

DEALING WITH OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM!
NEHEMIAH 4

DEALING WITH OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM!
NEHEMIAH 4

INTRODUCTION

Summarize what has happened to this point.

The more we serve the LORD the more opposition we will face!

God's people **ALWAYS** have enemies!

Some are "**without**"—on the outside...outside of our ranks!

Some are "**within**"—opposition within the camp...inside our ranks!

I. CONSIDER THE OPPOSITION FROM WITHOUT!

In this case they were *Sanballat*, a government official in Samaria; *Tobiah* the Ammonite; and *Geshem*, an Arabian, who is also called *Gashmu* (see 6:1 and 6:6).

These three wicked men were from **OUTSIDE** the nation of Israel; in fact, the **Ammonites** were definite enemies of the Jews!

(Cf. **Deuteronomy 23:3-6**)

A. Note The Progression Of The Opposition To This Point.

1. **Neh 2:10—When they heard someone was come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel... They were grieved!**
2. **Neh 2:19—When they heard that the work was going to begin...They ridiculed!**
 - a. "*They laughed us to scorn.*"
"*despised us*"
 - b. "*What is this thing you do?*"— i.e. implying that they were inadequate to the task.
 - c. "*Will ye rebel against the king.*"— This had previously stopped the work.
3. **Neh 4:1—When they heard that the work was going on...**
 - a. "***He was wroth.***"
"to glow or grow warm; blaze up with anger"

- b. **He "took great indignation."**
To be troubled with scornful anger as to supposed unjust or unfair conduct or treatment! (i.e. Personal affront! Open Insult! Disrespect!)

- c. **He "mocked the Jews" vs 2**
Satan is a mocker! (Cf. *Job 1:9-12*)

Remember how Jesus was mocked at His trial in Luke 22:63 and His crucifixion in Luke 23:35-37—Do you think Satan might have been behind that?

Ridicule is a device used by mostly ignorant people who are mean and filled with jealousy!

- 1) **They mocked the people! (Vs 2)**
What are these "*feeble Jews*" doing? (i.e. Trying to lower their self-esteem!)
- 2) **They mocked the plan! (Vs 2)**
"*Will they fortify themselves?*"
i.e. "We all know what that last fortification did for them!"

"*Will they sacrifice?*"
Can they sacrifice to get it done? (i.e. "I don't think they have it in them!")

"*Will they make an end in a day?*"
i.e. "I bet they'll quit after one day!"
(i.e. Again implying they didn't have the stamina in them to stick with it!)
- 3) **They mocked the materials! (Vs 2)**
"Will they revive the stones from the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

**DEALING WITH OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM!
NEHEMIAH 4**

(i.e. Implying that it would be built with inferior materials that were trash!)

- 4) They mocked the end result before they had even started good! (Vs 3)**
(i.e. Implying that their workmanship was of inferior quality!)

They were implying that the job was too big for them...that they would never be able to complete the project...and even if they did it would be inferior!

d. How did Nehemiah Respond To All This? (4:4-6)

1. Prayer. (Vs 4-5)

His concern was only for the glory of God and the testimony of the nation, so do not read personal revenge into his prayer. (Cf. Psalm 139:19-24)

2. Work. (Vs 6)

4. Neh 4:7-8—When they heard that the walls were up and almost finished.

a. They were wrath.

b. They conspired to fight and hinder the work.

What Satan cannot accomplish by deceit, he attempts again by force!

What a confederation of men we have in vs. 7 – and all of them conspired against the Jews.

Isn't it amazing how the Devil seems to have no man-power shortage? We have two enemies in 2:10, three in 2:19, and a whole multitude in 4:7.

**DEALING WITH OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM!
NEHEMIAH 4**

But *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

- c. How did Nehemiah Respond To This? (6:9)**
He prayed and set a watch. *"Watch and pray"* is a constant admonition for us in the NT; *Mark 13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.* [world]

Mark 14:38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. [flesh]

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; [devil]

Note that Nehemiah did not depend on prayer alone! He also set a watch! God expects us to **do the possible** and then **trust Him for the impossible!**

5. Neh 6:1-2—They heard that the work was near completion.

They tried to bring down Nehemiah (leader).

Nehemiah responded in verse 3ff.

Satan would have loved to see Nehemiah, leave the wall and get involved in a dispute with Sanballat, but Nehemiah did not fall into Satan's trap. Never allow ridicule to stop your ministry; *"take it to the Lord in prayer,"* and keep on working.

B. So, There Were Four Devices That The Outside Opposition Used:

1. The Enemy Used SCORN!

**DEALING WITH OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM!
NEHEMIAH 4**

Mocking them.

2. **The Enemy Used SHAME! (Personally)**
Belittling THEM and attacking THEIR self-esteem!
(Personally!)
3. **The Enemy Used SARCASM! (Work)**
Attacking what they DID!
4. **The Enemy Used STRENGTH!**

II. CONSIDER THE OPPOSITION FROM WITHIN!

The battle then moved from outside the city to the inside!
From outside of the ranks to inside the ranks!

