

## Nehemiah Sermon #14

Turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah 6

The work on the wall had reached a crucial stage and it was almost complete.

Failing in every previous attempt to halt the work, Sanballat and his allies determined that the final solution would be to attack Nehemiah, either outside the city (6:1-9) or inside the temple (6:10-14).

The sixth chapter tells us the story of these attacks.

There were three different kinds in Chapter 6: the first was the temptation to compromise, the second slander (the temptation to protect ourselves) and the third disobedience (the temptation to obey our flesh).

The goal of these attacks was to stop the wall-project by deterring Nehemiah.

I've entitled today's sermon "Say No to Ono"

Nehemiah 6:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word

Nehemiah 6:1-9

Let us pray

You may be seated

## Say No to Ono

### Vs. 1

They were in the last days of the project.

There was only one thing left to do—to set up the doors.

The open gateways were the enemy's last hope of regaining the upper hand.

The enemy has been with us from the beginning of this book.

But, in this chapter we see a crescendo, a great intensification of enemy activity.

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem made one final effort to keep Nehemiah from finishing the wall.

Their aim/focus/target was on one man – Nehemiah.

It was their most subtle attack, and Nehemiah was their sole object.

If they could only remove him from the scene, they might have a chance once again to regain what they had lost.

The enemy is always seeking to take ground/people back.

If they could eliminate Nehemiah, or even discredit him, they could mobilize their allies living in Jerusalem and take over the city.

The enemies understood that stopping the work would mean stopping Nehemiah.

If Satan can defeat a Christian leader, he can cripple a whole ministry and discredit the cause of Christ.

In any great work of God the leaders are strategic; the enemy will try to cause the leaders to fall, lose credibility, or disappear altogether.

Leadership is always targeted.

The first scheme was the most subtle.

Sanballat and Geshem invited Nehemiah to meet with them (vs. 2).

They made it appear that they wanted to have a peace conference with Nehemiah, but their hidden motive was to harm Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's enemies attempted to lure him outside the city with a false motives.

Wisdom dictated that Nehemiah should be both cautious and suspicious.

Nehemiah sensed trouble.

In Chapter 6, Satan used four strategies in attacking Nehemiah, strategies that he still uses.

We will see two of these today.

### **The First Strategy Is Compromise.**

Up to this point in the building program, Sanballat and his cohorts *opposed* everything that the Jews did; but now they offered to *cooperate*.

They offered to meet Nehemiah in a village halfway—a quiet place where they could make plans on how to work together.

While cooperation in the Lord's work is a noble thing, leaders must take care that they cooperate with the right people at the right time for the right purpose; otherwise they may end up cooperating with the enemy.

*The Valley Ono* is about twenty-seven miles northwest of Jerusalem.

It was equal distance between Sanballat and Nehemiah.

An invitation to meet in the plains of Ono was rightfully discerned by Nehemiah to be a trap.

This is the old satanic method of "When you can't beat them, join them."

Today it is called the Ecumenical Movement.

You might not be familiar with that term, but it is the joining of alliances by denominations, churches, and Christians—partnerships more often than not by overlooking what one believes and stands for.

The cry is “Don’t be so stubborn, so narrow minded. We need to join together because of the love of God. Let’s overlook the Word of God.”

There are those, outside the church today who want to compromise.  
 To compromise our convictions in relationships – young people don’t fall  
 To compromise our convictions at work or at home

But there are those in the church today who want to compromise truth  
 Truth – creation, authority in the church, sacredness of marriage  
 Abortion issue – overlook it  
 Homosexual issue – we are ordaining it  
 Movie hall issue – seduced by Hollywood back to the theaters  
 Music – music mimics the world’s – people who defend these worldly men and women  
 Dancing  
 Tattoos – Leviticus 19:28

This is just the tip of the iceberg.

The compromisers want you to feel that you are bigoted and dogmatic if you don’t meet with them and try to work out a compromise.

Somebody has to say “no” to Ono and quit climbing in bed with compromise.

These men repeated their invitation “four times” (vs. 4), which shows their desperation to halt the work.

Repeated temptation can weaken one’s resistance – wear us down – constant barrage  
 – for us to give in – let down

The invitations kept coming! We will always have opportunities to compromise.

But each time Nehemiah gave the same answer: “I answered them in the same way”

(v. 4).

Nehemiah was steadfast.

That is key to resisting the pressures – constant barrage.

Nehemiah stood firm and was careful not to let the opposition divert him from his main purpose.

Once the enemy gets a foothold in our life – in a ministry – he starts to weaken the work from within; and ultimately, the work will fail.

The devil tries to get you to take one step in his direction – tries to trip us up.

Nehemiah said, “No” to Ono

Nehemiah rejected their offer because of three convictions.

First, he knew his enemy; because “they thought to do me mischief.”

We need to realize who we are dealing with and their motives.

Second, he was convinced of the greatness of the work God had given him to do (v. 3).

“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.”

Realize the kingdom work, the great battle that we are in – for the souls of men and women.

Third, the Jews had nothing in common with Sanballat and his crowd, so there could be no basis for cooperation.

Nehemiah had made that clear at the very outset.

(Neh. 2:20) You will have nothing to do with us.

God's people are different from the people of the world and must maintain their separated position. That is why we are called "Saints" (Rom. 1:7) – Separated out – called out – come out from among them and be ye separated.

This calls for balance – how does one know where to draw the line?

Decisions of this kind require discernment.

There is a time for flexibility and a time for firmness.

Wisdom is knowing when to prefer the one to the other.

Nehemiah had discernment and determination.

Discernment is the ability to read between the lines.

