

Nehemiah and faithful living in the face of external struggles.

⁹ They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.” But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.” Neh 6:9

NUGGET – Last week we looked to see how God had Nehemiah handle struggles going on within the walls of Jerusalem that were being rebuilt. This week we see how Nehemiah is coping with the external struggles and opposition to the vision that he is pursuing at God’s command.

Nehemiah, in [verses 1-8](#) of this chapter, describes the people and nations that do not want to see these Jerusalem walls rebuilt. And these enemies use tactics of many kinds to express this opposition. And in response to this Nehemiah prays specifically against their specific opposition.

One of the things to learn from this is that God is a God of specifics. He’s not some hazy ethereal mist. He deals in absolutes and concretes and so should we. Sin is a concept that can seem huge and overwhelming. But narrow it down to what you are facing in life that is a temptation right now and you can begin to see how God has given you specific help in His word to see you past that temptation to sin. God deals in the nitty gritty of daily life.

- Specific temptation and sin is answered with
- Specific scripture and prayer.

Think of Jesus facing Satan in the wilderness in [Matthew 4:1-11](#). Each of the temptations that were put to Jesus He answered with specific scripture. Nehemiah was facing the specific opposition of weak hands coming because of fear of an external enemy. And that fear leading to weakness of hands was what he prayed against.

Scripture and prayer are given to us by God to rely on in the face of opposition and temptation. (See [1st Corinthians 10:13](#) as an example of God’s scripture promises we can rely on in the face of temptation.) Don’t let Satan win with deceit as he tried to do with Nehemiah’s hands. God gave Nehemiah success through opposing Satan with specific prayer. Remembering that Christ has gained us the ultimate victory over sinfulness on the cross gives us confidence and courage to focus on standing firm against our specific daily temptations.

APPLICATION – For help with faithful living against external struggles consider;

1. A forest is cleared by diligently cutting down one tree at a time – SIN in our lives can be attacked the same way through, praying against specific *sins*.
2. Write down one temptation you’re facing right now, pray for Christ’s guidance and read a promise from God’s word (like [1st Corinthians 10:13](#)) then shred that paper and throw it away.

PRAY – Thank God for giving you Jesus Christ to defeat Satan and restoring to you a right relationship with Him. Ask for His guidance and specific help in overcoming what temptation is before you today. Thank Him also for your trust in His grace and power.

*Going Deeper together. We meet in the **Fellowship Hall** during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who're able to come. If you're not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.*

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

'HEARING, SHARING AND LIVING THE GOSPEL'

Rev. Thomas A. Rhodes, Pastor

PO Box 5, 600 East Aldrich Road, Bolivar, MO 65613

(417) 326-5506 www.zionlutheranbolivar.org

NOTICE: This email and any file transmitted are confidential and/or legally privileged and intended only for the person(s) directly addressed. If you are not the intended recipient, any use, copying, transmission, distribution, or other forms of dissemination is strictly prohibited. If you have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately and permanently delete the email and files, if any.

GOING DEEPER

In the sixth chapter of Nehemiah Satan uses various tactics to attack the work and the vision that God had given to Nehemiah. Again, like last week we are looking at the work of a traitor. It's important to repeat this because simply being aware of a traitor is not the same thing as defeating him.

In fact it's important to learn that he uses various tactics according to the varying circumstances of the saints of God. The circumstance in this chapter is that the wall is being completed (see [verses 1 and 15](#)) and that means that God's plan will have succeeded. Satan never wants that. One of the things to learn from this is that as God is bringing success to His followers, opposition to that success will increase.

Notice that this opposition, though it is voiced from within Jerusalem ([verses 10-12](#)) has its source in the external enemies. And they don't stop there. They try (in [verses 2-8](#)) a frontal assault on the man of God to try and intimidate him. Again in this we see an example of what Jesus will face when He comes to earth.

Jesus has Judas within and the pagan Romans, and the Jewish religious establishment without, all coming against Him. As Jesus nears Jerusalem in His final days, He encounters opposition and contradiction from His followers ([Mark 8:31-33](#); [Matthew 26:3-13](#); [John 13:2-11](#)) and traps and schemes from his enemies ([Matthew 19:1-3](#); [Luke 19:35-40](#); [Mark 11:15-18](#)). All of this happens as Jesus comes near to his triumph over sin, death and the devil.

Sin, though defeated by Christ, never stops trying to separate Jesus' followers from Him and doing His will. And back in Nehemiah we have seen the same thing in the opposition he faced. And his opposition didn't end with the completion of the wall. (see [verses 15-19](#)). The work of standing against Satan and His attacks is never done as long as we are in this world.

That's a fact of life for Christian's that non-believers do not face. Of course they don't face opposition from Satan, he already has them separated from trust in God through Jesus Christ. That is his goal at all times, to defeat faith and trust in the Lord. That is what Job faced ([Job 1:9-11](#); [2:3-5](#)). As we said earlier, just knowing this does not defeat Satan, it is fully trusting in God's gift of faith alone which does that (see [Job 31:24-28](#); [Hebrews 3:12-14](#); [Mark 16:15-16](#); [John 20:30-31](#); [1 John 5:1-5](#)).

Finally looking at Nehemiah, he trusted in God through all his struggles to defeat his enemies and to bring about His will ([Neh 6:14-16](#)). In asking God to judge his enemies and in giving glory to God for the success of the wall, Nehemiah tells us that trust in God is what brings the vision to completion in the face of opposition. It is because Nehemiah trusted in

the mighty arm of God and His strength that gave him the will to see the wall finished that God had given him the vision to see.

I find this rather challenging. How am I to live as a result of this? What must change in my life to live in the trust of God that Nehemiah demonstrates? Remember that Nehemiah wasn't paralyzed by his opposition; indeed it seemed to energize him. It seemed to act as a spur to greater faith and trust in God and action to do the will of God as he understood it.

Perhaps it's that perspective that we can benefit from, the idea that opposition calls us to greater trust in God rather than doubt in ourselves. What do you think? Think of one area that is troubling you right now. How can trust in God be demonstrated in that area of life for you?

God's peace in Christ is ours even in the midst of our struggles, Pastor Rhodes.