

I. Introduction and Church Informality

We are very informal here. We do not have any rules to follow other than, "Please keep your seat while I am preaching." Even that is hard sometimes. But anyway, we just have fun. Are you not glad you can have fun and be saved? I am, and we just thank God for all that the Lord does here. We are very informal. We just have fun loving each other, loving the Word of God.

As I was saying, as you probably have deduced, we are very informal here. We are glad you are here, and we just have fun. But when it comes to opening up the book, we get serious about the Word of God. We are so thankful that God has given us the ability to have a Bible where we can just really focus on the Word of God.

Nehemiah 2. As you know, we have been studying the book of Nehemiah. We have been coming at it for a long time from the aspect of the gates that go into the city. We talked about how those gates really represent open opportunities for our church. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was built around the city of Jerusalem. Into that city, there were nine gates that they went in, and each one of those gates was a different gate that had a different name. We showed how that in the New Testament, God's program is the local church, and the nation of Israel in the Old Testament is a picture of that. Just as the city of God had gates that went in, every church should have openings that people come in through. We talked about the Sheep Gate, sacrifice; the Water Gate, the preaching ministry; we talked about the aspect of the Valley Gate, compassion—all the aspects that a church needs to really function. So we stayed with that nine or ten weeks, came through each one of those gates, and spent a couple of weeks on each one of them.

Last week, we talked about the inside, behind the scenes. When God builds something, like a church or your life, He not only does it outwardly—that is what we see—but there is always an inward work. We went behind the scenes last week, and we looked at Nehemiah, one of the most incredible stories in all the Bible. God put Nehemiah in the right place, at the right time, with the right circumstances to do the work for God. We made that parallel to where we are at in our own lives: God giving us the right men, in the right place, at the right time to build a work for God. The parallels are unbelievable. We saw how God's men and God's women need to have a burden. We saw last week how that burden turns into their prayer. That prayer brings them to the place where they have the wisdom of God to understand what God is really doing. The whole thing is built around the right timing: God, in His infinite wisdom and His sovereign knowledge, putting things together in a fashion that get done in God's timing.

Now that left us last week with a very happy ending. I honestly would like to stop the message right there and stop the series right there and say, "Hey, everything is great. Here we are. God wanted a city built. God got some men, some women at the right time, in the right place, and at the right timing of God, with the right burden, the right prayer. We have looked at the gates. The gates are built. Everything is fine. Everything is ready to go. God's plan is up and running. The nation of Israel is back in the land. God's promises are going to be fulfilled. Everything is going

to be good," and we could end it right there. But that is not reality. Yet the message I am going to preach today would be a message that everybody needs. If you are a young Christian here, you certainly need this message. If you are an old Christian here, you certainly need to remember this because you probably already know it, but repetition is the price of learning.

II. The Reality of Opposition

We come down here in Nehemiah 2. Verses 1 through 9 are really where we focused last week. We talked about how Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer, how Nehemiah was in a place where he really had a burden for the program and the ministry of God, and how God, in the right timing and all the right circumstances, brought him to the place where He put the men around him. Then he is in there before the king. The king says, "You look at the king." He said that to Nehemiah, and Nehemiah tells him in Nehemiah 2:5:

Nehemiah 2:5

And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

He tells the king, "I am burdened because my city, the city of my God, the focal point of all history, lies in ruin." The king says, "Well, go on back and build it." He said, "I will even pay for it." So when you come down through verses 6, 7, 8, and 9, you get all of that. Nehemiah 2:9 says this:

Nehemiah 2:9

Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

Everything is perfect. You have now the city is going to be built. The walls are going to be put up. The gates are going to be back on. The king is going to pay for it. He had a burden. God brought the right man at the right timing, and seemingly everything is in the right place. Just like here, we have the revival, we have the people, we have everything. Everybody is excited, and we are ready to go. We are going to build a work for God. Let us just stop right there and make it a happy ending. Sorry, we cannot. Nehemiah 2:9 is great, but look at Nehemiah 2:10:

Nehemiah 2:10

When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

We are going to talk today about the opposition that comes. We have seen the gates being built. We have seen all of the things happen that are great. But now we have got to deal with the reality of the ministry. We have got to deal with the reality of you and I as individuals coming together, building a ministry, building a church, reaching people for Christ. The reality of that is the devil is not going to sit still when that happens. Some of you already, I know from personally talking with you, have felt the opposition. Opposition is scary. Today, and this is probably going to be a

two-week message, all I want to do is help you understand opposition. I want you to know that whatever you are going through, whatever price right now you are paying to be here.

