

Title: How to Withstand Opposition

Passage: Nehemiah 6

Key Truths:

- When slandered, follow Nehemiah's example:
 - Be calm and concise
 - Put the blame where it belongs
 - Pray
- Why pray?
 - We are reminded who we are.
 - We are reminded that our salvation is not based upon our work.
 - We can receive forgiveness and grace.
 - We are reminded that God is in control of our situation.
- Grow in discernment of when to say no. Seek God's Word and godly counsel.
- Do not fear consequences when following God's Word.
- Compare what you hear with God's Word. Make sure it is consistent with all of the Bible, which is His proven Word.

Application:

- God calls us to please Him more than we are to please the world
- Continue to grow in Christ-like maturity by building discernment.
- When slandered, be calm and concise and be wise when trying to vindicate your name.
- Recognize there are only two groups of people: 1) those who follow God and given their lives to Christ and 2) those who have submitted to Satan and will ultimately face judgment before God.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
- What next steps will you take in response to the sermon?

Introduction

Conspiracy Theory

- word that has been used in various ways.
- Truth is that the Bible has pointed to this:

Ephesians 6:10-12

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- The Bible makes clear that Satan is real and so are his demons.

- God still owns the world but has allowed a limited period of time for Satan to
- Old Testament passages on Satan:
 - Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28
 - Satan's rebellion against God
- Where God is on the move, so is Satan.
 - Satan's greatest influence is among those who have not been saved by God.

Two categories of people:

- People who worship God.
- People who worship the devil
 - Subcategories:
 - Those who knowingly worship the devil
 - Those who unknowingly serve the devil
 - How? Reject God's standards and instead promoting Satan's ideologies

Today's passage:

- The battle is real between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.
- There is a clear battle between what is right and wrong.
- The church's role is to equip to withstand coming tribulation and persecution.

2 Timothy 3:12-14

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it

Context of Passage

- Opposition in different ways:
 - Nehemiah 4: ridicule from others
 - Nehemiah 5: divisions from within
 - Nehemiah 6: personal attack on Nehemiah

EXPOSITION

Personal focus on Nehemiah

Nehemiah 6:1-2

Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm.

Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies

- Sanballat
 - Name means "may the moon god give him life"
 - Clear worshiper of Satan

- Tobiah
 - Jewish name
 - One who compromised who instead sought personal prosperity
- Gesham the Arab
 - One of great influence as many Arabs were in the area.

heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates)

- on the eve of great accomplishment of completing the wall.
- Greatest temptations happen during times of great success and peace.

1 Corinthians 10:12

Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm.

- Nehemiah realized this was a trap.
 - They had never acknowledged any repentance or prior wrong doing.

Nehemiah's response

Nehemiah 6:3-4

And I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner.

- Why the response?
 - Realized the intent of the message
 - Realized the importance of saying "no"
- Gift of "no"
 - need discernment of when to say no.
 - Seek God's Word and godly counsel
- Caution: Temptation to compromise / give-in
- Today's culture: doesn't know what "no" means.
 - Lack of restraint.

Their next move:

Nehemiah 6:5-9

In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, 'There is a king in Judah.' And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together."

- Ancient Persian version of “fake news”
 - Times have changed but demons have not.
 - Slanderous gossip attack
 - Damage has been done when
- Tongue
 - Number one threat to unity of the church
- Gossip:
 - you share a truth about someone else who is not present with someone who is not part of the solution
- Slander:
 - You share a lie about someone else who is not present with someone whereby destroying that person’s view of that person.

Nehemiah’s Response:

Nehemiah 6:8-9

Then I sent to him, saying, “No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind.” For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

- Nehemiah’s response is a model for us when slandered:
 - Be calm and concise
 - Avoid engaging into the emotional trap
 - Put the blame where it belongs
 - Pray

Psalm 109:2-4

For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me, speaking against me with lying tongues. They encircle me with words of hate, and attack me without cause. In return for my love they accuse me, but I give myself to prayer.

Why pray?

- We are reminded who we are.
 - A child of the great, holy God
- We are reminded that our salvation is not based upon our work.
 - We can receive forgiveness if needed.
- We are reminded that God is in control of your situation.
 - God doesn’t just say He is your father but He will take care of you.

Another Tactic from Within

Nehemiah 6:10

Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home, he said, “Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night.”

- Opposition hired someone to lie and state some oracle from God to plant a trap.

- False prophet said he got a special oracle from God.
 - Trying to place fear of bad consequences.

Nehemiah 6:11-13

But I said, "Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in." And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me.

Nehemiah realized this was a trap.

- Threat of death
 - misplaced fear as any death next leads us to be in the presence of God.
 - Death is actually not something to fear.
 - God will take care of your loved ones.
- Hide
 - The Law provided that one would only seek refuge if unintentionally killed someone, not out of fear of opposition.
- In the temple
 - Nehemiah was not a priest so he was not qualified to be inside a temple.

Likewise:

- Do not fear consequences when following God's Word.
- Compare what you hear with God's Word. Make sure it is consistent with all of the Bible, which is His proven Word.

Nehemiah goes back to prayer.

Nehemiah 6:14

Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

APPLICATION

For Christians:

God calls us to please Him more than we are to please the world

- Do not compromise God's truths and standards because of fear.
- 365 verses in the Bible that say "Do not fear" (one for each day of the year)

Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Continue to grow in Christ-like maturity by building discernment.

- Discernment is needed:
 - Between truth and lies;
 - Between what is truth and almost-truth (Great need)
- Be discerning to know God's truth thoroughly on different

2 Peter 1:5-8

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When slandered, be calm and concise and be wise when trying to vindicate your name.

- Let God defend you.
- God is more concerned about your name more than you are.
 - He will vindicate you in His time.
- When you stand up for the truth, you will be attacked. Be wise and discerning in your response.

Colossians 4:5-6

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

For Non-Believers:

Recognize there are only two groups of people: 1) those who follow God and given their lives to Christ and 2) those who have submitted to Satan and will ultimately face judgment before God.

- Come to Christ and believe in Him.

Acts 16:31

And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.