

Hear, O Our God

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0:00] Last week we did cover the third chapter of Nehemiah.

When we saw that Nehemiah divided the wall into manageable sections to be repaired. A person or a group of people worked on each section. The various sections were repaired simultaneously. If we stopped with chapter 3 summary of the rebuilding effort, we might think that Nehemiah and the citizens face very little opposition. The rebuilding effort actually faced considerable opposition. The next three chapters will show us that. Chapters 4 through 6 document the external opposition to the wall. Tonight we'll cover the first six verses of chapter 4.

Once again we'll see Nehemiah turn to prayer while facing difficulty. Let's go ahead and read Nehemiah 4 verses 1 through 6. But so it happened when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant and mocked the Jews.

[1:09] And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria and said, What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices?

Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish? Stones that are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him and he said, Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.

Then in verse 4 Nehemiah is talking. He says, Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their reproach on their own heads and give them as plunder to a land of captivity.

Do not cover their iniquity and do not let their sin be blotted out from before you, for they have provoked you to anger before the builders. So we built the wall and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

We'll split the verses into three sections. You probably recognize some familiar names in the first few verses. In verses 1 through 3, we see the repeated mocking of Tupest.

[2:21] Once again, the repeated mocking of Tupest. We first heard of Sanballat and Tobiah in chapter 2. Here's Nehemiah 2.10.

Nehemiah 2.10 says, These men probably also were behind the opposition that we looked at in Ezra 4.7-23.

And of course, that previously stopped the work in Jerusalem. Sanballat served as governor of Samaria. And because Horonam was a town in Moab, he was probably a Moabite.

Tobiah, the Ammonite official, was likely governor of Ammon, although he might not have been governor. He could have been just an Ammonite official under Sanballat's authority.

Tobiah is a Jewish name and not Ammonite, but the Tobiah family was to have influence in Ammon for a long time. So they were district magistrates who were leaders of Samaritan factions to the north and to the east.

[3:36] And they'd lost any recourse to prevent Judah from rebuilding because God's people were authorized to fortify their settlement against attack. So to overtly attack and oppose the Jews would be to oppose the Persian king.

Because they couldn't overtly oppose the rebuilding of the wall, they had to resort to other means to disrupt the effort. And so we next saw Sanballat and Tobiah in verse 19 of chapter 2.

We'll go ahead and look at verses 19 and 20 of chapter 2. They say, But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us and said, What is this thing that you are doing?

Will you rebel against the king? So I answered them and said to them, The God of heaven himself will prosper us. Therefore we his servants will arise and build that you have no heritage or rites or memorial in Jerusalem.

In 2:19, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem attacked in a twofold way. They attacked by scorning and by slander. We talk then about how those are frequently used tactics of evil against good.

[4:49] We see them trying a similar approach in tonight's verses from chapter 4. At least they're true to their character. But as we get further along in our verses tonight, we'll see that Nehemiah is true to his character as well.

Nehemiah counters the resistance by relying on the fact that he is doing God's work. First though, let's read verses 1 through 3 of chapter 4 again. Then we'll look at the verses in more detail.

Those verses say, But so it happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews.

And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices?

Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish, stones that are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.

[5:57] Verse 1 says that Sanballat was furious and very indignant, and verse 2 begins by saying that Sanballat spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria.

The first thing we need to consider is why Sanballat would care about what is happening in Jerusalem. Simply put, Sanballat saw his own prosperity being threatened.

A powerful Jerusalem means a depressed Samaria, one of the main highways linking the Tigris-Euphrates river valley to the north with Egypt in the south, and Felicia to the west, passed through Jerusalem.

With Jerusalem once more a well-protected city, its very location will attract the trade, and gone will be Samaria's economic supremacy in the land beyond the river.

So there was an economic impact at stake for Sanballat. In the old days, several great trade routes went through Jerusalem on the way to Egypt, Persia, Arabia, and even Asia Minor.

[6:59] Sanballat and Tobiah perceived correctly that if Jerusalem were rebuilt, much of this valuable trade would return to Jerusalem, so the other provinces would diminish proportionally.

In an odd sort of way, though, Sanballat's mocking is a compliment to Nehemiah and the Jews, and that's because their rebuilding effort was successful enough to get Sanballat's attention.