I do not believe for a minute that the devil is going to come down and just kill us all in church or blow the roof off. That is not how he operates. He is going to be much more subtle than that. When the devil is going to stop this work, if he is going to put the hammer to what God is going to do, and he always tries to do that, history—the movement of history is nothing more than this. I have told you this before: History is nothing more than God having a plan and God moving in a direction to fulfill that plan, and the devil moving in opposition to stop that plan. That is the movement of God. That is the movement of history. That is all that it is. If you can get that basic fact down, then you are halfway there to understanding what you are experiencing. When it comes, even though it is unnerving, and even though you do not like it, and even though it may frighten you, there are some things that we can do. The first thing we can do is simply understand the opposition.

III. Understanding Opposition Through History

If you would go back to the book of Acts, you will find systematically this theory proven. In Acts 2, the Bible says that God begins to do some great things. The Bible says that they gladly received the Word of God, and there is great revival.

Acts 2:41

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

You come to Acts 4:1, and bang, the Sadducees stand up, and they resist it. God moves, the devil moves.

Acts 4:1

And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

In Acts 4:33, it talks about the apostles preaching with great power.

Acts 4:33

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 5:17, the Sadducees rise up with indignation to stop them.

Acts 5:17

Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

In Acts 5:15, the Bible says there is great healing, and the Word of God is preached, and people are being saved.

Acts 5:15

Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

Acts 5:40, the Sadducees raise up the scribes and the Pharisees, and they beat the apostles and try to stop them.

Acts 5:40

And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

In Acts 6:8, God brings Stephen to the forefront. What a great man. He preaches probably the greatest message in all the New Testament to the nation of Israel. He tells them what they have done, and the Bible says that this was the opportunity that they could have, that they could receive the kingdom of God.

Acts 6:8

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

He preaches to them all down through that chapter. In Acts 7:54, the devil rises up the religious leaders, and they kill Stephen.

Acts 7:54

When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

All through history, starting in the book of Acts, which really starts church history, that is what you find. You find that God moves in a direction to do something, and the devil moves in opposition to stop it. It is true in history. We do not have time to give you a complete history lesson this morning, but I will tell you this: you can go back and study the Reformation when God cracked the Roman church and sent out and made it possible for the Gospel to go around the world. The devil started a Counter-Reformation, and 200 years after that, the Reformation is pretty much dead.

In America, to give you a quick history lesson, we have talked about this on Bible study a couple of times. In America, you find that God starts on the East Coast, and there are seven great revivals, great awakenings that come across from the 1600s right up to the 1900s, of the Spirit of God bringing revival to this country. In every one of them, you find one of the American cults coming in right after the revival takes place to take the edge off and to stop it. So do not be surprised. Do not be surprised if you decide to do what is right. If you fall in love with the Word of God, if you say, "Oh, I really want to make God the God of my life, and I really want to do what is right," do not be surprised if you decide to do it, and bang, the opposition comes.

IV. Adversity Builds or Reveals Character

My job is to help you understand it, and really understanding it is the key. I am not afraid of anything I can understand. It is when you do not understand it. It is the unknown. It is the "what is going on" that really frightens you. For you and for me as Christians, it is no problem dealing with things when we understand it. The first thing I want you to understand is a great verse. You need to write this one down.

2 Timothy 3:12

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Let me translate that for you down where you can get it: If you are going to serve God, you are going to get it in the neck. You are going to get it. Well, why should you not? He paid the price on the cross for you to live. Why should you not pay a little bit down here to serve Him? You will. You will. My job, as I said, is to help you understand that. My job is to help you get to the place where you do not fear that and to give you some insight into how to deal with it because it is dealable. It is something that when opposition comes, you just need to be smarter than the opposition, and you get smarter than the opposition by simply understanding what the Bible says. So we are going to talk about it today.

For a Christian, every adverse thing in this life will have one or the other effect in your life. It simply will. For a Christian—not an unsaved man or woman, you are out there, you are on your own—but for a child of God, when adversity comes, it will have either one effect or the other effect in your life. Adversity comes for a child of God, and it will either build character or it will reveal character. Simple as that.

