

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
BIBLICAL MANHOOD – BALANCING FAITH AND EFFORT
Patrick M. Morley
May 10, 2002

I am going to invite you to turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah: Chapter 4. That created quite a little stir. This morning we are going to continue and begin the second half, the down slope, of our series on Biblical Manhood. I want to take a moment and just kind of briefly review with you where we've been, and then I want to tell you where we're going to go.

By the way, I've decided to change the names of the messages. Session I, "A Man's Wiring Diagram." In that session we talked about being images of God, but we are also fallen, so we have dignity and depravity, and we talked about God's purpose for man. Session II, "A Man Marked by Humility." Even if you're right, you're wrong if you're not humble. Session III, "A Man Who Is Born Again." It is not enough to be religious; you must be born again. Session IV, "A Man With The Habit of Desiring God." I will make it my habit to each day desire nothing more than God. Session V, "A Man Pursuing a Clean Heart." I will invite Jesus to create in me, as David did, pray a clean heart. Session VI, "A Man and His Worldview." I think the big idea was I will let Jesus be Jesus in my worldview.

Having thought about that, I wish I had that one back. Actually, every talk I've ever given, I've walked away wishing I had done four or five things differently. Anyway, for "A Man in His Worldview," we talked here in years past about the idea from Frederick Taylor, the father of scientific management, your system is perfectly designed to produce the results you are getting. A better big idea for "A Man in His Worldview" would be to say that your worldview is perfectly designed to produce the results you are getting. So, it's important for us to make room for the supernatural in our worldview.

This morning, we're going to do "A Man Balancing Faith and Effort." Then we will do "A Man Empowered by the Holy Spirit." Session IX will be "A Man Created to Worship." Session X will be "A Man Consecrated to Obedience." Session XI will be "A Man Winning His Spiritual Struggle," and Session XII will be "A Man Making a Contribution." This will give you some of the themes that will be going there. Get comfortable, turn your chairs if you need to do that, and we'll be in Nehemiah: Chapter 4.

A father was helping his children get ready for bed, and the little children were brushing their teeth. His five-year old son accidentally dropped his toothbrush in the toilet. He took it out and was getting ready to use it again, and his father said, "Son, once your toothbrush has fallen in the toilet, you need to throw it away." So they put it in the trashcan, and his little boy disappeared. A couple of minutes later he came back, and he had his dad's toothbrush. He said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Well, Dad I dropped this one in the toilet about two weeks ago." A true test of Biblical Manhood!

Well, that's a small struggle, but we have a lot of struggles in life, a lot of opposition, and I am going to read to you Psalm: Chapter 90, Verse 10 out of the *New Living Translation*. "Seventy years are given to us, some may even reach 80, but even the best of these years are filled with pain and trouble. Soon they disappear, and we are gone. Even the best of our years are filled with pain and trouble and challenges and tribulations, and so forth, and there is just a lot of opposition in life.

I've had a rough couple of weeks. My mother passed, and that had it's own set of challenges. Also, Man in the Mirror, the ministry, is a business. You understand this, right? If you think a ministry is not a business, and you go into a ministry, you're going to be out of it because you're going to be out of business. A ministry is a business. It has the goal of sharing the Gospel, in our case with men, and helping them grow in their faith. But it is a business. Man in the Mirror is now a three million dollar business. It's grown very rapidly these last two or three years, and along with that come all the challenges. The biggest challenge is the funding. The more rapidly a business grows, the more cash it eats, right? So a rapidly-growing business always has cash flow problems.

We don't have a Development Director. I am it. I am the Development Director, and about 38% of our income is donations, and the rest of it is through resource sales and seminars, Project Father's Day and things like that. I am spending about half of my time now in the fund-raising area, and it's getting old. I would like to be writing more. I would like to be doing some other things, and it just gets old. We're struggling. I'm one payroll down, right now, today. I'm one payroll down. That's not bad after 53 years to be only one payroll behind. Yesterday some things happened, and I think that's going to be okay, but I'll see on Tuesday whether the checks bounce or not.

