

Nehemiah 6:15-19 – The World Hates a Strong Church

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Handfuls, Gill, Gaebelin, Armstrong, Barnes, Geneva, Clarke, Poole, Henry, Trapp, Delitzsch, JFB, Gray, INT, Beloved in Jesus Christ: It is strange, in a way, to see the foolishness of the world in how they treat Christians.

If the world were wise, they would treat Christians royally, as you are children of the God of heaven – who is also King of the World!

But the world doesn't have God's wisdom.

One of the places to **see this is in China where the government routinely persecutes Christians** – especially Reformed Christians. Christians work hard, pay their taxes, help their neighbors, don't get drunk, don't steal, vote in elections, and serve in the army. **Christians are model citizens.**

Why would the government not support and protect Christians? **Why would they work against their own self-interest?**

They work against Christians because **unbelievers have an intrinsic contempt and hatred of all things Christian.**

That was what Nehemiah faced 2500 years ago! And things have not changed.

Let's hear today about the hatred, and ultimately, opposition of non-believers, to the church of Jesus Christ.

Our headings are:

The Walls were repaired

The World was disappointed

The Wretches continued to hate

Our goals are: **That you will learn to expect regular opposition when you live as a Christian, but that you will recognize the great praise you bring to the Savior when you endure opposition.**

The Walls Were Repaired

15 So **the wall was finished** on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, **in fifty-two days.**

1. In 52 days the walls of Jerusalem were repaired, the were gates put in place, and the building adjoining the temple was repaired.

With these things done, the worship of Yahweh was restored and the Jews had physical and financial security again.

2. This work was completed very quickly because the people loved God and so had a mind to work.

These walls that were ignored for more than 100 years were repaired in 52 days!

Of course, the **Jews were repairing damaged parts of the wall**, not building it from scratch. They did not have to quarry stones and much of the materials they needed were nearby.

3. But even with their mind to work, God was helping them, so their ability could have miraculously been increased by God.

God caused the Israelites shoes and clothes not to wear out though they were used for 40 years!

God caused Jericho's walls to fall down with the shouts of the Jews!

God used Moses' arms to make the sun stand still!

God gave Samson strength to push down buildings!

God's used Gideon's 300 men to destroy the Midianite army!

So repairing the walls in 52 days was nothing.

4. Lessons:

a. There is little to limit man's work if he is determined to work hard and well and be strengthened by God. This is true for work around the house or work for the house of God.

b. Building Jerusalem's walls was a picture of the building of Jesus' kingdom. It was pictured many times in the Scripture.

Daniel 9:25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

And **what rejoicing there will be when Christ's kingdom comes in fullness!**

And what **disappointment the world has as Christ's kingdom comes!**

c. The true reason you would work hard for the kingdom, is not because you are determined, but because you know how God loved you in Jesus and made you a covenant member so you want to live for him.

You join with covenant members to do the work of Christ everywhere.

d. Concurrent with the hard work of the people, being bold and determined, was the faithful leadership of men like Nehemiah!

They did not allow threats to detract them.

They regularly encouraged the people.

The goal was too great to be distracted. Serving the coming Savior was key!

Similarly, **faithful pastors and elders are essential to the kingdom's progress.**

These are the men we need...not those who are trying to be popular or get their faces on TV or sell more books.

The World Was Disappointed

16 And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

1. The enemies of God's people hated the fact the walls were repaired and their hearts became disheartened.

These enemies included more than Sanballat, Tobiah the Ammonite, Geshem the Arab, and the Ashdodites; many of the surrounding nations also hated that the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt.

They were very much like their father:

Genesis 4:5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

The cities of Samaria, the capital city of the northern 10 ½ tribes of Israel, were not permitted to have their walls restored, but Judah was permitted to repair their walls!

How envious of the righteous are the wicked!

2. Their disheartening was because they knew the work of repairing the walls of Jerusalem was done by God, against whom they could fight but could not win.

They must have been so ashamed! Their spirits were broken.

They said that if a dog ran on the wall, it would fall down, but now it stood strong.

Their declaration would have destroyed them before the face of the people when they were proven wrong.

3. Instead of the wicked rejoicing, the people of God had a song to sing – a song with which to praise God!

Psalm 126: 2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." 3 **The LORD has done great things for us,** And we are glad.

17 Also in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them. 18 For many in Judah **were pledged to him,** because **he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah** the son of Arah, and his son **Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam** the son of Berechiah.

4. In the middle of construction, treasonous leaders in Judah worked against Nehemiah and the interest of the nation.

Many of them were not just friends of Tobiah, the foreign enemy of God's people, but in fact they **pledged – taking an oath of support to him,** working against God's people.