The Word of God – knowledge, understanding – wisdom gives the man or woman of God the ability of discernment.

Decisions based only on *opinions* might be reconsidered, but decisions based on *convictions* must stand unless those convictions are changed.

Otherwise, decision becomes indecision; and the leader who ought to be a tree becomes a falling leaf – tossed about.

Christians have lost convictions and just about anything can be done in the name of Christianity today.

Nehemiah not only had discernment, he had determination.

"I cannot come down; I'm doing a great work."

We need churches and Christians with the determination/discernment – not to come down.

We cannot water down our ministry; it is a great work.

Some people never understand how you can say no,

One of the marks of maturity is the ability to say no.

We must learn to say no to the opposition

Say no to the wrong

Stand for the truth – no matter family, friend, or the culture.

Our faith means nothing unless we live to the standard of God

We have a harder time maintaining standards than maintaining doctrine.

Standards normally go first before your doctrines do.

Sanballat and Geshem soon got the message.

Nehemiah wasn't about to leave Jerusalem and meet with them at a so-called 'peace conference.'

Consequently, they tried another tactic.

Slander

If they can't get you any other way, they will resort to this.

The first strategy is compromise.

## **The Second Strategy Is Slander**

### **Vs. 5**

They tried a different motivation to get Nehemiah to respond.

An open letter can be a vicious way to attack a leader.

Such an unsealed letter was a sign of disrespect.

This was political hardball. The unsealed letter would have been read many times, as indeed it was meant to be.

The goal of this document was to intimidate Nehemiah into stopping his wall-building work and come out and meet with them.

They tried to put pressure on Nehemiah to respond by having this letter read publicly. Nehemiah refused to budge.

Don't be surprised when you're slandered and pressured.

Notice what the letter said – vs. 6-7

These reported rumors were serious accusations.

Nehemiah became the object of slander.

Slander and gossip usually play on some kernel of truth – goal is to discredit, destroy.

They include an element of truth in this letter.

What we're dealing with here is *rumor*.

One of the characteristics of a rumor is that the source is never quoted.

Actually a source is seldom known.

Verse 6 states, "It is reported among the nations . . . "

"Who's the source of this 'reporting'?"

Statements like "it's been reported" and "somebody said" have caused trouble in many local churches and other ministries.

It is hard to build a work, but it is easy to tear it down.

I want to know – who said it?

If the person won't reveal who said it, I don't want to hear it.

A rumor is noted, first of all, because the *source is never declared*.

Second, a rumor is noted for its *exaggeration* and *inaccuracy* – vs. 8c

Wisdom forces a person to ask such searching questions as, "Is it necessary to say this? Is this confidential information? Do I have any right to know this or to pass this on?"

The Bible says God hates those who sow discord among His family" (Prov. 6:19).



Ephesians 4:29, *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”*

The evil of giving our lips to gossip is equaled only by giving our ears to it. Let us beware!

One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 26:20, *“Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out. So where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.”*

What should be our response when we are confronted by rumors or gossip?

If you ever are the target of gossip, look carefully at verse 8.

Here, you can learn how to handle yourself when you're under attack.

For openers, Nehemiah calmly denied the charge.

Then, he put the blame where it belonged.

It is impossible for a leader—or any person for that matter—with a sensitive spirit not to be hurt by a rumor.

No one takes pleasure in being falsely accused.

This open letter – Sanballat wanted the public to know so that he could look good and also put pressure on Nehemiah.

1. They wanted it to appear that they had Nehemiah's welfare at heart.

They wanted Nehemiah to get the impression that their desire to get together was to discuss the matter in order to protect Nehemiah.

2. They were attempting to get Nehemiah to respond out of fear.

A person's normal reaction would be to protect himself against this possible misunderstanding.

His enemies were hoping this would bring him to the bargaining table.

So, #1, Nehemiah denied the accusations.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Nehemiah and the Jews were *not* “planning to rebel.”

These accusations were so bogus that it was ridiculous—and Nehemiah let them know  
it in no uncertain terms.

Who makes this stuff up?

Secondly, he prayed.

Nehemiah denied the reports, prayed to God for strength, and went back to work

### **Vs. 9c**

This is indeed “vintage Nehemiah”!

He did what he had done so often before in crisis situations.

He lifted his heart to God and prayed.

Obviously, this was a difficult time for Nehemiah.

He needed divine strength and help.

Those who seek God’s strength will find it.

When the letter failed to get the response that Sanballat and Geshem hoped, they  
devised another scheme (vv. 10-14).

Say No to Ono

Let us stand for closing invitation – every eye closed.

God's people need discernment – the ability to be able to determine what to do.

This requires the wisdom of God found in the Word.

God, help us to be people of Your Book and Your mind.

Compromise – is there any area of my life that I am lowering my standards?

I'm tired, weary – I'm giving in, or giving up in this area of my life.

Young person, are you flirting with compromise?

How to overcome slander, temptation, compromise

#1 – prayer

#2 – perspective – realize – Christian – to be holy – involved in a great work

#3 – persistence – determination

God's Word doesn't compromise when it comes to our sin.

God says we are all sinners and we are guilty.

God says there is only one solution for our sin problem.

God loved us and sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins – on the Cross – to be buried  
and rise again.

And God says there is only one way for salvation.

It is through His Son – there are no other ways.

Have you admitted to God your sinfulness and need for His Son, the Savior, Jesus  
Christ?

You can do that right where you're standing

Cry out to Him from your heart.

O God, I am a sinner. I need salvation and I am trusting in Jesus Christ to save me.

Forgive me, Lord, and save my soul.