

STRENGTHENED

O GOD, STRENGTHEN MY HANDS

NEHEMIAH 6:9

Sunday Morning, March 16, 2025 » Pastor Josiah Kagin

Message Title: Overcoming the Opposition (Part 1)

Message Text: Nehemiah 6:1-9

Introduction:

As Nehemiah and the teams of laborers were nearing completion of the walls around Jerusalem, the opposition from the enemies in the surrounding regions intensified. Much of the opposition was directed at Nehemiah. The enemies came against him with multiple *tactics* trying frantically to stop the great work that was being accomplished. With Nehemiah in mind, one author stated, “*Spiritual leaders must expect to be the targets of attack from Satan and his human allies.*” Nehemiah did and overcame each attack with God’s help. Let’s allow his example to prepare to overcome the opposition we will face in the work God has given us to do.

1. _____ from the Work (1-4)

A. A Mischievous _____ (1-2)

Nehemiah 6:1–2 Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) 2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

QUOTE: The open gateways were the enemy’s last hope of regaining the upper hand without actually mounting a siege, which would be out of the question against fellow subjects of Persia.⁹—Kinder

PLAIN OF ONO — 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem near the modern cities of Jaffa and Tel Aviv. Also called the Valley of Craftsmen.

DEFINITION—MISCHIEF: evil; that which causes harm or destruction or misfortune.

2 Corinthians 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

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B. A Mission-Driven _____ (3-4)

Nehemiah 6:3–4 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.

A GREAT WORK (3)

Nehemiah 2:12 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem...

A GREAT RESOLVE (4) — Nehemiah was invited four times to leave the work. He declined each invitation.

NOTE — We can overcome distraction with resolve to do what God has given you to do.

John 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

QUOTE: People have become more selfish, churches have become less influential, pastors have become less Bible-centric. Families have invested less of their time and energy in spiritual growth, particularly of their children. The media now influences the Church more than the Church influences the media, or the culture for that matter. The Christian Body tends to get off track arguing about a lot of things that really don't matter. — George Barna

2. _____ in the Work (5-9)

A. A _____ Report (5-7)

SANBALLAT'S OPEN LETTER

Nehemiah 6:5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;

QUOTE: In Eastern Asia, the Persians make up their letters in the form of a roll about six inches long, and a bit of paper is fastened round it with gum, and sealed with an impression of ink, which resembles our printers' ink, but it is not so thick. Letters were, and are still, sent to persons of distinction in a bag or purse, and even to equals they are enclosed—the tie being made with a colored ribbon. But to inferiors, or persons who are to be treated contemptuously, the letters were sent open—that is, not enclosed in a bag. Nehemiah, accustomed to the punctilious ceremonial of the Persian court, would at once notice the want of the usual formality and know that it was from designed disrespect.—JFB

GASHMU'S PUBLISHED RUMORS

Nehemiah 6:6–7 Wherein was written, [RUMOR #1] 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. [RUMOR #2] 7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: [THREAT] and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words.

NOTE — Gashmu is the Assyrian form of Geshem, king of Kedar. Of all the enemies Nehemiah faced, he was the most powerful and influential.

SANBALLAT'S EXPECTED TERMS

Nehemiah 6:7 ... Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

DEFINITION—COUNSEL: to consult (get advice); to get or ask advice from.

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man That walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

B. Stated _____ (8-9b)

INVENTED FALSEHOODS

Nehemiah 6:8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

DEFINITION—FEIGNEST: to invent (falsehood); to make up something artificial or untrue.

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

INDUCED FEAR

Nehemiah 6:9b For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done.

DEFINITION—WEAKENED: fall limp; to be or become weak or ineffectual, conceived of as falling limp.

DEFINITION—AFRAID: to frighten; to cause fear in; to intimidate

A recent survey found that when it came to talking to other people about the gospel, fear was far and away the most significant deterrent. People communicated that they were afraid of losing valuable relationships and wanted to avoid the tensions that accompanied these kinds of discussions.

(jesusfilm.org/blog/christian-evangelism-statistics)

Psalm 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me...

C. A Simple _____ (9c)

Nehemiah 6:9c ...Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

DEFINITION—STRENGTHEN: to make strong or stronger; make courageous; this phrase is a Hebrew idiom denoting empowerment. (FSB)

QUOTE: The enemy tried to weaken the faithful by impregnating their hearts with fear, but the man of God prayed for strength. “Strengthen my hands,” is the cry of all the faithful who know that victory is won only when God provides the strength. —Rata

NOTE — We can overcome intimidation with prayer seeking God’s strength.

Ephesians 6:18–19 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

QUOTE: Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.
—William Cowper

Conclusion

Hebrews 12:1–3 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Questions to Consider

Am I easily distracted from the what God has given me to do? If so, how is that distraction impacting my walk with Christ, my marriage, my family, my witness, or my service to Christ?

Am I intimidated by spiritual battle and those that oppose my God and my faith?
Do I give into fear or do I turn to God in prayer?

