
IGNOMINIOUS MEMENTO

(STAY CALM AMIDST CONTRARY WIND)

NEHEMIAH 4:1-4

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DEFINITION:

AN OBJECT OR EVENT THAT SERVE AS A HUMILIATING OR SHAMEFUL REMINDER OF SOMETHING DISGRACEFUL OR A MEMORY OF PUBLIC DISGRACE AND DISHONOUR.

British critic and author THOMAS CARLYLE CALLED RIDICULE "THE LANGUAGE OF THE DEVIL." SOME PEOPLE WHO CAN STAND BRAVELY WHEN THEY ARE SHOT AT WILL COLLAPSE WHEN THEY ARE LAUGHED AT.

SHAKESPEARE CALLED RIDICULE "PAPER BULLETS OF THE BRAIN," BUT THOSE BULLETS HAVE SLAIN MANY A WARRIOR.

It is not unusual for the enemy to insult the servants of God. Goliath ridiculed David when the shepherd boy met the giant with only a sling in his hand (**1 Sam 17:41-47**). Jesus was mocked by the soldiers during His trial (**Luke 22:63-65**) and by the rabble while He was hanging on the

cross (**23:35-37**); and some of the heroes of the faith had to endure mocking (**Heb. 11:36**).

*When the enemy laughs at what God's people are doing, it is usually a sign that God is going to bless His people in a wonderful way. When the enemy rages on earth, God laughs in heaven (**Psalms 2:4**).*

Sanballat and his friends had begun to ridicule the Jews even before the work on the wall had begun. "They laughed us to scorn," wrote Nehemiah, "and despised us" (**Nehemiah 2:19**). What special relationship Sanballat had with the army of Samaria is not explained to us. Perhaps he had the army assembled as a show of strength to frighten the Jews.

BY MAKING HIS INITIAL SPEECH BEFORE THE ARMY, SANBALLAT INTENSIFIED THE POWER OF HIS RIDICULE AS HE MADE SOME IMPORTANT PEOPLE LAUGH AT THE JEWS.

First, Sanballat ridiculed *the workers* by calling them "**feeble Jews**" (4:2). The word *feeble* means "withered, miserable." The people were like cut flowers that were fading away. They had no human resources that people could see, **but the enemy could not see their great spiritual resources.**

The people of the world don't understand that God delights in using feeble instruments to get His work accomplished (**1 Corinthians 1:18-31**). The world glories in its wealth and power, but God's people glory in their poverty and weakness. When we are weak, then we are strong (**2 Corinthians 12:1-10**).

Then Sanballat ridiculed *the work itself* by asking three taunting questions. "Will they fortify themselves?" must have evoked gales of laughter from the Samaritan army. How could a remnant of feeble Jews hope to build a wall strong enough to protect the city from the army? "*Will they sacrifice?*" implies, "*It will take more than prayer and worship to rebuild the city!*"

This question was blasphemy against Jehovah God, for Sanballat was denying that God would help His people. **"Will they finish in a day?" suggests that the Jews didn't**

know how difficult the task was and would soon call it quits.

In his final question, Sanballat ridiculed *the materials* they were using. The stones were taken out of the rubbish heaps and probably were so old and damaged that they would never last when set into the wall. **While it is true that limestone is softened by fire, it is also true that the walls were "broken down," while the gates were "consumed with fire" (Nehemiah 2:13).** In spite of what Sanballat said, there was still plenty of good material for the builders to use.

TOBIAH THE AMMONITE was one of the visiting dignitaries at the Samaritan army inspection; and when it was his turn to make a speech, he ridiculed *the finished product* (4:3). You wouldn't need an army to knock down the wall; a solitary fox could do it! Of course, much that Sanballat and **Tobiah said was true from a human point of view; for the Jewish remnant was weak and poor, and the work was too great for them. But they had great faith in a great God, and that's what made the difference.**

How did Nehemiah respond to this ridicule? **He prayed and asked God to fight the enemy for him.** This is the third time you find Nehemiah praying (1:4-11; 2:4), and it will not

be the last time. Nehemiah didn't allow himself to get detoured from his work by taking time to reply to their words. The Lord had heard the sneering taunts of Sanballat and Tobiah, and He would deal with them in His own way and His own time.

Nehemiah's prayer resembles the "imprecatory psalms," such as **Psalms 69; 79; and 139:19-22**. **We must remember that Nehemiah was praying as a servant of God concerned for the glory of God. He was not requesting personal vengeance but official vindication for God's people.** The enemy had blasphemously provoked God before the builders, and this was a terrible sin. **THE OPPOSITION OF SANBALLAT AND TOBIAH AGAINST THE JEWS WAS IN REALITY OPPOSITION AGAINST GOD.**

The things people say may hurt us, but they can never harm us, unless we let them get into our system and poison us. If we spend time pondering the enemy's words, we will give Satan a foothold from which he can **launch another attack closer to home.** The best thing to do is to pray and commit the whole thing to the Lord; and then *get back to your work!* **Anything that keeps you from doing what God**

has called you to do will only help the enemy.

The primary lesson from Nehemiah 4:14 is to not be afraid of opposition, but to remember and trust in God's power and faithfulness when facing challenges. In this verse, Nehemiah exhorts his people to fight for their families and homes because God is great and awesome, and He is on their side to give them strength.

LESSONS TO TAKE HOME

GOD'S POWER OVER YOUR ENEMIES:

Nehemiah reminds the people that their enemies, while seemingly powerful, are insignificant compared to God. The lesson is to shift your focus from the intimidating opposition to the all-powerful God.

FIGHT FOR WHAT MATTERS:

The verse specifically mentions fighting for "your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes". This highlights the importance of protecting your loved ones and your community when it's under attack.

COURAGE IN THE FACE OF FEAR:

Facing opposition can be discouraging, but Nehemiah's call encourages courage. Instead of

succumbing to fear, believers are called to take action, trusting that God will empower them to fight.

reminded of His capability and goodness. God's strength is a powerful force for good, and He is reliable and trustworthy.

TRUST IN GOD'S GOODNESS:

By remembering the Lord who is "*great and glorious*," the people are

A CALL TO ACTION:

Nehemiah's words were not just theoretical; they were a directive to engage in the battle for their future and the future of their families. This emphasizes that standing firm and taking action is crucial when rebuilding or facing attacks.

CONCLUSION

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