

Nehemiah – Leadership Principles

Lesson 4 – Opposition

Class Study

Nehemiah needed to deal with constant opposition from Judean neighbors. Nehemiah's leadership skills often are highlighted by his success in shepherding God's people in the face of the constant and sometimes violent opposition that came from the nations bordering Judah. The leaders of this opposition were:

- 1) Sanballat was the governor of Samaria. When Assyria conquered Israel (northern tribes) they took many Israelites into captivity and replaced them with people from elsewhere. The Jews at Jesus time thought of the Samaritans as half-breeds and looked down on them. The hatred between Jews and Samaritans was significant.
- 2) Tobias apparently was the Persian official over the territory of Ammon, since he is called "the Ammonite servant (of Artaxerxes)." Like Sanballat, he at times acted independently to oppose Nehemiah or to insinuate himself into powerful circles in Judah (6:17-19; 13:4-8) Tobias also had a close relationship with Eliashib the priest (13:4-7). (See number 4 below for further information.)
- 3) The Arab ruler Geshem may have been in charge of a northern Arabian confederacy that controlled vast areas from northeast Egypt to northern Arabia and southern Palestine. Geshem may have been opposed to Nehemiah's development of an independent kingdom because he feared that it might interfere with his lucrative spice trade.

From the time that Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem to the completion of its wall, these enemies devised plots designed to stop Nehemiah and the Judeans. The following verses teach us about opposition to our leadership.

1. 2:10
 - a. How was this situation a problem for them?

 - b. What similar situations have you experienced?

2. 2:19-20
 - a. How do his previous actions help to minimize this problem?

 - b. How does the fact that he knows the Scripture well help him in this situation?

3. 4:1-14
 - a. Verses 1-3 – The opposition intensified their resistance. What strategies did they employ?
 - b. Verses 4-6 – What was Nehemiah's response to this situation?
 - c. Verses 7-8 – What are the next steps by the enemy?
 - d. Verse 9 – What counter move did Nehemiah make?
 - e. Verses 10-12 – What or who became the enemy now?
 - f. Verses 13-14 – What was Nehemiah's response?
 - g. What are some major learnings you can take from this section?

4. 6:17-19

Despite the completion of the wall and the discouragement of the surrounding peoples, Tobiah remained subversively active in Judean affairs, posing a continual threat to Nehemiah's leadership. These verses and this topic will be studied in a later lesson.