

Walking by faith is not always a walk in the park.

Nehemiah 4 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Work Is Ridiculed

**4** <sup>[a]</sup>Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. <sup>2</sup> He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the <sup>[b]</sup>wealthy *men* of Samaria and said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore *it* for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the <sup>[c]</sup>dusty rubble even the burned ones?” <sup>3</sup> Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was near him and he said*, “Even what they are building—if a fox should <sup>[d]</sup>jump on *it*, he would break their stone wall down!”

**4** Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. <sup>5</sup> Do not <sup>[e]</sup>forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have <sup>[f]</sup>demoralized the builders.

<sup>6</sup> So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its *height*, for the people had a <sup>[g]</sup>mind to work.

<sup>7</sup> <sup>[h]</sup>Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the <sup>[i]</sup>repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, *and* that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. <sup>8</sup> All of them conspired together to come *and* fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it.

Discouragement Overcome

<sup>9</sup> But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

<sup>10</sup> Thus <sup>[j]</sup>in Judah it was said,

“The strength of the burden bearers is failing,  
Yet there is much <sup>[k]</sup>rubbish;  
And we ourselves are unable  
To rebuild the wall.”

<sup>11</sup> Our enemies said, “They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work.” <sup>12</sup> When the Jews who lived near them came

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and told us ten times, “[<sup>12</sup>]They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,” (repeat 10 times) <sup>13</sup> then I stationed *men* in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the [<sup>14</sup>]exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows. <sup>14</sup> When I saw *their fear*, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: **“Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.”**

<sup>15</sup> When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work. <sup>16</sup> From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains *were* behind the whole house of Judah. <sup>17</sup> Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took *their* load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon. <sup>18</sup> As for the builders, each *wore* his sword girded at his side as he built, while [<sup>19</sup>]the trumpeter *stood* near me. <sup>19</sup> I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, **“The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another. <sup>20</sup> At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, [<sup>21</sup>]rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”**

<sup>21</sup> So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from [<sup>22</sup>]dawn until the stars [<sup>23</sup>]appeared. <sup>22</sup> At that time I also said to the people, **“Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day.”** <sup>23</sup> So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each *took* his weapon *even* to the water.

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### **Walking by faith is not always a walk in the park.**

Overcoming opposition by faith.

Act courageously through opposition.

Ease ≠ open door

Opposition ≠ closed door

Opposition comes when Gospel progress is being made.

### **Welcome**

#### **Introduce self**

#### **Review**

In Nehemiah.

- Leaders are formed in private well before they are used by God.
- God is Great. God is Perfect. God is Able. I am none of these.
- Is God's glory your top concern?
- Act courageously through opposition.

Today we look at chapter 4 of Nehemiah's book. We will read the text today as we explore it, so turn to Nehemiah chapter 4.

#### **Prayer**

Before we get into text, let me tell you about some of my friends in Haiti. About a year ago, Pastor Herve felt the need to disciple 25 people from his church in St Marc, Haiti. This is a vibrant church, but he picked these people for special discipleship and evangelism training. As the training progressed, several from the group began to feel the leading to evangelize in two communities to the north of St Marc. One was named Balague and the other Pinson. Pinson is located in a hard place in Haiti. There is not a good water source. It is dry. The village is located right along the main highway north, Highway 1.

The group from St. Marc chose a date and went to evangelize in Pinson. They went door-to-door. They performed a drama highlighting the work of Jesus Christ

Commented [t1]: Group of Disciples - Haiti

Commented [t2]: Haiti Village

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against sin. They had many come into a new relationship with Jesus. With excitement, the team returned to Pinson to disciple the new believers and to see how the church would be able to continue its impact in the Pinson community.

As you may know, the political situation in Haiti is not good. The government is ineffective. There is a very vocal opposition to the President. Law and order is not to be found. With all of this, Pinson is being changed for Christ.

On the way back to St Marc on evening, the team was stopped at gun point by a gang. They robbed the team. The gang stole four motorcycles. The gang physically abused the team members. No life was lost, but the team returned to St Marc discouraged, robbed of expensive vehicles, robbed of money, robbed of dignity, and robbed of the desire to continue the work in Pinson. They did not want to return.

