

Week 3. Nehemiah 4+6:1-16: Defiant Restoration

- The work has got going (Ch 3) and the walls are being built. Opposition follows.
- Opposition comes from 2 sources: external (this week) and internal (next week, ch 5)
- Through it all we see God's people *prayerfully persevere against opposition*

God gets his work done through his people for his glory

Structure:

We are taking a slightly different approach to Neh 4-6 by looking at it more thematically. The three chapters together report on opposition from every side, external and internal. Meanwhile, Nehemiah prays and perseveres, the people follow...and God gets the work done. This week we will focus on the external opposition, its effects and the people's response:

4:1-3	Ridicule
4:7-9	Threat
4:10-12	Rumour
6:1-4	Conspiracy
6:5-9	Slander
6:10-14	Deceit

Nehemiah's response continues to be exactly what we have seen so far: he prays, and he acts. See 4:4-6, 4:9, 4:13-14, 4:19, 6:9, 6:14-15

Key Themes

- **Varied Opposition:** God's people have always faced opposition because since Genesis 3 there's *always* been opposition *to God*. It is varied, but all potentially effective.
- **Reliance on God:** God's people must rely on God to get his work done
- **Prayerful Action:** Which doesn't mean impassive helplessness. Reliance on God means acting to keep serving him in his work despite and in the face of opposition.
- **God's Glory:** God gets his work done through his people for his glory (6:16)

Suggested Questions

- What different forms does opposition to God's people take in these chapters?
- What different forms have you seen or heard opposition to God's people taking today?
- How should we account for and respond to the consistent opposition through history?
- How can we ensure we don't become discouraged or stumble due to opposition?
- How can we encourage others not to become discouraged?
- How should we pray in light of opposition to God's people?

Intro Talk Summary

Opposition key theme in E-N. Major focus of Nehemiah 4-6.

Theme: God gets his work done through his people for his glory

Remember: focus not just walls. It's the people. Restoring God's people incites opposition
Because it's a key theme of the Bible – since Genesis 3 opposition always persisted.

In West hard to see it, but major theme of church. Born into opposition.

- 1st to 3rd C systematic repeated opposition synagogues and pagan temples
- Today: more martyrs than ever ?1 million last decade... 1 in 200 Xns killed for faith
- Period of relative low opposition in West very unusual in history. Opposition N!!

West: increasing. Low level ridicule and seen as threat to society. 1st century society values

- Can be External and internal...
- Look at chapters thematically – Ezra 4+6.16 – external opposition this week

Varied Forms:

4:1-3 Ridicule... S+T military parade...make look great. Snorting laughter
Wall 9 feet thick!!

4:7-9 Threat... Cranks up. Physical threats.

4:10-12 Rumour... Pressure rises. Fringe involved.
Let's be reasonable here. Don't incite them (D.L Moody!)

6:1-4 Conspiracy...

6:5-9 Slander... Sanballat threatens to get imperial reversal...been done before

6:10-14 Deceit... Friendly sounding calls coming from people opposed.

Point: All potentially effective...and some effectiveness evident (4:10) – demoralised.

Response:

Typical of Nehemiah: Pray. Pray. Pray... and act

Again and again 'we prayed and...'

- 4:9. Implied 4.14b 4.20 as trust in God. 6. 9. 6.14
- Recorded prayer v3-4... uncomfortable?
 - o Enemies of what?... remember building God's people = block gospel
 - o What mean to pray for justice? Justice will be done...on Christ or on self

Not 'pray, sit back and do nothing' – prayer fuels action.

God Glorified:

Result: **God gets his work done through his people for his glory** v16