



Slaying The Giant Of Discouragement In Your life!

Neh. 4:10-14

And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. 11And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you*.

13Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

What exactly are the limits to human tolerance? What are the units of measurement for pain and discouragement, and how does your discouragement threshold differ from mine?

I'm not sure about the answer to those questions, but the human spirit can be an amazing thing. Take the case of Lawrence Hanratty, who was named the "Unluckiest Man in New York City." This poor fellow, profiled in the Los Angeles Times, was nearly electrocuted to death in a construction site accident in 1984. For weeks he lay in a coma, with his lawyers fighting for his liability claim-until one of them was disbarred and two of them died. Hanratty's wife ran off with her lawyer.

Hanratty lost his car in a terrible crash. After the police had left the scene of the accident, criminals came along and robbed him. Then, an insurance company fought to cut off his workers' compensation benefits; his landlord tried to evict him. He suffered from depression and agoraphobia. He required a canister of oxygen for breathing and took forty-two pills per day for his heart and liver ailments.

But a city councilman took up his cause. Neighbors began to rally around him. Incredibly, Lawrence Hanratty summed up his life this way: "There's always hope,".

The dictionary defines discourage as "to deprive of courage, to deter, to dishearten, to hinder."

All of these D words and you can throw in doom, depression, defeat, and despair.

The mind dwells on these when life as us pinned down.

The New Testament uses three Greek words to carry the ideal of being disheartened, dispirited, or discouraged.

We always translate them as "to faint" or "to grow weary."

2 Cor. 4:1

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2 Cor. 4:16

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

Ephes. 3:13

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Luke 18:1

And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

It happened during the darkest days of Israel and Judah, when the invaders rolled in. The Babylonians destroyed the holy city of Jerusalem, looting its glories and carrying away its people to enslavement in a distant land.

It seemed that God's people had lost it all- their land, their pride, their very identity as a nation set apart for special destiny, for now God's people were dispersed across the nations.

These were the darkest times, days of lamentation and weeping and silence.

But then a ruler named Cyrus the Persian came to power, and he gave permission for the Jewish exiles to begin to go back home.

In the time of the first return and the rebuilding of the Temple, we think of two biblical heroes: a priest named Ezra and an administrator named Nehemiah. Each has a book of his own in the Bible.

Ezra was the priest to broken hearts, and Nehemiah was the builder of broken dreams.

From the book of Nehemiah we can learn a lesson about the renovation of hope from the rubble of discouragement.

With the walls lying in ruins, the people of Israel hadn't had a peaceful night of sleep.

Raiders from the outlying provinces had been able to attack by night and keep the Israelite settlers discouraged.

The threat of a Hebrew revival was an unwelcome one to the neighbors.

They were under attack from every side, and the greatest weapons in the arsenal of their enemies were fear and discouragement.

In this forth chapter of Nehemiah they were half way through their project of rebuilding the walls.

At this halfway point a fresh wave of discouragement breaks out and Nehemiah has to deal with this discouragement, and the way he done it will still work today.

1. Recognizing Discouragement.

Factor One: Fatigue

Vince Lombardi observed that "fatigue makes cowards of us all".

"The strength of the labors is failing", said Judah.

52 days of backbreaking labor, fatigue was catching up with them, and when energy runs short, so does courage.

The devil's business is to wear the saints of the most high out.

Overworked!

For a couple years I've been blaming it on lack of sleep and too much pressure from my job, but now I found out the real reason: I'm tired because I'm overworked.

The population of this country is 237 million.

104 million are retired. That leaves 133 million to do the work.

There are 85 million in school, which leaves 48 million to do the work. Of this there are 29 million employed by the federal government, leaving 19 million to do the work. 2.8 million are in the Armed Forces, which leaves 16.2 million to do the work.

Take from the total the 14,800,000 people who work for State and City Governments and that leaves 1.4 million to do the work.

At any given time there are 188,000 people in hospitals, leaving 1,212,000 to do the work. Now, there are 1,211,998 people in prisons.

That leaves just two people to do the work. You and me.

No wonder I am so tired.

Another thought...20 years' experience is not the same as one year repeated 20 times.

Factor #2 : Frustration.

They were not only weary, discouraged, but they were frustrated.

“There is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall”.

They no longer saw the proud, gleaming walls of their dreams.

Visions of glory seemed like a mirage in the desert.

There was nothing but broken bricks, mud, and debris.

They were burned out!

You can live out, you can wear out, or you can burn out.

To burn out don't mean you work too hard.

The true nature of burnout is working too hard at the wrong things.

It's striving for a goal you can't accomplish.

It's a feeling of despondency.

Factor #3: Failure

Neh. 4:10

And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that **we are not able to build the wall.**

Fatigue and Frustration are a good recipe for failure.

We are tired, fed up, we can't do this.

Negative talk is infectious, spreads like a virus to infect a whole community.

Failure is universal, what makes the difference is how we handle failure.

When things go wrong we are more apt to give an ear to the enemy.

Factor #4: Fear.

Neh. 4:11-12

And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you.*

2. Responding to Discouragement.

First Response: Cry out to God!

Neh. 4:4-5

Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the

land of captivity: 5And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked ~~thee~~ to anger before the builders.

Neh. 4:9

Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

We often cry out to God last instead of first!

Second Response: Continue the Work God has given you to do!

Neh. 4:6

So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

Are immediate reaction is to quit!

Neh. 6:3

And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

The times we most feel; like quitting are the times we must do are best to keep holding on.

Third Response: Concentrate on the Big Picture.

Neh. 4:13-14

Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

Fourth Response: Claim the Encouragement of God's Promises.

Neh. 4:14

And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

David encouraged himself in the Lord!

Psalm 46:1-3

God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3*Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

2 Thes. 3:13

But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

Galatians 6:9

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Fifth Response: Carry Someone Else's Burden!

If we read a bit farther into this fourth chapter, you will find a band of stragglers, the remnant of fallen Israel, had bonded together to become a team.

Some were carrying, some were guarding, some were building, and all were wearing swords.

United We Stand!

Discouragement tends to cut us off from the ones we need!

The best way for you to be encouraged is to find someone else and encourage them.