Have you ever been in a situation like that? Just when the going gets good. Just when all cylinders are firing for God, a major setback or opposition occurs. Know what I am talking about?

Nehemiah does. Let's look at our text for today.

In Nehemiah 3 we saw the work in Jerusalem progressing. The wall is being built. Families work closely together and in their own neighborhoods. And just as things are progressing, opposition occurs.

At the start of chapter 4 our "friend" Sanballat is back. He come on the scene in 1:10, 1:19, and now in 4:1. He is an angry man and was really ticked off that the Jews were rebuilding the wall. He makes fun of them and gathers friends around him to help in his opposition.

**"What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore *it* for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?" Nehemiah 4:2**

His buddy Tobiah is there too adding to the opposition.

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**“Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!” Nehemiah 4:3**

Can't you just see the guys standing around as the Jews work making fun of them. The leader is Sanballat. His side kick Tobiah makes a joke and they all break in to laughter.

Be Dramatic: **Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble** If a fox should jump on it, he would break it down. **Laughter**.....

( video clip of fox jumping: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2SoGHFM18I> or this shorter one <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYYcbq6aZvA> )

**This** opposition is a piece of a cycle we see repeated three times in chapter 4. Let's name it the Nehemiah cycle. Let's follow this cycle and see where it leads.

**In position one, we have God's work being done.** The wall is being built. The gates are being repaired. This is chapter 3.

**Position two holds the place of opposition.** Sanballat, Tobiah and others verbally assault the workers.

**Moving** to position three requires hope and courage. It is formed in private. It is brought about by faith. Nehemiah is our guy. What does he do? **Position three, he turns to God in prayer.** Listen to his prayer:

**Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. <sup>5</sup> Do not <sup>[e]</sup>forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have <sup>[d]</sup>demoralized the builders. Nehemiah 4:4-5**

Does he engage Sanballat and Tobiah? No  
Does he double down and make a new plan? No  
Does he rally the people to work harder? Not yet  
Does he throw his hands in the air and say, "This is too hard?" No

**Commented [t4]:** Any way we can add a short clip of a fox jumping? See youtube links. No worries of too hard to include.

**Commented [t5]:** Cycle with 4 Positions

**Commented [t6]:** Cycle Position 1

**Commented [t7]:** Cycle Position 2

**Commented [t8]:** Cycle Position 3

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Nehemiah turns to God in prayer. He turns to the one with whom he has built a trusting and faith based relationship. He calls on his God to do the work against the opposition. He calls on the One who called him into action. **He turns to God in prayer** – position three in our circle.

Once God is in focus and he is trusting in God, **Nehemiah moves to position four of the circle, action.** He returns to the action which God called him.

Commented [t9]: Cycle Position 4

I said there are three cycles of this pattern, let's look at Nehemiah cycle number two.

They are building the wall and it reaches half its height – v6. They are making progress.

Commented [t10]: Goto blank cycle as I describe the following two cycles of Nehemiah.

Position one, **God's direction being done.**

Position two, **opposition**, is just around the corner. Sanballat, Tobiah, and now many others...

**they were very angry.** <sup>8</sup> **All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. Nehemiah 4:7-8**

Not just one or two. Now there are many from many places.

Nehemiah enters position three – **we prayed to our God – v9.** This time it is not just him, but the people, **WE prayed to OUR God.** Nehemiah points the people to God in prayer. A good spiritual leader points others to God. The people in faith and trust turn to God in prayer and...

Position 4 – **Action - we set up a guard against them day and night. Nehemiah 4:9**

And in verse 10 we jump right into circle three...

Position 1 – setting up guards and continuing the work

Position 2 – Opposition – Judah (Northern Jews) v10, The Enemies v11, Nearby Jews v12

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Position 3 – remembering God –

**When I saw *their fear*, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: “Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.” Nehemiah 4:14**

**When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall... Nehemiah 4:15**

**...Our God will fight for us.”** Nehemiah 4:20

Position 4 – **Action** – defense, communication, work, encouragement in the Lord

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Commented [t11]: Screen – Walking by faith...

