

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

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

## MANIPULATION AND SLANDER (NEHEMIAH 6:1-9)

### ONE LAST EFFORT

Sanballat, Tobiah, and their allies failed to disrupt the wall's reconstruction with threats. Their next plan was to use personal attacks against Nehemiah.

- The opponents realized that Nehemiah provided strength for the Jerusalem community through his exceptional leadership. **He was a target to the enemy.**

### AN INVITATION

The only way to get to such a well-protected citizen was to lure him from his colleagues and onto enemy territory. "Let us meet together on the plain of Ono."

- Ono was possibly near people who wanted Nehemiah dead. **It was a great distance from Nehemiah's home and allies**, 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

### PERSISTENCE

His opponents were persistent. They didn't know what to do except to repeat the invitation: "Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer."

- **Nehemiah was involved in a mission that captured his heart**; he was working for God, who was worthy of his devotion. **Are we persistent on the mission of God?**

### OPEN LETTER

Sanballat attempts a desperate strategy, similar to what proved successful in the past with King Artaxerxes.

- Sanballat sends an open letter to Nehemiah, meaning others could read it. **The letter aired rumors with the intention of having them spread.** The goal was to either unsettle Nehemiah or create tension.

### SLANDER & GOSSIP

Nehemiah is in a difficult spot. If he goes to talk about peace, he knows they will try to harm him. If he stays, then the rumors will spread and get back to the king.

- **Nehemiah calls out the lie.** "There is nothing to these rumors you are spreading; you are inventing them in your own mind."
- **He prayed:** "God strengthen my hands."

### THE AMBIGUOUS THEY

It's crazy what people complain about. **We are a self-centered and critical culture. It's easy to point out issues but difficult to find solutions and actually be part of them.**

- **If Jesus spent time worried about all the negative things people said about Him, He would've never made it to Calvary! We don't need to get caught up in the garbage.**

### TEMPTATION OF PANIC (NEHEMIAH 6:10-14)

#### FALSE PROPHET

Shemaiah was shut in at his home. **He gives a threatening message that was crafted to cause Nehemiah to panic and make an irrational decision.**

- **Nehemiah had wisdom and discernment.** "Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life?"

### LEADERSHIP AND INTEGRITY

Nehemiah **recognized the responsibilities of leadership and the need to stand firm** despite threats against his safety.

- He also knew that Shemaiah proposed a violation of the law because non-priests were not allowed within the sanctuary.
- **His response was guided by a devotion to God and to lead this community.**

### PANIC AND SELF-DEFENSE

If Nehemiah had given into their trickery, then his reputation would have been crushed. They hoped that through fear and the urge for self-protection, he would violate the law.

- **When we panic, we make dumb decisions.** When we make dumb decisions, the enemy will tell us how foolish we are. **When we believe the lies, we're in trouble.**

### GOD TOLD ME TO TELL YOU...

**We need to be careful when we hear the phrase "God told me to tell you."** This is sometimes used to emphasize someone's point. **Make sure we check with Scripture.**

- If God wants to share something with us, He will! Just make sure we listen.
- **It's great to seek counsel from others, but make sure we are going to God ourselves.**

### CONTINUED AND RESISTANCE (NEHEMIAH 6:15-19)

#### CLARITY DURING CONFUSION

In the midst of gossip and slander, **Nehemiah brings light to God's work.** The wall was completed in 52 days! This attested to God's favor and protection and Nehemiah's ability to inspire and lead the people.

- Judah's enemies tried to make Nehemiah and the Jews afraid, but in the end, they were the ones who feared.

## PRAYER AND UNITY

By placing the emphasis on "our God" (v. 16), **Nehemiah circles back to the very beginning of his time of prayer and fasting.** He knew from the outset **the project needed to be a God-centered idea, or else it would fail.**

- Nehemiah prayerfully and actively trusted in the Lord to give him a team, and **they were united on a mission.**

## UNITY WILL EXPERIENCE CONTINUED RESISTANCE

Even though they faced the reality of God's hand on Nehemiah, there are some that are still determined to oppose Nehemiah.

- Tobiah and his son married into Jewish nobility. Wealthy Jews continued an alliance with Tobiah. The wall was completed, but the corruption and oppression continued.
- **We have to remain diligent and focused!**

## WHAT'S OUR FOCUS?

- Nehemiah's heart was gripped by the desire to serve and honor God.
- Many of us focus on what's in it for us, worldly success, and temporary pleasure.
- Success in the Christian life requires the believer to have **a clear understanding of God's Word, endurance, wisdom, discernment, and dependency on Him.**

## HOW DO WE REMAIN FOCUSED?

- Philippians 3: "Not that I have already reached the goal or am already perfect, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I have been taken hold of by Christ...Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead."
- **Have we taken hold of Christ? Does His love compel us?**

## ARE WE DISCOURAGED?

- Anyone else exhausted and tired? Are we confused? Are we lonely? Do we want to quit running the race?
- Ask God for 2-3 people to live life with us. Ask for a community. We need help!
- People will fail us. **We ultimately have to find our encouragement from God.** He will never fail, and He is able to sustain us.

## PRAY

- Many of us have let our guard down. **We live our lives like there isn't spiritual warfare.** We will face trials and opposition.
- Some of us are expecting a breakthrough, and we don't realize the importance of **daily obedience** — one day at a time.
- "I don't feel like it." **Do it anyway. Pray, read, surrender, and live one day at a time.**
- **Hebrews 12:1-3**