



**Adjust** your life in order remain flexible for the ascent

Ezra 4:1-6 (1-24 in context)

**The Setting (v.1):**

Ezra had an interesting job. He has a job in Persia that would be a lot like the position today, Secretary of State for Jewish Affairs. King Artaxerxes 1 sent him to Jerusalem to kind of clean things up. He was commissioned to enforce the Jewish law throughout the land.

- The intentions were to rebuild the temple.
- Why so important? Because it represented the dwelling of the presence of God, and was an indication of the commitment of His people.

**The Setup (v.2):**

The “people of the land” were the half-breed nation made up of a mix of Jews and Gentiles known as the Samaritans. They were known for their false religions. They looked a lot like what we see in [2 Timothy 3:1-7](#)

The Bible tells us in 2 Kings a little more about them. They really aren't that bad from the eyes of man. The Bible says they feared God, sacrificed to Him. So, how bad can they be? But this is exactly why they were such a threat and enemy of the Jews. They would do all those "right" things, and still worship other gods.

They saw that the Jews were growing in numbers and in influence.

### **The Stand (v.3):**

Zerubbabel was discerning and could tell they were distractions- tools in the hands of the enemy to distract and discourage God's people from God's plan.

When we join forces with those who are not walking in God's purposes, we fall prey to becoming pantheists (the universe is the manifestation of "God", therefore it tolerates all gods), universalists (all people will eventually be saved and go to heaven) and living a syncretism (merging different belief systems) style life.

God's leader in this scenario was unwilling to allow those who had other interests to interfere with what God was building for Himself. It's either 100% about God, or 100% about self. No matter the influence. No matter the appearance. No matter the circumstance... you must stand.

### **The Setback (v.4-6):**

The enemy used the opposition for:

-discouragement - "discourage" - seek to prevent progress; literal translation- made the hands feeble.

-fear (what if's, what will people think, what if we fail, what if we don't make it, etc)

-bribery (get in the inside- the core of their influencers)- try to use others against you

*Neh 4:1–3 - Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. 2 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?" **3 Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!"**

### **So why the opposition?**

This may be one of the hardest questions in all of eternity to answer. What causes us to be people who oppose the work of God? Any one of us could be used like this from the enemy at any given time. If we're prideful, selfish, resistant, fearful or even just lazy in our faithful pursuit of Jesus and being like Him even unto death, we're open game for the enemy to use as opposition to His work.

### **How do we respond?**

#### **you can be passive (and settle)**

- give up on His plan and start your own
  - Haggai 1:4 - "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?"
- you can live for second best "it's the best I can do" and "I guess it could be worse" or "at least I'm not like them."
- just accept the chaos of everything as your new normal

#### **you can be aggressive (and seethe)**

- blame God
- blame others (but then you'd be forgetting Ephesians 6:12 - We do not wrestle against flesh and blood...)
- hold grudges and become bitter

#### **you can be flexible (and succeed)**

- believe in God's perfect timing
- trust that God is still in control
- rely on the truth that His ways are not our ways
  - Proverbs 3:5-6

- Flexibility is required because the enemy is unrelenting and persistent in his opposition against your progress.
  - It doesn't matter how many times you recommit, rededicate and regroup. The opposition is always challenging us- ("Wipeout")
- 

The daily questions is, will you be stuck in the way you've always done it? The way that makes you feel better or more secure? Will you adjust? Will you stiffen your neck towards the changes that come your way. Will you blame God and others when you meet heartache and opposition? Will you give up and settle for what seems less risky? Or... will you be like those who are described in 2 Corinthians 4:

**7** But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. **8** We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; **9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **10** always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. **11** For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. **12** So death is at work in us, but life in you.