

NEHEMIAH 4:1-23

A. Introduction

1. Three reasons why Nehemiah is a relevant book for us to be spending time in at our elder's meetings:

It is a book about building a community of people who will reach the community around them.

It is a book about God's provision for His people as they wait for King Jesus to come.

It is a book that will be helpful for us as we approach 10 years since the formation of Banstead Community Church.

2. What have we seen so far?

In Nehemiah 1-2 we saw that God's provision for His people as they wait for King Jesus to return, which He gives to His people to build them up so they will reach the community around them are elders of local churches.

In Nehemiah 3 we saw that the building up of the church in order to reach the community around them will not be effective without the involvement of both church leaders and church members.

3. In Nehemiah 4 we see that when the church is being built up and reaching its community there will be opposition because the devil doesn't want people to love, worship and follow Jesus.

B. There will be opposition

1. Opposition comes from different sources.

"When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, 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 the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble – burned as they are?" (Nehemiah 4:1-2)

"Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building – if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!" (Nehemiah 4:3)

"But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that 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." (Nehemiah 4:7)

It can be personal – opposition that comes from people close to us.

It can be cultural – opposition that comes from culture around us, often through the media.

It can be governmental – opposition that comes from the policies of governments.

It can be institutional – opposition that comes religious institutions.

But behind all opposition is the devil.

2. Opposition comes in different forms.

It might be ridicule.

"When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews." (Nehemiah 4:1)

It might be threats.

"They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it."
(Nehemiah 4:7)

But the purpose is the same – to discourage and demoralise God's people so that they give up.

"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 said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." (Nehemiah 4:10-12)

3. Application

We need to recognise that everyone in the congregation will be facing or fearing one or more of these sources of opposition.

We need to recognise that at some stage, opposition will come to this church and its members in stronger forms than it has done so far if we are faithful to the work Jesus has given us.

C. How should we respond?

1. We should pray.

The response of the Jews to the ridicule was to pray.

"Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders." (Nehemiah 4:4-6)

The response of the Jews to the threats was to pray.

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

2. We should press on.

Press on with the Work that God has given us – the trowel.

"So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart." (Nehemiah 4:6)

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

Press on with the Word that God has given us – the sword for us is the Word of God.

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

"From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armour. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked." (Nehemiah 4:16-18)

"Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!" (Nehemiah 4:19-20)

Press on with wholeheartedness.

“So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.” (Nehemiah 4:6)

“So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so that 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.” (Nehemiah 4:21-23)

3. Application.

To pray and to press on is a Christlike response to opposition.

To pray and to press on is the resources God has given us to stand against the devil’s schemes (Ephesians 6:10-20)

To pray and to press on is what we as leaders need to be set an example in.

To pray and to press on shows that we believe that our God is great and awesome and will fight for us.