Each time Nehemiah leads into God’s way, he encounters opposition, he returns leaning into God in prayer and what he knows about God, and then continues the action God began before the opposition.

So what are some key thoughts that come out of this discovery?

- When there is suffering and opposition, press through, lean into God, for His reward.
- Don’t isolate yourself, withdraw, or take a position of inaction, remember the Lord, pray and press through.
- Put off the lies of the enemy and focus on the Truth.
- ~~Opposition, darkness, will always press in against the Truth, light, but the Light will always overcome the darkness.~~
- Preparation against opposition happens way in advance and most likely in private.
- ~~Opposition comes with Gospel progress is being made.~~
- ~~Redemptive history, the building of the Kingdom, perseveres through the relapses and will always be achieved through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.~~

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Hebrews 12:1-3 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Jesus, the Example

**12** Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

<sup>3</sup> For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary <sup>[c]</sup>and lose heart.

There are many other examples of those who have lived out this Nehemiah cycle we have seen. We could take time to list them and look at them, but let's go to the author. The One who is our perfect example. Let's consider Jesus.

Commented [t12]: Blank screen

- Jesus left his position and place in Heaven and came to fulfill the plan of God the Father.
- Jesus made himself like us so that he can identify with us in all things.
- Jesus lived a sinless life.
- Jesus lived 30 years, of which the Bible is mostly silent, before he showed himself as the Christ in public.
- As Jesus lived out the plan of the Father, the plan for our salvation, he was opposed.
- Jesus kept going to that private place to see God, to receive direction, and to renew his focus on the Father's plan.
- Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:2

It would be easy to get out our cycle and run through the positions and review what Christ did, but I think we can see it already in our minds. And his great example for us is the moment in time the Word of God shares with us when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Commented [t13]: Christ in Garden screen

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Matthew 26:36-47 New American Standard Bible (NASB)  
The Garden of Gethsemane

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus \*came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and \*said to His disciples, **“Sit here while I go over there and pray.”** <sup>37</sup> And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. <sup>38</sup> Then He \*said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

<sup>39</sup> **And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed**, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” <sup>40</sup> And He \*came to the disciples and \*found them sleeping, and \*said to Peter, “So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour? <sup>41</sup> Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

<sup>42</sup> **He went away again a second time and prayed**, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.” <sup>43</sup> Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup> And He left them again, and **went away and prayed a third time**, saying the same thing once more. <sup>45</sup> Then He \*came to the disciples and \*said to them, “[a]Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup> **Get up, let us be going**; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”  
Jesus’ Betrayal and Arrest

<sup>47</sup> While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up [b]accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, *who came* from the chief priests and elders of the people.

The plan was in place. Jesus knew the Father’s heart and direction.

The time had come for the plan to be executed, literally. Jesus felt the opposition. Jesus asked for another way. The Father responded with his initial plan.

Jesus prays, leans into the Father, and pushes through into action...

### **Get up, let us be going – Matthew 26:46**

And because he

1. Knew the Father’s plan and direction
2. Faced the opposition – Satan, Physical Abuse, Unjustified Death
3. Prayed, Remembered the Father’s leading, the Father’s character, the Father’s love
4. He leaned into the Father, moved into action, and provided the only way for us to be righteous before God

**Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith.**

Commented [t14]: Blank the screens

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Cool. Neat discoveries. Nice graphic display. Perhaps someone could or has written a book about this. So what. Or better yet, now what.

What cycle of opposition are you in today?

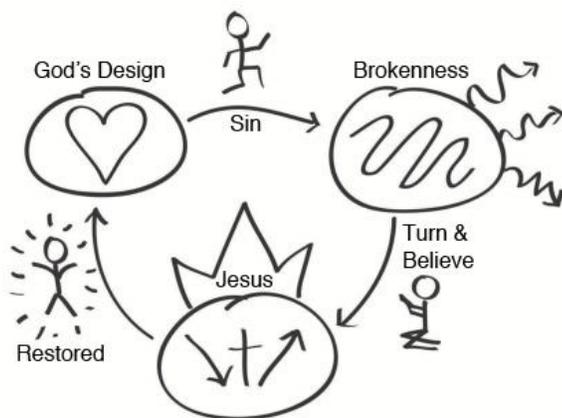
Here is a blank cycle, how would you fill it in?

