

Personally Attacked (Nehemiah 6:1-7:4)

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[0 : 00] When word came to Sambalat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it.

Though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates, Sambalat and Geshem sent me this message. Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.

But they were scheming to harm me, so I sent messengers to them with this reply. I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?

Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer. Then the fifth time, Sambalat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter, in which was written, It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says it is true, that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall.

Moreover, according to these reports, you are about to become the king, and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem. There is a king in Judah. Now this report will get back to the king, so come, let us meet together.

[1 : 22] I sent him this reply, Nothing like what you are saying is happening. You are just making it up out of your head. They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.

But I prayed. Now strengthen my hands. One day, I went to the house of Shemaiah, son of Delaiah, the son of Mehitabel, who was shut in at his home.

He said, Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you. By night they are coming to kill you.

But I said, Should a man like me run away? Or should someone like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go. I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me, because Tobiah and Sambalot had hired him.

He had been hired to intimidate me, so that I would commit a sin by doing this. And then they would give me a bad name to discredit me. Remember Tobiah and Sambalot, my God, because of what they have done.

[2 : 30] Remember also the prophet, Noah Dyer, and how she and the rest of the prophets have been trying to intimidate me. So the war was completed on the 25th of Elul in 52 days.

When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

Also, in those days the nobles of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and replies from Tobiah kept coming to them. For many in Judah were under oath to him, since he was son-in-law to Shekariah, son of Arar, and his son Jehu-Hanin had married the daughter of Mishulim, son of Berechiah.

Moreover, they kept reporting to me his good deeds, and then telling him what I said, and Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me. After the war had been built, and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians, and the Levites were appointed.

I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother, Hananiah, along with Hananiah and the commander of this setter, because he was a man of integrity, and feared God more than most people do.

[3 : 46] I said to them, The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them.

Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own house. Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt.

And this is the word of God. Thank you, Angel. What a wonderful reading. And good afternoon, PCBC English and friends, and anyone joining online.

Please keep your Bibles open, if you have them in front of you, to Nehemiah chapter 6. We will be looking at this whole section, and it's an interesting section, isn't it?

Back in the Bible, a book that we've been looking at as a whole church, and, yeah, gets really personal, doesn't it? Lots of eyes. And lots of intrigue.

[4 : 53] Seems like a lot's going on, and God will help us as we uncover what he wants for us today. I was here at 9am this morning to interview two lovely young men.

Pastor Andrew, unfortunately, was unwell, so came and took his place, and we did some baptism interviews. And so it got me thinking, in a month's time, we're going to be celebrating another baptism service.

And so most of you have had this experience before, or you've seen it. It's a wonderful step, isn't it? A real strengthening of your own faith as you tell the world that you love Jesus, you're following him. And it got me thinking about my own baptism service. So I was baptized as a believer in 2005, so before some of you were born. When I invited people to come along to my baptism service celebration, I was at a different church, so we didn't have the benefit of this, you know, made-to-order swimming pool sort of thing.

Actually, our pastor at the time took us to the local swimming pool, so YMCA, GI, that's where I was baptized as a believer. I remember the day, two of us shared our testimonies of faith in Christ.

[6 : 09] We were baptized by our pastor at the time, and then we got out of the cold water, because it was cold, and then we just got changed, and then when, I think we had shared lunch or something like that afterwards. So, nothing too dramatic.

And while it was a moment of rejoicing for my Christian family at the time, the same could not be said for my non-Christian family. So, I grew up not going to church, and when my parents found out, they had mixed responses.

When my relatives found out, they also had mixed responses. And at my baptism service, my parents did not attend, nor did my brothers. In fact, regarding my decision to follow Jesus, one initial response still sticks in my head.

Paraphrasing, and in another language, Christianity. Of all the religions, why did you choose that one? And so, since then, like some of you, over two decades of experience being personally attacked for following Jesus.

I can't claim any credit. Sometimes it's my fault for being attacked, right? Because I've been a fool. I've said something wrong. But then, you know what? I don't even know why I'm a Christian today if it was down to my own efforts.

[7 : 28] Honestly, I can't claim any credit that I'm still following the Lord today. So many times it's been tempting for my fear of man, fear of what other people think of me, to overwhelm my fear of the Lord.