When adversity comes, it will build character in your life in many instances. Character is not something you are born with. I mean, we are all born characters, but the character I am talking about, you are not born with. You develop it. You get a good mom and dad with a good family, or you get good teaching and you get training, and you instill and you build character in our lives to the place where we become. You have children. I have a little grandbaby. You have little kids that are babies. Some of you have kids that you are raising right now. Let me tell you something, do not deceive yourself. Those kids, as sweet as they look, as sweet as they are, as much as they bring joy and pleasure into your life, as much as you love them and you would do anything for them, the greatest gift you can give them is character. You do not give it to them by just standing by and letting it come happen. It does not happen that way. Character is something that you build. I am against raising kids where you take all the adversity out of their life. My job is to protect them as a parent. That is your job. We need to look and protect our kids. But let me tell you something, when you put them in a glass bubble that you devoid them of any adversity, they grow up in an adverse world not knowing how to deal with it and not building character because I am telling you, adversity builds character. It makes you forced to look at the circumstances of life and do the right thing.

Adversity, in many cases, will reveal character. Character inside you means that when you are out there on your own, you see, when you take time as a parent, when I take time as a pastor

right now to take young Christians, just like you sweet moms take time to build character into your little babies, when I take time as a pastor with you young Christians, you young couples who want to do what is right, that maybe do not have all the ideas and the handles yet on family, Bible, your life, but you want to. When I take the time to build character into you, and that is what we are doing right now. That is what the Word of God does. On Thursday night, you call it Bible study. I call it character building. We take the Word of God and we put it into your life. We teach you things about the Bible. We teach you things on Sunday morning about the Word of God. You are here to get it. My friend, when you are here to get it, and you get it, and it builds character, someplace down the line, you are going to be tested. When you are tested, that character that has been built now will be revealed then. All things in life. I do not know of a third thing. All things in life for a child of God that are adverse will either build character or reveal character.

The mark of a real strong Christian, the mark of a child of God that is mature, is not when everything goes good. Who cannot love God when it is good? Who can enjoy the things of God and give God thanks when everything is going good in life? That is why the Bible says, "In all things give thanks." You give God thanks in everything, even the bad things. You do that because you recognize that through opposition is how you grow. We are going to talk about the different kinds of opposition in just a little bit, but I am setting the stage here and telling you that opposition, opposition to you wanting to do what is right, is absolutely okay. The mark of a child of God is not when everything is going good that you can get along with God. It is like raising your kids. Somebody says to me, "Well, we have really good kids." They sit there and they come to church every Sunday, and they look like they are good kids. But I have learned this: You know what proof of godly kids are? It is not the fact that they are here this morning, though I am glad you are here. You know the proof that your kids are really where they need to be? It is not the fact that you can get them to come to church. It is the fact that when things go wrong and you have to deal with them, how do they respond? That is the test.

In the test of what every day, I know pastors right now who have kids that are out in the world, and they think because they are living at home and what they have done is they want to save face in all the area of ministry with the people in their churches. So what they have done, they have created a palatable situation where the boy or the girl can live at home, and everything can go fine. It seems like it is fine until the kid wants to do this, and the dad says, "You cannot do that." Then you see the real issue. We kid ourselves into thinking as long as everything is nice and our kids are home and we are having a great time and everything, that that is really godly Christianity. No, the real test for a child is like the real test for your marriage. It is like the real test for you as an individual when your world goes to pieces, and you are forced with a right or wrong situation. It is how you respond to it. Certainly, I am not responsible for the bad situations that happen in life to me, no more than you are to you. I am not responsible when bad things happen in my life, and you are not responsible when bad things happen to you. But what we are responsible for is how we react to them. That comes back to character, building character.

That is why I tell everybody that comes into this church, I will spend time with you in the Bible one-on-one. I do not care what you want to talk about. I do not care if we can talk about Santa

Claus, UFOs, the death of Christ, Babylonian capital. I do not care because all of it builds character. Anytime you and I, or you by yourself, or we teach the Bible on Sunday morning or Thursday night or whenever, whenever the Word of God is taught, it produces quality character in your life that you are going to need because the opposition is going to come. When it comes, character then will be tested and revealed. I have watched life for many years now, and I know that is true.

V. The Vulnerability of God's People and the Need for Unity

We are a lot like the nation of Israel. That is why I chose this message about the gates because I saw in its entirety that we as a little church, you and we have here young Christians and old Christians, men and women that have been with me forever who stand on the Word of God. I thank God for you. Then I easily thank God for the young ones that have come in since we have been together. In a short time, God has given us young men, young couples, time and time again, that show up that are good people that just need to be taught the Word of God. I thank God for that, and that is what it is all about.

