

## Nehemiah – Building the Future, Part 5

The book of Nehemiah is not just about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem – it is about building a **FUTURE** for God’s people! Jerusalem looked like New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina – the city was destroyed and the people were scattered and demoralized. But in only 52 days, 42 different working parties restored a 50 foot high wall with a circumference of 4 miles at a rate of 504 feet per day – all the while fighting opposition. How did they accomplish in only 52 days what no one had been able to do in 140 years?! **THEY PRAYED, YES ... BUT THEY ALSO ACTED!**

Nehemiah had three enemies in his quest to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls of protection and separation – and we have the same three enemies!

**SANBALLAT** – name means “hatred in secret” – represents the **DEVIL** who says the walls are “NOT NECESSARY”

**TOBIAH** – name means “Jehovah is good” (strange name for an enemy!) – represents the **FLESH** that says the walls are “TOO MUCH WORK”

**GESHEM** – name means “corporeal” or “having material substance” – represents the **WORLD** that says the walls are “INTOLERANT” (subtle!)

By the time we get to chapter six, the wall of Jerusalem is fully completed – only the gates remain to be finished. It was an amazing feat, because they accomplished the work while surrounded by enemies! To the north were Sanballat and the Samaritans; to the east, Tobiah and the Ammonites; to the south, Geshem and the Arabs; and to the west, the Ashdodites. Ashdod was perhaps the most important city in Philistia at that time, and the Philistines did not want to see a strong Jerusalem.

It is at this point that the enemy drastically changes his tactics! Up until the walls were built, he **OPPOSED** the work; now that he sees he has lost and the city is established, he offers to **COOPERATE** in the work!

**Nehemiah 6:1-4** 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;) 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. 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? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

**Ephesians 4:27** Neither give place to the devil.

As the leader, Nehemiah did the right thing by drawing a line in the sand at this point! He knew that the Jews had nothing in common with Sanballat and his crowd, so there could be no basis for **COOPERATION**. Nehemiah had made this clear from the very outset of the project, and he refused to back down from his principles now!

**Nehemiah 2:20** Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

**2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1** Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

**God’s people are DIFFERENT from the people of the world and must always maintain a SEPARATION from the spirit that is in the world!** Nehemiah refused to be influenced by their repeated offers. If their offer was wrong the first time, it would be wrong the fourth time or the fortieth time! **Decisions based on opinions might be reconsidered, but decisions based on Biblical convictions can never be changed!**

**Some think that because we have changed our METHODS over the years that we might consider changing our MESSAGE or our LIFESTYLE CONVICTIONS – nothing could be further from the truth!**

**When the enemy’s attempts at COMPROMISE failed, he tried the tactic of SLANDER against Nehemiah through a letter to the king.** Christian leaders must know how to handle false accusations, vicious letters and gossip. Otherwise, these devilish weapons will make them lose their perspective and spend so much time defending themselves that they neglect their work. Nehemiah didn’t make that mistake!

**Nehemiah 6:15-16** So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. 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.**

By the end of chapter six, the wall is finished. But this only marks a new stage in spiritual warfare, for now Nehemiah must protect what he has established. How he does this is the theme of the rest of the book. Satan is not a quitter but stays in the battle even after it looks as if he has lost. Many a careless Christian has won the war but afterward lost the victory.

**Luke 4:13 (KJV)** And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

**Luke 4:13 (MSG)** That completed the testing. The Devil retreated temporarily, lying in wait for another opportunity.

**Luke 4:13 (AMP)** And when the devil had ended every [the complete cycle of] temptation, he [temporarily] left Him [that is, stood off from Him] until another more opportune and favorable time.

This almost happens to the people of Jerusalem! Nehemiah goes back to the king for a time, and while he is gone Tobiah (THE FLESH) acts up!

**WE MUST ALWAYS GUARD AGAINST REPLACING NEHEMIAH (GODLY LEADERSHIP) WITH TOBIAH (DESIRES OF OUR FLESH)!**

**Nehemiah 13:4-8** And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.

By the time Nehemiah returns, Tobiah has convinced Eliashib the high priest to actually set up a room for him to live in the Temple! Nehemiah lost no time in throwing Tobiah and his possessions out into the street! He found himself right back at the beginning, getting rid of rubbish again.

**Luke 19:12-13** He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, **Occupy till I come.**

Satan never stops trying to gain a foothold in our lives. We need to not only win the battle once, but OCCUPY the territory God has given us!