And I wonder if some of you relate. But the Lord is stronger. He's better. Because the Bible is clear. In his presence, there is fullness of joy. And what was sung is true.

Jesus is more beautiful and believable than anything this world has to offer. And when your life is hidden in Christ, I can tell you the best is yet to come.

But the Bible is also clear. You will face many hardships as you enter the kingdom of God. And some of it will include personal attack. And so here in Nehemiah 6, it's God's word for us.

When the name calling gets personal, when the enemy is firing at you nonstop, when you've ever experienced being belittled, bullied, insulted for sticking with Jesus, this passage gives us wonderful medicine to help us stand firm.

[8 : 37] Stand firm in the Lord. Now we all have different translations. I think, Angel, you read from the NIV, which is a wonderful translation. Actually, the NIV editors of Nehemiah 6 have done a smart thing here.

They've actually ignored the chapter numbering. And they've kind of put a little section heading, not at 7 verse 1, but further down. And so I'm going to do something similar here. So we're going to take this whole story as one chunk.

And in the time we have before Lord's Supper, I want to explain from today's passage how there were three attacks that Nehemiah faced. I'm going to give two observations about what happened.

And I want to leave us with one truth to meditate on as we serve on God's mission today. All right, three, two, one. You guys able to remember that? Hopefully. Yep.

There's an old saying, right, isn't there? Bad things tend to come in threes. And so that's why I've started with three. Most of this chapter details Nehemiah's bad experiences. There were three different kinds of personal attacks.

[9 : 39] Right? First up, notice in verse 1 to 9 how Nehemiah personally faced public accusations about him. Right? Public accusations.

When word came to Sambalat, Tobiah, Geshem, the Arab, and the rest of our enemies that I'd rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it, and so on, what did they say? Sambalat and Geshem sent me this message.

Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono. Nehemiah's nearly finished the wall building project and he's asked to go to the middle of nowhere, right, with these enemies and have a korero with them, have a conversation.

Yeah, right. Look, Sambalat, Tobiah, Geshem, these were men of influence in post-exilic Jerusalem, as we'll soon see.

In fact, their influence never disappears. Right to the end of the book of Nehemiah, we hear about their schemes, okay? But here, at this point, Nehemiah is smart. He sees through their requests.

[10 : 46] It's not just a happy picnic that they're asking him to come to. And so he gives a tactful but truthful answer. He says, I'm busy with work, right?

It's such a good excuse. Verse four, he has to use it four times, right, as if these guys were like real estate agents calling him. Verse five, I'm sorry if you're a real estate agent. You're lovely people. Verse five, what do you notice, right? Then the fifth time, sneaky Sambalat finally shows his real intentions, doesn't he? Right?

Through an aid, right, he's too powerful to come talk personally to Nehemiah. He brings a letter, right? And this letter has reports, okay? Reports. Nehemiah apparently is planning a rebellion. He's having royal ambitions. He wants to be king. And then it says here, now this report will get back to the king of Persia. So come, let us meet together.

[11 : 45] Nothing more threatening than a bit of blackmail. I mean, never mind that actually, as we remember, Nehemiah's project had King Artaxerxes' approval, right?

He's there on the king's errand. Never mind that actually not one of the construction crew there were actually trained soldiers. You remember Nehemiah 3? They were all kind of like, just normal, ordinary people, just helping out.

So that talk of rebellion? I don't know. Never mind that actually Sambalat has already mocked them before. So who's the bad guy? It's not Nehemiah. But for some reason, here it says, well, my mate Geshem says it's true, so it must be.

And so Nehemiah, verse 8, leaves a wonderful reply. What a load of rubbish that you're saying. But the key detail is that this letter that Sambalat sent, right, have a look in verse 5, in his hand was an unsealed letter.

Okay? This is like an email that was set to reply all. Like an online post set to public. What's happened here is that Sambalat has purposely slandered Nehemiah so that there's no way that Nehemiah, one guy, can personally go to everyone that's read this letter and said, hey, let me tell you my side of the story.

[13 : 04] It's not possible. It's not possible to correct them all, right? This was a public accusation designed to frighten him. Frighten this governor, Nehemiah, into pushing pause on the rebuild project, right, to try and fight all these fires.

Or maybe this was designed so that it would get all the way back to King Artaxerxes in Persia, right, who's been supporting Nehemiah, but then maybe after hearing about this, maybe he would roll it back.