But we are a lot like the nation of Israel. They were little. We do not have a million-dollar budget a year to do all the things that we should do, could do, would do. Ten people decide not to come to church on our Sunday morning, and it shows. We are vulnerable. We have couples here and people here that are young, they are struggling, they want to learn what is right. They want to do what is right. I am telling you, the opposition is going to come, and the devil is going to try to crush them just like he tried to crush them here. They were vulnerable back there. They were not a big nation like they were when they came out of Egypt. There were not five or six million strong with mighty men of valor. They had been whipped. They had been beaten, and they are down in a world that is totally against them. They are trying to rise up to do the work of God just like you are, just like we are. The devil, as they try to raise up, tries to step them down. They are vulnerable. We are vulnerable. They are trying to do God's work in a world that hated God's work. I am not talking about an unsaved world. I am talking about a Christian world. There are men and women in your life that claim to be Christians that will give you the worst opposition you ever had of trying to do what is right with God. A Christian world that had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof.

As a church, we need to understand, first of all, and Nehemiah understood it, we need to protect the people that God gives us. It is great to have a great time and talk about all the fun we have, and that is good and that is fine, and I am all for that. But the bottom line is we have to protect the children that God gives us, the men and women that God brings in. Nehemiah understood it. That is why in Nehemiah 8:1-8, when he talks about preaching the Word of God, he gathers them together as one man. Ephesians 4, a great book that talks about the church, talks about the unity of the Spirit being one: one Spirit, one calling, one Lord, one faith, one God, one baptism. He says in Nehemiah 8 that they were brought together as one man. He understands that we have to hang together in God's work, or we will hang separately.

I see it. I do not know why pastors cannot see it. I see it in everything. I go out and look over in Africa, and I see all the antelope and the wallabies, the giraffes, the caribou. You know what they do? Their greatest enemy is a lion. The Bible says that our greatest adversity is a lion that is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. You know what those animals do to keep the lion from getting them? Well, they can figure it out. They stay in herds, and they stay tight. The more, I mean, you know what? A lion may be tough, and he may be strong, and he may be the king of the beasts, but have you ever been kicked by an 800-pound water buffalo in the face? It tends to hurt. He may be the king of beasts, but he realizes if he gets in that crowd where all those things can kick him, he is going to come out limping and hungry. Now, if they can figure it out, why cannot we figure it out? Everybody in here is important. Everybody.

I read in the newspaper this morning, maybe some of you saw it, there was a church in town last week that taught their people how to pray for the Chiefs. You saw that in the sports section. There is a church that taught them how to pray for the Chiefs to win. Well, I go even farther than that. I will teach you this: I believe the greatest potential pastor in Kansas City, if he just gets saved—maybe he is saved, I do not know, I cannot speak for him, but I am going to say that he is not—if he would just get saved and turn his emphasis from one thing to the other, the greatest pastor in this city would be Coach Vermeil. You know why Gunther Cunningham failed? You know why Marty Schottenheimer failed? I do not know anything about football. I just like to watch the guy try to get smashed. I do not know anything about it, but I know how to make it work because he is using biblical principles. Remember when Marty was here, when Gunther was here, and I like Gunther, he is my kind of guy, but he did not have the understanding. You know what the first understanding is? The first thing he did is get rid of all the troublemakers, all the guys who were partying out and getting read about them all the time. You know why? Because he understood to win good ballgames takes men with good character. He realized that if you, you know what brings good, you know what good character brings with it? It brings their work ethic. You show up to practice wanting to practice. You do not show up hungover. So he got rid of all the troublemakers. Even the media sees that, they do not understand it. They call them the character guys. They call them the good guys. He got rid of all the bad character. Then he has a bunch of guys that are not saved, but they have good solid moral principles, good work ethic because they have character. Then he molds them into a team as one man. You will never find one guy. The thing I like about him, again, I do not know anything about football. I asked my wife, she knows much more about it than I do. I do not know anything about it, but I know the principles work because he is using the same principles that I am using. You know what? You will never interview one of those guys that will say, "Look what I did, look what I did." You know what they all do? They all say, "Well, it is a team effort. It is a team effort. I would not have made that touchdown if so-and-so did not block for me." You know what? He has them thinking like one man. He has everybody covering everybody else. So why do I think Dick Vermeil stayed up one night or listened to my tapes on Nehemiah and said, "Oh, I know how to build a team"? I would like to think so, but I do not think so. But let me just say this, if the wallabies can figure it out, and Dick Vermeil can figure it out, why cannot we figure it out?

