

Fear God, Not Men

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Exegetical Idea: Nehemiah was able to finish the building of the wall and the gates in 52 days because he did not fear, but faced bravely the challenges that arouse.

Homiletical Idea: Challenges and opposition ought to be expected, and be even a sign, if we are faithfully working for God.

Purpose Statement: To embrace God's mission with passion and zeal with the assurance that God will make us prosper.

Intro:

1. Revival stirs up the enemies of God and His people.

- a. Who were the enemies of the Jews in the days of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall?
 - i. **Nehemiah 2:10, 19** – “Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab”
 - It all started with feelings of envy, despise and contempt.
 - These feelings are eventually expressed in words of discouragement and disrespect.
 - ii. “Note the geography of opposition. Jerusalem is surrounded by enemies: Sanballat/Samaria to the north; Tobiah/Ammon to the east; and Geshem/Arabs to the south.” *Andrews Study Bible*, p. 595
 - **Nehemiah 4:12** – “From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us.”
- b. **Nehemiah 4:1, 6** – When God's people are committed to God and engaged in His work it raises the wrath of the enemies of the cause—primarily Satan and his angels, but often includes wicked men as well.
- c. **Nehemiah 4:7, 8, 11** – The rage turns into persecution when the work prospers.
 - i. The same happened with the apostolic church. They were persecuted once they experienced the revival of the Spirit and went forth to work (Acts 8:1-3).
 - ii. **Revelation 12:17** – The Devil is the one stirring up wrath and persecution against Christ's followers.
 - iii. **Revelation 16:13** – It is interesting that in the last days God's people will have to face the enmity of a three-fold alliance—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

“The apostle Paul declares that ‘all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’ 2 Timothy 3:12. Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world's standard and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that

marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 48

2. Nehemiah and the Jews earnestly prayed and watched during the time of opposition.

- a. **Nehemiah 4:4, 9** – Here we see the concept of watch and pray in order not to fall prey to the enemies.
- b. Earnest prayer should not be offered only when we are seeking for God’s directions to know what to do, but it should continue as we labor for the Master.

3. Besides watching and praying, the Jews also were prepared for battle.

- a. **Nehemiah 4:14, 21** – Nehemiah encouraged the people to fight against their enemies and continue to rebuild the wall.
 - i. The rebuilding of the walls and the gates was not an easy project.
 - ii. It was filled with opposition, yet it was possible to accomplish the task with prayer, hard work, and fight against the obstacles.

Application: We should expect success in the gospel ministry only as a result of

- Prayer
- Hard work
- Planning
- Fighting against the obstacles

4. When persecution fails Satan uses deception.

- a. **Nehemiah 6:1, 2** – Sanballat and Geshem conspired against Nehemiah.
 - i. Through deception they tried to destroy Nehemiah.
- b. **Nehemiah 6:3** – Commitment to the work protected Nehemiah from conspiracy.

5. Yet, another weapon that the enemy uses if “FEAR”.

- a. **Nehemiah 6:4-7** – The enemies lie and accuse Nehemiah of sedition against the King of Persia.
- b. **Nehemiah 6:9** – The rumors against Nehemiah was aimed to create fear.
- c. **Nehemiah 6:10, 13** – Shemaiah was hired by Tobiah and Sanballat to prophesy falsely against Nehemiah so he should be afraid.
- d. **Nehemiah 6:14** – Sanballat, Tobiah and the prophets were conspiring against Nehemiah to make him afraid.

“As some parts of your brain are revving up [when you experience fear], others are shutting down. When the amygdala senses fear, the cerebral cortex (area of the brain that control

reasoning and judgement) becomes impaired — so now it's difficult to make good decisions or think clearly.” Zachary Sikora, PsyD,

- e. Biggest fears holding people back from serving God:
 - i. The fear of inadequacy
 - ii. The fear of uncertainty
 - iii. The fear of failure
 - iv. The fear of rejection
 - v. The fear of change
 - vi. The fear of losing control
 - vii. The fear of being judged
 - viii. The fear of getting hurt
 - ix. The fear of something bad happening
- f. God invite us to fear not and trust Him:
 - a. 2 Timothy 1:7 – God can give us a sound mind.
 - b. Isaiah 41:10 – God promises us that He will help, strengthen, and guide us.

6. In the midst of conspiracy, threats, persecution, lies, the wall was finished in 52 days.

- a. Nehemiah 6:15, 16 – God was vindicated by the commitment of His people to work.

“Christian life is more than many take it to be. It does not consist wholly in gentleness, patience, meekness, and kindness. These graces are essential; but there is need also of courage, force, energy, and perseverance.” *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 497