And we heard a little bit about a similar account in Ezra 4, some of you remember. And maybe these events might link up with some of the other letters that were being written in the days of King Artaxerxes.

And so this is serious stuff, this accusation here, right? And this is no surprise, though, I think, if you're a follower of Jesus.

Sometimes when you follow God, there is no mercy from people who are committed to harming you, is there? I know we live in New Zealand, and most of the opposition here that we face is very

polite, right?

[14:10] But close to people's hearts, the things that they worship and treasure, their idols, you're going to find a lot of pushback, especially when you as a believer start to encroach on their territory.

Okay? Tell someone that they're spending too much money on their fast cars and flashy dream holidays, and you might get pushback. Oh, you're just a killjoy. You're Christian.

I don't know. Can you think of some other situations where you get a lot of hate because you follow the Lord, because you make certain decisions? I mean, some of you might even have noticed that there's a special dislike for Christianity among some Maori today, some younger Maori, because stories about Christianity being a colonial enterprise pushed by Westerners.

They've taken deep roots, and now if you tell a different story, you're going to get personally attacked. There's a special dislike sometimes for Christianity amongst our rainbow activist friends. I'm friends with some of them, but some of them will have no mercy, right? They will actually systematically call schools and organizations and ask them, what's your view? And if it doesn't line up, they might send a letter, an unsealed letter even.

[15:27] And here too, we experience our brothers and sisters facing personal attacks, facing stories spun by influential people. And I'm sure that some of you have your own personal stories to tell and share as well.

Maybe you have non-Christian family members who spread rumors about what you do and why. Maybe you have co-workers who give you the cold shoulder, but over drinks afterwards have lots to say about you and your faith.

Once you sigh to the Lord, you need to expect unfair stories, public accusations. They are never far off. And just because they're not true at all doesn't make it hard to bear.

But not only did Nehemiah face public accusations, you'll notice verse 10 to 14, he personally faced deceptive invitations. Pretty tricky, dirty tricks that are being played here.

That's what's been going on behind this strange story of Nehemiah and the prophet Shemaiah here. Anyone here own a hat or wore a hat to church? Is it okay? I won't tell on you.

[16:40] Just put your hand up. Yes? Yep. Hats. I want you to imagine you don't just have one hat, but you have more than one hat. Surely some of you, I'm sure, collect hats and you hang them up on your wall.

Okay? Like, no? Okay? Just me? Okay. No. Sometimes life gets complicated though because in a sense we have more than one hat in life. I'm a pastor of a couple of people here at PCBC English. That's one hat. But I'm also a husband of Cheryl, right? My wife. One hat. And then I'm a dad to five kids, right? That's another hat, right? Sometimes life gets tricky because which hat am I wearing? I mean, I've got at least three hats. You might have more. In Israel, things went terribly wrong when God's leaders decide that they need to use all their hats in one go or use more than one at the same time.

There's stories, right? All through the Bible, all through the Old Testament. Think of Miriam trying to take over from Moses, right? She's lead worshiper, right? Worship leader. But then she also wants to be lead pastor as well with Aaron.

[17:44] Or think of King Saul, right? He's meant to be a king, so he's meant to just focus on ruling the country. And then one time, he starts to do the sacrifices because Samuel has a late showing up.

And that led him to all kinds of trouble. He lost his kingship. And so just like how our politicians should not take the judge's bench and, you know, the fire people shouldn't do the police's job and also the doctor's job at the same time, Nehemiah wisely avoids this trick, okay?

They've invited him to go to the temple, right? People are coming to kill you. Come to the temple. And Nehemiah knows, that's not my zone. That's for priests like Ezra and others.

Nehemiah is meant to just focus on being a godly governor. And so again, Nehemiah, through God's grace, sees right through these false words in verse 10.

No, men are not coming to kill me. And even if they were, Nehemiah will not hide inside the temple door. He will not break the rules around sacred space and God's law.

[18:51] And so you take your prophecies and take them back to your paymasters, Toby and Sandy, and you just go flush them. That's what Nehemiah is basically saying here in verses 10 to 14. It's amazing, isn't it?

For Nehemiah to realize and discern Shammai's true strategy, this is God at work, giving him wisdom, strengthening his hands as he's prayed already.