When you think about it, opposition is almost always caused by success and not failure. If we're trying to do something worthwhile and are being opposed, that opposition occurs because we're achieving something.

We actually should be encouraged by it, and the very reason Sanballat was angry was because the wall was actually being rebuilt. He was threatened by Nehemiah's success.

Nobody would have paid any attention if Nehemiah were failing at what he was doing. Sanballat tried to rally the opposition by asking a series of five questions, and we see those questions in verse 2.

[8:02] So let's look at each one of those questions individually. The first question was, what are these feeble Jews doing? Do you see what the key word is?

Feeble. Feeble, yes, is the key word. What the Jews were doing was very substantial, but Sanballat was trying to belittle the work by attacking the workers. Calling them feeble mocks their ability to do anything of significance, and it belittles their achievements on the walls.

Through his disdain, he attempts to lower their self-esteem, weaken their resolve, and destroy their morale. Have you ever met some people like Sanballat?

I think we all have met people like Sanballat. Those are the folks that take delight in putting others down, and their scornful words immediately put us on the defensive and try to take the joy out of what we're doing.

But as with Sanballat, they aim at discouraging us so that we won't be able to do our best. As we touched on earlier, though, Sanballat's actions contradict his own words.

[9:11] If the Jews were so feeble, why does Sanballat get so heated up about what they were doing? If they're so feeble, he shouldn't have to worry about their work. It'll come to nothing. But mockers often contradict themselves in their haste to discredit and despise others.

Sanballat's second question was, will they fortify themselves? The word translated fortify needs to be defined so that we understand the question properly. The word basically means to leave.

Only twice in Scripture is it translated with the fortify word, and both times it's in Nehemiah when that happens. So the meaning here is that the Jews were leaving the building of the walls up to themselves.

We could translate the question as, will they leave the building of the fortified walls to themselves? So the emphasis here by Sanballat is on the relatively small number of workers.

We looked at verse 220 earlier. Remember that Nehemiah had excluded Sanballat and some other foreigners from being part of the project. Now Sanballat is attacking the position of Nehemiah with this mockery.

[10 : 22] Sanballat's question implied that if Sanballat and his allies weren't included in the effort, the Jews wouldn't have enough people to do the job well. Of course, we saw last week that there were other people that were allowed to help the wall that weren't from Jerusalem, but the key thing there was the attitude.

Nehemiah knew that Sanballat really didn't want to help, whereas the ones he let help, they really did want to help, and they were doing it for the right reason. Sanballat's third question was, will they offer sacrifices?

This particular question attacks the faith of the Jews. Nehemiah earlier had specifically stated to the mockers that the God of heaven himself will prosper us.

We saw that in 2.20. Sacrificing to God expressed this faith. Sanballat mocked the sacrificing to mock their faith. That scornful question implies, will they pray and think that God will help them, or will they worship God and think that God will still come to their aid?

Sanballat's attitude is the common response of worldly-minded people. They can't understand how a person can do things just for God's glory alone. In the same way that Sanballat mistook the motives of the Jews, unbelievers today make the mistake of judging Christians by the standards that the unbelievers set for themselves.

[11 : 47] The scorning world always mocks and shows great contempt for the value of our faith. They look at our faith as nothing but stupid superstition at best.

They ridicule the ideas that prayer can help anyone and that the Bible should be obeyed. But God's people really should know better and we shouldn't be bluffed out of our faith by the mockery of wicked men.

The fourth question was, will they complete it in a day? And this question attacks the fervent enthusiasm and dedication of the workers. It scornfully says that the workers' enthusiasm seems to show that they think that they can rebuild the wall overnight.

Sanballat implies here that their enthusiasm has carried them away so much that they have made the unwarranted conclusion that they can successfully rebuild the walls when they're unable to do so.

He no doubt remembers that they tried before and met with failure so he's trying to get them to think, what guarantee do you have now that you're going to be successful? The world likes to mock our fervency in the faith too because if a person is earnestly dedicated and devoted to God, he or she is called a fanatic or is said to lack balance and sometimes even said to need psychological help.

[13 : 07] Think about this contradiction though. A person can go to some athletic event and yell like a wild man and the world will admire the loyalty of that fan. But if we let a person get excited about God and doing something like building the walls around the holy city of Jerusalem, that enthusiasm is ridiculed instead.

