

Satan's Strategies

By Matthew Black, Pastor

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Tabernacle Baptist Church

7020 Barrington Road

Hanover Park, Illinois 60133

Website: www.GodCentered.info

Open your Bible to the book of **Nehemiah 6**. In Nehemiah is the story of progress in the midst of opposition. Amidst all this opposition they had sword and trowel. They were ready to fight and ready to work. First we had the opposition from the enemies—Tobiah and Sanballet. But in chapter 5, we had internal strife—Jews were making money off of other Jews. Nehemiah stood up and rebuked them and set things right.

But now in chapter six he's going to face another test. Someone once said, "The test of your character is what it takes to stop you".

As Christians we must be committed to God's will for our lives and not fear man. Christianity is not a social club. Neither is it a philosophy. It is an eternal commitment of your soul to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. You follow Christ to the exclusion of all others. This is what we see displayed in the life of Nehemiah.

If you are in the Father's hand as a believer in Jesus Christ, then you can expect Satanic attack and spiritual opposition. That's what Nehemiah 6 is all about. You need to understand how the enemy attacks.

- I. Notice first, that the enemy will often attack in times of **PROGRESS**. Nehemiah was almost done with his project when the attack came. In **verse 1**, Nehemiah's says, When "our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall..." that they tried to get him to come down from the wall. And they said: **verse 2**, "Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief."

Application: We often think we are the strongest in times of God's blessing, but it is when we are most vulnerable. Satan's secret weapon is pride and ease. **1 Corinthians 10:12**, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Pride and dependence on earthly success and material things will dull your spiritual convictions. Never forget that God only responds to humble, broken, and sometimes desperate people. "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (**1 Peter 5:5**).

- II. The enemy will attacks your **PRIORITIES**. If Satan can get you to stop doing what is really valuable to the kingdom of God, he has won. He will sidetrack you!

Nehemiah 6:3, "And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? 4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner".

III. The enemy attacks with **PERSISTENCE**. There are seasons of life where everything is going wrong. Verse 4, "Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner". Four times Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem said, "Let's go to Ono". And Nehemiah four times said, "OH no, I will not". My work is too important.

Application: Families—Dads you've got to spend time with your wife. Read with her. Pray with her. Are you personally meeting with God each day? Do you have a prayer life? Without it you will wither away.

So Nehemiah's enemies kept coming four times, and so the media, the distractions, your job, etc. will constantly and persistently challenge you to lose your priorities. You cannot give in.

Application: Growing up means taking responsibility for yourself. We are all called to "grow in grace". That means we quit making excuses and we commit our lives wholly to Christ.

So Nehemiah's enemies kept coming four times, and then a fifth time with an open letter!

IV. The enemy attacks with **PUBLIC PRESSURE**. **Verses 5-6**, "Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; 6 Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words."

Sanballat's weapon of choice is the RUMOR MILL! Essentially, he was going to spread a rumor that Nehemiah was going to set up a king and begin a revolution against King Artaxerxes.

Application: There is nothing that can undermine a ministry faster than something like this if we take the bait and don't deal with it properly. Gossip is a cancer that can never edify, but always destroys the body of Christ.

There are those who would want to get their way in the churches whose motives are not to please Christ but self. You need to be wise to know when someone is gossiping.

1. How can you know if you are listening to gossip?

- a. First a **source** is never declared. Look at what Sanballat says, "It is reported among the heathen" (**verse 5**). This lends credence to the story. This is intimidating, but the Christian must never be intimidated by falsehoods and smokescreens.
- b. Second, rumors usually involved **exaggeration** and **inaccuracy**. The person spreading the rumor has assumptions but has not verified the truth.

Proverbs 18:13, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." We are called to verify facts and circumstances.

2. God hates gossip. It is one of the seven deadly sins that God hates!!

- a. **Proverbs 6:16**, "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."
3. What is the right response to Gossip? What is the right response?
- a. **Refute** the Gossip, **verse 8**, "There are no such things done as thou sayest"
- b. Put the **Responsibility** on the Gossiper. Verse 8b, "but thou feignest them out of thine own heart". If you want a rumor monger to stop dead in their tracks, and turn pale, then when they give you that juicy tidbit, just say, "Can I quote you on that?"
- c. **Realize** they warring against God's work. **verse 9a**, "For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done."
- d. **Rest** in the Lord. Here we see Nehemiah praying, **verse 9b**, "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands."

How do we defeat Gossip? I wish all telephones came with **Ephesians 4:29** engraved on them, "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."

Ultimately you refute it, place the responsibility on the one gossiping, realize

- V. Satan attacks with **PARANOIA**. Fear is a big tool. Nehemiah 6:10, "Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee."
- A. The right response is courage. Verse 11, "And I said, Should such a man as I flee?"
- B. The right response is conviction. Numbers 3:10 says that it is sacrilege to hide in God's temple. Nehemiah knew his Bible. verse 11b, "and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in."
- C. The right response is consecration and trust verse 12, "And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. 14 My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear."

Conclusion: Because Nehemiah did not give in look at **verse 15**, "So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. 16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God".