

**Nehemiah 6: 1 – 16; John 15: 12 – end**

**‘Wary of people’**

**Introduction ...**

Two weeks ago at Evensong, we left Nehemiah in Babylon but with the Persian King’s permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city.

He had a tough time between then and the account in tonight’s passage. And – as we heard, the opposition had not gone away.

There is a link here to the words of Jesus in our New Testament reading ... that we too – in being faithful followers of Jesus – may well experience opposition – even hatred.

**Types of Opposition ...**

There are two types of opposition for Nehemiah – chronicled in chapter 6. There is external opposition – from Sanballat, a Horonite, and Tobias, an Ammonite, plus Geshem, an Arab. In previous chapters – we can read of their deep opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

**External Opposition ...**

And so it was probably relatively easy to suspect ‘foul play’ when their invitations to a meeting came, and kept coming. Although, maybe some around Nehemiah tried to persuade him otherwise ... that perhaps this time would be different.

This wariness of behalf of Nehemiah is something for us to note. I think that there can be a dangerous naivety sometimes amongst Christians that can overlook the reality of evil. Forgiveness is not the same as allowing ‘carte-blanc’ in the future, or assuming that there’s some kind of guarantee that previous behaviour won’t be repeated.

For Nehemiah, alongside this external opposition, there was also

**Internal Opposition ...**

We heard, in the passage, of false prophets – Shemiah among them. Shemiah offered Nehemiah what could have looked attractive advice ... **‘let’s go to the temple ... close the doors ... stop them killing you.’**

Nehemiah was wise enough to see that this would undermine confidence in the whole project. Almost as if there’s a pain barrier to break through in terms of boldness in adhering to the call God has given to him.

**Application ...**

What is God’s call to you?

In terms of who you are called to be ...

In terms of how you are called to give of your time, skill and money?

When there’s opposition to this call – external or internal ... remember Nehemiah and ask for God’s grace to help you to persevere.

What is God’s call to us as a church?

We have the strapline **“All are Welcome”** and we’ve been learning what we need to ‘take on board’ in terms of those with physical disabilities, those with dementia, those who want to use technology to join with us ... and yes – there’s opposition

... External from the Heritage Lobbies

Internal from those who disagree with the changes

Will we persist?

We’ve also recognised a call to be involved with **our Link Missionaries, Christian Aid, Fair Trade and the Food Bank ...**

As the cost of living crisis “bites” – will we persist – in generosity?

**In verses 15 and 16** of our reading – we heard the result of Nehemiah’s wariness, faith and persistence:

**‘The wall was finished ... many perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.’**

May the same be said of our work.

Amen.