

## IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION

TEXT: (Nehemiah 6:1-4, NIV)

<sup>1</sup> When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, <sup>2</sup> 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?”

<sup>3</sup> Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!”

<sup>4</sup> Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. <sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

<sup>7</sup> But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. <sup>8</sup> They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. <sup>9</sup> But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

## INTRODUCTION

1. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2, NIV).
2. “The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’  
I said, ‘Sovereign LORD, you alone know.’  
Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones and say to them, “Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!”’” (Ezekiel 37:1-4, NIV).
3. “Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.”’ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army” (Ezekiel 37:9-10, NIV).
4. “By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall” (Nehemiah 2:13-15, NIV).

## I. THE NEED FOR RESTORATION

1. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1-2, NIV).

## A. Every Person Had a Part to Play

1. "Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them.

The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors" (Nehemiah 3:1-5, NIV).

2. "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (I Corinthians 12:27, NIV).

## B. Every Person Was Well Armed While He Worked

1. "From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. 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. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me" (Nehemiah 4:16-18, NIV)
2. "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (II Corinthians 10:4, NIV).
3. "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Ephesians 6:11, NIV)

## II. OPPOSITION IS INEVITABLE

## A. By Ridicule

1. "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?" 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 4:1-2, NIV).
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, NIV).
3. "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you" (I Peter 12-14, NIV).

## B. By Threat of an Open Attack

1. "They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat" (Nehemiah 4:8-9, NIV).

2. "Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away" (1 Corinthians 13:8, NIV).
3. "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 22:5, KJV).

#### C. Through Discouragement

1. "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" (Nehemiah 4:11, NIV).

#### D. By Distraction

1. "Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: 'Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.'  
But they were scheming to harm me" (Nehemiah 6:2).
2. "And I sent messengers to them, saying, 'I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you'" (Nehemiah 6:3, ESV)?
3. "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62, NIV).

#### CONCLUSION

1. "The wall was finally finished in early September—just fifty-two days after we had begun!" (Nehemiah 6:15, TLB)
2. "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14, NIV).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recall and discuss an experience in which you experienced strong spiritual opposition.
2. How did you overcome the struggle?
3. List ways you can prepare for future battles.
4. Instead of coddling someone, how can you help him or her be an overcomer.
5. Discuss the following statement: If you make them victims, they will always be victims, but if you help them to become overcomers, they will overcome.