



SERMON BASED STUDY GUIDE

Pastor Dustin Smith

IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION

OPENING & PRAYER:

We face opposition. We will face it now, later, and often. Opposition shows up in business, family, friendships, and the workplace. It can arrive as criticism that wounds, as systems that block us, or as steady discouragement that tries to stop the work God has given us. We refuse to let opposition be the final word. We learn from Nehemiah how to move forward when walls lie in ruins and when decades of failed attempts make progress seem impossible.

“Lord, thank you for modeling what leadership is supposed to look like. Thank you for leading and guiding us through our relationships even when opposition shows up. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.”

SCRIPTURE:

And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." **Nehemiah 1:3**

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants." **Nehemiah 1:4-6**

"O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." **Nehemiah 1:11**

"And give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was a cupbearer to the king. **Nehemiah 1:11**

When wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. **Nehemiah 2:1-2**

I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" **Nehemiah 2:3-4**

So, I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it." **Nehemiah 2:5**

And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So, it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me to the governors of the province Beyond the River. **Nehemiah 2:6**

Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?" **Nehemiah 4:1-2**

And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

Nehemiah 4:14

When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, who were building the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. **Nehemiah 4:15-17**

And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us." **Nehemiah 4:19-20**

So, the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul, in fifty-two days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. **Nehemiah 6:15**

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 3:14**

GO DEEPER:

We begin with grief and prayer. Nehemiah wept, fasted, and then prayed. Prayer started the work, shaped the words he would speak, and prepared the ground for favor. Prayer did not replace planning or effort. Prayer became the engine that opened doors and gave clarity for the next steps.

We ask for and receive favor. Nehemiah prayed before he spoke to the king. He asked God for mercy and then for opportunity. That combination produced access where none seemed possible. Favor arrived not because of political savvy alone but because God softened hearts and provided a platform to act.

We inspect, plan, and gather a team. Nehemiah walked the walls, assessed the damage, and recruited workers. The rebuilding happened brick by brick with many hands carrying loads and many hands holding weapons. The work required shared responsibility, practical roles, and mutual protection. We were never meant to rebuild alone. The body of believers stands as our support in the fight.

We remember the long view. The work we do today shapes our family and generations to come. Choices that break cycles of dysfunction pass blessing forward. The call to persevere asks us to continue even when success looks unlikely. Nehemiah finished in weeks what had stalled for a century because he kept going.

We press on. Perseverance turns prayer, favor, planning, and teamwork into finished walls. We hold fast, adjust when attacks come, and keep building. When the wall stood, the surrounding nations recognized that help had come from God. That outcome invites us to be people who step into ruin, carry the burden, and complete the work for the sake of our children and their children.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. All of us will face opposition. Opposition touches every life and every season. We must name it honestly, refuse to let it define us, and treat it as a refining process that reveals weakness and forges resolve. Opposition calls us to deeper dependence and clearer purpose, not to retreat. **[01:36]**

2. Persistent prayer changes outcomes. Prayer serves as the first tactic, not the last resort. Persistent, lamenting, and focused prayer reorients our hearts, guides our words, and primes unexpected openings. Prayer moves before plans and continues alongside effort until doors open. **[14:36]**

3. God opens doors and favors. Answered prayer often arrives as access and favor in unlikely places. The right encounter can shift political or social barriers and grant permission to rebuild what was broken. We pair bold requests with faithful work, trusting that God can prepare hearts for our arrival. **[19:32]**

4. We fight for our families. The work we take up extends beyond personal gain and reshapes family destinies. Steadfast choices interrupt harmful cycles and seed new patterns for generations. Our persistence in righteous labor becomes the inheritance our children inherit. **[27:17]**

5. Perseverance completes the work. Finishing demands steady will when odds look poor and feelings falter. Perseverance means continuing with disciplined action and hope rooted in God's promise, not immediate results. The prize belongs to those who press on until the wall stands. **[39:53]**

LEARNING AND GROWING:

1. What specific requests did Nehemiah make to the king in Nehemiah 2:5-8, and how did the king respond?
2. What role did teamwork play in rebuilding the wall, and how did the workers protect themselves while working (Nehemiah 4:15-17)?
3. The sermon emphasizes that opposition is a refining process. How might hardship strengthen resolve or clarify purpose, as seen in Nehemiah's story? **[01:36]**
4. When facing opposition, prayer is described as the "first tactic, not the last resort." What area of your life (work, family, etc.) needs persistent prayer right now, and how can you prioritize it daily? **[14:36]**
5. Nehemiah's work impacted future generations. What choices can you make today—in parenting, relationships, or habits—to break negative cycles and leave a legacy of faith? **[32:26]**

CLOSING PRAYER:

"Father, thank you for the opportunities to grow in our faith. Thank you for leading us through our tough times and showing us that you are always in control and have us in your hands. In Jesus' name we pray, amen."