

Ministry & The Work of God: 6

Facing Opposition: Knowing Your Enemy

Nehemiah 4-6

Nehemiah faces problems, difficult situations and experiences.

- Mocked (4. 1-6)
- Threatened (4. 7-9)
- Discouragement (4. 10-23)
- Natural Events – Famine]
- Financial Crisis] (5. 1-19)
- Oppression]
- Conspiracy (6. 1-14)

Knowing Your Enemy

2 Corinthians 2.11 “we are not ignorant of his [satan's] devices”.

- Paul did not let satan take advantage of him - he was aware of the way that he works
- Paul says that he knows his schemes, his tricks and his strategies.
- If the enemy can get in he will cause division and destruction.

- The enemy is cunning and sly and masquerades as “an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11.14).
- Our wrestle is not against people but against the principalities and powers motivating them (Ephesians 6.12)

In the story of Nehemiah we see three main characters who are the cause of much opposition to him, his team and the work.

- Sanballat the Horonite *represents – the enemy, evil and wickedness*
- Tobiah the Ammonite *represents – religion (and attacks from within the church)*
- Geshem the Arab *represents – authorities and governments*

Sanballat the Horonite *represents – the enemy, evil and wickedness*

- Sanballat's name means ‘The moon-god Sin gives life’; or ‘bramble or thorn-bush, enemy in secret’ (Hitchcock) [*Paul's thorn in flesh – messenger of satan*]
- He was a Persian satrap of Samaria
- Lived at Beth Horon (House of the Caves) 12 miles NW of Jerusalem
- His daughter is married to the grandson of the High Priest
- Mentioned 10 times (all in Nehemiah)

- **2.10** – He is disturbed that Nehemiah seeks the well being of the children of Israel.
- **2.19** – He despises the work of God and calls Nehemiah a rebel against the king
- **4.1** – He was angry and furious that the work had begun. He mocked, derided the Jews that built the wall.
- **4.7** – His anger led to a plot to attack the work in order to bring about confusion to hinder it and cause it to fail.
- **6.1 & 6.2** – His attempts to stop the work of God fail so he seeks and plans to harm Nehemiah.
- **6.5** – He accuses Nehemiah of organising a rebellion.
- **6.12 & 6.14** – He hires a secret informer to give a false prophecy
- **13.28** – His son in law is one of the High Priests grandsons.

Sanballat represents the enemy that comes against the work of God:

1. He despises all of God's children, not so much them but God in them
2. He seeks to disrupt and bring down the work of God, by attacking it's leaders, bringing a wedge of division to cause frustration.
3. He spreads untruths about that will destroy the reputations of God's people and the work.
4. He discredits the Word of God by planting false prophets
5. He seeks the praise, worship and adoration that belong to God alone.

Tobiah the Ammonite *represents – religion (and from within the church)*

- Name means 'Jehovah is good' from Ammon. Ammonites and Israel were constantly at war.
 - Known as 'the servant' possibly a freed servant who became a man of great influence and connections; he had the ear of the king; He is married to a Jewish girl; His son is married to a daughter of one of the leading wall builders (Neh 6.18; Neh 3.4,30).
 - A Persian governor in Samaria.
 - Allied with Sanballat.
 - Mentioned 15 times (all in Nehemiah except two in Ezra)
- **Ezra 2.60** – there is a question as to his legitimacy to be numbered with Israel.
 - **Ezra 4.7** – (called here Tabeel) demands that the king issues a decree to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem
 - **Nehemiah 2.10** – He is called a servant, probably in the employ of the king of Persia, which gave him great influence.
 - **2.19** – He accuses Nehemiah of rebellion
 - **4.3** – Joins Sanballat in mocking the work of God. Tobiah wants to keep the Jews subservient and cracks a joke at their building skills.
 - **4.7** – He plots with Sanballat and others to attack the work
 - **6.1** – mentioned that he hears about the progress of the work.
 - **6.12 & 6.14** – hires a secret informer to give a false prophecy
 - **6.17 & 6.19** – in constant communication with those who were opposed to Nehemiah
 - **7.62** – repeat of Ezra 2.60.
 - **13.4, 7-8** – While Nehemiah has returned to Persia to give his report to the king, Tobiah moves in to a room in the Temple. Upon his return to Jerusalem Nehemiah throws him out.

Tobiah represents religion (and those from within the church):

1. Religion infiltrates the work of God with tradition and rituals, throwing out all that is necessary – religion rejects the commandment of God in order to keep its' traditions (Mark 7.6-9)
2. It seeks to promote itself and all it stands for rather than Jesus Christ – trying to prove its' legitimacy.
3. Religion is always against any true move & work of God

Geshem the Arab *represents – authorities & governments*

- Not much is mentioned in Scripture about him – Nehemiah calls him 'the Arab'
 - Geshem was an Arabian tribal name – probably a governor of one of the provinces of Arabia.
 - His opposition to Nehemiah may stem from the fact that he does not want Persian authority to come in and occupy a newly fortified Jerusalem and prevent Arab control of the area.
 - Mentioned just four times in Bible, all in Nehemiah
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- **2.19** – allied with Sanballat & Tobiah in despising the work of God and accusing Nehemiah of rebellion
 - **6.1 & 6.2** – He attempts to get Nehemiah to meet him in one of the villages of Ono in order to harm him
 - **6.6** - He accuses Nehemiah of organising a rebellion in order to become their king

Geshem represents authorities and governments:

1. Authorities resent anything that it cannot control
2. Authorities & governments will accuse the work of God of rebellion to its rules and dictates.
3. They may appear to be concerned and helpful, by providing financial support, social care and activities but that help comes with strings attached designed to disrupt it.