

Nehemiah Sermon #15

Nehemiah 6 – second half of Chapter 6

When we finish Chapter 6 – first half goal was – rebuild the wall

Chapters 7-13 – second half – rebuild the people

The title of the last sermon was “Say No to Ono”

Last time – Nehemiah was attacked personally. They targeted him.

#1 – Compromise – every Christian faces this – steadfast – “I am doing a great work; I cannot come down.”

When they can't get you any other way, they'll get you with slander

#2 – Slander – force him with pressure – remember they sent that open letter

Christians compromising and giving in to pressure

So in chapter 6, Nehemiah describes three attacks on him personally.

Each was different, but each was designed to destroy him—if not his life, at least his testimony

As Christians who strive to live for God, attacks come – goal is to destroy us and at least our effectiveness, our testimony for Him in this world.

I've entitled today's message “Fear Not.”

Do you know how many times God tells us in this Bible to “fear not”? 365 times – one for each day of the year

Nehemiah 6:10

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

Nehemiah 6:10-19

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

Fear Not

Vs. 10a

Isn't it interesting that when one approach didn't work, another approach was used.

The enemies of God are relentless!

Temptation is nonstop – sin being at the door

This third attack of the enemy was even more subtle than the others.

A prophet of God who lived in Jerusalem had sent for Nehemiah to come.

Nehemiah accepted Shemaiah's invitation to see him, thinking he was a true prophet.

This was a clever plan for trapping Nehemiah.

The prophet had shut himself up in his house and gave the impression that Nehemiah was in danger.

When Nehemiah came to see him, Shemaiah said that they both should take refuge in the temple, where the enemy couldn't reach them (I Kings 1:50-53).

(This is not the first time somebody has run to the Temple.)

"They are coming to kill you!"

The temptation was to have Nehemiah make an improper use of the house of God.

That he should actually use the temple of God to save his own skin.

But Shemaiah had sold out to the opposition.

This plot was to try to destroy Nehemiah's credibility in Israel.

Tobiah hired a false prophet.

If they could get God's man to run afoul of the Word of God – a temptation to disobey the Scriptures – they could destroy his testimony and stop God's work.

Shemaiah's so-called "prophetic message" asked Nehemiah to violate God's law.

Nehemiah was not a priest. He was a layman – regular person.

For him to enter and shut himself in the temple—literally within the holy place—would be to desecrate the house of God and to bring himself under God’s judgment – it was strictly forbidden (see Num 18:7).

Do you know what the punishment was? Death.

Vs. 13

Vs. 11

Nehemiah saw immediately through their whole conspiracy.

He refused to enter the temple and commit a transgression.

Nehemiah minced no words and he didn’t have to think twice – “I will not go in.”

He had previously said, “I cannot come down!” and now he declared, “I will not go.”

He was able to discern that Shemaiah was a fraud because Shemaiah’s invitation was contrary to the Word of God.

According to Deuteronomy 13 & 18 and Isaiah 8, if a prophecy from a prophet is in contradiction with what God has already revealed, we should be suspicious of it.

How then could he discern whether or not the message was from God?

And how can we?

His two questions in v. 11 indicate the answer:

(1) “Should a man like me run away?”

This show of fear would be a lack of trust in God and would undermine the confidence of the people in his leadership.

(2) “Should one like me go into the temple to save his life?”

I am not eligible; it is not Biblical.

Folks, how necessary it is for Christians to have “the belt of truth buckled around our waist”—the “truth” here being the revealed Word of God in the Scriptures. God’s Word – protects us – it gives us life.

The right decision had been swiftly made, on principles that were stronger than the apparent situation or the fear of death.

It was this – that enabled Nehemiah to see through the whole temptation.

Nehemiah quickly detected the lie and let it be known that he was not about to run away in the face of danger.

Nehemiah rejected Shamaiah’s proposal because it was contrary to the Law of Moses. It was forbidden for a layman to go beyond the altar of burnt offering at the temple.

Nehemiah knew that Shemaiah was a *false* prophet because the message he delivered was contradictory to the Word of God.

“What saith the Scripture?” (Rom. 4:3) must be the test of any message, even if that message comes from somebody who claims to be one of God’s servants.

This tells me two things:

#1 – I need to do what I know from this Book.

#2 – I need to know this Book better.

If we do anything in 2006, let us commit to that this new year.

Vs. 12

This is discernment

The strategy to “discredit” or undercut/undermine the leader is a subtle one and is common today.

The enemies used Nehemiah’s own people against him and even used God’s prophets. Jews vs. the Jews – Christians vs. Christians – counterfeit/imposter

More churches have been destroyed by the insiders than by the outsiders.

It's clear that Nehemiah's enemies were willing to stoop to any means to achieve their goals.

The devil and his workers will, too.

Sometimes it comes through the front door and sometimes the back door.

Vs. 14a

Here we have a second short prayer.

He prayed about them and left the matter with the Lord.

In verses 9 and 14, we have the fifth and sixth of Nehemiah's short prayers that he sent to the Lord in times of crisis.

He again prayed that God "remember Tobiah and Sanballat who were opposed to his leadership and opposed God's work.

They were in essence sabotaging God's work.

Vengeance was left to God—

Deuteronomy 32:35, God said, to Me belongeth vengeance.

Psalm 94:1, O Lord God, to Whom vengeance belongeth.