Sanballat's fifth question was, will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish, stones that are burned? The chief building material around Jerusalem was limestone.

Limestone can be greatly weakened by fire and that fire makes it unfit for construction. So Sanballat is marking the quality of the material that's being used in constructing the walls.

His contempt says that using these stones from the heaps of the burned rubbish means that the workers would have to restore the stones to the strength that they formerly had. The implication, of course, is that this is impossible so the Jews simply can't construct a wall of inequality.

This mockery of the materials, though, is typical of unjust contempt. It's untrue. Only the gates were burned. The walls were broken down, not burned down.

[14 : 24] Listen to Nehemiah 1.3. Nehemiah wrote in Nehemiah 1.3 and they, talking about the delegation from Jerusalem who visited Nehemiah, they said to me, the survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach.

The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down and its gates are burned with fire. Nehemiah confirmed that situation in verse 2.13 after he arrived in Jerusalem.

In verse 2.13, Nehemiah wrote, I went out by night through the valley gate to the serpent well and the refuge gate and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates were burned with fire.

Some small amount of stone around the gates may have been affected by the burning of the gates, but that presented a very minimal, if any, problem in rebuilding the walls. Sanballat's mocking question was simply the lying words of a scorner who didn't need facts to scorn.

He only needed an audience to listen to him. Sanballat had that audience in Tobiah and the others around him. Tobiah latched on to Sanballat's criticism of the wall's quality.

[15 : 40] Look at verse 3 again. It says, Now, Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him and he said, Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.

Tobiah's statement is not original. He simply restates Sanballat's fifth question in a different way, but at least he paints a vivid word picture there. Think about a fox.

Foxes are fleet of foot in their life and agile as well. A wall would have to be very poorly constructed to be toppled over by a fox running across it.

The vividness of Tobiah's remark has led some commentators to think that between verses 2 and 3, Sanballat and the men of Samaria actually came to Jerusalem and watched the Jews at work.

And we'll see next week as we get further into chapter 4, there's some additional evidence that that probably happened. Tobiah's accusation, though, is like the accusation of the ungodly world about the conversion of some sinners.

[16 : 43] How often have you heard people say about somebody's conversion, it won't last or it's only a temporary thing? The ungodly world looks at faith in Christ as some weak thing and Christians as weaklings whose faith can't survive the tread of a fox.

But Tobiah will learn that the walls will survive and those walls will survive not only foxes but they'll survive the onslaught of armies as well. Similarly, today's world is ever learning that true faith in Jesus Christ becomes a wall that even death can't destroy.

So that probably raises a few questions and those questions are things like how will Nehemiah handle this new development and what can he do to successfully counteract this malicious slander?

And the second and third sections of our lesson answer those questions. We need to see three things about how Nehemiah handled the opposition and we'll see one thing Nehemiah did not do and two things that he did.

The thing that he did not do is that he did not retaliate. The first thing most of us do when we're ridiculed is to snap back but think about what would have happened if Nehemiah had said something like so they think you're feeble or they think we're feeble do they?

[18 : 03] Well they're not so strong themselves. What if he called Sanballat a petty governor of a petty province in a remote area of the empire and he could have told Tobiah that he's only a governor of a hot little desert area that nobody ever wants to visit but if he did that he would have lowered himself to their level and he would have come out second best because in the eyes of the world at that time Jerusalem was a lot worse off than those other places were.

So he was very smart in just staying out of the fray with that. The next section of our lesson shows us the first thing that Nehemiah did. We've seen the repeated mocking of two pests in verses 4 and 5 we see the leader praying several requests.

So the leader praying several requests is what we see next. Nehemiah's dependence on his sovereign God is never more evident than in his prayer and in the face of opposition here's what Nehemiah prayed.

He said, Praying is a great and profitable reaction to any problem.

We've seen that throughout Nehemiah already. We'll see that more and more as we go along.

Praying when trouble comes tranquilizes the soul. You may have to do other things besides praying when problems come but you must always pray and you can always pray even if you can't do other things.

[19 : 49] Nehemiah believed that when the people of God were involved in the work of God any assault on them was an assault on God. In this case to despise the Jewish workers was to despise God himself.

Keep that in mind as we look at the specifics of Nehemiah's prayer. That prayer first begins with an expression of anguish over being despised. God's people have always been despised by the world but that still doesn't make it easy to experience when it happens.