During World War II, I will tell you another one. It is everywhere. In World War II, in the early days of World War II, we were doing daylight bombing over in Europe. The British tried it, and

they said, "Oh, we are not going to do this anymore. We will do it at night," because they were getting shot out of the sky like mosquitoes. But we tried it. We did it. We are going to say, "Oh, we can do it." We were losing. A B-17 had 10 guys in it. There were times when they went out with a force of 200 bombers, and a hundred of them, 1,600 guys, died. The Germans, the Luftwaffe, were just blowing them out of the air. Then an old general, General LeMay, got the idea. "I know how to fix that," he said. So he re-figured the whole flight pattern of all those bombers, and he made them fly in formation where they were not more than 20, 30 feet apart from each other. Because what the Germans were doing, the Luftwaffe were getting high in the sky, and they were coming right down through those bombers, and they were strafing them, and they were coming inside and looping and just shooting the pieces out of them. So LeMay said, "No, no, no, no. You have 800 bombers, all right. You make eight groups, put them 20 feet apart, stagger those groups so no German plane can come down through them. They have to come from the front or from the side or from underneath or from behind, but they cannot just come down through the middle." Because here is an understanding: you have 600 planes. Those 600 planes have 10 guns apiece on them, 50-caliber machine guns. That is 6,000 guns. Those 6,000 guns theoretically can shoot 600 rounds a minute. What brave German pilot is going to dive down through that formation when he knows there are over 4 million bullets coming his way at one time? You could close your eyes and blow them out of the sky, and that is what they were doing. When those pilots started to come, the first time the German Luftwaffe tried that thing, and every gun in that thing, every radio operator, every gunner, tail gunner, ball nose gunner, every one of them called him in coming at 12 o'clock high. Four million machine gun rounds came out that plane. That German went through there and said, "I am going home. I am out of here. That hurt. Where was that stuff coming from?"

Now, if General LeMay can figure out, and you know what? You would walk into the little buildings there where they had their briefing before the missions. You saw these signs, every vintage picture of World War II where you go in and you see inside the barracks, inside the Quonset huts where they have their briefings and the pilots get ready, there is one big sign to remind them over and over again. You know what it was? It was "Fly tight formations." When you fly tight formation, the Germans cannot get inside to shoot us to pieces. Now, if he can figure it out, and Vermeil can figure it out, and the wallabies can figure it out in Africa, why cannot we understand that you and I are in the greatest battle in the history of the universe? Who cares if the Chiefs go to the Super Bowl or not if men and women die and go to hell for all of eternity? Our battle, our warfare, is much bigger than that and much greater than that, and the bottom line is we need to fly tight formations. We need to pull up next to each other. We need to love each other. We need to care for each other. We need to be there for each other, and you need to accept that. The plane that said, "I am not flying tight. My old man, those Germans are not going to get me," and got way out on the left flank, he got shot down. If you think you can fly by yourself in the world that we live in, facing the opposition that is going to come your way—we have not got to the opposition yet, it is coming, I am going to talk to you about it—you will not make it. You will not make it.

When Nehemiah understood that and he saw all the opposition, so when he gathered the people together to preach to them, he pulled them together as one man and in unity because he

understood that in the tightness of God's people, the devil cannot function in a oneness and a unity where everybody, you see, that is what the devil does. The devil will never destroy this church or any other church from the outside. You know what he will do? He will just get one or two people on the inside. That is all he does. He has always done it that way. Though he does not have any candidates at this point because you are all one, I am preaching this message to you because I am telling you, you can never forget this because it is going to come.

VI. The Source and Reason for Opposition

You say, "Well, where is the opposition going to come from?" You know where it is going to come from? It is going to come from where it should not come from. It is going to come from your friends. It is going to come from your family. It is going to come from work. It is going to come from your mom or your dad. It is going to come from your husband. It is going to come from your wife. Opposition will never come from where you think it comes. It will always come from some, because you see, if it was just somebody out there with a sign saying, "Do not go to church today," you would just pass that by. But let me tell you something, when somebody you are emotionally tied to and you are emotionally attached to, it gets a lot tougher. This is what Jesus said in Luke 14:26, when he makes that statement that a lot of young Christians do not understand.

Luke 14:26

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

People say, "Well, is he really saying to hate your father and your mother and your wife and your husband?" No, that is not what he is saying. He is telling them, "Let me tell you something." You read the context, he is saying, "Look, the opposition you are going to get into and the things that are going to happen to you, your love for God is going to have to be so great because it may make a choice between you having to decide that person or Me." You see, folks, you have to understand this. You have to see the level of this. We have to analyze this because the real problem here, the real problem when the opposition comes from your family, from your husband, from your wife, from your mom, from your dad, from your uncle, from your friends, the people you hang out with, that is going to come the exact same way. I am going to show it to you here in just a minute.

