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### Keep Calm And Carry On

### Nehemiah 4:1-23

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The Ministry of Information was formed by the British Government as the department responsible for publicity and propaganda during the Second World War. In late 1939 after the outbreak of the war, the MOI was appointed by the British Government to design a number of morale boosting posters that would be displayed across the British Isles during the difficult times they knew lay ahead.

The third and final poster of a set three was very straightforward and to the point - it simply read 'Keep Calm and Carry On'. Since being rediscovered in 2000 by a bookseller, the poster has become popular in both Great Britain and the United States and has been parodied countless times.

In his book, "Stuff Brits Like," author Fraser McAlpine breaks down the phrase explaining why the British have grown to love it though:

*"There is something quintessential in the way the posters do not say 'Don't Panic' or 'We Will Prevail'... They say 'Keep Calm,' and what that means is, 'We may be suffering something of an invasion at the moment, but that's no reason to start acting in a rash and bot-headed manner.'"*

In Nehemiah chapter 4, the Jews who are rebuilding the walls face opposition and ridicule. Yet, their leader, Nehemiah, gets them to Keep Calm and Carry On.

The ringleaders of this opposition are Sanballat and Tobiah, two governors in the region.

**<sup>1</sup>But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews.**

Sanballat, in front of his homeboys (the army of Samaria) begins to mock and ridicule the Jews.

**<sup>2</sup>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?"**

Tobiah, his sidekick, throws out an attempt at some humor that is meant to cut as well.

**<sup>3</sup>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."**

#### The Opposition Never Goes Away

We saw these haters in chapter 2 and we'll see them again in chapters 6 and 13. People who attack like this never really go away. So the best thing to do is to pray, keep calm, and carry on.

**"Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."**

**--Calvin Coolidge**

And this is exactly what Nehemiah did. Nehemiah didn't stoop to their level. He didn't attack back. He prayed.

**<sup>4</sup>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!**

This is what Paul told the Romans as well in 12:18-19:

**<sup>18</sup>If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**

**<sup>19</sup>Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.**

We are not to lash out at others when they ridicule us and our work. We let God take care of things and we carry on. Nehemiah and the people carried

on and just set a watch to be a look-out for the enemy.

**<sup>9</sup>Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.**

Still, some of the ridicule worked on the people. Their strength and resolve started to wane.

**10Then Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.”**

And then rumors, that were meant to scare and discourage, came from the enemy saying that they might launch a sneak attack.

**11And our adversaries said, “They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.”**

And on top of that, some of the Jews’ brothers and sisters (who had not joined in the work) kept coming over and over again saying that the people ought to stop because the enemy might get them.

**12So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, “From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us.”**

Yet, Nehemiah kept calm and carried on. They kept working but he also set folks to guard the more vulnerable parts.

**13Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.**

### **Always Remember Whom You Are Serving**

And then to calm their fears even more so that they could carry on with confidence, Nehemiah reminded them of the God they served and that there was no need to let the haters discourage or cause fear.

**14And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”**

And just like bullies, the enemy backed down. AND, it was obvious to all that God had something to do with all of this.

**15And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.**

**Verses 16-23** explain how Nehemiah and the others carried on. They made sure that as they worked they were still prepared to fight if need be. Nehemiah set up an alarm system so that if there was a problem at one section in the wall, everyone would rally to that point. This must have boosted morale knowing that at a moment’s notice you would have everyone at your side if your portion of the wall was attacked.

He also made sure that the people did not have to go home and travel alone to and from the work of the wall. He had them stay around so that they could guard when not working and stay safe together.

Nehemiah ends this chapter with a statement about his own commitment to the work. He was not asking the people to do anything that he was not willing to do himself.

By example he and his family and his servants and his bodyguards stayed in the same clothes day and night unless they were washing them, meaning they were all in. They were there 24/7. They believed that much in the work.

### **Your Response Can Turn Attacks to Something Positive**

The attacks of the enemy could have served as not only discouragement, but they could have been the death knell of the whole endeavor. Instead, Nehemiah kept calm and carried on. And because he did, the people stayed calm and carried on. The attacks, instead, had turned out as a rallying point for the people. And on top of that, the people became even more dependent upon God.

### **True Strength of Character Shows in Times of Adversity**

To say you have strong character today means nothing if you are not able to step up when challenged tomorrow. **Proverbs 24:10** says:

**10If you faint in the day of adversity,  
Your strength is small.**

If when the going gets tough and you “faint” or your strength wanes or you waver during those times, your strength you say you have now is worthless. You WILL face attacks. How you respond to those attacks is what is important.

### **APPLICATION**

WHEN attacks come...

1. **Make sure you are onboard with God’s work and you are not assuming He is onboard with your work. PRAY.**
2. **Ask, “Who is the “attack” coming from? People you trust? Who love God?  
Or...  
Is the attack from people who don’t really care about you? Or what God is doing?**

**If it is the first group, listen and evaluate.  
If it is the second group, Keep Calm and Carry On and don’t look back.**

