

I Am Doing Important Work, and Cannot Come Down

– Nehemiah 6

Suggested Questions from the Text

Read through the passage from Sunday. These questions are designed to help you consider the text as you read.

Nehemiah 5:1-7 – *Come, let's meet together...*

- What challenges do you face in your private, personal time, which attempt to distract you from God?
- How can our good works be affected by lies and opposition that try to discredit us?

Nehemiah 5:8-14 – *There is nothing to these rumours...*

- What lies and rumours attempt to attack your image, identity, purpose and mission?
- How can lies, doubts and fears take our focus away from God and cause us to dwell on the wrong things?
- What practical methods can you use to continually remind yourself of the truth God says about you?
- What Biblical truths do you dwell on? How do these help during times of attack and opposition?

Nehemiah 5:15-19 – *...this task has been accomplished by our God.*

- Do you give God opportunity to prove His faithfulness, or do you limit His work to what you can achieve?
- Have you made steps of faith, and seen God step in? What effect did this have on your friends / family seeing this?

Sermon Overview (I Am Doing Important Work, and Cannot Come Down)

Nehemiah has been tasked to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. He has worked on the wall, has faced opposition in his task, and has been moved by compassion to care for the needy in the city. As we continue reading the account of Nehemiah, his opponents continue to challenge his mission, but Nehemiah does not stop.

The Work is Finished (verse 15-16).

The work is completed – and the nations around them have lost their confidence. The job has been completed in 52 days, by a diverse group of Israelites – not by expert professional builders. The intimidation does not come from the expertise of man. The nations around haven't lost their confidence because the best of the best have installed a great wall – none of them were experienced at this task. The nations looked in - and saw that it had been completed by God (v16).

We can often make decisions to start a task on the basis of our ability to achieve it. We only take on a job if we know we can be successful in it – and our success reflects how much we are able to achieve. However, God calls us to take steps which mean that we need Him to intervene in order for us to have success. The people rebuilding the wall were obedient amateurs. The disciples were uneducated idiots. Yet it is clear they have God on their side. When we stop relying on ourselves, and trust in God – trusting in His command more than our talents - we bring glory to Him and His faithfulness.

Opposition in Private and in Public (verses 7-13).

Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem have heard about Nehemiah's success in this task – and they scheme to distract him from completing his task of restoring Jerusalem. The opposition attempts to call him off – and tempts him to deal with them in secret. Rather than be distracted by this dealing – Nehemiah focusses on what God has called him to. Knowing what God has called him to, knowing the purpose that God has planned, Nehemiah could refuse the distraction – and a plot that could have been harmful for him. We need to be like Nehemiah, prepared to defend the good and important work that God has called us to in the private moments of opposition; not to give ourselves to fruitless and harmful distractions - even when no-one else would find out.

The opposition does not stop there. Four times, the same proposal came in secret, but Nehemiah refused. By the fifth time, the message came in public – so that other people would see. Nehemiah's image and identity is challenged, and his motives are attacked. The message comes encased in rumour and gossip in order to discredit Nehemiah – to both the nations around us, and the people who are following him. Nehemiah rests on God in the face of these challenges. He knows his identity is in God alone. He knows the purpose of his mission. Nehemiah knows that even if all the nations are saying one thing about him – no matter how much they all agree on it – as God has said something different, it is in Him that he trusts.

Nehemiah's Response to Opposition (verses 14-19)

Nehemiah responds to the attacks. There are four things which he does to rebuke the opposition. He recognises they are lies – that there is nothing to them. He recognises their motive, to intimidate and distract. He recognises the specific lies – and reaffirms the truth – the lie that the wall will not be completed, while the wall is built. He recognises where his hope comes from – that God will strengthen his hand.

Nehemiah is so sure of the truth of what God says. When opposition comes, the first thing Nehemiah does is to notice how it does not match up to God – and he knows how to stand against it. The best way to respond to opposition like Nehemiah faces – is to know the truth completely. By spending time knowing the truth, what God has said about us, and what He has called us to do, we can be sure in the face of opposition and can recognise the lies and dangers. If we don't know the truth, we can be fooled by the lies, and be fearful when opposition attacks. Yet, when we know the truth – the entirety of God's Word - we are not swayed by untruths.

We need to set our minds on things above to be full of truth (**Colossians 3:2**) – considering who Jesus is, what God has done, the purposes God has, and the view God has of us. We should dwell on whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, on moral excellence and anything praiseworthy (**Philippians 4:8**). Jesus is the ultimate example of these things - and is the one worthy of our focus. To know the truth of your image, your motive, and your purpose – set your mind on things above and the things He says about you. Knowing these truths, we can recognise the lies that attempt to distract us. Setting our minds on the important work that God has called us to, we can dismiss the opposition.