Remember this when this was written, right? There were actually true prophets during this time. Anyone remember? This was a time when Haggai went through his book last year, Zechariah, there were other true prophets were prophesying.

So there's no real reason not to believe Shammai's words, right? Except Nehemiah has been given wisdom from the Lord. He knows that things are not always as they seem.

Just as God answers Nehemiah's prayer for strength in his hands, he is graciously giving him discernment to know between true and false prophecy. And I want to suggest that we need that discernment today too.

[19 : 55] Church, are we not called as Christians to test the spirits? 1 John 4. I think it goes without saying as well, church, that even today, not every prophetic word is going to be wise to listen to.

We want to test them. We had a wonderful time with a speaker, with some of the English leaders, and he said the exact same thing. Test what I say, right? We want to make sure that if we hear something, we go to God's word.

Ask him, help you discern it. And what a wonderful promise from James chapter 1, right? If we ask God for wisdom and we lack wisdom, he grants it generously.

He's that kind of a father. Now, Nehemiah is not intimidated, right? Rather, he discerns this attack. It's a personal one, and he wards it off as well.

But dodgy accusations and, you know, suspect invitations aside, the third kind of attack Nehemiah faces we see at the end of chapter 6, right?

[20 : 56] Ongoing opposition from his enemies. I mean, have a look again. Listen in again from verse 15. Sorry, verse 16. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

Now, in those days, the nobles of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and replies that Tobiah kept coming to them. All right? We've just crossed a momentous milestone from this verse onwards.

Remember, what was the whole building project? They were trying to rebuild a wall, right? And now, okay, verse 15 onwards, it's done. It's a miracle.

Not only is it a miracle, it's an amazing miracle for a bunch of amateur builders to finish a wall in 52 days, right? There's a lot of construction around our area. It's going to take more than 52 days, maybe 52 months, right?

So we know that this is a miracle. And just as they hoped, verse 16, once people heard that this wall was finished, they started to fear, fear the God of the universe who was clearly on Israel's side.

[22 : 08] And yet, even though God's old place, his holy space, is now physically rebuilt, extended, protected, Nehemiah, it seems, still faces ongoing opposition.

You think he'd get a break, right? He's finished the job and everyone would just say, yep, we love you now, Nehemiah. No. His approval ratings seem to keep tanking. Because someone is, again, at work.

We see in verse 17 to 19, it's Tobiah. And he's playing the long game. What does he do? He's writing letters back and forth. He's winning over the nobles of Judah through his writing, through his schmoozing.

And it's really hard to speak up against an enemy of God when he happens to be well connected to all your friends and family. In fact, he's now related by marriage to some of the most important people in your lives.

I don't know if you've ever experienced this at work or even at church. It's certainly going to make life hard, right? If you need to push back or challenge someone or something. Family loyalties are not always easy to untangle.

[23 : 19] And worst of all, it seems in this section that Tobiah is the one who is controlling the story, right? He controls the narrative around Nehemiah. Imagine trying to just serve as a, I don't know, worship leader, as an usher, whatever.

Here's Nehemiah leading his province and fan mail is coming about his frenemy Toby. Always he's the greatest.

Always he's the one that is the one that we should listen to. Always his good deeds. You're just serving faithfully and it's always about this other guy. Not only that, there's reports of all the things you've done and said and told.

I'm sure quoted out of context. When I was interviewing people for an article that I helped to write about a cult, the cult's name is Shincheonji's, New Heaven, New Earth, I learned a new phrase from a former member that I was interviewing.

This phrase describes how people would sometimes respond when, you know, someone challenges the cult member or cult person about their faults or inaccuracies and then they would just push back with a barrage of words.

[24 : 38] It's called gaslighting apparently. Who knows what gaslighting means? Who's experienced gaslighting? I don't know. It's not fun. Gaslighting is when instead of someone replying to your argument or your challenge or question, you just barrage back with words until they start to doubt their sanity or their memory or their beliefs or what they have just said and argued.

And so recently when someone tried to point out that a false teacher could not teach the Bible and was doing it wrong, the gaslighting sounded something like this and I'm just quoting. I really feel pity for you. You're just allowing the devil to use you in this extent.

You're fighting against the chosen one here. This teacher's the holy one of God. Gosh. Way to miss the point. Or maybe you try to bring up a concerning pattern of behavior in someone at church or someone in your life.

