Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall

Nehemiah 2:11–6:19

BIBLE BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Scoping Out the Opposition

Nehemiah 2:10 hints that the task facing Nehemiah would not be easy. At least two of the leaders of people living near Jerusalem—Sanballat and Tobiah—were unhappy about Nehemiah's plans. They didn't want anyone to help the Israelites.

Nehemiah inspected the wall in secret because he wanted to keep his intentions to himself until the time was right to reveal them. He already knew about the opposition of Sanballat and Tobiah, but he didn't know if other opposition existed, even within the city of Jerusalem. After conducting an exploratory examination of the ruined wall, he gathered the Jewish officials and told them of his plan, of God's blessing, and of the king's help. And they were ready to start building!

A Series of Challenges

After the work began, it wasn't long before opposition arose. Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, just to the north of Jerusalem, mocked the Jews. Tobiah, probably the leader of the Ammonites just to the east of Jerusalem, stood beside Sanballat in his opposition.

The secret of the Jews' early success in rebuilding the wall is revealed in Nehemiah 4:6: "the people worked with all their heart." When the wall was about halfway rebuilt and the gaps were being closed, Sanballat and Tobiah met with other enemies of the Jews and plotted their next steps. The Jews responded by praying and posting guards. Half the men worked, as the other half—well-armed—stood guard.

From within the wall, another problem lurked: impoverished Jews in need of loans were being further extorted for more money. Nehemiah quickly rectified the situation.

The final opposition to the rebuilding came in two phases: first an attempt to draw Nehemiah out so that he could be injured or killed, and then an attempt to deceive him into showing fear and weakness by hiding in the Temple. Both attempts failed, and the rebuilding continued.

Despite the challenges, the wall was rebuilt in only 52 days! The people had accepted Nehemiah's goal, and God helped them overcome the challenges along the way.

The Jesus Connection

Jesus was never one to shy away from challenges. He was constantly challenged by religious authorities, and he met those challenges head-on.

What challenges are you facing? How do you need God's help to face them? Read Nehemiah 6:9. Then pray that God will strengthen you as you combat the challenges in your life. You can write your prayer here.