Commented [t15]: Blank Cycle screen

**Salvation...**

If you were listening today, you know the only way to be right with God. Its not what I say or think, but what has been written by God himself. Three circles...

Commented [t16]: 3 Circles



If you are not restored, you have no hope.

If you are restored, you are new...

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, <sup>18</sup> he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. <sup>18</sup> Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and <sup>20</sup> He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Your action will be to decide. Yes to Jesus. No to Jesus.

What is your decision?

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### Gospel Conversation...

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We talk a lot about the 50,000 in our community who are far from Christ. Perhaps your cycle comes as you have gospel conversations. We know we are to tell others about Christ. We know it is the Father's heart for all to be saved. So we know His direction – Matt 28:19-20 – Go and make disciples.

But then the opposition comes in the form of...

- The rolling of eyes when you speak in the office about God things
- The jokes and laughter on your behalf (remember Talbot's fox joke?)
- Exclusion from family gatherings
- Isolation as friends don't call any more
- Misunderstanding that you are intolerant and prejudice

Will you pray to the Father and lean into Him with action?

What is God's desire and direction?

<sup>1</sup> Timothy 2:3-5 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>3</sup>This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who desires all men to be saved and to come to the <sup>5</sup>knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,

Your action will be to have that gospel conversation.

### Personal Sanctification (anger)...

Galatians 5:22-23 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>22</sup> **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** <sup>23</sup> **gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.**

What is the Father's direction here?

A life that shows these things.

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What is the opposition?

- Anger resulting in harmful actions
- Lies
- Selfishness
- Gossip
- Uncontrolled Pleasures
- Substance Addictions
- Behavioral Addictions
- Impatience
- Judging
- Discouragement
- The voice in your head who says you are not good enough, you will fail again, the voice of lies
- Fear

And the list goes on. When opposition comes, what do you do?

What is your action?

When you are afraid, what do you do? This is a very real question today. We are dealing with a virus and the battle is scary.

Commented [t18]: Blank screens

- Prayer
- The Word (personal devotions, breakfast devotions, promises of God)
- Music

Example: discouragement and stress, bed, prayer, promises of God

Spiritual Leaders – model Nehemiah to your people.

**Finish Pinson...**

The team returned to St Marc discouraged, robbed of expensive vehicles, robbed of money, robbed of dignity, and robbed of the desire to continue the work in Pinson. They did not want to return. They were not going to return. They couldn't afford it materially or physically.

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Pastor Herve reminded them of God. He reminded them of God’s desire to have all come to righteousness. Pastor reminded them that not return gave Satan the win and the testimony to the new believers in Pinson would be of a God who gave up on them. The church prayed.

Commented [t19]: Picture of people in church

The disciple makers of St Marc returned to Pinson. They prayed, lead into God through faith, pushed through the fear, loss of personal items and loss of personal safety.

Today, there is a church and school sharing the Gospel, teaching children about Christ, feeding and offering clean water.

Commented [t20]: 2 screens with pictures of school, water, and lunch prayer

So take your circle, your Nehemiah cycle.  
How will you fill it in today?

1. **What is God’s direction for you?**
2. **What do you see as the opposition?**
3. **How will you pray and take action?**

Commented [t21]: Questions screen

Pause...

Titus 3:3-8 New American Standard Bible (NASB)  
Godly Living

**3** Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, <sup>2</sup>to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. <sup>3</sup>For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. <sup>4</sup>But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, <sup>5</sup>He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup>so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs <sup>1a</sup>according to *the* hope of eternal life. <sup>8</sup>This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

2 Timothy 1:7 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>7</sup>For God has not given us a spirit of timidity or cowardice, but of power and love and discipline and sound judgement.

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**When I saw *their fear*, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: “Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.” Nehemiah 4:14**

Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome!

### **Prayer**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your way acknowledge him and he will make your path straight.

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity or cowardice, but a spirit of power, love, and self discipline and sound judgement.

Remember the Lord who is great and awesome.

Amen