

# Persevering

**Nehemiah 4:1-16, 6:1-8**

Soon after the rebuilding of Jerusalem began, God's people faced opposition. Jesus promised us this too (John 10:10), so how do we persevere? Raphael shows us what the enemy is trying to do and how we can overcome opposition in our lives.

The first thing the enemy tries to do is steal the vision from your heart because that's the key (Proverbs 4:23). Nehemiah's story shows us three stages of opposition. The underlying factor in all this is getting the people to focus their attention on themselves rather than on God:

1. Anger, mockery and ridicule. The enemy tells us that we are of no value - a lie to discourage us so we won't keep going.
2. Threat of attack - fear and intimidation. But the enemies never actually attack! The threats are empty because God ultimately always protects His people.
3. Deception and false accusation. As the work progresses, so does the opposition! They are persistent. Sometimes we keep facing the same temptations and opposition – this does not mean that you are not progressing - often the opposite is the case.

Three strategies to overcome opposition:

1. **Prayer** - instant and corporate. Ephesians 6 tells us how important constant prayer is, we need to learn to react to opposition by praying.
2. **Words of encouragement to put the people's faith in God.** Nehemiah reminds them of what God is like. We mustn't allow fear into our hearts (John 14:14). God's Word is full of encouragement to us and dismay for the enemy - so it's double-edged when we use it.
3. **Putting plans in place to counter the enemy.** Practical steps are part of how God works in our lives.

How should we apply this to our lives?

1. **Building the wall of your personal growth (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Matthew 5:6, 1 Corinthians 9:16-17).** When the enemy accuses us, we should engage with those thoughts but rather use the truths of God's Word. When we repent of our sin, we can then declare our righteousness in Christ (1 John 1:9). Practical steps involve assessing your life and where trouble comes from, and making plans to avoid those things, even to the extent of denying yourself. We need personal discipline - and grace is not opposed to this.
2. **Building the wall of your dreams and purposes and goals (Matthew 11:3, 6, Hebrews 10:35).** God's timing is often not the same as ours, and this is hard for us. Will we give up or will we keep believing? The things that God has spoken to you about should not be given up on because they have been "delayed" (from our perspective). Everyone who achieved great things from God had to keep going despite delay and discouragement.
3. **Building the wall of King's Church (1 Thessalonians 5:25, Romans 15:30).** Leaders bear a unique brunt of this and need your help and prayers. Leaders will call for help like Nehemiah's trumpet: prayer meetings, volunteer requests, etc.

## Questions

- Can you think of times in your life when you have been particularly aware of the need to persevere in your faith? This may have been because of overt opposition or not.
- How are Christians to consider our enemies? How is Nehemiah's example helpful, and are there any ways that Jesus has changed this since then?
- Which of the three enemy strategies Raphael mentioned tends to be particularly troubling to you?
- Persevering cannot be done in isolation: how does this small group encourage you? What could it do (in meetings and relationships) that you might be helped by?
- Raphael mentioned three walls we should be looking to build: personal growth, dreams/purposes/goals, and King's Church. What practical step could you take in each of these areas to keep building?