Maybe the gaslighting goes like this. You don't even know my story. You're just here to hurt me.

You don't even have any standing in this church anyways, do you? I want to pull it back a bit.

We need to be careful, right? We must, of course, be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to get angry. Sometimes, in the Lord's kindness, a rebuke is because it's true and there's truth in it that we need to take in.

[25 : 54] And yet, when you and I live in a world that is full of people who do not know or trust the Lord, be assured you will encounter gaslighting, public attack, deceptive invites, ongoing opposition.

Perhaps Nehemiah, if he was a Gen Z, would just say, Tobiah sent letters to gaslight me. And you know what? Perhaps if our Lord Jesus was around today, he would do the same.

Have you ever thought about his life, the life of our Savior, personally attacked by religious leaders, chased out of his own hometown by his family? Have you ever thought about our Lord Jesus, deceptively invited to play word games with the Pharisees?

They tried to trap him with their words, right? His words. That was our Lord Jesus. He had to face all of that. Have you thought about our Lord Jesus, even in the face of ongoing intimidation?

Isn't it good news? Our Lord proclaimed, despite all that. Isn't it that he set captives free, despite all of the personal attack? And so our Lord Jesus is the last person to be deserving of torture, of mocking, of beating, of a cruel death by Roman soldiers who were laughing at him as they surrounded him and humiliated him.

[27 : 26] Our Lord Jesus did not deserve to be hung on a cross between two rebels, two actual rebels. And while surrounding him were all these people hurling insults, keeping up false narratives about Jesus, calling him names like false prophet, loser leader, pitiful person.

The good news is this, brothers and sisters. Our Lord Jesus, Christ, was personally attacked for you, for your sins, for my sins, to forgive them all, to bring a fresh start.

And the good news as well is that no one could attack his resurrection, right? In the morning, Christ the lion awoke. The empty tomb stayed empty.

And all the enemies of God, when they heard this, yes, some doubted. Yes, some tried to make up cover stories to hush it up, but those who believed, they realized this was truly God's work.

to paraphrase Nehemiah 6.16, this had been done with the help of our God. Jesus' death and resurrection, nothing compares to our Lord and Savior.

[28 : 50] And before we move into responding to this wonderful news, I want to suggest a couple of responses too, to personal attacks that we can take as well.

And they come straight from the text. And then finally mention one last thing, a truth that will keep us going as we ourselves encounter personal opposition. I want to make two observations.

When you are personally attacked for being a believer, one observation is this, don't be shocked.

Pray. Did you notice how Nehemiah, every time he encounters something, he responds with prayer,

right?

Verse 9, they were all trying to frighten us, right? But I prayed, now strengthen my hands. They were going to give me a bad name to discredit me and I prayed about it.

I didn't fight back and I didn't go toe to toe with them. Lord, remember these people. If you're a leader, and all of us will be one day if we follow the Lord, Satan loves to attack leaders.

[29 : 55] He loves to strike standard bearers, right, in his army, in God's army. And so you need to pray. We need to pray for you. And don't be shocked. Your opponents will be much closer than you think, right?

I think even more so in family-type cultures like ours. And so pray. Pray. And don't be shocked because sometimes you'll soon realize the conflict will tend to come from a certain group of people or maybe even the same people over time in different ways.

Again, pray for them. Pray for yourself as you withstand that kind of opposition. And you know what? We have been hearing about mission, right? So wonderful to see what's going on in Vanuatu.

So wonderful to hear your stories of you just being faithful in your workplaces and so on. You know what? Mission is people hearing and learning who God truly is through Jesus.

Whether they praise him or whether they shake their fists at him. Again, we want to pray. We can't control the response. Don't be shocked at opposition but pray.

[31 : 03] Ask God. Please, Lord. Open blind eyes to see Jesus. And you won't always have the last word. Right? In our world of social media where anyone can say anything about you, you will never have the last word.

And so pray. Nehemiah did the same thing. He never resorts to trying to fight back out of everyone who slaughtered him. And neither did Jesus, right? Nor his followers, I think.

Nor do we. And yet, such wisdom comes from the Lord Jesus when he says, when people do wrong to you, pray for them. Pray for them. You might even be heaping burning coals on their head as you pray for them in a sense.