I was talking to a donor, and he gave me a wonderful textbook speech that money follows ministry, that where God is working, the money will be there. Besides wanting to strangle him, I said, "Well, I'll tell you what then, God must not be in our ministry, and He must not be in any other ministry to men in the United States because as the President of the National Coalition of Men's Ministries, I don't know of a single ministry to men that is doing well financially. Not one of them. Every single one of them is always strapped for money. Why is that? If you were the devil, and there are 63 million men who do not profess faith in Christ, and 90 million men who are not involved in discipleship, this would be quite a coup for you; quite a victory. I would think that would be a lot of territory that you would not be able to able to maintain. So, there is a lot of opposition.

Henry Blackerby, whom I love, has a very famous saying, "Find out where God is working and join Him there." Now, a lot of people get this wrong and don't understand what Henry meant. He didn't mean find out where the money's flowing, find out where people are falling out of trees to come to Christ. That's not what he meant, but that's what a lot of people have corrupted his little thought to mean. Think about it, "Find out where God is working and join Him there." Now, if you use that Americanized understanding of this, then Jesus was a total failure in His ministry because He had thousands, and He only ended up with 40. He preached his whole deal down to 40. If you want to use some sort of Americanized thing, of course, Henry's from Canada so he probably has a different point of view, right, but the idea, "Find out where God is working and join Him there." God is doing incredible things in the lives of men, but the reality is that the devil has created a lot of opposition to defend that.

You have your own opposition. Some of you, right now, have family feuds going on over wills - the judication of a will. Or some of you have family feuds going on over the care of aging parents. Some of you have a power struggle going on with your wife about how we're going to raise these kids of ours. Some of you are in opposition today because you have a vendor who is jerking you around. He owes you money, you know he has the money, but he's not paying you, and you can't pay your bills because he's not paying yours. So you have opposition from the vendor and you have opposition from the people that you owe bills due to. You're trying to figure how to make your own little payrolls. After my 20-year business career, my conclusion is that what business really is about is arguing about who keeps the money. When it is all said and done, a business is arguing about who keeps the money. So maybe you have some sort of unfulfilled dream, unfulfilled calling, and you feel like you've been in opposition. It could be for 20 years that you've wanted to do this calling, and you just always feel like you're blocked from it. Or maybe you're just like me, you're sort of tired of the daily battles, just tired of the daily battles. I told somebody the other day, "You know, I'm tired of living by faith."

Now the question that I said I've been organizing this around is, who are the men in Scripture we most admire and why, and what do they have in common? We see some great examples of men in the Bible who have faced similar oppositions to you and I or greater. Men like Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, Daniel, Shadrak, Neshak and Bendigo???? and the father would say, "God will deliver us, but even if He doesn't deliver us, we will not bow to you King Nebekenezer." Men of great passion for God who are facing great opposition! Then men like Nehemiah, the man I want us to look at this morning. How did these men face their opposition?

Let's take a look at our text Nehemiah: Chapter 4, Verse 1. The background – Nehemiah has been part of the Exile community. He did not return to Israel. I think the Exiles have been back in Jerusalem for about 11 years, they have not rebuilt the temple, the town was still in shambles, and there had not been much progress in the 11 years, and God put a burden on Nehemiah's heart to rebuild Jerusalem. So, he gets the resources, he gets the money, he gets the people, he gets to Jerusalem, he has a plan, and they start to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem, and all of a sudden opposition comes out of the woodwork.

Verse 1. "When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews." Now, picture somebody here who becomes angry and greatly incensed and starts ridiculing. You've had people like this who most of the time, even if you have an enemy, they are civil, so they're kind of getting you around the back end. But you've also had an opponent who has abandoned all care about whether or not you think he's a nice guy anymore, and they're letting you have it. They are angry, they're incensed, and they're ridiculing you. You've had this happen. If you haven't had it happen, you will. "He ridiculed the Jews, and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, 'What are those feeble Jews doing?'"

Then, down in Verse 4, Nehemiah's answer to this is, "Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads." Then, down in Verse 6, "So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart."

