

NEHEMIAH

The Restoration of God's People

Sermon 04: "Opposition to Work"

Scripture: [Nehemiah 4: 1-23](#)

Theme: *When the enemy opposes us, as he surely will, we should respond with prayer, work, vigilance, and focus on the Lord.*

Sanballat and Tobiah up to this point are still baffled by Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem with their persistence in the rebuilding of the wall. We see in verse 1 that, "*Sanballat heard that we¹ were building the wall, he was **angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews.***" These two men then take it one step further and mock Nehemiah by asking sarcastic questions to them.

Nehemiah and the rest of the people who helped rebuild the wall are now encountering opposition from the government, in particular Sanballat and Tobiah. Notice Nehemiah's humble reaction toward them. He continues working and in doing his best to ignore their opposition, turns to God in prayer. In a way, this is how he is trying to combat the enemy. While it is not Satan himself, Nehemiah is trying to combat one who is opposing the work of the Lord. We see Nehemiah then ask God to turn their taunt back on themselves² and to give them "*a taste of their own medicine.*" He then takes it even one step further in asking God to not cover their guilt and to not let their sin be blotted out³.

In a similar manner, how then are we to respond when we face opposition to the work that the Lord has called us to? Let's start with our families. When you serve your neighbors, church, co-workers...etc, are there people in your family (immediate and extended) who do not know the Lord and His ways, who mock you for what you are doing? If so, being as honest as possible, what is your natural reaction? Do you give up on the conversation? Do you get embarrassed by what was said or done? Do you experience opposition in your workplace or school from people who do not know the Lord? What is your response to them?

Taking it to the next level, does this catch you off guard when this happens to you? Does it surprise you that the closer you get with God and the more you serve Him with your whole life, the more opposition comes your way?

Given all these questions and circumstances, what then is your response *to be*? What does Scripture say our response is to be? Lets look at [Ephesians 6:10 - 19](#), [2 Timothy 2:3](#) and [3:12](#), and [James 1:2 - 4](#). What does this tell you about persecution, trials, and opposition? According to Scripture, it tells us that we are to expect it and be ready for it.

¹ *Nehemiah and the children of Israel*

² Nehemiah 4:4

³ Nehemiah 4:5

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. How can you know the difference between legitimate rebuke and ungodly opposition? How can we grow even if it is the latter?
2. How can we determine the difference between healthy realism that acknowledges problems and unhealthy negativism?
3. Does Satan use believers to oppose God's work? If so, how?
4. If Satan opposes the committed believer, why not avoid this by being lukewarm (see [Revelation 3:14-22](#)).
5. Briefly explain the last time you faced opposition **to God's work** from others. Keeping what we have learned from Nehemiah and what the apostle Paul has taught us, explain what would have been a more appropriate response to that situation.
6. How are you preparing for opposition to God's work? If you are not, how can this group or church better prepare you for opposition to Kingdom work?

SUMMING IT UP:

If we only had chapter 3 of Nehemiah, we would get the impression that the work on the wall went without a snag. "So-and-so built this gate, and these people built the wall to this point, and next to them, these people built the wall further, etc." It sounds as if there were no problems, but that was not the case. It never is. Here is a statement you can write down and bank on: When God's people attempt to do God's work in God's way, there will always be opposition. It's true. The Bible records this fact. History confirms it repeatedly. The enemies of God will do everything in their power to thwart His purposes.

This week's theme:

When the enemy opposes us as he surely will, we should respond with prayer, work, vigilance, and focus on the Lord.

Take a few minutes and read through [Nehemiah 4](#). What tactics did Sanballat and Tobiah use to discourage the Jews from rebuilding the city walls? How have you seen this in your own life?

Now read [Ephesians 6:10 - 19](#), [2 Timothy 2:3](#) and [3:12](#), and [James 1:2 - 4](#). What does this tell you about persecution, trials, and opposition?

- In future instances of opposition, how do you plan to respond in a fashion that pleases and honors God?
- To what project or church endeavor do you need to renew your commitment (regardless of the opposition you might face)?