Romans 12:19, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay saith the Lord.

Notice in vs. 14b, we learn here that Shemaiah's was only one voice in an impressive chorus of false information – get one going, get two going, and so on.

There was a conspiracy against Nehemiah among the prophets, including a prophetess named Noadiah.

This created a great deal of pressure for Nehemiah, for the Jews had great respect for their prophets.

Nehemiah was outnumbered, yet he stood his ground. He refused to give in.

It had to seem like everyone was against him, but Nehemiah held firm in his faith in God and the Word of God.

Vs. 14e

The same verb translated “fear” is repeated again in 9, 13, 19, where it could be translated “intimidate” (lit., “to make afraid”).

The different forms of opposition in this chapter were all intended to instill fear in Nehemiah

And what is fear? Lack of trust in God

And how do we overcome it? By faith

Now look at verse 15. See what happens? What a magnificent accomplishment! He rebuilt the ruined wall of Jerusalem in fifty-two days, when nobody else thought it could be rebuilt at all.

He came to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls.

It was not an easy task; enemies from the inside and outside tried to stop the work.

In spite of all these attacks and setbacks the wall was finished in the remarkably short time of fifty-two days.

See, when God's people put their mind to it and will not be distracted, it is amazing what can be accomplished.

What a note of victory!

The work was finished in fifty-two days.

Only God could have done this through them.

Now, folks, even though the wall is now completed, there is still danger.

Here we see how the enemy responds after the project was finished.

The next strategy is to continue the fight even after the game is over.

The completion of the wall was an embarrassment to the enemy, *but they did not give up.*

Satan is not a quitter but stays on the field even after it looks as if he has lost the battle. *Many a careless Christian has won the war but afterward lost the victory.*

Satan is always looking for “an opportune time” to attack the victors and turn them into victims.

“Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle.”

When we are on top of the mountain – beware!

This marks a new beginning, for now Nehemiah must protect what he has accomplished.

How he does this is the theme of the rest of the book.

Vs. 16

While the enemy blasts, God builds.

It is impossible to do the will of God without attack.

They acknowledged that the God of the Jews was responsible for the miracle that happened.

Judah’s enemies tried to make Nehemiah and the Jews afraid; but in the end they were the ones who feared

Vs. 17

Nehemiah was surrounded by people who kept that ancient postal service quite busy!

All of this time – there was this playing “footsie” with the enemies of God.

Tobiah had a “telephone” right into the walls of Jerusalem so that everything Nehemiah did or said was reported to Tobiah.

It seems incredible that *any* Jew would secretly cooperate with enemy, let alone Jews who were *nobles* from the royal tribe of *Judah!*

If any tribe had a stake in the future of “the city of David,” it was the tribe of Judah; for God promised that a Savior and King would come from their tribe.

When these nobles cooperated with Tobiah, they were resisting the Lord, disobeying the Word, and jeopardizing their own future.

Why would they do such a treacherous thing?

For one thing, Tobiah wrote them letters and influenced their thinking.

The church and its people are influenced by the world – way too much!

What should be the main influence in our life? What is the main influence?

Instead of seeking the truth, the nobles believed the enemy’s lies and became traitors to their own people.

Do you know who is sabotaging God’s work in America today? Mainly Christians.

How could these Jews turn their backs on their own heritage, their own brothers and sisters, and their own God?

The bonds of human connection were stronger than the bonds of spiritual affection.

His numerous binding agreements (*by oath*) – **vs. 18a**

See, Tobiah was tied to the tribe of Judah through marriage, the nobles of Judah gave the loyalty to him that they should have given to God.

Vs. 18b

There are two cases of intermarriage mentioned in vs. 18.

Remember Ezra – it is clear that the measures taken against marriages with foreigners in Ezra 10 were soon forgotten.

This treachery had its roots in the problem of mixed marriages.

Tobiah was the son in law of Shechaniah.

And his son, Johanan [Jo hay nun], was married to the daughter of Meshullam.

The matter is simply noted in this chapter but later Nehemiah is going to deal with it.

(Chapter 13.)

These Jewish families wanted to persuade Nehemiah of the good intentions of Tobiah.

To them Tobiah was not such a bad person.

Vs. 19

One of the greatest tragedies today is the convincing arguments of people who are in bed with sin.

This is not that bad. This is no big deal.

These Jews repeatedly told Nehemiah what a fine man Tobiah really was!

He was a snake!

When speaking to Nehemiah, they always had a good word to say about Tobiah.

“They that forsake the law praise the wicked” (Prov. 28:4).

Had the nobles of Judah been studying and meditating on the Word of God, they would have had discernment and not been walking “in the counsel of the ungodly” (Psalm 1:1).

But is the situation much different in churches today?

It alarms me the way professed Christians, who claim to be “Bible taught,” give their endorsement and support to people who are nothing but religious hucksters.

“A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way,” (Jeremiah 5:30-31).

Let us stand for closing invitation.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning—
Right understanding – right reverence of God

Nehemiah, by knowing the Word, was able to overcome.
Let us recommit ourselves to this Holy Book.

Nehemiah, by keeping his faith in God, was able to endure.
Let us keep our eyes on our great God.

God says – I love you and I gave my Son for you – Jesus Christ – because we are
separated from God because of our sin.

Jesus is the Way – He is the Mediator.