(Think of the 3-Self Patriotic Church in China or the Russian Orthodox Church.)

How could Judah's nobles do such a thing?

5. More, Tobiah was son-in-law to Shechaniah the priest who had tried to lure Nehemiah to violate God's law and have him killed.

And his son was married to one of the builders of the walls.

You can see how this compromised the people of God by their intermarriages with those who did not love God or have God's interest at heart!

Tobiah the Ammonite was united by marriage to many of the Jews (not just

Shechaniah), something Jews were warned against.

6. Lessons:

a. The world will always be downcast when the church is built up. Envy eats them!

Don't think you can get along with people in the world.

Acquaintance? Yes. But close fellowship? Never.

You have two different loyalties.

People of the world only pretend to be your friends when they are not in charge.

When they are, they will become your enemy! That has been proven time and time again.

b. Enemies from the inside the church are more dangerous than enemies from the outside.

Imagine the sense of loss when you can't count on your church leaders to stand up for truth and discipline, but they would rather compromise for their own benefit, or when pastors join with wicked forces and hurt Christ's body.

c. See the danger of intermarriage with non-believers. Henry: A sinful love leads to a sinful league.

You always have to make compromises. You may not think you will, but it always ends up being the case.

BTW, **children usually follow the non-believing parent!** Sinning is easier!

The Wretches Continued to Hate

19 Also they **reported his good deeds before** me, and **reported my words to him.** **Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.**

1. The wicked people (insiders) who collaborated with Tobiah (outsiders), continued to bring good news about all Tobiah was doing to Nehemiah, in a continuous attempt to get him to submit to Tobiah.

Maybe they wanted to make Nehemiah believe Tobiah was not a bad man after all. But this is the natural progression of close family relations with the wicked.

Proverbs 28:4 Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them.

This is to be expected.

2. At the same time, these wicked insiders were reporting, likely with lies, what Nehemiah was saying in order to get favors from Sanballat, who was trying to kill Nehemiah.

3. And Tobiah, whose name meant “God is good,” did not show goodness to Nehemiah, but consistently tried to frighten him so he would stop supervising the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

4. If you look at 1Samuel, the Philistines, when they captured the Ark of the Covenant from God’s people and found out how angry God was with their actions, quickly met and wisely set about to restore the ark back to God’s people.

1Samuel 6:1 Now the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. 2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it to its place." 3 So they said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but by all means return it to Him with a trespass offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed from you."

These Philistine pagans knew better, but the Samaritans, the Arabs, and the Ammonites – all related to the people of God – chose not to do any better.

5. Lessons:

a. If you mix with wicked people, especially if you are married to them, you will feel pressured to defend them. So avoid being close to the wicked. (This applies to friends as well.) They will make you drop your guard...all in the name of “wanting to get along.”

(This is why you must not be tied to any political party! You will feel the pressure to defend everything they hold to! Be tied to God!)

b. Stand up for the side of truth – God’s truth. If you do, you won’t feel the pressure to compromise.

You may suffer for speaking the truth. You might lose friends. You might lose your job. But you will honor Christ, your Savior, and you will find reward!

c. Watch out for people who have one foot in the church and one in the world.

It is a dangerous place to be. They can't commit to serving either God or money!
Don't marry them! They are fakes.

Conclusion:

The world hated a strong, recovering church in Jerusalem. They did not want the Jews to be secure, prosper, and worship God.

That **opposition came from outside the church and inside the church.**

And these wretches who hated Christ's kingdom so much **never stopped attacking it.**

Brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus:

1. Even though the church of Jesus Christ in North America is weak right now, the wicked still hate it and will continue to do all it can to completely destroy it.

The wicked have a commitment to get people on their side...to move to the dark and devilish side.

2. Commit today to join with your brothers and sisters to help rebuild Christ's floundering church.

Fight against internal and external threats to her.

Spend your time, tithes, and talents to do so.

Persist in fighting the opposition.

Christ expects nothing less! He wants the praise of men.

3. Ask God to make you strong so you can defend her.

What will make you strong?

You must **reflect back on God's holiness, your sinfulness, and the wonderful work of Jesus** on the cross for sinners!

Nothing else will make you work more than to reflect on the cross.

Finally: Maybe you have opposed the church! **Know what the end of opposing the church is: Hell.** But if you want a change of destiny, ask God to count Christ's death as yours. Yes, you might have to face some opposition in this world if you are a Christian, but God will help you through opposition and he is saving a place in heaven for you.