The contempt which Sanballat brought upon the Jews became very burdensome to those Jews.

The indoctrination by Sanballat of his associates and the Samaritan army caused that contempt to spread very quickly and it spread greatly and forcefully as well.

The workers on the wall would be besieged by provocative belittling language of other mockers so it wasn't a pleasant experience and it would cause a disastrous effect on the work on the walls.

John Butler wrote this. He said, Scorn hurts. Sticks and stones can break our bones but scorn can break the spirit. Proverbs 18.14 conveys a similar thought.

[21:00] Proverbs 18.14 says, The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness but who can bear a broken spirit? All of this tells us the value of prayer in such a situation.

When the flesh grows weary and weak under the assault of scorn we should seek God for strength to be steadfast in the time of that scorn. Let's look now at the specific request that Nehemiah made. He didn't hold anything back in those requests. Actually, we need to recognize that the exact nature of Nehemiah's prayer has long been a source of embarrassment to some Christians.

Nehemiah voiced four requests to God. He said, Turn their reproach on their own heads. Give them as plunder to a land of captivity. Do not cover their iniquity.

Do not let their sin be blotted out from before you. Nehemiah's critics say that the requests are so unlike the teaching of the Lord Jesus that God surely can't expect us to use that as a model.

[22:06] We'll discuss, though, how these requests really are consistent with the teachings and the behavior of Jesus. First, though, let's look at each request. His first request was to turn their reproach on their own heads.

And this is another way of saying what Paul wrote in Galatians 6-7. Paul wrote, Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

So judgment upon sin often comes in the same coin in which the person has sinned. This prayer about the scorers of Nehemiah's suffering reproach has certainly been answered over the years.

Think about how many people have read about them over the millennia and how many people have sent scorned Sanballat and his fellow mockers after learning from scripture about their wicked actions.

Those whose mouths are filled with wicked contempt may have their moments in the sun when their contempt of others is popular and accepted. That moment in the sun will be short, but the time that they're scorned will be forever.

[23:16] Nehemiah's second request was for God to give the mockers as plunder to a land of captivity. This request speaks of the wicked mockers being captured and led away into captivity because of their evil.

It's the picture of the criminal being arrested by society and being incarcerated in prison. When we think of judgment upon sin, we generally think of divine judgment, and we ought to think of that. But judgment on this earth for sinners is also a valid thought. Evil is also to be arrested and be punished by men. That's why we have jails and prisons, and those are for the incarceration of those who live evil lives here.

Nehemiah wants these criminals of contempt arrested, and it's a legitimate desire for him.

Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 13 verses 1 and 2.

Romans 13 1 and 2 say, Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God. And the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

[24:22] Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. Nehemiah's third request was do not cover their iniquity.

That request is a request that always has great prospects of being answered when you're talking to God about that. It was answered here too. Scripture has revealed the sin of these wicked mockers for several millennia.

Their evil deeds weren't concealed. Even the anger in their heart has been revealed in Scripture.

Men think they can hide their sin so that nobody knows, but Scripture says, be sure that your sin will find you out.

And of course that's Numbers 32 23. When God starts revealing your sin, there's nothing that can't be uncovered. Men go to great extremes to conceal their sins, but it's fruitless.

Think about government officials and some others who sometimes seem to succeed in covering up their wicked ways with all their cleverness, power, money, and clout. Their sin still gets revealed in due time.

[25 : 34] Nehemiah's fourth request to God was do not let their sin be blotted out from before you. This request is where he speaks of divine judgment. Evil involves more than men's judgment.

It also involves divine judgment. And divine judgment will be far worse than men's judgment upon those whose sin is not blotted out from before God. We know, of course, and we should always acknowledge that sin can be blotted out when men come to Jesus Christ who died on Calvary's cross to provide the means whereby the guilty could be saved.

But if a sinner refuses to come to Jesus Christ for deliverance from judgment, he will be judged for all eternity in hellfire. And divine retribution for sin is a very serious matter.

As we looked at the specific request, we alluded to some reasons why Nehemiah's prayer actually is consistent with what Jesus taught and how Jesus acted. Now that we've looked at the request in detail, let's talk a little bit more about how these requests are consistent with what Jesus modeled for us.

