

Accelerated Success: Opposition

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1. THE TACTICS OF OPPOSITION

1.1. The first tactic is ridicule.

Nehemiah 4:1-3 "When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall he became angry and was greatly incensed and he ridiculed the Jews in the presence of the associates and the army of Samaria and 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 stones back to life from those heaps of rubble burned as they are?' Tobia the Ammonite who was by his side said, `What are they building? Even if a fox climbed upon it, he would break down their wall of stones."

1.2. The second tactic is resistance.

Nehemiah 4:6-8 "We rebuilt the wall until it reached half of its height and the people worked with all their heart. But Sanballat, Tobia, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to the wall of Jerusalem had gone ahead and the gaps were being closed they were very angry. They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it."

1.3. The third tactic is using rumours.

Nehemiah 4:11-12 "Also our enemies said, `Before they know it or see us we will be right there among them and we will work to kill them and put an end to their work."

2. THE EFFECT OF OPPOSITION

Nehemiah 4:10-11 "Meanwhile the people in Judah said, `The strength of the labourers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall. Also our enemies... will attack..."

2.1. The effect of opposition is discouragement.

2.2. Discouragement usually comes at the halfway point of a project.

Nehemiah 4:6 "So we rebuilt the wall until all of it reached half of its height."

2.3. Four causes of discouragement:

- Fatigue
- Frustration
- Failure
- Fear

3. THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO OPPOSITION

3.1. We should rely on God.

Nehemiah 4:4-5 "Here O God for we're despised. Turn their insults back over their heads and give them over as plunder in the land of captivity. Do not cover their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight? They have thrown insults in the face of the builders."

Proverbs 26:4 "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself."

3.2. We should respect the opposition.

Nehemiah 4:9 "But we prayed to our God and we posted a guard day and night to meet this threat."

3.3. We should reinforce our weak points.

Nehemiah 4:13 "Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families with their swords, spears and bows."

Nehemiah 4:16-18 "From that day on, half of my men did the work while the other half were equipped with spears and bows and armour. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did the work with one hand and held a weapon in the other. Each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me. I said to the nobles and officials, 'The work is extensive and spread out and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. Whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet join us there and our God will fight for us.'"

3.4. We should reassure our people.

Nehemiah 4:14 "After I looked things over I stood up and I said to the nobles and the officials the rest of the people, 'Don't be afraid! Remember the Lord is great and awesome. Fight for your brothers and your daughters and your homes.'"

3.5. We should refuse to quit.

Nehemiah 4:15 "When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work."

Nehemiah 4:21-23 "...with half of the men holding spears from the first light of dawn till the stars came out at night. At that time I also said to the people, 'Have every man and his helper stay in Jerusalem at night so they can serve us as guards by night and workmen by day.' Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes. Each had his weapon even when he went for water."

Sermon Discussion Guide

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OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

1. Which of the “tactics of opposition” has influenced your success?
2. Do you sometimes find yourself feeling discouraged at the halfway point of a project? What causes you to become discouraged?
3. How do you usually respond to opposition?