The real problem is in Nehemiah 2:10. Understanding this, this is what the devil does not like. This is why, listen to me, this is why the opposition is going to come in one verse.

Nehemiah 2:10

When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

There is the problem. The devil did not like that somebody showed up to take care of God's people. By doing that, he knew that God's people were going to rise up and build and be everything that God wanted them to be. He did not want that until the opposition comes. So the

opposition comes. Let me tell you something. This is the second thing you want to go home with. You will want to go home with the first thing that everything in life adverse either builds character or reveals character. Here is the second thing you want to go home with. Forget everything else I said, get those two things and go out of here, and you can forget the rest. You will get by just on these two things.

The second thing is this: It is no accident you got saved, and it is no accident that you are here. We saw it last week: God's man, God's place, God's timing, God's everything. Let me tell you something, God has a plan for your life. You may not understand what that plan is. You may not realize that plan. You may not understand it, but I am telling you, God has a plan for your life, and the devil understands it greater than you do. The devil wants to do everything in his life right now while you are young to stop you from fulfilling what God's plan is in your life. I do not know what God is going to do with you. I know that God's program is the local church, and I know that God has put you here. I know that God, this is the place where we work from here, and we build from here, and we train from here, and we build character from here, and we go through the tough time together. This is why this is your place of protection. But I am telling you right now, God has something that He wants to accomplish in your life. I have no idea what it is. I do not know what He wants to do, but I am telling you it is something, and the devil wants to stop it. Just as this guy down here in Nehemiah 2:10, Sanballat, just as he was grieved that somebody wanted to do something with God's people, there are people in your life that are not happy about the fact that you are excited about what God is doing in your life. There are people who have made a mess out of their life. Very frankly, they do not like the fact that your life is on track with God. They made a mess out of their life, and they do not like the fact. They do not like the fact. They do not care for the fact that you are doing what is right because every time they see you, it is nothing personal. Please do not take it personal. Do not get personal with it. They are not mad at you. They do not hate you. They hate what is inside you. Every time they see you doing right, it reminds them and convicts them that they are not doing right. That is it. It is simple.

Romans 14:7 says that no man lives to himself and no man dies to himself.

Romans 14:7

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

There is always somebody watching your life, and unsaved people today out of fellowship will not like the fact that you are in church this morning, that you show up, that you get the Word of God, that you carry your Bible, you love your Bible, and you have decided to follow the Lord Jesus. They are not going to like it. Unsaved people are not going to like it because they put them under conviction that they are lost, and the Holy Spirit of God in both cases works on them through you, and you are going to pay the price for it. So what? Whatever price you pay is not a millionth of a tenth of a percent of the price that He paid. It is part of it. It is part of it. Unsaved people get under conviction by even being around them. Saved people are even worse because they are saved. There is nothing worse in this world than a saved person out of fellowship with God. They are miserable, and their misery is like a big broad paintbrush, and they want to paint

on everybody that way. Let me tell you something. You get a mom or a dad or a brother or a sister or a husband or a wife that is out of touch with God or lost, and you are saved, and you have had to do what is right. It is going to be like here, and it is going to go the same way, and they are going to, the devil is going to use them. I mean, I am not saying that they stay up late at night and the devil is in the garage with a candle and a flashlight saying, "Okay, what do you want me to do tomorrow?" I am not talking about that. The devil uses them unknowingly. The world, the conviction of God, forces them. That is why the greatest thing you can do is stand strong for the Lord. The greatest thing, and I am going to show you how to do it here in just a minute. There are three things that they do, and what they do will work for you, but I want you to understand the opposition because God has a plan for you. God has something that He wants to accomplish in your life. That is why you are here. Some of you have young kids. Those kids are going to grow up someday in a world that is godless. The only godly thing they are probably going to see is what you do with them.

VII. How Opposition Manifests

Here is how it goes. Look at Nehemiah 2:19. Here is how it goes. It always goes this way.

Nehemiah 2:19

But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

You see the first thing they do is laugh at him. They make fun of him. Let me tell you why somebody will belittle you. Let me tell you why somebody will make fun of you for what you believe. Maybe it is somebody that is close. I remember as a young Christian, trying to grow up and doing what is right. Some of the closest people in my family, in my life, that I thought would be happy about it, and they were not happy when I was not doing what is right. Now suddenly when I get on fire for God, they are not happy either. You know why they were not happy? Because they were not on fire for God. People want you to be as miserable as they are. They make fun of you. They will call you names. They will belittle you. They do that to discourage you. "Oh, did you get religion, did you? How stupid religion is. You know, anybody with a brain cannot really believe all that junk." That is what he did here. When he came down over in Nehemiah 4:3, they said, "Oh, they built the wall," and they are laughing and making fun.

