

# **Building for Christ: Nehemiah Bible Study**

## **Lesson 3: The Opposition**

A Bible Study Series of The Mt. Zion Church

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We Have the Vision to be a LEARNING Church!  
We are Rooted in Christ and Reaching the One!



Introduction: When Jesus assigns work for us to accomplish, we often do not realize its impact. Your mind may have immediately gone to the impact of ministry on those who receive the care and love of Christ. However, an additional group are impacted as well. Those forces which would oppose the work of Jesus also experience the influence of Christ as new territory is conquered. The Bible teaches that we should cover ourselves with the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-16) because we exist in a state of war. We, who follow Christ, are to be warriors who seek to expand our Lord's influence in the places where we live. Those who oppose God (principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness) do not give up ground without a fight. This lesson teaches us about opposition that will come and how Nehemiah led the people to continue building and to protect themselves simultaneously.



### **Reading for week 3:**

Nehemiah 2:10-4: 1-23

Ephesians 6:10-16

Ezra 4

#### **Name pronunciations:**

Sanballat (**San**=sand without the 'd, **ballat**=sounds like mallet or pallet. The emphasis is on the "San" part of the name)

Tobiah (To=toe, bi=buy, ah=uh. The emphasis is on the "bi" part of the name)

Biblical readers will find within the Old and New Testament passages which illustrate the presence of opposition to God's will and His purpose (See Matt. 5: 10-12, 1 Samuel 2:10, John 16:33). The Bible teaches that we should expect opposition and opposition can at times be an indication that one is in the will of Jesus. For example, Joseph's life as recorded in Genesis, does not indicate disobedience on his part. Rather, the struggles he faces are to get him off mission which would inhibit his God given dream from coming true. At each transition point of his life, Joseph had to overcome opposition so that he could arrive as the second most powerful person in Egypt at just the right time. He remained true to his calling and the repetitive phrase about his life was "and God was with him".

Opposition, in the life of God's people, is a tool used by those who are ungodly and do not desire the Lord's work to be accomplished. The current lesson focuses on the opposition to the rebuilding of the wall shown in Nehemiah 2:10 and Nehemiah 4:1-3.

The main opposition comes from two men: Sanballat and Tobiah. Historical records indicate Sanballat was a governor of Samaria. Tobiah most likely was either an affluent Ammonite by birth or marriage, or an affluent Jew living in Ammon. The way Nehemiah records his name (Tobiah the Ammonite) lends that he was more likely to be a non-Jewish man.

#### I. Opposition to God's Work-- Nehemiah 2:10 and 4:1-3

The opposition to rebuilding the wall begins with an interesting comment. Sanballat and Tobiah were deeply disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites (Nehemiah 2:10).

- Why do you think Sanballat and others, became disturbed that the wall was to be rebuilt? What is bothersome to God's enemies that the people of God are spiritually strong and doing well?



Notice the progression of opposition

- Sanballat and Tobiah are disturbed (Nehemiah 2:10)
- Sanballat becomes furious (Nehemiah 4:1)
- Sanballat mocks the work (Nehemiah 4: 2)
- Tobiah mocks the work (Nehemiah 4:3)

Why?

SANBALLAT AND TOBIAH  
WANTED THE STOP TO HAPPEN

If the wall is rebuilt, what will the Israelites be able to do in Jerusalem? (Consider what is housed behind the wall)

Opposition others create

WHEN WE GET BUSY  
FOR CHRIST,  
OPPOSITION WILL  
ALWAYS COME!



Opposition can be  
caused by me

IF I STOP  
BUILDING,  
I STOP OR DELAY  
GOD'S PURPOSE!

- What are God's people supposed to do? (What is our purpose?) The clearest example of what we are supposed to be and do can be found in Genesis 12:1-3 and Acts 2:42-47.

# My Purpose Is...

- What does Genesis 12: 1-3 tell us about what we are to be as God's people?

God's Promise Genesis 12: 1-3	What this means I am to be

- What does Acts 2:42-47 tell us about what we are to be as God's people?

Early Church Example Acts 2:42-47	What this means I am to do

**List some ways in which we have not lived up to what  
you are to be and what you are to do  
(This is opposition you allow or create).**

I have not....	Because....	How do these failures result in “broken walls” (family structure, communities, church effectiveness, societal impact)? is....

## II. The Protection from Opposition (Nehemiah's response!) Nehemiah 4:4-5

### PRAYER!

Nehemiah responds in a unique, but powerful  
manner. He prays! This repetitive action in the life of  
Nehemiah suggests that we vastly underestimate the power of  
prayer!

His prayer states:

1. The workers are struggling with being looked down upon
2. Sanballat and Tobiah are mocking God \*
3. Nehemiah begs God to see the behavior of Sanballat and Tobiah
4. Nehemiah asks God to deal with the mockers

➤ How do you usually respond when people are against you? Do you pray or do you go off?



The Result of Nehemiah's Prayer was verse 6

Nehemiah 4: 6 is an example of how we should treat distractions to the work and the attitude we should have about our work. (This is true for all work) The verse indicates that they continued working because the people had a mind to work.

This means they were determined and focused on the work they wanted to accomplish.

**BIG QUESTION:** Why was it okay for Nehemiah to ask God to deal with these men in a harsh manner? How does this line up with Jesus' teachings that we should pray for our enemies?

### III. The Power of Fear and The Plan to Overcome Opposition

Nehemiah leads the beginning of the work to rebuild the wall and opposition arises. The most interesting aspect of Nehemiah's role as leader was his ability to see the real issue, address it, and get to work! Leadership can at times present great challenges. The way we respond to those challenges provides discouragement or hope for those following us. How do you, as a leader, respond to challenges?

Did you know that the biggest fear of most Americans is speaking in public?

- How does Nehemiah respond to the fears the people have of being attacked by the enemy? (Look closely at verses 13-20)
- Why would Nehemiah's response to the threat encourage the people to continue working on the wall?

Let's think about the ministry God has given each of us. What are the challenges you face and what steps will you take (similar to Nehemiah's) to address these challenges?

Current Challenge to your ministry	What are your steps in response?



#### IV. Results! Results! Results!

Often, we face challenges and think that they will be short-lived or will disappear because we addressed them. In the case of the work led by Nehemiah, this was not the case. The people working found themselves under the threat of attack, but their determination to accomplish the task created a sense of community and focus.

Notice verses 18-19. Nehemiah arranges a method of protection for all the people. Then in verses 20-21 we see Nehemiah's explanation of how the people rotated responsibility for protection. The results...Everyone was safe!



The function you play in ministry is important! However, we usually lack focus in the way we approach ministry, thinking that we have to be “on” all the time. Notice verses 21-23 which imply that there was a rotation of roles. Everyone had their role and did that part to the best of their ability at the time they were assigned to do the work. Some were builders, some were protectors, some were both. Leaders had multiple responsibilities, but overall, they were organized and everyone knew their role.

- What role do you play in ensuring that the work of Jesus continues?
- Have you been passive or active in that role?
- How can you increase your effectiveness for your role?

#### Conclusion!

Opposition to God's work will come. Isaiah 54: 17 teaches that we will have weapons against us and we will have accusations against us, but they will not prosper if we are in the will of God. The work God has for you will require planning for completion and planning against those who would destroy the work. The promise of God is that our efforts will be successful “if we faint not”!

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, please remind me that I can do all things that you have set my hand to accomplish. While you protect me, you also call me to plan and do my part. Thank you for the success you have in store for your work. Amen.