

Rebuilding with God: Facing Opposition

Nehemiah 4 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 17 October 2021

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: What's the farthest you've been out in nature (and away from people)? Describe the experience.

Worship: [Romans 8:31-35](#) (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?*)

Sermon Summary for [Nehemiah 4](#) (*Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

Most of us will do whatever we can to avoid conflict. But it's a reality we must accept if we are to follow Christ. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matt 5:10) God knows we will face persecution when we engage in the mending work of the Gospel. As Peter wrote, "Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you" (1 Peter 4:12). Modern churches often gloss over the truth that the world will resist, push back, and even persecute those who seek to serve God and further His Kingdom. Nehemiah demonstrates for us how to face such opposition to renewal, what to expect, and how to handle it.

I. From where will opposition to renewal come?

External Opposition // As Tim Keller wrote, "There will always be approach/avoidance issues with the unbelieving world around us, toward God and toward us as his people of the kingdom." Following Christ is an assault on the pride of non-believers – telling them that there is a better way to live, that each of us is more broken and in deeper need of God's grace than we ever realized. Serving God lessens others' ability to sit comfortably in our fallen world. And for that, they will oppose those seeking to live the Christian life.

Internal Opposition // The threats of pride and power can take hold within the church too. Meaning ridicule and opposition are an internal threat as well. It often creeps in as we place people at the heart of God's mission instead of Christ – manifesting when we compare or deride other churches, other pastors, other Bible studies as being less than our own. As if God can only work through us or our own group of Christians. It's jealousy; it's insecurity; it's arrogance and pettiness. Nehemiah shows that such internal opposition can also be a sign of fear and a lack of faith. It's doubting that God will "hold up His end of the bargain" and show up when He is needed most.

II. What shapes will opposition to renewal take?

Contempt // Satan loves to throw contempt at us, both through others and through his accusations within our own hearts. The key is to admit our weakness in advance, to laugh at the contempt, to say to those voices of ridicule (especially those inside our own head), "You're right: I am weak. And deeply flawed. More than you know! But, God is strong in my weakness! He will provide strength in me – or despite me – to do whatever He is calling me to do."

Mockery // It's inevitable when you step out in faith to pursue God's renewal. We are going to be mocked when we pray, when we sacrificially give, or show justice and mercy. Jesus received such mockery from all sides – from the Devil in the wilderness, from religious leaders as He was condemned to die, and from the crowds as He walked to Calvary. He bore it all, and because we are one with Him, we can face mockery with hope and assurance.

Fear & Doubt // Doubt that is fear-based is crippling. So we must go to God with our fears, with childlike trust, and then watch how He works through us – even despite or against us – to make His Kingdom come in all the earth.

Threats of Assault // Few understand the real, physical threat for identifying with Christ that's encountered by believers in Iraq, North Korea, China and numerous regions in Africa. But in God's economy, all of the opposition is intended to hem us in to Himself. No one wants to be hemmed in by physical threat, but if the surrounding is hemming us in unto God ([Ps 139:4-6](#)), then we can endure. For He is our fortress, our walls of strength.

III. How will we stand against opposition to renewal?

Prayer // Jesus tells us to pray – fervently, specifically, continually – and that we should never give up. It's a sign of faith to continue to pray and trust in the face of opposition, hoping for Gospel transformation and healing.

Work // Nehemiah is utterly dependent on God ([Ps 127](#)). But in that dependence, he gets to work and faithfully keeps at it with an awareness of the threats against His serving God's Kingdom.

Discussion Questions (*You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.*)

External and Internal Opposition to Kingdom renewal

- Paul presents reasons why opposition arises to good work. Before reviewing those, think together as a CG: Why do you think opposition arises when good work is being done?
- What forms of opposition were Nehemiah and the wall builders facing?
 - Have you experienced this type of opposition when doing Kingdom work with God's people? What form did this take? Describe the experience.

What shapes will opposition to renewal take?

- In the reading, what did the physical opposition look like?
 - What were the mental forms of opposition – both self-imposed and from others?
- Which of these forms of opposition do you relate to? Are there some you've been guilty of in the past?
 - Are there types of opposition from the story that you have trouble relating to? If so, explain why.

How will we stand against opposition to Kingdom renewal?

- What do you feel and think when the idea of "praying for the defeat of enemies" is presented?
 - Who were they praying against in this story?
 - What enemies can we pray against together?
 - In what ways can we be praying for each other and for the Church?
 - How can we as a congregation keep showing up to "Rebuild the Walls"?
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Prayer

For this week's prayer guide click [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: Generous Service

TWO22 in Central Asia

Since 2018, PCC has supported TWO22 – a multi-national movement to see 2% of Central Asia profess faith in Christ by the year 2022. Leaders from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have united in pursuit of this mission in places where Christians experience a great deal of persecution.

This past year, Sasha Kim, a church planter we support in Kyrgyzstan, was able to put on a conference for the leaders and church members involved in TWO22. Nearly 800 people attended; Sasha described the experience as life changing for many team members. This conference happened in part due to the support PCC received from our Easter Give offering. Because of the generosity of our PCC family, we were able to reach 800 people in the middle of a global pandemic. This week, [commit to praying each day for Sasha](#) as they near the end of their TWO22 campaign and set new goals for the next phase of this movement.