First, Nehemiah's request, like the imprecations elsewhere in Scripture, were for divine judgment against sin. That's a clear teaching in Scripture. The prayer in verse 5 for God not to cover up their enemy's guilt was not a prayer against their salvation.

[26 : 56] It was a prayer for justice for what they had done. Second, Nehemiah's prayer was a prayer for God to act. He wasn't asking for permission to take personal vengeance himself.

Third, Nehemiah's prayer expressed zeal for God's work and God's honor. Nehemiah had no doubts that the building of the wall was God's doing.

He knew that opposition to it was opposition to God. Fourth, Nehemiah trusted himself and his workers to God's plan, just as Jesus did.

Listen to how 2 Peter 2.23 describes Jesus' conduct when he was reviled. 2 Peter 2.23 says, who, talking about Jesus, when he was reviled, did not revile in return.

When he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously.

Praying for God to judge sin is much different than taking that judgment into our own hands.

[27 : 57] Nehemiah knew that. Nehemiah prayed for God to judge the mocker's sin using methods that God had established. This approach is completely consistent with what Jesus said and did.

Think back to when we looked at the Olivet Discourse. There we saw Jesus consistently warned that unrepentant sinners are bound for utter darkness. He said there there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Getting back to tonight's text, the last phrase of Nehemiah's prayer gives the main reason why Nehemiah expected God to judge the mocker's sin. Look at the last clause of verse 5.

Nehemiah 4.5b says, For they have provoked you to anger before the builders. That also gives us some evidence that maybe they were there watching because he says they have provoked God to anger before the builders, so that implies that the builders could see them.

The word you there is in italics in the scripture text. We know that means that it was not in the original text, but it was supplied by the translators to help the understanding of the text.

[29 : 03] The insertion there, though, is justified. The builders may have been angry here, as some believe, but we know from other scriptures that God will always be angry with sin.

For one example, listen to Romans 1.18. Romans 1.18 says, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth and unrighteousness.

For an Old Testament example, here's Psalm 7.11. It's pretty clear. It says, God is a just judge and God is angry with the wicked every day.

Pretty straightforward on the wording there, isn't it, when it says God is angry with the wicked every day. God is a God of love and we need to proclaim that truth, but God is also a God of holy anger against sin.

We need to proclaim that truth as well. Sanballat and Tobiah made God angry with their mocking of the work on the walls in Jerusalem. Unless they repented and turned to God for salvation, they are still to this day feeling the fury of God's anger.

[30 : 14] The advantage of time gives us a great chance to see the long-term results of Nehemiah's prayer. The passing years clearly have shown that God answered Nehemiah's prayer.

But the prayer likely had benefits on Nehemiah himself when he immediately prayed it. Nehemiah doesn't explicitly tell us, but the first great benefit was undoubtedly that it diffused his anger. He shows no anger as he proceeds. This was valuable because anger is seldom productive. In fact, anger is usually a hindrance to good work.

In addition, the prayer must have restored Nehemiah's perspective. Instead of being thrown off by his enemy's ridicule, he now recognized it for what it was, and it was fear that his leadership of the Jews might actually succeed.

He understood that the best thing that the Jews could do was press on with their task. Pressing on with the task is exactly what Nehemiah and his workers did.

[31 : 17] So far in our study, we've seen the repeated mocking of two pests. We've seen the leader praying several requests. Finally, we see the people working with few rest.

The people working with few rest. When we started the previous section, we said that we could learn three things from Nehemiah's response to the criticism.

First, he avoided stooping to the mockers' level. Second, he prayed to God. Third, he went on with the work. And we see that third thing from verse 6.

Nehemiah said, So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together, up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. Because Nehemiah had left the taunts of his enemies with God, he no longer needed to be concerned about them.

He could get on with the task that God had given him. Nehemiah puts it very nicely. He simply says, So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together, up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

[32 : 24] It was kind of the ancient version of the World War II slogan of Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition. Regardless how the builders felt, though, they performed well under the scolding of their enemies.

We see that in three ways from the text. We see their persistency in the work, their progress in the work, and their passion in the work. Nehemiah and his fellow Jews didn't quit working on the walls of Jerusalem.

That's where we see their persistency. One commentator translates the first part of verse 6 as, We still built the wall. So, no matter what was going on, they stayed focused and still built the wall, and that expresses the persistency well.

