

The Danger of Compromise

Text: Nehemiah 6:1-19

Introduction:

1. This chapter: The opposition from the enemy resumes but in a more subtle and dangerous form. Having failed to stop the progress of the work of God through open, frontal attack (contempt & conspiracy), the enemy now resorts to an under-cover operation to disrupt the work of God. The enemy tries every crafty tactic he can come up with to get Nehemiah to compromise.
2. The word 'compromise' refers to "an amicable agreement between parties in controversy, to settle their differences by mutual concessions." This can be a necessary thing in certain contexts (e.g., marriage) in things which are purely a matter of personal opinion. But in relation to the truth, there can be no concessions.
3. The enemy uses four weapons against Nehemiah to try and get him to compromise: 1. The Lure of **Fellowship** 2. The Lips of **Falsehood** 3. The Leadership of **Fear** 4. The Links of **Family**

I. THE LURE OF FELLOWSHIP (VS. 1-4)

A. The Enemies Proposal (Vs. 1-2)

1. The prompting of the proposal (Vs. 1).
 - a. Progress in the work of God will always arouse the interest and attention of the enemy.
 - b. The breaches were being repaired. Breaches were gaps or holes in the wall that had been punched through by enemy battering rams. The same word is translated 'gap' in Ez. 22:30. The compromised Christian who has multiple cracks and weak points in his spiritual fortifications does not bother the enemy. But let him take steps to close those gaps of compromise and the wrath and fury of the enemy will be aroused.
 - c. The gates were soon to be hung. This would give the people of God the ability to monitor who was coming into the city. It also meant they had the ability to shut the wrong people out!
2. The presentation of the proposal (Vs. 2)
 - a. Deceptive – appeared to be the extending of the hands of cooperation.
 - b. Dangerous – the real intent of the enemy was destruction. If the leader could be eliminated, the work of God and the people of God would be easy pickings for the enemy.
 - i. Ono = located approx. 40 km North-west of Jerusalem in hostile enemy territory.

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- ii. The invitation, now matter how nice on the surface, would require Nehemiah to leave the place of safety and victory.
- iii. True fellowship is connected to separation (walls). There is too much that goes under the banner of “fellowship” today that should actually be re-labelled “compromise” because the whole counsel of God is not allowed and truth is conceded. Much of what is called “fellowship” today is LCDF – lowest common denominator fellowship. We are interested in NBF – Nehemiah Bulwark Fellowship!
- iv. Interestingly the N.T. word for ‘fellowship’ comes from the Greek word ‘koinonia’ and denotes “sharing, holding something in common” (Gromacki). It means a “joint-participation in a common interest and activity.” (Wuest) Fellowship therefore goes deeper than a chat over a cup of coffee. Paul and the Philippians experienced a fellowship in the gospel (1:5), grace (1:7), in the Holy Spirit (2:1), in the sufferings of Christ (3:10) and in giving (4:14-15).

B. Nehemiah’s Refusal (Vs. 3-4)

Learn to say **NO** to invitations that lead to compromise!

1. Nehemiah’s Perspective (3a)
 - a. Nehemiah held the work of God in high regard. He was involved in a “**great**” work!
 - b. The work they were doing was indeed of great historical and spiritual importance for the nation of Israel. Close to 150 years have elapsed since the walls were destroyed by the Babylonians.
 - c. We are involved in the “great work” of the **Great** Commission and we cannot afford to get distracted from it by accepting invitations to false fellowship.
2. Nehemiah’s Priorities (3b)
 - a. Nehemiah was absolute – “I **cannot** come down”.
 - b. Nehemiah left no room for further negotiation or dialogue. To him it wasn’t even an option. His allegiance to God and His work made it impossible for him to accept such an invitation.
 - c. Nehemiah knew that his absence would mean the demise of the work – “why should the work cease”.
3. Nehemiah’s Position (3c)
 - a. To accept this invitation would require Nehemiah to “come down”.
 - b. Accepting an invitation to compromise is always a step down from the high ground of faith.
 - c. When considering an invitation, ask yourself, “which direction might this take me?”

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4. Nehemiah's Persistence (Vs. 4)
 - a. Nehemiah demonstrated more persistence than the enemy. The enemy came a further four times and Nehemiah gave them the same answer every time.
 - b. The enemy does not give up at the first refusal! Many stand for the truth initially, only to eventually buckle to the enemy's pressure.
 - c. What about love and grace?
 - i. John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
 - ii. Titus 2:11-12 "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;"
 - iii. Ernest Pickering:

One young man who had been for years a member of a fundamentalist church suddenly left it to join a New Evangelical congregation. Upon enquiring as to the reason, the pastor was told that the New Evangelicals were more loving than the fundamentalists and that the young man was attracted to them for this reason. None of us can claim a corner on love, and no doubt it is true that many fundamentalist congregations could greatly improve in their love toward the Lord, toward one another, and toward the world in which they live. However, what some perceive of as love is, in reality, compromise. Many confuse a broad acceptance of various doctrinal positions, lifestyles, musical tastes, and methodologies as a demonstration of Christian love. In other words, if one is broader and more lenient, one is more loving. But this concept is not grounded in Scripture. Truth and love are not to be divorced. They walk together and are in perfect agreement. Some believe that if one is truly loving, one will not denounce error nor evaluate in a negative way the positions of others. Since the New Evangelicals do not do this, they are perceived to be more loving than fundamentalists, to be kinder, more gracious, and more tolerant. But divine love is capable of hatred, strange as that may seem. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." (Psalm 97:10). We are to "love in the truth" (2 John 1). One who is truly filled with divine love will rebuke evil and expose error. **Many have erroneously equated a refusal to speak forthrightly as a demonstration of love.**

- d. Note: If Christ were to preach in many of our churches today, He would likely be thrown out for not being Christ-like enough, for not being loving and gracious enough! We should note Christ's true perspective on error in Rev. 2:14-16 where He rebukes the church at Pergamos for their slackness in dealing with false doctrine in their midst.

II. THE LIPS OF FALSEHOOD (VS. 5-9)

A. The Report (Vs. 5-7)

1. The format of the report (Vs. 5)
 - a. An open letter. Intended to be read and spread!
 - b. Letters are powerful tools, for good or evil. There is a place for an open letter if it contains the truth communicated in the right spirit. But an open letter filled with falsehood is a diabolical thing.
2. The contents of the report (Vs. 6-7a)
 - a. Hearsay – gossip and idle tales. How often do Christians make conclusions based on "I heard such and such from so and so" Some Christians are **Gossip Garbage trucks** – they go from

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one house to another, collecting wheelie bins full of slander and gossip!

- b. Slander – false accusation. Look at how they accused Nehemiah and the people of God:
 - i. Falsely accused them of planning to rebel against the king. Note: It is interesting how often the people who want to charge a godly leader with wrongdoing are rebels themselves!
 - ii. Falsely accused Nehemiah of selfish ambition for power – “that thou mayest be their king”.
 - iii. Falsely accused Nehemiah of self-promotion – “thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem”.
 - iv. John Butler writes, “Those who rebel against the will of God are generally and ironically the first to charge others with rebellion of one sort or another when the accusers do not like the way others are acting. The Jews’ enemies had been rebelling against the king’s orders about the walls ever since Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, yet they make this charge of rebellion against Nehemiah. This hypocritical habit of sinners in charging others with the sins they themselves are guilty of is also seen in the charge of lack of love often made against pastors and other church leaders. The ones who lack love the most are generally the first to charge others with lack of love. Check out the lives of those making absurd charges, and you will likely find it is a hypocrite pointing the finger.”
 - c. Threats – “now shall it be reported to the king according to these words.” This slander had strong political overtones. To rebel against the king of Babylon was a most serious offense, punishable by death.
3. The aim of the report (Vs. 7b)
 - a. They wanted to force Nehemiah off the wall to come and discuss the accusations against him. But falsehood, slander and hear say are not basis for any meeting!
 - b. They wanted to cause fear, thus weakening the resolve of the builders so that the work would stop (Vs. 9)

B. The Response (Vs. 8-9)

1. Nehemiah stayed on the wall (Vs. 8) – We are not to leave the work of God to chase every slanderous rumor we hear!
2. Nehemiah exposed the lies (Vs. 8) – Nehemiah did not directly address the specifics of the accusation. He simply called them out for what they were – lies! Notice that the slander was calculated to weaken their hands through fear so that the work would not be done (Vs. 9a).

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3. Nehemiah sought the Lord (Vs. 9) – Take slander and false accusation to the Lord and seek His strength to press on with service God.

III. THE LEADERSHIP OF FEAR (VS. 10-14)

A. The Promoting of Fear (Vs. 10)

1. The prophet Shemaiah (Vs. 10)
 - a. A deceptive presentation (Vs. 10)
 - i. The person: Shemaiah was one of the spiritual leaders in Israel. He appears to have had access to the temple (Vs. 10) and he makes a ‘prophecy’ (Vs. 12). He was likely a priest. It is hard to stand against those who claim to be spiritual leaders.
 - ii. The play act: Shemaiah feigned fear by shutting himself up in his home.
 - b. An insidious plan (Vs. 10, 13)
 - i. The ploy was to try and get Nehemiah to act upon an emotional impulse rather than being governed by objective truth. This would then give them juicy material for an “evil report”. The word ‘reproach’ means “to expose by stripping, defame.”
 - ii. The “just follow your heart/feelings” mantra is an extremely dangerous philosophy for decision making. Be guided in your decision making by the word of God, not your emotions.
 - iii. Fear is one of the chief weapons of Satan.

