

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – May 10, 2020

Theme: Nehemiah: A Vessel of Restoration

Topic: Overcoming Opposition

Main Text: Nehemiah 4: 1 - 23

Key verse: Nehemiah: 4:9 – “Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.” (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: Opposition is a common phenomenon we face daily in every sphere of life. It is even worse in politics where opposing factions go to any length to outwit each other. God’s kingdom is not spared as Satan continues to oppose anything “God”. Nehemiah, a Jew born in captivity, was serving as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia (present day Iran). When he received news of the sorry state of Jerusalem –the affliction of the remnants, the ruined walls and gates - he was moved to do something about the situation. Through the favour of God, he obtained permission from the king to go and rebuild the city. On arrival in Judah, he commenced the repair and restoration work, with different teams working on different portions of the wall and gates. When it became apparent that progress was being made in the rebuilding work, a stiff opposition arose from some of their neighbours.

1. **(a) What do you think is the rationale for this opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah? (b) Identify the various ways in which the enemies manifested their initial opposition to Nehemiah’s rebuilding effort (Nehemiah 4: 2-3) and the response of Nehemiah to this initial opposition (Nehemiah 4: 4-5). (c) Let participants think back to a time when they encountered some form of opposition. What do you think was the reason for the opposition you faced?**

The initial opposition to Nehemiah and his team was through a combination of ridicule and insults. All this was meant to discourage them from continuing in the work. Nehemiah understood that this was not a battle for him to fight, so he handed it over to God in prayer. Aided by God, the work continued “...and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work” (v.6). The people received encouragement to work. Seeing the enthusiasm of the people and the speedy progress of the work, the enemy decided to go physical – as they “conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it” (Nehemiah 4: 8). The only weapon left for the enemy was to wage a physical war.

2. **(a) Discuss Nehemiah’s further response in the face of this new threat from the camp of the enemy (Nehemiah 4: 9, 13,14). (b) How do we typically handle opposition that comes our way, especially when the situation appears overwhelming? (c) In regard to contemporary times, what lessons can we learn from Nehemiah’s response in 2(a) above?**

God revealed all the plans of the enemies to Nehemiah and his team, thereby frustrating their schemes. This gave further encouragement to Nehemiah and his colleagues “that we returned all of us to the wall, everyone unto his work” (v.15). It was however not going to be business as usual, there was need to change strategy in the rebuilding effort. James admonishes us to back up faith with action because “by works faith is made perfect” and “faith without works is dead” (James.2:22, 26). That “...our God shall fight for us” (Nehemiah 4: 20) is not an invitation to be nonchalant. It was necessary to do their part while trusting in God. However, no matter what extra measures deployed against this opposition, it was ultimately God that brought the victory. God’s people overcame the opposition and the city was rebuilt in 52 days. (Nehemiah 6:15).

3. **(a) Identify other precautions taken by Nehemiah to ward-off the enemy (Nehemiah 4:16-23). (b) How do the measures employed by Nehemiah against his enemies relate to spiritual opponents we may face in our effort to obey and serve God?**

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant me courage and determination not to shrink from Your work in the face of opposition, in Jesus’ name. Amen.