Persistency stops the focus of the enemy, which is wanting to get us to quit. The best way to defeat the enemy, though, is to keep doing God's work. And to keep doing God's work, we may have to do the work even when we don't feel like it.

Ridicule and mockery stop so many people, but the persistent person will keep going even if he feels belittled and despised. If we quit because somebody makes fun of us, we won't last long at anything, especially we won't last long in serving God.

[33 : 39] Nothing is so scorned and mocked as serving God. So during this time of contempt, the people succeeded in getting the wall completely joined together and halfway finished in its height.

They made great progress in spite of that contempt. The joined together statement really commends the great work of the workers. It speaks of the dedication of everybody involved in the work.

All the workers had to keep going if the entire wall was going to be completed. If some of the workers didn't do their task, parts of the wall would have gaps, and that would play into the hand of the mockers.

The last clause of verse 6 summarizes the people's passion for the work. That clause says, for the people had a mind to work. I almost made that the title of the lesson.

But the word mind in this text is translated from the Hebrew word, which is translated heart most of the time. To have a mind to work here means that the people had their heart in the work.

[34 : 40] Having a mind to work was one of the most important keys to success that the people had in building the wall. Having a mind to work keeps somebody focused on working regardless of how difficult the task is, and regardless of how much opposition the person faces.

Having a mind to work means that we won't surrender to mocking mouths. Contempt is always ineffective against somebody who has a mind to work. Nehemiah was able to build a great society as well as great wall in Jerusalem because the people had that mind to work.

And it still works that way in our society today. Nehemiah's prayer that began with the simple words here, O our God, can teach us several things.

By resorting to prayer, Nehemiah is able to give full expression to his feelings. He doesn't suppress his emotions or bottle up his anger inside him. If he'd done that, it would have begun to warp his personality.

destroy his sense of reality and destroy his relationship with the Lord. People who suppress their feelings generally do so because they have an idea, an external idea, of what Christian conduct should be like.

[35 : 51] And this is sometimes diametrically opposed to how they feel. By being concerned about what others will think of them, they suppress their resentment and as a consequence, they themselves become bitter and resentful.

Instead of suppressing his feelings, Nehemiah had recourse to prayer and in that prayer we saw how Nehemiah held nothing back. Prayer has many beneficial effects too.

Not only does it enable us to ventilate our feelings, it also gives us the opportunity to discuss matters with God and to have him help us obtain a new perspective on our problems.

If we would only pray over our difficulties, we would find that our anger or resentment would be dissipated. If we took time to tell the Lord about the things that disturb us, we wouldn't be tempted to gossip to others about them.

And prayer then actually is an important part of proper mental health. In addition to being reminded of the value of prayer, the verses tonight should teach us something else.

[36 : 54] The verses should teach us that progress is possible during problems. Let that sink in for just a second. progress is possible during problems.

God knew the problems that Nehemiah faced were going to happen. And for proof of that, listen to Daniel's prophecy about the rebuilding of the walls. This is Daniel 9.25.

Daniel wrote, Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and 62 weeks.

The street shall be built again and the wall even in troublesome times. For our purposes tonight, the last part of the prophecy is the key.

Daniel said, The street shall be built again and the wall even in troublesome times. Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled. It was indeed in troublesome times when Nehemiah and his fellow Jews built the wall around Jerusalem.

[37 : 57] How encouraging is it to know that with God we can progress in the work even in troublesome times. It should remind us that our God is not a weak God who can only help us in the good times, but he's also a refuge and strength and a very present help in trouble.

That same fact applies when we face problems today, but the question is, do we really believe that? And if we really believe it, do we act like it? When we face troublesome times as individuals or a church, the words of Psalm 46.1 still apply.

Psalm 46.1 is that verse that says, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Nehemiah knew that, and that's why his response to the trouble started with the words, hear, O our God.

With that, let's go ahead and pray to close. Father, we thank you for the reminder that you do hear us when we pray to you. Help us to learn from Nehemiah and have prayer be the first thing that we do whenever we face difficulties.

Let this passage tonight encourage us that progress is possible even in troublesome times. Help us hold on to that, remember that, and keep the faith.

[39 : 14] Thank you for what you have done for us and continue to bless us as we move forward. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.