

Nehemiah 4:1-6

¹Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. ²And 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?" ³Tobiah 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!" ⁴Hear, 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. ⁵Do 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.

⁶So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

The Growing Opposition

- *What is opposition?*
 - Opposition
 - The action of opposing, resisting, or combating.
 - Biblical Opposition – the act of opposing, resisting, or combating God’s plan or God’s work
 - A group of people arise to stop the work on Jerusalem’s walls.
- *Why is there opposition?*
 - Why oppose the rebuilding of Jerusalem?
 - Why do they care if Jerusalem rebuilds?
 - Why do they care if the city becomes strong again?
 - It is actually pretty easy to understand
 - If Jerusalem becomes stronger – Sanballat and company will become weaker
 - If Jerusalem becomes more influential – Sanballat and company will be less influential
 - The rebuilding of Jerusalem affects their power, prestige, and position
 - This isn’t just an opposition issue, it is a worship issue
 - When your primary goal is your comfort, your prestige, your power, your position then you will oppose everything that stands in your way.
- *How will the opposition operate?*
 - Sometimes opposition will be passive
 - Sometimes the opposition will be active
 - Sometimes the opposition will happen quietly
 - Sometimes the opposition will be loud
 - Opposition in Nehemiah
 - Start with speeches
 - Sanballat: Mocks the People
 - “What are these feeble Jews doing?”
 - Sanballat: Mocks the Work
 - “Will they restore it? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish in a day?”
 - Sanballat: Mocks the Materials
 - Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?”
 - Tobiah: Mocks the Finished Product
 - “If a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!”

- Show of force
 - These speeches take place in front of an assembled army
 - Threaten and Plot
- Analyzing the Opposition
 - Misdirection
 - Half Truth
 - Lies
- *Responding to the Opposition*
 - Nehemiah correctly analyzes the situation
 - It's about God not me
 - Nehemiah Prays
 - They Go Back To Work
 - What will be gained by listening to opposition?
 - As we will see later in our text, nothing but discouragement, distraction, and doubt

Nehemiah 4:7-9

⁷But 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. ⁸And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. ⁹And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

The Opposition Continues

- *Escalating*
 - Jerusalem is now completely surrounded by opposition
 - The enemies of Jerusalem plot a surprise attack
- *The Response*
 - We've examined the opposition pretty closely , let's look for a moment at Nehemiah's response
 - Nehemiah will do two things, pray and set a guard
 - Nehemiah understands that
 - The people are called by God to the work
 - They are equipped by God for the work
 - They are empowered by God to defend the work
- *The Message of the Response*
 - We trust our God!
 - We're surrounded
 - We're outnumbered
 - We're outgunned
 - Yet we will stand by this wall and defend it, because the victory is in God's hands not ours.

Nehemiah 4:10-14

¹⁰In 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." ¹¹And our enemies said, "They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work." ¹²At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, "You must return to us." ¹³So 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. ¹⁴And 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."

Discouragement

- *The discouragement in Jerusalem*
 - The strength of the burden bearer is drooping, the rubbish heap so vast; And we are unable by ourselves to rebuild the wall." Jacob Myers (translation of Nehemiah 4:10)
 - The conflict outside has spread inside
 - They are actually agreeing with the enemy
- *The danger of discouragement*
 - Discouragement spreads
 - Discouragement disrupts
- *Nehemiah Fortifies*
 - The City
 - The People