
Sermon Notes

February 18, 2018

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

Dealing With OPPOSITION Nehemiah 4:1-23

The Unseen World

- ❖ What is going on in the unseen world?
 - for whatever reason, God's will didn't allow the wall to be built without opposition
 - God allows trials and testing to come into our lives in order to bring glory to Himself
 - God grows our faith and make us *perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*
- ❖ How does the enemy act?
 - "the best offense is a strong defense"
 - when God's people attempt to do God's work in God's way, there will always be opposition
 - God's enemies do not sit idly by and allow God to receive glory
 - God's enemies do not allow God's people to experience victory without putting up a fight
 - remember: we only have ONE enemy

- ❖ Satan works through Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem to oppose Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem
 - anger and rage (*set on fire*)
 - Colossians 4:5-7 lists a variety of tools in Satan's toolbox
 - mockery and ridicule
 - threat of a military campaign
- ❖ New enemies are mentioned in vv. 7-8 (Arabs, Ammonites, Ashdodites)
 - come and fight
 - cause confusion
 - terrorism: frighten and intimidate the Jews into thinking a massive surprise attack is imminent
- ❖ These are real threats that come from powerful enemies

Nehemiah's Response

- ❖ Nehemiah exhibits extraordinary leadership
 - critics demoralize, leaders encourage
 - Nehemiah keeps the work force focused and faithful
- ❖ Rightly handled, opposition can actually become a tool in the hands of God that strengthens our resolve to do God's will

- ❖ Nehemiah's first response is **PRAYER** (vv. 4-5)
 - "Never am I used of God more significantly than when I am praying for my critics." (Chuck Swindoll)
 - When mocked and ridiculed, Nehemiah does not respond in kind
 - just like Jesus in 1 Peter 2:22
 - Nehemiah prays to God honestly, openly, with startling candor and raw emotion
 - Nehemiah's prayer shows his great trust in and dependence on God's sovereignty
 - Nehemiah does not offer his prayer in a spirit or a tone of vengeance
 - Nehemiah's great concern is for God's justice and His righteousness to be put on display and to prevail (*cf.* Romans 12:19)
- ❖ **AFTER** praying, Nehemiah takes **ACTION**
 - Nehemiah exhibits the balance that exists between faith in God and a readiness to act
 - some wall builders now serve as guards
 - the people are vigilant, armed, ready
 - even though the work force is cut in half, the work pace is sustained and possibly even increased
- ❖ Remember the Lord and **FIGHT FOR YOUR FAMILY**

- stand in the gap for those you love
- don't sit idly by and let loved ones get picked off by Satan

- ❖ A plan for perpetual diligence
- ❖ Perseverance in the Christian life is a ceaseless warfare against the forces of the kingdom of darkness (Eph 6:10-19)
 - spiritual warfare fills the pages of the NT (John 16:33, 2 Timothy 3:12, James 1:2-4)
 - put on the armor of God and fight God's fight as you keep your eyes on Him, not on your adversary
 - fight by praying

Personal Application

1. Think about jealousy. What is behind this powerful emotion that prompts people to become agitated and upset when others succeed?
2. What kind of criticism or opposition is most difficult for you to take? (from strangers? fellow church members? family members?) Why is this so?
3. Did you ever feel like giving up on a project or a person? What motivated you to stick with it?
4. In future instances of opposition, how do you plan to respond in a fashion that pleases and honors God?