

NEHEMIAH 4

This chapter is the first of 3 which deal with the opposition that Nehemiah and the builders have to face when building the wall. God's work always provokes opposition! We also learn how to deal with opposition.

What is the first kind of opposition that Nehemiah and the builders face (verses 1-3)?

- What tactics do the opposers use?

- Are there any hints as to why they say these things (see verse 1 and 2:10)?

The first opposition is taunting and ridicule, encouraging the builders to give up the work. Lying behind these jokes is a clear hatred of God's people - which is itself evidence of a hatred of God himself.

Is this kind of opposition to God's people and God's work still in evidence today?

This is probably the most common opposition we face in the west at the moment. It is strong and though they are "only words" are not always easy to cope with - leads to discouragement in the work.

What is Nehemiah's first response (verse 4-5)?

- What does he NOT do?

Nehemiah prays to God. He does not respond directly to them or get caught up wasting valuable time and energy.

What desires/priorities lie behind Nehemiah's prayer? Is it simply personal vindictiveness?

It is clearly desire for the glory of God. See verse 5 "they have provoked you to anger". the very fact he is praying and not responding personally shows he believes it is God's role to deal with this opposition.

Is there still a place for this kind of prayer? See Psalm 7:8-11 and 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10, but also Matthew 5:43-45

God promises to deal with his enemies, and that is used as a comfort to God's suffering people.

We are called to love our enemies and forgive them - but this prayer of Nehemiah's can be used as prayer for their conversion and forgiveness so is not incompatible with Jesus' words. "Do not cover their guilt" - i.e. don't ignore what they have done. The guilt can be taken by Jesus on the cross, so the sin still is paid for.

What is Nehemiah's second response? Why is that significant (verse 6)?

The work continues. He does not let the opposition hinder the work.

What is the next kind of opposition Nehemiah and the builders face (verse 7-8)?

Physical opposition.

Is this kind of opposition to God's people and God's work still in evidence today?

Yes - India etc.

How does Nehemiah show how to deal with that kind of opposition (verse 9)?
Both prayer and action (like we saw in chapter 1 and 2). Sanctified common sense. God calls us to be wise. butr notice it is proportional and about defence of the work, not attack.

What effect has the work and the opposition had on the people (verse 10-14)? How does Nehemiah encourage the workers?
Their strength begins to fail, and the runours of the opposition saps morale. Nehemiah encourages them by reminding them of who they are serving (verse 14), and the fact they are a people.

What is going on in verses 15-23? Is it simply enough that the wall is built?
The work needs to be protected as well as built so they are organised and shielded. Notice the key place of the leaders, standing between the people and the enemies (verse 16). However it is God who is doing the protecting (verse 20).

Look up these verses. In what way is God's work to be protected and fought for today?

- Acts 20:28-32
- Ephesians 6:10-16
- 2 Timothy 4:1-5
- Titus 1:10-16

God's work must be protected, enemies must be fought, but this is done by the word of God which both feeds the sheep and fights the wolves.