Nehemiah 4:3

Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

This one guy says, "Build the wall." He said, "Well, that bunch of feeble Jews," he said, "if a fox went up and banged into that wall, he would knock it down. Ha ha ha ha ha ha." Oh, I have heard it. "Hey, preacher, you are smart. Where can't get his wife? How did all the animals get in the ark? Hey, where are you going, preacher? What do you think?" I met one time, years ago, I used to go with Mel Sabaka. Some of you know who he is. We used to go, I used to drive for him in

revivals around Ohio. We took this old guy, we took with us one time, a great guy. We stopped and got something to eat. I was just a young Christian. But you see, those kinds of things I saw build character in me. I will never forget, we were sitting around the three of us around that table. A bunch of old truck drivers over there, taking God's name in vain and all this. We got our pie, food, whatever. We bowed our heads, and Mel asked a blessing. You know, you could hear him all over the place. I mean, he was loud. We were done preaching. When we were down there thinking, all these truck drivers, I mean, they are like 10 feet tall. I thought sure that I was going to die. One of them swung around on the stool at the counter and says, "Hey," he said to the elderly guy, "Hell, man," he says, "where you come from? Does everybody pray like that for the eat?" I was rattling, you know, I am a little boy. The old man would look around and say, "No, son, the hogs do not." "No, the hogs do not." The guy just turned around that seat and shut up, be able to do what he did. I thought he was going to die. But you know what that did for me? That showed me a man that stood up in a whole place with a bunch of big guys that he loved God more and was more in love with God than being afraid of what was being said. Now that did something for me. I never forgot that. In fact, I would go home as a young Christian. I would pretend I walked the dog down the street, you know, I would walk late at night, you know, I would be thinking that thing through it. I would be, said, "Well, what I had done," and I would yell out in the middle of the night, "Hogs do not!" You know, and you know, people look out the window, you know, I was in it, man. It motivated me. Got me to play some 40 years later. I would say, "The hogs do not." And you want to step outside, I will meet you with me, but you know what, I will tell you what. The hogs do not. You cannot be afraid to take a stand for the Lord. You cannot be afraid to take a stand for the Lord.

Opposition is going to come. It is going to come from, they are going to laugh at you. They are going to make fun of you. They are going to mock you. You have to be, you know, you have to be smarter than the opposition. Come into work and say, "Hey, preacher, what is up?" "Heaven, heaven is up, heaven is up, hell is down, but heaven is up." "Hey, preacher, what is new?" "Jerusalem, Revelation 22. Oh, you have to read about it." Oh man, do not take it from him. All you do is infuriate him. A guy said something one time, he says, "Why did you do that the way you did it?" He said, "Because it makes people mad. I like making people mad." You want to make your opposition mad? Do not just come apart. Do not just come apart. That is what they want. That is why they are doing it. They want to see you fold up like a broken accordion. Do not come apart. Stand up. You want to get back at him? You do not have to hit him. You do not have to shoot him. You do not have to get a club and beat him. All you have to do is stand up and say, "The hogs do not."

They laughed at him. They are going to laugh at you. They are going to make fun of you. I will tell you the next thing they did in that chapter: false accusations. They said, "Hey, you are going to rebel against the king, are you? That is what we are going to tell everybody. You are down there rebelling against the king, the civil authority." They were not. But you know what they are going to say to you? "Why? Because you go to church now, you think you are better than anybody else? Think you are better than me? Why? You are going over to that old past Baptist church? That is a cult. You are the cult. Well, you are just following that man over there. You are just following somebody." I mean, false accusations. They will do it every time. Paul said, "Be

you followers of me, even as I am a follower of Jesus Christ." You follow me as long as I am following God. When I quit following God, quit following me. It had nothing to do with me. It has to do with the book and the God that you are following. But you know what? They are going to make it. You need to understand that. Because you know what happens? We are all alike. None of us like adversity. Nobody likes people to be mad. Nobody likes things to say. But you go to work in the morning, and you know, you like people to be positive. You do not like somebody coming up and saying, "Boy, you really, you know, you are going to be like, you really had a bad hair day today, did you?" You know, you do not like that. It ruins your whole day. You do not like somebody coming up and saying, "That is a nice dress, too bad they did not have it in your size." You do not like that. It ruins your whole day. We do not like adversity. We like to get along. We like to be positive. When somebody close to us brings adversity because we are trying to do what is right, oh, it hurts. It bothers you. Oh, they laughed and they scorned. They made false accusations.