The first thing we see is that if we do God's will, we can expect opposition. If you are doing God's will, you can expect opposition. The weak and the _____ that's the Kingdom's order. I would have done it differently, but he doesn't check with me on these things. He lets the weak and the _____ go up together, then in the end, the weak gets taken into the bond, the _____ get burned. But, until then, weak and _____ together. If you're doing God's will, you can expect opposition. That's the first thing we see.

Second, you must depend absolutely on God and faith. "Here us, O our God, for we are despised." He turns to God in faith. He does not depend upon his own ability.

Third, even though we depend absolutely on God in faith, we must absolutely be prepared to do whatever it takes to be faithful with our abilities. Faith and effort are working together here. Now, you see this happen again – one, two, three, Sanballat, Hear us, O God, we trust you, and we rebuild. We took responsibility. We put forth the effort – one, two, three.

Now you see it again in Verse 7: "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." So, there's your opposition.

Verse 9: Nehemiah said, "But we prayed to our God," there's the faith, "and posted a guard." There's the responsibility. There's the effort. "We prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat."

Moody had a saying, "We pray like it is all up to God, we work like it is all up to us." Basically, it's praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition here.

Questions. Would a farmer expect to take in a harvest if he hadn't planted anything or had not put down any fertilizer or hadn't spread any water? Would a soldier expect to win a war if he didn't practice how to shoot a target? Would a businessman expect a profit if he didn't exercise some diligence to sell his product? Of course, not. Effort is required.

I want to do a little excursive here with you, and I want to acquaint some of you for the first time with two words. For some of you it will be a re-acquaintance. These are words that are Biblical words that you don't hear a lot about today, but in some circles you do- justification and sanctification. Justification is what? It is the moment, if you will, that we are saved. It is being declared righteous in the sight of God, legally declared righteous in the sight of God because of what Jesus did on the cross, dying for our sins.

We take hold of our justification as Bill here said by faith alone. You've heard this many times here and, hopefully, you've heard it elsewhere, too, that we are saved by faith alone, through grace alone, through Christ alone. It's faith alone, right? Justification is by faith alone, not by works, or not by effort. What role does your effort play in your salvation? In terms of gaining your salvation, zero is the correct answer. It's the merit of Jesus. It's not your merit. It does not depend upon man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. In the process of us becoming saved, our justification is by faith alone.

Now once a man becomes a Christian, the Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and the Bible says, "Without holiness no one will see the Lord." Once we have gained our salvation, then we have a responsibility to become holy. Now who makes us holy? How do we become sanctified? Once we start talking about sanctification, we are sanctified by faith in the same way that we are justified by faith. This is a little obtuse, this section here. I try to give something, almost every week, for those who are a little more theologically minded. If this is a little too obtuse for you, just forget it, but I think it's worth knowing.

Justification is by faith alone. Sanctification depends upon both faith and effort. In other words, God does expect us to apply effort to become Christ like through faith. In a moment, I'm going to give you a number of Scriptures that will help you understand this. Before I do that, I want to show you two errors. I am going to guess that some of us here have, in the past, probably not now because we have it all straightened out by now, but it's possible that someone in the past may have made one of these two errors. The first error is the error of faith without effort.

I should have given you a little bibliography so I'll just mention one book here by Kenneth Pryor, *The Way of Holiness*, and he has outlined two movements that have made errors in this whole idea of the relationship between faith and effort. The first error, faith without effort, is the error of quietism. Does anybody possibly know which religious group are the quietists -Quakers. The Quakers started this quietism movement, this idea of faith without effort, I surrender all, let go and let God, that I don't do anything, that God is doing everything. God is the one who is making me holy, and I don't have to do anything to cooperate with that. I'm overstating the case here to make the point, but it's faith without effort, and I would prefer to say for our purposes that our error would be safe without enough effort. You can see how these people can make some grave mistakes thinking they don't have to strive to be more Christ like. They'll have to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, as the Scriptures say.

