

## Opposition to the Work pt.1

2.28.10

Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. 2 And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?"

3 Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!" 4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. 5 Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders. 6 So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. 7 But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. 8 And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. 9 And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. 10 In Judah it was said, "The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall." 11 And our enemies said, "They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work." 12 At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, "You must return to us." 13 So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes." Nehemiah 4:1-14 ESV

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of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that? Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!" Insulting the workers and their work in numerous ways.

**P: Any time we seek to do God's work God's way, there will always be opposition.**

Three Enemies that Oppose Us All:

1. The world—the system of values on which the 'kingdom of this world' operates.
2. The flesh—the yet unredeemed part of us that we war against for holiness.
3. The devil—our spiritual adversary spoken of repeatedly in the Scriptures.

*Do I know that this is true? Do I know how each of my enemies oppose me and do I have a plan for success?*

*"Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders."* Nehemiah's prayer.

**P: When the opposition comes, our first response should be prayer.**

*Is prayer my first response or a 'last resort' when opposition comes in my life? What needs to change?*

The Content of the Prayer:

1. It reveals that Nehemiah understood that they were working against God, not him.
  - a. Very reminiscent of the 'imprecatory psalms.'
  - b. Our hearts are usually not so well-intentioned so we need to be careful.

2. This also reflects the unfolding nature of Redemptive History.
3. For us, this prayer is more descriptive than prescriptive.

"So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

**P: God accomplishes His Sovereign will through the obedience of His people.**

*Am I walking in the appropriate balance between God's sovereignty and my responsibility? If not, what needs to change?*

*"But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard...they were very angry...they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.*

Rhetoric is becoming reality. Jerusalem is now surrounded and they are plotting an attack.

**P: God's enemies don't let up so we can't either.**

*Have I been wrongly expecting the Christian life to be easy?*

*"And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night."* Another obvious partnership between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

*"In Judah it was said, "The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall."* Judah was another name for the area around Jerusalem. This shows that morale is weakening in the face of the greatness of the work.

*"And our enemies said, "They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work."* Important to note that these weren't idle threats.

*"At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times. "You must return to us."* Frightened wives and family members.

**P: In accomplishing God's work, sometimes well-meaning people—even your own family can become an obstacle.**

*"So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. Nehemiah gets creative.*

**P: Good leaders play the hand they are dealt, not the hand they wanted.**

*Am I able to make the needed adjustments as the situation changes or am I 'playing the victim?'*

*And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."* Nehemiah directed their attention heavenward.

**P: When opposition arises we need to look to the greatness of God not the greatness of the opposition.**

*Is my tendency to focus on God or the opposition in my life?*

**The greatness of God is seen most clearly in the Cross.**

*Works Consulted : Expositor's Bible Commentary, MacArthur Study Bible, Message by Mark Driscoll, Other works by Ware, Wiersby, Carson, Stanley, Getz, others. Logos Library: too many to list!*