

Joint Ventures, Nehemiah, 3.21.10

Intro

1. Pretend you're traveling with Nehemiah to Jerusalem. Recount Jerusalem's situation at your return. The year; the history leading to this point; 1.1-3
2. Consider the physical condition – over 2 miles of walls destroyed; the reason walls are needed.
3. Consider the morale & spiritual condition
4. Consider the enemies
5. Nehemiah's challenge – 2.17-20
6. The people's response – 3
7. The completion – 6.15-19. They accomplished in 52 days what had existed for 140+ years.

The Key Lesson: Persistence is key in doing anything significant for God.

1. Scriptural examples of persistence:
 - a. Jacob – Gen.32.22-32. God encourages persistence & blesses those who diligently seek Him.
 - b. Mt.7.7f. – Ask & it shall be given
 - c. Mt.10.22 – All men will hate you b/c of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.
 - d. Luke 18 – The Persistent widow
 - e. Ro.2.7 – To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.
 - f. Heb.12.1 – Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.
 - g. James 1.12 – Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, b/c when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised those who love him.
 - h. James 4.7 – Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
2. The primacy of the Persistent

- a. The Overcomer's rewards – fruit from the tree of Life; will not be harmed by the second death; a new name that only Jesus & the overcomer understand; authority over the nations; clothed in white and name announced before God; receive places of authority as citizens of God's city; and reign with Jesus from his throne.
- b. Appl for you– God is calling you into persistence. Don't give in or grow discouraged; this is the time to be fervent and faith filled. Keep believing and praying in God's will.
- c. Appl for Cross Over campaign – let's pray, stand & act in faith.
- d. Desmond Doss, Medal of Honor recipient, a symbol of persistence.
 - i. The **Medal of Honor** is the highest [military decoration](#) awarded by the [United States government](#). It is bestowed on members of the [United States armed forces](#) who distinguish themselves "conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States."¹ Because of the nature of its criteria, the medal is often awarded [posthumously](#). .
 - ii. Desmond Doss;Seventh Day Adventist; devout; didn't believe in war (conscientious objector), but wanted to serve his country during WW2; volunteered to serve in Army's Medical Corps; considered strange b/c of his strong religious convictions; harassed & others attempted to have him discharged b/c he refused meat, carry a gun or work on Saturday; served as a medic with the Army's 77th Division during their Okinawa, Guam & Leyte campaigns of '44 & '45. Despite the lingering suspicions & withering accusations of others, PFC Doss persisted and the lives of dozens of men were forever grateful.

Def. – Persistence is focused effort over a period of time which refuses to be discouraged by others or the situation.

➤ Focused

- For Nehemiah: 2.11–15, it began with the assessment of the walls around Jerusalem. It was clear what he was trying to accomplish.
- Appl – What often times discourages people is the sense of being overwhelmed. We look at problem(s) and we don't know where to begin or what to do. We have to get perspective. Perspective comes through assessment.
 - Neh assessed the situation by inspecting the condition of the walls and gates. Despite the enormity of the project, he remained focused on the goal. He didn't get sidetracked by all the other drama. He addressed the smaller issues, while remaining focused on the main one.
 - If we don't assess, we'll lose focus and become consumed with the most nagging problems and not the most important! We gain perspective by assessing. We prioritize by assessing. Assessing comes through interchange with others & seeking God's wisdom. You will be overwhelmed if you don't seek other's input or try to climb the mountain by yourself.
- Understanding the situation is part of Focus, but once you gain perspective you must act.
- Effort
 - Neh.3 depicts the enormous amount of work that went into reconstructing the walls. It took immense effort and cooperation (Neh.4) before the work was done.
 - Appl – What grinds us down? Sometimes the work can grind us down.
 - What else grinds us down? Waiting for something good to happen. We generate fear when we sit and we overcome fear by effort.
 - Illust – As an Upward Coach, the girl's were the most fearful when they were sitting on the bench. Watching Hailey gain confidence as a ball handler. She was fearful on the bench, but gained confidence on the court.
 - Fear or boredom is a warning signal to get busy. Some treat life like a parade, "I'll just wait and watch what happens."

- Part of life's happiness is in the effort/pursuit. Someone said, "It's not the sugar that makes the tea sweet, but the stirring."
 - Appl – Once you gain focus, then you must marshal the resources and expend energy.
 - Cross Over application – We know what our focus is – **To advance together in faith and watch God do amazing things.** (debt reduction & 2nd floor completion) and now we must put forth effort through prayer & sacrifice of money & time
 - Illust – Desmond Doss. His focus would be saving the lives of his fallen comrades; He would put forth so much effort & bravery that it silenced his most vocal critics. On Leyte, he rushed through a storm of bullets and sniper fire to save a comrade. His commander said we watched as a Japanese sniper leveled his gun at you, but he didn't shoot. His Company was assigned with another to take a rocky escarpment that rose 400' above the island of Oikinaawa and ran the distance of it. They knew it would be difficult, so Doss suggested they pray before the ascent. He led in prayer. The fighting was fierce and the other Company had to retreat, but Doss' Company moved forward and took the higher ground. No one killed and only a few were wounded. The next day a follow up inquiry was made for the reason for their success and their final response was, "Doss prayed." Doss was gaining the respect of his fellow soldiers b/c of his faith and effort.
- A period of time
 - Neh.6.15 – They undid in a few days what had remained for 140 years. It took 52 days of concerted effort.
 - It took Noah 100+ years; Abraham waited 25 years; Jesus waited 30 years; David waited 20 + years. The greatest discouragement is often the length of time it takes for promises or work to be fulfilled. The wait can be more discouraging than the actual work that's being done.
 - Illust – the 3 year construction on Hwy288/332 and 2004 & Stephanie's comments: I'm so upset that they've torn up my city. We need to envision the finished product.

