

Have You Experienced Mockery and Ridicule?

By Anand Peter

Ignore them, they did it to Jesus first!

As of this writing, Israel is at war; Jerusalem has long been a bone of contention.

During my childhood, I often experienced ridicule because of my height. All my cousins, who were raised alongside me, stood six feet tall, and during our walks I would typically keep to the footpath while the others took the road, which eased the situation somewhat. These days, some people mock me on account of my age; I do not mind that in the least, since I take pride in having reached the age of eighty and beyond. I am also, at times, criticised on account of the skills and gifts God has given me. Here is a lesson for all of us from Nehemiah. Although the people of Nehemiah's day faced no mockery over height or age, it is likely that they, too, felt the sting of scornful words directed against them.

Nehemiah told the assembled believers all that the Lord had done to bring them safely to Jerusalem, and God gave them the courage to join him in the formidable task of rebuilding the city's wall. The people were filled with joy and enthusiasm at his words, confident that God's hand would be with them.

At this point, their adversaries — Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab — set upon them with scornful mockery: "What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?" (Nehemiah 2:19). The people faced a choice. Would they abandon the work because of the mockery and ridicule they were suffering? Would they doubt God and the task He had set before them? Or would they trust the Lord, take up their tools, and carry on with the labour?

The following verse shows us their answer, and gives us a pattern worth following in our own trials of this kind. Rather than yielding to his adversaries' taunts, Nehemiah kept his eyes fixed on what he knew to be true, and answered them plainly: "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build" (Nehemiah 2:20). The people, called here "his servants," set themselves at once to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

When the Lord sets a task before us, we must not be swayed by the scepticism and mockery of others. Consider all those who undertook tasks that seemed impossible in the eyes of the world: Noah, Joshua, Mary, and Peter. Keep your eyes fixed on the task the Lord has given you, and trust that He will grant you success.