What's the other error then? Well, if the first error is faith without effort, then the second mistake would obviously be effort without faith. Now what movement is this? This comes out of a 17th Century movement called Pietism. Don't try to remember this, but it's a very important movement because most of evangelical Christianity today - Pietism was a reaction to some errors in the German Lutheran Church of the 17th Century. It was a wonderful movement because it really emphasized small group Bible Study. Christianity in America is heavily focused on small group ministry, and it's good. That came out of this movement, but this movement is, basically, all about practical Christianity, all about me doing in my own strength what needs to get done. So, it's a lot of effort, but without much faith. You might be able to think about your own life and see some ways where you might make one of these two errors.

The Scriptures say that how we should handle opposition, because we expect opposition, but we depend on God, but we take responsibility. So it's not either faith or effort, it's both. I don't know what it is about the human psyche that has such a difficult time holding these two things in mind at the same time, but that's what the Scripture speaks.

I am just going to take you through a few passages. You can write down the addresses here because I am going to go through them very quickly. Nehemiah 4: 9, "But we prayed and posted a guard." "We prayed," there's faith, "and we posted a guard." So we could say we post a guard as we pray.

Proverbs 21: 31. "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord." Now, think about this, "The horse is made ready for the day of battle," there's effort, "but victory rests with the Lord." So, it's up to God. So, it's up to us, it's up to God. We do our part, we put forth effort, we make the horse ready for the day of battle, we do the business plan, we make the sales call, we provide the service,

we do our part, then God gets the victory. God insights the vendor to pay his bill when we send it to him. That's the way it is, right?

Proverbs 3: Verses 5 and 6. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding and in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path." Don't lean on your own understanding. Trust in God. Faith. Trust in God. Don't lean on your own understanding. What's the pride in that? You don't lean on your own understanding. Because you've taken the time to develop an understanding, it's not on what you don't rely. There's the effort. You have to put forth the effort.

Totally aside - the Thanksgiving Leadership Prayer Breakfast Committee. Chairman, 25 years. This year I'm going to turn the reigns over to a younger group of leaders. I recruited some guys to come in and build a new leadership team, a new chairman, and I'm thinking, "Oh well, I'm going to mentor these guys and kind of show them how to be the prayer breakfast people." So, these guys come in, and they have more ideas. They're just popping off ideas - they're mentoring me, and you know what I thought about? It took me weeks to figure this out. I said, "You know, our little group has been together for years, and the problem is that when you've been together for a long time, you pretty much have all the thoughts that that group of people have. If you want to have any new thoughts, you have to get some new people in. So with all these new people in, you've got all these new thoughts. But there is another way to get some new thoughts. And that's to read. If you read widely, you will have all kinds of new thoughts coming into your brain. If you want to have an understanding, you can sit around and pray and have faith without effort and wait for some of these Biblical truths to osmote into you or you can read your Bible.

Philippians 2: 12 and 13: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." There's the effort. What does the next verse say? "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." As we work, God works. That's your big idea, men. As we work, God works. We have to do our part. If we do not put forth effort, it is not of sound, mind and principle that God would bless a son who is lazy. It is not of sound, mind and principle that a son who is always working his dad I'm a dad. If your son is working you, I mean you are just a little fleabite human. If you know that your son is working you, do you think God doesn't know it when you're working him?

[[[[[[[[[[

Hebrews 12: 1 and 2: "...Run with perseverance the race marked out for you." There's the effort. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith," the sanctifier of our faith. We persevere, that's our part; Jesus is the author and the perfecter of our faith. He's the justifier and sanctifier of our faith. You see what I'm trying to show you? This is throughout the Bible. Everything, after the moment you become a Christian, is faith and effort working together. As we work, God works. As we work, God works. That's the deal. But it's tough, you know, because these oppositions are out there, and they easily grind you down.

