

Building and Battling Nehemiah 4

Nehemiah's efforts to rebuild the city were not met with universal acclaim. He faced growing opposition. If you want to serve the good of God's people, and the honour of God's name, you will encounter opposition. Today we will see what that looks like and how to combat it.

Nehemiah's enemies felt threatened. When you face opposition for doing the right thing you should be encouraged: it means you're on to something.

The Tactics of the Enemy:

Ridicule: this is the first weapon the enemy deploys against Nehemiah. When your faith is ridiculed it can be destructive. It is worse when the ridicule is based on truth, as was the case with Nehemiah's enemies: the Jews were weak and their situation was hopeless. Our enemy does not need to invent stuff about us, the truth of what we are really like gives him ammunition enough.

Fear: The people become afraid of what others might do to them. You may face the fear of what it might cost you, or what others might say about you if you take a stand for God. There was also the fear of being in the minority: of being on the wrong side of history. And the threats were of a night-time attack, and everything seems worse in the dark. When our lives are already overshadowed we can be especially vulnerable to fear.

Discouragement: The strength of the workers was beginning to crack. It's much easier to start a work than finish it. When progress seems slow and the task huge you can begin to think, is this really worth it? Discouragement is a tool in the hands of the enemy because it saps our energy for good and for God.

Fighting Back

Remember God: Nehemiah kept putting God and his greatness in front of the people. He did not retaliate, he prayed: he knew he had someone better to fight for him. We can pray for our enemies, and bless them, when we remember God and all he has done for us in Christ: when we realise that Christ became weak and died for us. If that is how much he loves us, it doesn't matter what others say.

Do the Next Thing: Nehemiah and the people carried on building. We can defeat the enemy's plans by doing the next thing that the enemy doesn't want you to do: by putting the next stone in place.

Arm Yourself: Nehemiah armed the people and led by example. The New Testament describes the Christian life as being like a soldier. We too are to arm ourselves with the armour of God. And just as we are to take up the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, so Christ took it up in the wilderness and deflected every one of Satan's temptations by quoting scripture. And whilst Nehemiah was prepared to give his life for the people, Jesus did give his life – for us. When we realise that it will give us the courage we need to fight.

Find a Platoon: Nehemiah organises them into smaller fighting units. They need one another. So do we. It is an encouragement to get into a small group – so you can fight for others, and they can fight for you.