

LESSON 3: STUDY BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

Expect Opposition in Renovation and Restoration

Nehemiah 4:1-3 — When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, ² and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?”

³ Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!”

I. The Necessity of Adversity

In the 1990’s, an experiment called the **Biosphere "2"** attempted to create optimal earth conditions artificially. One reason the experiment failed was that they could not recreate the wind in such a perfectly controlled environment. As a result, trees grew quickly but kept falling over. Without the breeze and storms, the trees couldn’t develop a strong root system.

Persevering through storms and suffering helps us develop strong roots in God! Without adversity, we become like the fragile trees in the Biosphere.

II. Context & Background

Remember the book of Nehemiah was set in the post-exilic times, around the 5th century BCE—after the Babylonian exile. Nehemiah has assigned responsibility and roles to leadership families in chapter 3. He is leading a rebuilding project on Jerusalem's walls.

Nehemiah's assignment is God-Centered and God-Directed. However, opposition quickly attacks and threatens the people and the project.

“When the enemy attacks you it’s because he saw the new thing God was going to do in your life. That must mean something good is on the way.”

— **Instagod.org**

III. The Faces of Opposition

- **Sanballat:** His name means “Sin (the moon god) gives life.” He was the leading political official of Samaria.
- **Tobiah:** The meaning of his name was not clear. He was the head of a family who returned from the Babylonian Captivity but could not prove its descent. A Jewish-

IV. Always Consider the Nature of Opposition

- **A. Emotional Opposition:** Leads to a state of oppression that attempts to hinder the operation (v. 1).
 - “Anger drives him to be furious and even indignant.”
 - “Threatened political control by causing conflict.”
 - “Jealousy over rising Jewish elevation and authority.”
 - “Fear of losing control to new Godly influence in the region.”
 - (Rage is rooted by inner insecurity)
- **B. Psychological Warfare:** Public embarrassment, loud talkers, mockery that a new God idea is about to take place.

The enemy works on confusion and attacks the leadership with multiple questions at one time.

V. The Attack is Threefold

- **A. Questions about one’s competence in the matter**
“The attack is to undermine the credibility of the leader.”
- **B. Questions about one’s gifting and ability**
“To diminish morale and motivation for movement.”
- **C. Public ridicule and shame**
“To affect the public confidence.”

VI. The Dismantling and Delegitimization of Vision

Opposition always runs deep. The enemy's strategies involve being:

- Attacked with words concerning their strength
- Attacked with words concerning their resources
- Attacked with words directed at their spiritual confidence

“Just as we develop our physical muscles through overcoming opposition—such as lifting weights—we develop our character muscles by overcoming challenges and adversity.”

Stephen Covey