

Nehemiah: The Heart of a Builder

“Progress and the Pain of Opposition”

Nehemiah 4

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In our world, criticism and opposition will come to any real working of God. Expect it. These key truths in Nehemiah 4 brace us and ready God's people for the pain of opposition:

1. Be very encouraged because opposition only rises up to those who are doing something of God. v. 1-3
2. How we to respond to opposition matters! v. 4-5
3. Anticipate half time. Often something happens at the half way point. When servants are focused on work on the wall, they often suffer a:
 - A. Loss of strength ... “The strength of the laborers is giving out.” (10)
 - B. Loss of vision ... there is so much rubble ... “rubble gazing”
 - C. Loss of confidence ... that we cannot rebuild the wall.
 - D. Loss of hope (11)
 - E. Loss of courage “Also our enemies said, Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.” The people of Judah would rather quote critics than quote God.
4. Know that fear will paralyze a people. (12) *Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”*
5. There is no progress in anything without pain. Progress will cost you.

Questions to Study or Discuss:

1. In vv 1-6, threats from Sanballat and Tobiah get more serious. How does opposition to a work of God tend to intensify?
2. In what ways can God's people develop Sanballat or Tobiah like attitudes?
3. Conversely, when you or what you are doing for the Lord are the target of opposition, what tends to be your first response? In what ways does Nehemiah respond? What is the outcome of his response?
4. Why does Nehemiah's prayer in v 4-5 seem so unloving?
5. Half time (v 6) often is a dubious time. After a season of working with all your heart, you can be vulnerable. In what ways does the enemy threaten God's people in vv 7-12? How are threats magnified? (vv 10, 12)?
6. What principles of leadership does Nehemiah use to handle threats (vv.13-20)? What can we learn from Nehemiah's handling of opposition and pain?
7. How are pain and progress connected? What keeps you going? What kept Nehemiah going? (9, 14, 20)
8. When you face opposition, how do you respond? Does it make you want to quit a job or challenge you to work through it to completion?
9. What kinds of opposition have you, your small group, or your church faced in the past? Currently?