

The Work of God and Forces Opposing God's Work

Chapter 17

Audio Lesson: Old Testament Survey lesson 43



Objective: To understand what kind of opposition we will face as we serve God.



The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

—2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.

—Ephesians 3:20-21

There are many principles about God's work that we learn from the Book of Ezra, and they can be summed up by this statement: *It is the plan of God to use the power of God in the people of God to accomplish the purposes of God according to the plan of God.*

The book of Ezra teaches us about the opposition that comes to us when we are serving God in His work. We can always expect opposition because when God is working through us, we will experience God's best, and Satan does not want us to experience God's best. Sometimes he tempts us to accept what is good instead of what is best. Sometimes he tries to get the wrong people involved in the projects God wants His own people to accomplish. Whatever opposition we face, we can expect it to come from two directions—from the world and even sometimes from those within the church. But Ezra is not a message about being defeated or distracted by opposition. It shows us how to overcome it. By faith, we can trust that God will overcome the opposition in our lives in order to accomplish what He wants us to accomplish.



1. True or false? It is possible to think you do wonderful works for God and really be a worker of sin.
2. True or false? When God provides for His work, He usually provides only barely enough to do the work.
3. True or false? Satan knows he cannot distract God's people from His purpose and His work.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. What does God want for those who do His work?
 - a. Anything, as long as it is good
 - b. To work until they get burned out
 - c. To trust in their own wisdom
 - d. Only His very best
5. What should we expect when we do God's work? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. Strong opposition
 - b. Immediate rewards
 - c. God's help and provision
 - d. The support of the church and all our friends
6. From whom does our opposition come?
 - a. From our obvious enemies
 - b. From false religions
 - c. From friends and associates who do not understand
 - d. All of the above
7. Who can shut a door that God has opened?
 - a. Satan
 - b. Other people
 - c. Circumstances
 - d. No one
8. Which of the following might Satan attempt in order to oppose us? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. Tell lies about us
 - b. Mock us
 - c. Discourage us
 - d. Tempt us with attractive but ungodly alliances
 - e. Overrule God's plan
 - f. Infiltrate the church with unbelievers
9. What sometimes happens after God's people accomplish His work?
 - a. He makes them invincible to opposition.
 - b. He lets them fail when they do not stay close to Him.
 - c. He sends Satan to tempt them more than they can bear.

- d. He ruins them in order to prove that He is still in charge.
10. Why would God let His people fail?
- a. He never lets His people grow proud and independent without consequences.
 - b. It is the only way to get Satan to stop bothering them.
 - c. He likes to disguise His people so the world will not notice them.
 - d. He wants to repeat the same victories over and over again.



Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

—Matthew 28:18-20

What enemies and obstacles do you see at work in your life to keep you from loving and obeying God completely? What promises does God give you to overcome them?



Thank God for His power and wisdom, especially as He has already applied them to your life. Ask Him to strengthen you to overcome every obstacle to your faith and obedience.



Going Deeper

1. How do these “Synoptic Gospels” of the Old Testament (Ezra and Nehemiah) show us that we should expect opposition when we are doing the work of God? _____

2. Based on these two books, give three examples of where we should expect this opposition to come from. _____

3. In what ways does this opposition confirm that we are doing the work of God? _____

4. When you compare Scriptures like Ephesians 6:10-18 with these two books of Ezra and Nehemiah, what are two of the forces of our opposition when we are doing the work of God?

5. What are some of the weapons we must use to overcome this opposition? _____

6. How can we prevent the opposition that comes from within our team or spiritual community?

7. How do both of these books demonstrate the glorious reality that we can expect God to provide for the work He has called us to do? (Compare Ephesians 3:20) _____
