

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 21ST - 22ND, 2021 // BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

RUMOR HAS IT (NEHEMIAH 6:1-9) NOT EVERYONE WILL BE HAPPY

We often think that when God is at work in our midst, everyone will be happy about it. But as we see here, even when God is obviously blessing in powerful ways, there will be those who oppose it, even those who claim to be one of us.

- **One of the most time-consuming practices is to try and please everyone.**

NEHEMIAH'S DISCERNMENT

Some people will even say they desire peace, but they really desire to steal, kill, and destroy. Their motives are varied, but the end is still the same. We need spiritual discernment to identify these people and to know how to confront them.

- **The Holy Spirit helps us as we ask Him for wisdom and discernment.**

YOU GOTTA KNOW WHEN TO HOLD THEM...

There are times when we ignore the accusations of people and keep our hand to the plough. There are other times when we confront the concerns of people and answer them. In Nehemiah 6:1-9, we see Nehemiah ignore his enemies, but we also see him confront his enemies.

- **Proverbs 26:4-5 (CSB)**

AN OPEN LETTER

In certain Christian circles, there are people who use the "open letter" to attack other Christians. An open letter is one written to a person (usually someone who wouldn't give the writer the time of day) to attack or malign him/her. Instead of private correspondence, this letter is published for all to read with the hope that public opinion will be swayed.

THE AMBIGUOUS "THEY"

Sanballat wrote an open letter filled with gossip, slander, and rumors quoting "they." "They" were supposedly saying that Nehemiah's goal was to break away from Persia and set himself up as king. There was no plot on Nehemiah's part, and there was no "they" Sanballat was quoting as Nehemiah says these were invented in Sanballat's mind.

SEEING THROUGH THE DISTRACTIONS

God had given Nehemiah the discernment to see the accusations for what they were...attempts to distract Nehemiah and his people from the work of rebuilding the wall. As the enemies saw the completion of the wall nearing, they stepped up their opposition.

- **Often the greatest attacks happen just before God's greatest victories.**

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO THE END

Nehemiah believed he was fulfilling God's will in rebuilding the wall. But he never took God's presence and power for granted. As much as Nehemiah is a book on leadership amid opposition, it's a book showing a leader desperately dependent on God.

- **Obedient leaders are important; God's presence and power are indispensable.**

GOD TOLD ME (NEHEMIAH 6:10-14)

USING GOD AND RELIGION

When intimidation won't work, when gossip, slander, and rumor won't work, some people will pull the "God card." Sanballat and Tobiah hired a prophet to try and sway Nehemiah with a "prophecy" of impending doom for Nehemiah. Once again, Nehemiah trusted God's word given directly to him. He didn't need a new word from God.

A PROPHET'S FOLLY

The best way to identify a false prophecy is to compare it to God's Word. Shemaiah asked Nehemiah, who was not a priest, to come into the temple proper, which was punishable by death for anyone, not a priest.

- **When someone has a "word from God" for us, our first impulse should always be to filter it through THE Word.**

MOTIVES MATTER

People can be very religious, but they can have their own agenda and not God's agenda. Shemaiah (and the other prophets) must have desired power and money because he was a hireable prophet. A true prophet can't be bought because his/her only concern is to bring glory to God.

- **What's in their heart will come out.**

STAY FOCUSED AND TRUST

If we have a clear direction from God, then we can trust that He will work in us and through us to see that direction through. Nehemiah's faith and trust in God's clear call helped him to stay focused amidst all the clutter of distractions his enemies brought against him.

- **Being assured of God's direction isn't pride; it's faith.**

FAITH DURING OPPOSITION

Faith is easy when things are going our way. Faith becomes more difficult when we face opposition. We have 2 choices: we can focus on the opposition or focus on God. Once again, Nehemiah shows his faith is in God alone to handle his opponents.

- Nehemiah models Paul's teaching in Rom. 12:19 that we trust God's judgement.

NOT FINISHED (NEHEMIAH 6:15-16)

GOD'S GLORY

Yes, Nehemiah was a great leader who was full of faith and a hard worker. But more importantly, he knew that all the success was thanks to God and for God's glory alone.

- **When we have success, do we live and speak in such a way that everyone knows success was due to God working in us and through us?**

BEYOND WHAT WE CAN ASK OR THINK

Approximately six months since Nehemiah left Persia and 52 days since the wall's construction was begun, the wall was completed. No amount of potential or actual opposition could keep God from accomplishing His purposes.

- William Carey: **Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God.**

SUCCESS DOESN'T END OPPOSITION

Even though God blessed Nehemiah in such a way that he accomplished all God had put on his heart, Nehemiah still faced continued opposition even as the last brick was laid.

- **Until Jesus returns, we will have an enemy that wants to sow tares in the midst of our wheat.**

ALLIANCES

Tobiah had intermarried into the Jewish people. He now uses these alliances to promote his continued opposition to Nehemiah and his reforms.

- "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." **Sadly, even God's people can seek out those who will join them in opposition to the work of God.**

DO I OPPOSE GOD AND HIS WORK?

- Do I seek out people with whom I can gossip or listen to gossip?
- Do I rejoice when people with whom I disagree face difficulties and failures?
- Have I publicly agreed with someone but worked behind the scenes to undermine that person?
- Do I believe in "refined" sins?

WHY DO I DO WHAT I DO?

- **Is the goal of my life to see the name of Jesus elevated and glorified?**
- **When I serve the church, is it to fill an emptiness in my soul, or is it out of the overflow of all that Jesus is to me and all He's doing in me?**
- **Am I ok if others get "greater" glory than me if God gets the greatest glory?**

DO I BELIEVE THAT IF GOD IS FOR ME, THEN WHO CAN BE AGAINST ME?

- **Does opposition cause me to despair or to depend more on God?**
- **When I do feel opposition, does my prayer life increase or decrease?**
- **When I see success, do I rest in that success, or do I rejoice and reengage?**