B. The Prevailing over Fear (Vs. 11-14)

1. Nehemiah’s Refusal (Vs. 11)
 - a. Nehemiah was courageous (11a) – Nehemiah was a man of spiritual steel. He faced the winds of adversity head on and didn’t run away in panic like many do today. Prov. 28:1 “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.”
 - b. Nehemiah was humble (11b) – Though he had a high position in the land, he did not have an inflated opinion of himself. He might have been the king’s cupbearer, but he was not a priest and he would not presume to enter a place that was forbidden him.
 - c. Nehemiah was Scriptural (11c)
 - i. Nehemiah knew the recommended course of action was not from God as it required him to violate the Word of God. He did not succumb to “situation ethics”.
 - ii. We need to run our decisions through the filter of God’s Word, asking ourselves the question “*What saith the*

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Scripture?” (Rom. 4:3) Our rule for life is “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*” (1 Thess. 5:21)

- iii. Only the priests were authorized to enter the holy place in the temple (Num. 3:10). Uzziah is an example of a king who violated this and was judged by God (2 Chr. 26:16-21).
2. Nehemiah’s Discernment (Vs. 12-13)
 - a. Nehemiah’s perceptions were not carnal but spiritual. Nehemiah was a man of prayer and of the Word, hence his godly discernment. Nehemiah cut through the deceptive façade and saw the real intent of the enemy. He smelt a rat!
 - b. He discerned several things:
 - i. His commission was not from God.
 - ii. His motivation was selfish.
 - iii. His intention was harmful - The intent was to trip Nehemiah up so they could have occasion for an evil report. Previously they had manufactured their own false reports. Now they sought to lead Nehemiah into a trap that would allow them to have something with a little more weight to use against him.
 - iv. Illustration: The Pharisees and Sadducees tried repeatedly to trip up the Saviour in a similar way.
3. Nehemiah’s Prayer (Vs. 14)
 - a. Nehemiah sets down a good example for us as we are faced with similar trials and tests. His most important response in the face of all these things is prayer!
 - b. Nehemiah simply asks the Lord to look upon the situation. Effectively He places the issue before the Lord, trusting that He will respond with perfect justice.

IV. THE LINKS OF FAMILY (VS. 15-19)

A. The Success of the work (Vs. 15-16b)

1. The speed of the completion – 52 days! This is a testament to the diligence and dedication of those involved in the work.
2. The secret of the completion – God was behind this project! In any work of God there are two aspects: 1. The Divine 2. The Human. The reason this work was blessed of God was because it was initiated by God and empowered by God (A. Redpath).

B. The Sadness towards the work (Vs. 16a)

1. The enemy’s perspective – they were saddened at the success of the work of God! There are those that rejoice to hear of damage to good churches and who are secretly distressed when it succeeds.

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2. The enemy's perception – despite their hatred for the work of God, in the end, even the hard-hearted opponents of the work had to recognize that this was not a work that could only be explained in human terms. God was behind the success of this work!

C. The Subversion of the work (Vs. 17-19)

1. Marriages (Vs. 18)
 - a. Sympathizers within who cooperate with the enemy cause much damage to the work of God!
 - b. Tobiah had a close relationship with Judah through his wife and daughter in law (6:18-19). Marriages of this kind with the heathen were forbidden by God. "The ties of marriage were stronger than their bonds of commitment to the Lord" (Wiersbe)
 - c. Alan Redpath: "There are plenty of men in any church who know the right thing, but who often are afraid of petticoat government."
 - d. Note: A laid back personality is no excuse for a lack of leadership. You do not have to be laid back and relaxed when it comes to the Word of God!
 - e. Warning! We have a tendency to invoke the "its family" exception clause in order to make compromises that violate God's Word. But this exception clause is not found in Scripture! The real test of the fabric of your Christian walk is whether you are willing to uphold the Scriptures when it is going to cut across the most sensitive of human emotions. If we are prepared to allow our emotions to lead us with our family problems rather than the truth, sooner or later, Satan will exploit that weakness to his advantage and damage the work of God.
 - f. Matthew 10:37-38 "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."
2. Messages (Vs. 17, 19)
 - a. Written communication – subversive letters.
 - b. Verbal communication – they represented God's man negatively and the rebels favorably!
 - c. Butler: "Every pastor and other Christian leader who has been serving God for any length of time knows Nehemiah's experience here. It is a very disgusting experience to say the least. Those people who oppose your work and continually work behind your back to disrupt and hinder your work are the ones others in the church praise to you. The praisers' theme seems to be, "How wonderful are the dissidents." But the Bible says, "They that forsake the law praise the wicked" (Prov. 28:4), so you know that those who praise the wicked to you are not good people themselves."

Conclusion: Are you a supporter or detractor of God's work? Are you responding in a spiritual manner to spiritual attacks?