Satan followed this same tactic in the early Church at Jerusalem:

- 1) When he used Ananias and Sapphira . (Acts 5)
- 2) When he used the complaining widows inside the fellowship of the Church. (Acts 6)

He had also previously used Judas inside the ranks of the apostles!

A. One Enemy From Within Was DISCOURAGEMENT And COMPLAINING! (4:10-11)

The workers were discouraged with all that rubbish they had to deal with and on top of that the danger of attack!

Why did the tribe of Judah complain? Perhaps it was because they were secretly in league with Sanballat! (6:17-19)

Also note in 13:15 Judah's disobedience to the Law of God.

When they said, "*We are not able*" they were actually agreeing with the enemy (4:2)!

Discouragement and complaining spread rapidly and hinder God's work!

**DEALING WITH OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM!
NEHEMIAH 4**

We don't see here that Nehemiah paid much attention to their complaint! He just kept on building, watching, and praying!

B. Another Enemy From Within Was FEAR! (4:11-13)

Fear and faith can never abide in the same heart!

In vs. 11 we have a rumor started by the enemy that said their armies would suddenly invade Jerusalem.

The Jews living outside the city heard this report and carried it to Nehemiah ten times. Note how persistent Satan's workers can be!

Finally, Nehemiah set the guard on the walls and encouraged the people not to fear.

Note that the work stopped from vs. 13 to vs. 15. This was exactly what the enemy wanted!

Nehemiah saw the folly of this plan, so he put the workers back on the job, a weapon in one hand and a tool in the other!

He also set a special watch with trumpets (vs. 19-20), but he did not allow the work to stop!

These are some wonderful examples of what a Christian worker ought to be:

1. **They had a mind to work...(4:6)**
2. **They had a heart to pray...(4:9)**
3. **They had an eye to watch...(4:9)**
4. **They had an ear to hear! (4:20)**

DISCOURAGEMENT, COMPLAINING, FEAR...

C. Yet Another Enemy From Within Was SELFISHNESS.

We won't deal with it right now, but Chapter 5 is a sad chapter, for in it we will see the Jews selfishly preying upon one another. We'll see no building in chapter 5.

III. SOME THOUGHTS ON THE MATTER OF CRITICS AND THEIR CRITICISM:

A. Who Are Our Critics?

1. Satan.

Revelation 12:10— ...accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

2. The Unsaved Man.

His nature is ungodly and against what we preach and stand for!

3. Believers.

Many examples in Scripture.

B. Why Do People Criticize?

1. Some Do It Because They Hate The Work Of The LORD!

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

2. Some Do It To Pull You Down To Their Level!

a. Some Aren't Busy For The Lord And Don't Want To You To Be Because You Make Them Look Bad!

Those who criticize the most usually are doing the least!

b. Some May Be Jealous Because They Don't Believe They Can Do Anything!

3. Some Don't Like Change And Are Caught Up In The Tradition Of Men!

"Well we ain't never done it that way before!"

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

4. Some Don't Like Growth!

*"Our little old church"
"Us four and no more"*

5. Some Do It Because They Don't Know All The Facts!

Sometimes that's because it is better for some things not to be widely known.

6. The Instance We Have In Nehemiah—It Was About Money And Control!

A powerful Jerusalem meant a depressed Samaria and a loss of economic supremacy!

So, those are some reasons why people criticize...

C. CRITICS USUALLY RUN WITH CRITICS! (VS 3, 7-8)

Some Biblical examples:

Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses. (Numbers 12)

Korah and the 250 gainsayers. (Numbers 16)

The Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees.

Also understand that the chances are if you are around critical people, you will also become critical.

D. CRITICS USUALLY BRING THE THINGS OF GOD DOWN TO MAN'S LEVEL! (Vs 3)

"What you are doing is a bunch of junk."

However, if we are doing God's work for God's glory then that is not true!

**DEALING WITH OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM!
NEHEMIAH 4**

**E. CRITICS SHOULD BE HANDLED WITH PRAYER
FIRST!**

Matthew 5:44—"Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

**F. IF THEY DON'T LEAVE, USE COMMON SENSE WITH
PRAYER! (Vs 9, 15FF)**

**G. TAKING CRITICISM IS A PART OF A BELIEVER'S
LIFE THAT CAN BRING BLESSING! (Matthew 5:10-12)**

**H. WE MUST BE CAREFUL FOR WHEN CRITICISM
COMES BECAUSE DISCOURAGEMENT MAY
FOLLOW!**

CONCLUSION

To Overcome Opposition And Criticism:

We Need A Willing Mind—vs. 6

We Need To Be In Prayer—vs. 9

We Need To Be On Guard—vs 9

We Need To Remember God—vs 14