



MESSAGE THREE: WHEN EVERYTHING IS GOING WRONG

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In the previous talk, we saw how Nehemiah cast such a compelling vision that it marshaled the nation to begin to rebuild the wall with great energy and passion. The vision created a team of people who worked tirelessly and progress was unhindered.

Today, we are going to see the rest of the story. Remember this... **GOD-SIZED VISIONS ATTRACT CRITICISM AND OPPOSITION.**

Nehemiah persevered despite criticism, personal attacks, and schemes. How did he do it?

A DIFFERENCE MAKER COMES UNDER ATTACK

The enemies of the vision get fired up with **anger**.

Nehemiah 2:10, When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites. (NIV)

Nehemiah 4:1, When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. (NIV)

The first wave of the attack: **taunting, mocking, shaming**.

Nehemiah 4:1-3, *When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?" Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building—if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!"* (NIV)

The second wave of attack: **isolating** and **threatening**

Nehemiah 4:7-12, *But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it...Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."* (NIV)

The third wave of attack: **slander** and **intimidation**

Nehemiah 6:5-14, *Sanballat sent his aide to me...and in his hand was an unsealed letter in which was written: "It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: 'There is a king in Judah!' Now*

this report will get back to the king; so come, let us confer together"...They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed." One day I went to the house of Shemaiah...who was shut in at his home. He said, "Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you." He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me. (NIV)

HOW A DIFFERENCE MAKER RESPONDS

Nehemiah was **honest** in prayer.

Nehemiah 4:4-5, Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders. (NIV)

Nehemiah used **common sense**.

Nehemiah 4:9, We prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. (NIV)

Nehemiah **motivated** and **inspired** the people.

Nehemiah 4:14, After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." (NIV)

Nehemiah had a "**never quit**" attitude.

Nehemiah 6:3-4, *I sent messengers to them with this answer: "I am doing a great work, and I can't come down..." Sanballat and Geshem sent the same message to me four times, and each time I sent back the same answer. (NCV)*