

Nehemiah: freenotfree

Week 3 – freedom comes from standing firm

Transition: Last week we saw how Nehemiah’s praying to God about Jerusalem’s deplorable condition came to fruition—he was enlisted by God to get personally involved. In a sense, he was an answer to his own prayer! So far, we have seen that both praying and doing are means that God uses to set us free. This week, we will look into how standing firm for those things that are of, from and for God is another pathway to freedom.

Context: Once the wall of Jerusalem begins to be rebuilt, the enemies who were opposed to the work began to surface, organize, and plot against the rebuilding effort. In this week’s Scripture we will watch how Nehemiah responds to this opposition while maintaining his focus on completing the work that the Lord gave him to do.

Opening Question:

- Share a time when you made a stand for something. What was it? Why did you do it? How did it turn out? Did you face any opposition? If so, what was it? What would you do differently (if anything)?
- What are some things that you think Christians ought to take a stand on? How do you determine when to take a stand on something and when not to? Why do you think Christians are not unified over what to stand firm on?

Scripture/Storying: Nehemiah 4 & 6:1–7:4

Discipleship Questions:

- What taunts do Sanballat and Tobiah say against the Jews who are rebuilding the walls (4:1-3)? What do you make of the taunts? Have you ever been taunted? If so, what were the taunts and how did you respond?
- How does Nehemiah respond to the taunts (4:4-6)? What are your thoughts about how Nehemiah responded?
- What do Sanballat and company do when Nehemiah and the Jews do not respond to the taunts, but continue the building effort (4:7-23)? Have you ever been bullied? If so, share the story. How did you respond? How did it turn out?
- What effect did the threats (4:7-23) have on some of the Jews? What effect did it have on Nehemiah? Have you ever been in a situation where people “on your side” were encouraging you to surrender to threats? If so, share the story. Why did you not surrender?
- How does Sanballat and company’s tactic change once they realize that their threats are not having the desired effect (6:1-2)? How does Nehemiah respond (6:3-4)? Explain the wisdom of Nehemiah’s response.
- How does Sanballat and company’s tactic change yet again (6:5-7)? How does Nehemiah respond (6:8-9)?
- What was Sanballat and company’s last attempt to stop the rebuilding project (6:10-14)? How did Nehemiah respond?
- What happened as a direct result of Nehemiah leading the rebuilders to stand firm (6:15—7:4)? Through what you’ve read in these two chapters, what does it take to continue to stand firm?
- In what ways have you seen Christians harassed, threatened, taunted, bullied, or violently opposed? What do you think are some appropriate responses? If any of those things are happening to you now, share with the group how you intend to respond.