Then Nehemiah 4:8, they conspired against them. They conspired against them. I am going to tell you something. The devil will do all kinds of things to keep you out of church, to keep you from Bible study. I know some of you have to work, and some of you have natural things. I am not talking about that. He will do everything in the world to keep you from reading your Bible. You will sit down and you will say, "Hey, I am going to, you know, I am going to sit down here, and I am going to study my Bible tonight." But that time of falling off, and it will be somebody, a friend of yours, or your mother, or your father. They will say, "Hey, we want you to do this," or "Hey, this, that." You know what you will do? You will hang up the phone and say, "Okay, I will be right over," and put your Bible away. I am not saying there are not times you do that. I am not saying you should not do that at times. The bottom line is this: God needs to come first in your life. Those kinds of things build character. I am telling you, folks, everything in life, adverse as a Christian, either builds character or reveals character. The devil knows our weaknesses. He does all of this. He will do all these opposition. He wanted to stop the Jews because the bottom line, the real problem was, he was grieved exceedingly that there was a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. Just today, my friend, the opposition is grieved that there is a church that wants to seek your welfare as a child of God. The devil knows you are tender. The devil knows you are vulnerable. The devil knows as a young Christian, you are impressionable. The devil knows maybe you are not real strong, and you get somebody close to you or somebody in your life that jumps on you, that should not jump on you, and gives you all kinds of problems. It hurts, it hurts, it hurts. What do you do? What do you do? You fly tight formation. That is what you do. Do not be a lone wolf. Do not be out there all by yourself. Get in, get to know people. Let people pray for you. Let people help you. I am telling you right now, that is the only thing that is going to survive. That is what you need to do. You have to understand that in this room, where God's people who love you as one in the unity, there is the safety and everything that God wants you to have in this book, but you have to do it. The devil knows where to nail you.

VIII. Overcoming Opposition

I am going to give you three things to do, and we are done. This is what they do. Three things to do.

1. First thing you need to do is get an attitude. Quit wimping around here. Get an attitude. I do not mean get arrogant. Just get an attitude. Let me give you the attitude to get. Nehemiah 4:14

And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. Get an attitude. Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord. Fight for your brethren, for your sons, for your daughters, for your wives. Do not give up on them. Fight for them. In this church, in this little group, in this little body, fight for each other. Be there for each other. Realize you are tender, you are vulnerable, you are impressionable, and it hurts when a mom or a dad or a brother or a sister or a boyfriend or a girlfriend is opposition to what you are trying to do in your life. Knowing that God has a plan, get an attitude. Rise up. Do not be afraid. Remember the Lord.

2. Then the second thing, after you get an attitude, take a stand. Look at Nehemiah 2:20. Nehemiah 2:20

Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem. You know what he said? He said, "You know what, in spite of your opposition, we are going to rise up and build. We do not have to worry about you. God is going to prosper us, and in spite of what you say or what you are going to do, we are going to rise up and build, but you, sir, have no portion with us. You have nothing to say in it. God is the God of my life, and I am going to do what God wants me to do." You take a stand. You take a stand.

3. Then the third thing, get a mindset. Get an attitude, take a stand, get a mindset. Look at Nehemiah 4. This is what they did. It works. In fact, with all the opposition, after everything is said and done, here is what he says. Nehemiah 4:6

So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work. Get the right mind. Understand that this mind that was in you will be also in Christ Jesus. Get the right mind, a mind to do the work of God, a mind to work, a mind to do the Word of God. Take a stand, get an attitude. Realize that God is preparing you for something to do. No matter how much you love him, no matter what they are to you, nothing or nobody should stand in between you building the character in your life that is going to bring you to the place where you can fulfill God's destiny in your life. Because let me tell you something, friend, when it is all said and done at the judgment seat of Christ, there will be nobody standing there but you. You will give an account based on what you did with the Word of God to overcome the opposition. Right attitude, right stand, right mind. The opposition will come, it will come. But the key of us being a strong church is the oneness, pulling it together, flying tight formations, doing what the wallabies do, doing what Dick Vermeil does, building everybody into one, that everybody covers everybody else, pulling together, protecting the brethren.

Father, we thank You and praise You for all You do.