

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Nehemiah 4:6-23; 5:1-13

Introduction: Anytime a person determines to obey God and do God's work God's way, he/she will face obstacles. God has a way around those obstacles and anyone determined to continue doing things God's way will find God's way to overcome those obstacles.

Nehemiah was determined to get the city walls of Jerusalem rebuilt and get the people restore to fellowship with God after being exiled for years and years. However he was running into difficulties from some of the Jews' own people who didn't want things changed for they had been "in control" for many years. Nehemiah exhibited a great hope and trust in God in spite of the growing, steady wicked opposition to his efforts to help get Jerusalem and God's people back together again.

I. THERE WILL BE FEARFUL THREATS (4:6-23)

1. Important people will try to interfere.
 - Sanballot was a Jew, governor of Samaria and his daughter married the high priests' grandson.
 - Tobiah was a wealthy Jew and governor of Ammon and had been given a private room in the Temple courtyard by the High Priest.
 - These two men were "important" and did all they could to sabotage and halt the rebuilding of the city walls and used words of mockery and threats of war.
2. Nehemiah turned to God and prayed that God would step in and turn these men's threats into nothing and stop them.
3. Finally, the walls were rebuilt but only half as high as they normally would/should have been.
4. The two men, Sanballot and Tobiah then declared war on the partially rebuilt city of Jerusalem.
 - Initial success in doing Godly things God's way is often followed by renewed and increasing opposition.
 - Also some may become discouraged, as with those helping rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, they were physically and emotionally exhausted, were ridiculed by their opposition, many attempts were made to stop them, they had been distracted from their personal and family needs and they had a sense of being "the only ones doing the work."
5. A "pep" talk is sometimes needed for God's people and Nehemiah did just that. He reminded them that God was on their side and to fight for themselves and others and their country.
 - Today pastors need to give "pep" talks to their congregation for the world and Satan wears down the Christian who is trying to do God's work, God's way.
6. Sometimes God's people have to "ride more than one horse at a time." The expression of doing more than one thing at a time and that is what Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilding the city had to do.
 - One group worked on the walls while another group stood guard.
 - Some worked with their weapons nearby, some worked with a weapon in one hand while using the other to work on the walls with. Everyone was ready and willing to fight.

- Sooner or later every Christian who is trying to do God's work God's way will run into difficulties. Don't quit! "Ride two horses at the same time" if you have to.

7. Obstacles to doing God's will and work are inevitable.

- Be prepared for them for they are going to come.
- Being able to see what needs to be done is one thing, but seeing what is standing in the way is another so one needs to be prepared for it.
- The best response to obstacles and distress when it comes in doing God's will is to PRAY.
- Prayer reveals clearly and forcefully what/who one is placing his/her hope and trust in.
- After praying, one then puts "feet" to his/her prayer and acts.
- Doing God's work God's way ALWAYS brings success, however.....
 - Not always immediately, sometimes it is after a long, hard way of constant trust, work and more prayer.
- It is God's intention that His Children learn to trust Him, to hope in Him, to find joy in Him, so therefore God often chooses to stretch out our times of difficulties.

8. Most Christians never think that when they obey God that opposition is going to come in some form.

- Think about your own Christian life when you were trying to do God's work God's way, didn't difficulties come? Remember how you prayed and continued on? Which came first, action or prayer?
- What is your record of doing God's will God's way and then facing the opposition that came? Did you give up or did you keep on?

II. THERE WILL BE UNEXPECTED ACTIONS (5:1-13)

1. Opposition from without is one thing and can be expected, but what about from the "inside?"
2. The rich Jewish landowners had been taking advantage of the poorer Jews by charging high interest on loans, even taking their homes, property and family members as servants when the poor couldn't pay the interest, much less the payments.
 - The poor couldn't do both, rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and work to make the interest payments.
3. Nehemiah called all the rich landowners together and clearly told them that what they had been doing was like another country coming in and making slaves of the people.
 - In very clear words Nehemiah told them to return the interest, property and indentured people.
 - They had to swear before the priests that they would do what he said.
4. That was then, but what about today? Are any of God's people guilty of such behavior?
 - What if God demanded the same thing today from Christians? Give back all that has been wrongly taken from fellow Christians. What would be the reaction?

CONCLUSION:

1. Any Christian determined to do God's will God's way is going to have opposition from anywhere.
2. Prayer before doing anything will reveal what the opposition is and what to do about it.
3. Sometimes God allows difficulties to be increased and lengthened to strengthen faith and obedience.