

**Word notes Sunday 02/10/2011 Tony Hodge**  
**Nehemiah Chap 4: Dealing with opposition**

**Summary** (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

**Key Text: Nehemiah 4**

When we're involved in God's work of restoration, either in our own lives or in advancing the Kingdom, opposition is inevitable and it was no different for Nehemiah as he leads the people in restoration of Jerusalem's walls. What happened and how did he deal with it?

1, Ridicule, vv1-3. Sanballat and Tobiah step up the insults and ridicule the work the Jews have done. Most if not all of us have suffered this in one way or another personally and may have experienced it coming against us as a fellowship too. The aim is to put us off, to keep us ineffective and no threat to the enemy.

2, Prayer, vv4-9. Nehemiah's first response is prayer! He is urgent, passionate and realistic in his prayers asking God to expose the weaknesses of the enemy – to visit on them what they attacked the Jews with. Anger is not wrong so long as we remember not to let it control our actions - "in your anger do not sin" Eph 4:26. He gets the people involved in prayer too (v9).

3, Discouragement vv10-12. Even so some of the enemies taunts and threats get through and the people are discouraged. The enemy also steps up his actions and threatens violence.

4, Nehemiah acts, vv13-20, mobilising the people, restating his faith in what God has said and the enemy is frustrated. Not content with this Nehemiah initiates a solid defence while the work continues.

5, Sacrifice is needed, vv21-23. Things will not be the same, they will need to amend their working practices and their rest-time to remain secure. Looking forward to chapter 6 and v1 we see Tobiah et al still taunting Nehemiah and trying to get him outside the safety of the city so they can get him!

**Application** (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

1. This chapter tells a story of rumours and threats, blatant taunting and danger as the people get involved in God's work. Have you ever encountered ridicule or opposition similar to this, either spiritual opposition or physical?

2. What can you imagine some of the workers in Nehemiah might have written in their diaries that night after experiencing the taunts and threats and followed Nehemiah's directions?

3. What advice would those same workers give to people today, who are facing ridicule for doing the right thing?

4, Read 1 Peter 5:6-10. Relating this to the Nehemiah passage:

(a) What steps can we take to keep ourselves secure from the enemy's attacks?

(b) What does that mean for you personally, what might you have to change to ensure the security of your spiritual walls? Perhaps you might write these down and share them in pairs for prayer and accountability.

**Witness** (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Many things seem to dilute the message of hope we have in Jesus – one of these is the competing claims of other religions and even atheism. What do you think makes the gospel stand out from other faiths? How can we explain this to others in an intriguing and convincing way? If we do all we can what can we rely on God to do that only He can?