

The Joy of the Lord

A Study of the Book of Nehemiah

#7 Nehemiah's Determination

Introduction

As chapter 6 begins, Nehemiah and his faithful workers have completed the circumference of the wall (2.5 miles) but still need to hang all the doors. The work is nearing completion. The enemies of God employ four specific strategies to halt their work on the wall.

Strategy #1 Compromise (6:1-4)

Suddenly, the enemies of Nehemiah offer to compromise and help the workers build the wall. Nehemiah is invited to a kind of retreat out in the valley of ONO (about 20 miles north of Jerusalem). This was a quiet place where "they could work things out."

The offer was extended four separate times. But Nehemiah knew:

1. They were lying. His discernment was accurate.
2. He knew that the work at hand was important. He was not to be detoured.
3. There was no real basis for compromise (See Neh. 2:20).
4. Nehemiah's responses came from his convictions.

Strategy #2 Get the Word Out (6:5-9)

The opposition used an "open letter." Letters in that day were on papyrus or leather, rolled up, tied with a string and sealed with a clay seal. This letter was purposely left "open" so that the rumor mill could go crazy.

Sanballat wanted the Jewish workers to question Nehemiah's leadership. This open letter would help substantiate comments like, "it has been reported..." or "the workers say..."

Nehemiah was being accused of forming a rebellion against the King, appointing prophets to support his grasp of the throne and make himself king over Israel. His response was to once more go to the Lord in prayer and specifically ask Him for strength (vs. 9).

Strategy #3 Let us protect You (6:10-14)

Shemaiah, a prophet working with Sanballat and the others, suggests that Nehemiah should run and hide out in the temple: "...men are coming to kill you."

Nehemiah refused to run and hide for two very good reasons:

1. He was a brave and courageous leader who did not spook easily.
2. He knew the law and recognized that he could not enter the temple (Num. 18:7)

And once again, Nehemiah turns to the Lord in prayer noting the hypocrisy of the false prophetess Noadiah and other prophets (vs. 14).

A word about prophetesses in the OT: Miriam Ex. 15:20, Deborah Judges 4:4 and Huldah II Kings 22:14.

Strategy # 4 We will not give up (6:15-19)

The wall was completed in 52 days with “the help of our God.”

However, Tobiah was not deterred in his relentless pursuit of stopping Nehemiah. He had relatives inside the city who had been working with Nehemiah. His letters of intimidation were nonstop.

So What?

First and foremost, please do not miss Nehemiah’s first response to every tactic Satan used against him and his workers- PRAYER.

1. It is an incredible privilege
2. It is an incredibly powerful tool

Secondly, we must not be “...ignorant of Satan’s designs...” (II Cor. 2:11)

Satan is our enemy who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (I Peter 5:8). He is the deceiver of the whole world... the accuser (Rev. 12:9-10). He is the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31) and the “god of this age” (II Cor. 4:4).

But he is subservient to our sovereign God (Luke 22:31 and Job1:12, 2:6). And we are told to be vigilant and resist him. When Paul writes to Timothy, he calls that resistance a “good fight” (I Tim. 6:12).

Let’s be reminded of his strategies (taken from 10/4/2016 Desiring God article)

1. Satan is a liar, the father of all lies (John 8:44)
2. He blinds the minds of unbelievers (II Cor. 4:4)
3. He masquerades in costumes of light and righteousness (II Cor. 11:14-15)
4. He does signs and wonders (II Thess. 2:9)
5. He tempts people to sin (II Cor. 11:3)

6. He grabs the word of God out of people's hearts and chokes faith (Mark 4:1-9)
7. He causes some sickness and disease (Luke 13:16)
8. He is a murderer (John 8:44)
9. He accuses believers before God (Rev. 12:10)

Our job is to resist! "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

1. Prayer is the common ingredient to any resistance to Satan. Look at Eph. 6:10-18
Look at the example of Christ in Luke 22:31-32.
2. Using God's Word as a weapon: Look at Matt. 4:1-11
3. There is strength in numbers: Consider the One Anothers

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the relationship between compromise and convictions? Do you have a list of personal convictions?
2. Have you ever been hurt by gossip? How did the gossiping person “get the word out?”
3. How can an “offer to help” trip us up?
4. Can you give some real-life examples of Satan employing one of his strategies in your life? How did you respond?
5. In a practical sense, what does it mean to “resist the devil?”

Personal Reflections:

1. Has gossip been an issue in your Christian life? What are you doing to overcome it?
2. Looking at the list of Satan's strategies, which one (s) do you tend to battle?
3. What "weapons" do you use in a spiritual battle?
4. Read and reflect on Rev. 20:10. What does that passage mean to you?