That's what the Lord says. Don't be shocked when you encounter opposition. When you are personally attacked, instead pray. A second observation, suggestion, don't give up.

Persevere. I love how chapter 7, verse 1, just keeps going, right? Nehemiah just gets back to work. After the war was rebuilt, I'd set the doors in place, start appointing some people, put some people in charge.

[32 : 12] One of the temptations when you're personally attacked is that you sit down and you just go, I can't do anything, I'm being personally attacked. And I have no way I can do anything in life right now because it's so hard. Nehemiah just gets on with it because there is still work left to do.

Right? Here's all the people who oppose you, but here's so many other people who need the healing touch of Jesus. Go to them. Don't give up. Persevere. Or, wow, this relative has been hating on you, attacking you, hurting you for years and years.

Don't give up. At least you're still talking, right? Don't give up. Persevere. And there's an interesting point here at the end of this section here in Nehemiah.

The wall is rebuilt, right? Yay. Praise God. But why don't we end the story here at Nehemiah 7? Because there's more rebuilding to do. And we're going to hear about this in the next two months, right?

Not just the wall that needs rebuilding, it's the people as well. No surprise that actually spiritual rebuilding is actually the greater focus as we go on to the rest of Nehemiah.

[33 : 20] And likewise, as a church, you and I might have this to do, right? Our spiritual rebuilding might sound like 1 Peter 2, verse 11 to 12. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles abstain from the passions of the flesh.

Keep your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, the non-Christians. When they speak against you as evildoers, let them see your good deeds. Let them glorify God on the day of visitation. Same principle, right? When personally attacked, don't give up, just press on. Keep following Jesus. Finally, I think it would be remiss of me, it would be sad of me if I didn't point out to you the one attitude, truth, thing, the one thing that helps Nehemiah to press on.

This is a large section, right? But essentially, this section is teaching us to fear God over people. You may or may not see this, but actually, right through this whole section, the word fear in the Hebrew keeps popping up.

It gets translated different ways, afraid, fear, let me have a look, I think a bit of intimidation, right? You know, there's different ways that it says it through this whole section, but essentially, the story goes from fear of people, right?

[34 : 40] and fear caused by people, to what do we see in verse 2 or chapter 7? We see men of integrity, right? People who fear God more than most people do.

I think that's an object lesson in that. That's where we all need to head. Don't wallow and get stressed out and hung up about situations where you're afraid of people.

You're afraid of what people think about you all the time. You're afraid of what they'll do to you all the time. You want to head to a place, a space, where you fear the Lord most of all, where your one thing in life is to please the Lord and no one else.

One pastor said to me, you know, and he's had so much personal attack. He's an amazing guy. He said, look, if you focus on pleasing God with your character and conduct, you can just let God take care of your reputation.

And I think the way you and I can do that as a church, living in exile, is that we need to come and behold the Lord again and again. It's hard out there.

[35 : 49] And so we come together. We come back to the space, our smaller spaces where we gather in Christ's name, and we remind each other, they're not beautiful, those haters, those attackers.

Jesus is beautiful. And let's press on. They're not the ones I need to please first and foremost. No, the Lord is the one I need to please first and foremost. Let's keep turning to him.

You see, that happens week after week, doesn't it? Until we see Jesus face to face again. We keep dwelling in his beauty, the beauty of his holiness, his goodness.

We keep turning our eyes to fix on Jesus again and again. That's what we can do when personally attacked. That's what we can encourage each other to do when personally confronted.

So my prayer is that your fear of the Lord would overwhelm any fear of people. Shall we turn to him in prayer? Lord Jesus, this blazing in glory, your hair white and radiant, shining like the sun, alpha and omega, we turn our eyes to you again.

[37 : 09] Lord we confess that we seek the praise of men more than we seek your face daily. And so help us as we respond in song, as we respond by remembering your broken body and blood.

Would you help us? Help us to fix our eyes on you, Lord. And we thank you that you were personally attacked so that we would never experience that same judgment, that same ridicule, that in Christ the best is yet to come.

Lord I pray even for people who are wavering in their faith or unsure, who have turned their back to Jesus. You would even today help each person look full in his wonderful face.

Lord we thank you and we pray all these things in Jesus name. Amen. Hy Grisky hope you love me. Amen. ■■ MIT Hype of the Holy Chilcapism First Man Stars