- Neh long term goal was to rebuild the capitol of his country. Despite the deplorable conditions, the sin of the people and the overt attacks of his enemies, he kept his focus on the goal.
 - You need long range goals to keep you from being discouraged by short term set backs. When you don't, all you see is instability.
 - Appl – You may be wondering when you'll see breakthrough or hope. It – the period of time – can create worry. Worry wears us down. Worry robs us of strength and breaks down our resolve. Worry creates mental pictures of what we don't want to happen.
 - Illust – Martin Luther in dungeon grew depressed
 - Appl – Persistence is focused effort over a period of time. It's a focus that is faith based. We create a mental picture of what want to happen, so that as time elapses we aren't overcome with worry or fear.
- Which refuses to be discouraged by others or the situation
 - Neh.4.1, 7f, – The enemies of Israel grew angry and threatened to attack; they tried to assassinate him (6.2); they conspired against him using a prophet (6.10–12) and other Jewish leaders (6.17–19). The rebuilders of the wall grew discouraged because of the extensive work needed (4.10) and their debt (5). Despite all of this, Neh was not discouraged. He knew what God's call was & he refused to give in to the pressure around him. Many influential people wanted him to keep things as they were and not rock the boat.
 - Appl – Whenever you move forward with the Lord, there will be discouragement. People will complain; the enemy will threaten; the devil will attack; the grind will feel unbearable; you'll feel underappreciated or overworked; there will be a drag from others; even some who you thought would stand with you, move away from you instead. This is inevitable as you do the Lord's work.
 - Appl – Persistent believers move forward into the call. Many believers are looking for security over God's will. When you opt for security over pursuing God's will, you lose the edge. With security comes blandness. A ship in the harbor is safe, but that's not what ships were built for.

- Cross Over Appl – God is calling us to C/O. Don't discouraged by the economy or what others might say. Persist ahead with the Lord despite the circumstances or the negative voices around you.
- Illust – Desmond Doss did on May 4 – 5, '45.

„ On May 4, he treated 4 men who had been cut down while assaulting a strongly defended cave, advancing through a shower of [grenades](#) to within 8 yards (7.3 m) of enemy forces in a cave's mouth, where he dressed his comrades' wounds before making 4 separate trips under fire to evacuate them to safety. **On May 5th the tide of battle turned against the Americans. Enemy artillery, mortars and machinegun fire began to rake into the ranks of Company B, 77th Infantry Division. Japanese soldiers swarmed out of their foxholes and caves in every direction. Almost immediately 75 men fell wounded, and the remaining men were forced to fall back and retreat to the base of the escarpment. The only soldiers remaining at the top of the cliff were the wounded, the Japanese, and Desmond T. Doss.**

Heedless of the shells that burst around him and the bullets directed his way, Desmond tended his injured comrades. At the base of the escarpment those few soldiers who had managed to escape the onslaught could only sit helplessly by and hear the sounds of the battle as the wounded struggled to survive atop the cliff. And then...amazingly...a wounded soldier appeared over the face of the escarpment. Dangling from a rope, he slowly descended to the safety of its base as a tall medic fed the rope through his hands from the summit. First one, then another, and another....and another. Heedless of the advancing Japanese, Desmond Doss went about the work of sending the wounded to safety. Reports of that day tell of Japanese advancing with rifles and bayonets to within a few feet of the medic, slowly lowering his men to safety, before one of the wounded could kill the enemy before they shot Doss.

For five hours Doss lowered soldier after soldier down the face of the escarpment, using little more than a tree stump to wind the top edge of the rope around. Throughout the five hours Desmond had only one thought. He prayed, "Lord, help me get one more. Just ONE more!" How many men Doss saved that day, only God knows. One hundred and fifty-five soldiers went up the escarpment that day, and only 55 were able to retreat without assistance. The Army determined the conscious objector who had almost been court martialed or discharged as unfit for military service, had saved 100 lives. "Couldn't be," Desmond had replied. It couldn't have been more than 50. I wouldn't have had the time to save 100 men." In deference to Desmond's humble estimate, when

the citation for his Medal of Honor was written, they "split the difference", crediting the intrepid soldier with saving 75 fellow soldiers.

On October 12, 1945 Desmond Doss was invited to the White House. President Harry S Truman held a Medal of Honor in his hand as he looked at the brave young medic. "I would rather have this Medal," he said, "than to be the President." Then, with those words, he hung the Medal of Honor around the neck of Corporal Desmond Thomas Doss.

Conclusion: Persistence is key in doing in doing anything significant for God or others. Persistence is focused effort over a period of time which refuses to be discouraged by others or the situation. With our C/O campaign and in our daily lives, we must be persistent in fulfilling God's will. Desmond Doss, the follower of Jesus, emulated this virtue under the most severe conditions as should we in our generation!