

ACPC Bible Studies 2016 Nehemiah 4: 1-23;

Introduction

In chapter 3, Nehemiah details who did which jobs in repairing the walls. That chapter may seem very boring to us. However, it shows that now the people were united. Everyone has a part to play. In the church there are no "slackers", no one who has nothing to offer or nothing to do. In chapter 4, as the building continues, the inevitable happens. Opposition arises. Their enemies do what so often happens. Firstly, they ignore Nehemiah; then they mock and ridicule him and his people; then they get angry and threaten to attack. We see this pattern a lot. We can learn from Nehemiah's response. He does not to attack them. Nehemiah prays. He leaves any condemnation to God. Nevertheless, the people are rightly fearful and Nehemiah also takes very reasonable precautions. In verse 13, he strengthens their city's defences in case they attacked. He tells the people (and us today) what to do in case of war – or any emergency. We do not attack anyone, no matter how offended we feel. When we have to defend ourselves, firstly we don't fear anyone because the Almighty Lord is on our side. Secondly, we prepare well and carefully. Lastly, we don't start a war to test our weapons or show how strong our army is. In verse 14, the people fight to protect their families and homes.

Recognising and resisting opposition

The Devil is very cunning. He does not tell outright lies that everyone will immediately recognise. He tells "half-truths". Sanballat was right that the Jews were "feeble". They couldn't "restore the wall in a day". The destruction was enormous. However, the Devil will never tell the great truth that God will keep his promise to help. The devil's great weapon is discouragement through mocking criticism. Moreover, the opposition has no authority to stop the building. Nehemiah both prays and acts. He sets up a "guard" to watch for an attack.

Notes

1. v.6 "all their heart" or "a mind to work": They are committed mind body and soul
2. Rubbish. The walls were destroyed over 100 years earlier. A lot of rubbish had collected up.

Questions

1. When a country is threatened by an army, what should we do?
2. What is Sanballat really afraid of?
3. What are some examples of "half-truths" that we sometimes hear?
4. What "discouragements" and "mocking criticisms" do we sometimes hear?
5. "The greatest attacks come when we are half way there." Why? What does this mean?
6. Look at verse 13. This is at the most dangerous and vulnerable time. What does Nehemiah do? Why does he do and say this?

Conclusion

The key to this chapter is that the walls were half completed. The completion of the task was coming but it was still a long way off. This is like half-time in a rugby match. You can still either lose the game or win well in the second half. The people are getting tired and discouraged. Also, the opposition now come to see the possibility that God's people will in fact succeed in rebuilding the walls. They intensify their efforts in "the second half". This is a critical, difficult time. However, Nehemiah prays, trusts God, remembers the power of the Lord and encourages his people. This is a pattern that we should always remember too.