, you know this in the ancient Near East, if it's sealed, you can't open it. But if it's unsealed, this is essentially like letting everybody else read it so that you'll get this buzz of, well, so and so said, and I read this on the internet, and this is what it says.

Look at chapter 6, verse 6. This is what was written. You know, it's reported. Is this stuff not so practical? I mean, it's the same thing that happened.

You know I heard. You'll never guess what somebody said. In fact, even Geshem also says it. Oh, I heard it from them.

I heard it from there. That you and the Jews plan to rebel, and that's why you're building the wall. And according to these reports, according to the internet, you wish to become their king.

And you've also set up the prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, there is a king in Judah. And now the king, you know, you know this is going to get back to the king.

[ 43 : 18 ] You know Artaxerxes is going to hear these reports. So come on. Let us counsel together. There really is nothing new under the sun.

Faith family, I can either spend, this is what Nehemiah is facing, I can either spend my time on rumors, or keep focused on restoration.

Somebody say preach, preacher. I can either focus on rumors, or I can focus on restoration. Now later, they will, in fact, notice Nehemiah's response here.

This is what Nehemiah says, chapter 6, verse 8. Then I sent to them saying, no such things as you say have been done, you are inventing them out of your own mind.

Don't you love this guy? Just let's give Nehemiah a hug, right? Thank you, Nehemiah, for teaching us how to respond here. Right? I'm not getting engaged in your game.

[ 44 : 18 ] I'm going to keep focused on the mission. Now again, this keeps happening. We're almost to the point. You probably already know what it is. Later, they're going to get one of Nehemiah's friends, a priest, who is willing to take a bribe and invite Nehemiah for safety to the temple.

But Nehemiah knows that according to the law, he's not allowed in the temple. If he goes in the temple, he may die. Right? You know that in the Old Testament. He's not a priest.

And he certainly will lose all cred among the Jews. And so here's his response to that. But I said, should such a man as I run away?

First of all, why would I run for safety? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in. Does everybody see those three examples?

Come to Oh No. Oh No. Not going to do that. Well, what about these rumors that's out there? Not going to talk about it. Well, go to the temple for safety.

[ 45 : 21 ] Not going to go in. Here's the fourth principle. There's got to be concentration on the mission of God. There's confidence in the sovereignty of God.

Comfort in the people of God. You keep coming back to the vision of God. And you keep concentrated on the mission of God. Why should I stop what I'm doing to entertain you?

In short, ignore distractions. Nehemiah was focused on the God-given task he'd been called to do. And I cannot tell you how helpful this has been for me.

Because you can spend all your time fighting back. All your time defending yourself. All your time answering questions. Here it is, faith family. You can either spend your time answering the opposition or accomplishing the mission.

You can spend all your time answering the opposition or accomplishing the mission. And Nehemiah shows us, I am not going to stop what God has called me to do to entertain you.

[ 46 : 27 ] It is just like. And some of you are like, well, that's really insensitive. No, it's not pride. It's priority. And it's the same priority that the apostles had.

When a very real need. The feeding of widows. Surfaced and it was causing great division within the church. And do you remember what the apostles did in Acts 6, verse 2?

The twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, this is like Nehemiah all over again. It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables.

You say, well, that's not really a pastor's heart. No, it's a pastor who actually knows what he's called to do. That's your work.

And it is work that needs to be done. It's work that should be done. But it's not what I'm called to do. And I won't give up the call of God for my life to do what God has called you to do.

[ 47 : 30 ] It isn't pride. It is priority. Faith family, listen, notice this on the screen. Notice it here. To stay focused on the main thing, sometimes you've got to say no to lesser things.

Amen? Because sometimes opposition comes by distraction. That'll preach. The enemy just wants to distract you. Hey, why don't you come over there for a while and entertain that and spend a few months answering.

But Nehemiah is just like, no, I know what I'm called to do. And that's what I'm going to do. Because at the end of the day, listen, listen, listen, somebody say preach preacher. At the end of the day, I don't answer to my critics.

I answer to God. So, buzz off, num nums, right? So, what does Nehemiah show us here as we take that theme of opposition throughout the story?

Well, it shows us, one, that restoration will always have opposition. And because of that, we need to have the right expectations. But we also need to have the right responses.

[ 48 : 34 ] Listen, listen. When opposition comes to us at Faith Family, when opposition comes to you and what it is that God has called you to do, here's the right response, right? Here's the right response. Be confident in the sovereignty of God.

Success of your mission doesn't depend on you or anybody else. It depends on God. Amen? And take comfort in the people that God has given you.

Surround yourself with like-minded people who believe in what you're called to do and will support you and encourage you. Keep coming back to the vision of God. Like when you lose sight of the future and you're distracted in the now.

No, no, no. This is why this matters. This is not just about rebuilding walls. This is about a future city. And it is worth it to keep going. And I'm going to stay focused on the mission that God has called me to do.

I'm not going to get distracted or sidetracked on other things. I'm going to have razor sharp focus on the call of God. Is this practical?

[ 49 : 34 ] Okay, you say too long. But practical, right? Practical. Now, let me close with this. Have you noticed how Nehemiah's story foreshadows almost exactly the very ministry of Jesus?

Let me just point the obvious out to you. Like Nehemiah, Jesus was brokenhearted over Jerusalem. Not because of physical ruin, but because of their spiritual ruin.

Like Nehemiah, Jesus was sent into the world for what purpose? Not for destruction, but for restoration. He brought light into darkness.

He brought welfare for us. Not just welfare for the people of Israel, but good for the world. Amen? Like Nehemiah, through Jesus' ministry, he faces all kinds of opposition.

Almost the exact same kind. They plot against him. They spread rumors about him. They falsely accuse him. Like Nehemiah, they got one of Jesus' closest friends, someone who was willing to take a bribe to betray him.

[ 50 : 46 ] Like Nehemiah, they wanted Jesus dead. Except unlike Nehemiah, they were successful. They crucified him. And yet the Bible says that it was for the joy set before him that Jesus endured the cross.

And listen, listen closely. Jesus endured opposition with joy. Not to restore a city, but to restore you.

Jesus endured all. He's the greater Nehemiah. He endured all of that opposition not to restore a city, but to restore you.

To restore a world that was lost in sin. So I close, Faith Family, by telling you that life is full of Marvins and Sanballats and Tobias.

There are going to be people out there determined to cause as much destruction as possible. But like Nehemiah, we must be a people who see these efforts for what they are.

[ 52 : 07 ] Namely, the work of the enemy, not the mission of Christ. Amen? After all, Jesus said this, the thief comes to steal, kill, and but I've come that they may have life and life abundantly.

And all God's people said, Amen. Would you pray with me? Father, thank You for Your Word to us tonight. I do hope that it is a great encouragement to everyone in the room, but certainly there are some here tonight who feel they are in the midst of that opposition.

Lord, that they're facing all kinds of distractions or discouragement or things that would just take their eyes off Your call on their life for the things that You've broken their heart for.

The things that You want to use them to bring restoration and good in a world that is so broken and dark. And I pray that this will encourage Your people to keep doing Your mission by Your grace and Your strength.

Tonight, we set our minds on the cross as we remember through communion the sacrifice of Jesus, the opposition. No one has ever faced opposition the way Jesus faced.

[ 53 : 31 ] And He did that for us. He did that to restore us, to reconcile us to the Father. That's the ultimate restoration project and Jesus accomplished it for us.

So tonight, we think on that and we remember Him in Jesus' name. Amen. And there's no idea Thank you.