I mentioned this book here before, *Good to Great*. I may have even mentioned what I'm getting ready to mention about this book. I can't remember. There's a principle in here called the "Stockdale Paradox." Admiral Jim Stockdale was the highest-ranking military officer in the Hanoi Hilton as a prisoner of war during the Vietnam struggle. He was in prison for eight years. He was tortured 20 times. One time they wanted to use him for propaganda, and he beat his face with a chair and cut himself with a razor blade to disfigure himself so he couldn't be used as propaganda. When he finally got out, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, but he has permanent disfigurement. He has a stiff leg and some other problems that went along with that. Collins, the author of this book, *Good to Great*, had the opportunity to interview him. He wanted to find out how did Stockdale survive when he didn't know how the story would end. He had read Stockdale's book, he knew how it ended, and he was depressed just reading the book. How could Stockdale make it when he didn't know how it was all going to turn out. Here is Stockdale's answer. "I never lost faith in the end of the story. I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining moment of my life which, in retrospect, I would not trade." Then Collins said to Stockdale, "Who didn't make it?" Stockdale said, "That's easy. The optimists." Now Collins, the author of the book, is really confused. "What do you mean optimists?" He said, "Well, those were the men who said, 'We'll be out by Christmas,' and Christmas would come and Christmas would go, and they would still be in there. Then they would say, 'Well, we'll be out by Easter.' Then Easter would come and Easter would go, and they'd still be in there. Then they

would say, 'For sure we'll be out by Thanksgiving.' Thanksgiving would come and Thanksgiving would go, and they died of a broken heart." The principle, what the author has called the "Stockdale Paradox" is this – the idea that you retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties and, at the same time, confront the most brutal facts of your current reality whatever they might be. Isn't that Christianity? We face our opposition with an absolute understanding that we know how the story ends, an absolute belief that we will prevail no matter what, and, at the same time, through faith and effort, a willingness to face the most brutal facts of our present reality. You have to get out of bed. You have to go after it. You can't just sit around and be consumed by anxiety. "Don't be anxious," the Scriptures say.

Paul Meyer told me yesterday that he was talking to a young man in Singapore just riddled with all kinds of anxieties and he said, "Get a grip. Read your Bible." As we work, God works. If you don't work, why should you expect God to work?

So yesterday morning, I was prepared to give you a totally different illustration of a man defeated, utterly defeated – me – because I was . Yesterday morning, I was so low, you would have had to jack me up to bury me. I was so low yesterday morning. Part of what I was doing yesterday was finishing off this message. I said, "Lord, you know, how can I go tell these men to work and to put forth effort and to have faith? Lord, I am working myself silly here, and I'm trying to do it out of the overflow of prayer, and asking you to lead me and guide me, but I'm dying here. I've got to go tell these men this."

So I'm making calls yesterday trying to talk about payroll. Yesterday afternoon around 3 o'clock, I guy who is not on my call list, a guy who has already told me he doesn't want to support the ministry, calls me and says, "I'd like to give you \$50,000 to hire a Development Director." His passion is to help people in ministries get the CEO's of rapidly growing ministries properly staffed with a Development Director so you don't have to worry about this for the next 20 years. I just couldn't help but say, "It's faith, and it's effort, then it's God doing whatever He wants to do." He's faithful. We will prevail. You will prevail, and you have to hold on to this idea that you will prevail against all the odds, and, at the same time, face whatever the most brutal facts of your current reality. You take responsibility. You do what you need to do, independent upon God. As you work, He works.

Let's pray:

Father, I want to pray this morning for these men. Lord, there are some of these brothers here this morning who are going through incredible opposition and they're feeling this morning like I was feeling yesterday morning, and they need a sign of your goodness. I pray you will give it to them. And, Father, for those of us who have been trying to depend upon faith and not putting forth effort, I pray that you would show us clearly what we need to do. For those of us who have been putting forth effort and not putting enough faith in you, too much self-reliance, that you would show us what we need to do as well, and that you would be glorified through this. Lord, help us to renew our faith in Jesus this morning. Father, I pray that you would help men who are in these different oppositions to go out today and put forth the effort that's needed to take responsibility as they are independent upon you to produce whatever results would be good, pleasing and perfect in your sight and will. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

/cjb 5/29/02