

52 Days to Change the World. Week 4

I love the story of Nehemiah because he is a regular person who was moved to fix an injustice. He didn't turn the other cheek or look away he decided to do something. He prayed and began to plan.

The dream and planning stage is always my favorite part in doing anything. But sometime we have to take a step forward and then we face opposition. Scott started this message last week and I am going to continue it today.

I have a concern that churches and people don't lack vision and compassion. The issue is not wanting to do something. It is in the doing. Some disqualify themselves before they ever start. Others get started but obstacles and opposition get in the way and they get discouraged and stop.

Nehemiah many different types of opposition but pressed through and there are great lessons we can draw from his rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

Background:

Nehemiah has been taken captive with many of the Israelites to Babylon in about 450BC. He is a cupbearer or wine-taster for the king. He gets news about how bad it is in Jerusalem and becomes distraught. The king sees him.

When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates—² Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono."

YOUR ENEMY WILL TRY TO DISTRACT YOU.

If the devil can't stop you through **discouragement** as Scott talked about last week he will try to stop you through **DISTRACTION**.

Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono..." Neh 6:2

1st point, never take a meeting in a place called, "Ono". Ono was near the border of Samaria, Sanballat's home province. On the surface it appeared that Sanballat and his cohorts wanted to have a peace conference, but their hidden motive was to harm Nehemiah.

Sanballat's name came in the piece of papyrus found in a dig site in this area in the 1900's. His name in Babylonian means, "may Sin give him life."

The closer you get to doing what God wants done the harder your enemy will fight to stop you. You don't face opposition for doing wrong, it is when you do something right.

This is why the devil always attacks you on the way to church.

When I get most distracted is when I sit down to pray or read the Bible. That's why I do it first thing in the morning.

It is often the small distractions that eat away at us. Eccl. "Little foxes."

Something will always be on TV on Sat. night when you want to go to sleep so you can come to church on Sunday and worship God.

But they were scheming to harm me;³ so I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?"⁴ Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

Response: I'M NOT COMING DOWN

You have to have the courage and discipline to say, "NO, I am doing something good I will not be distracted."

It is true, "The good is the enemy of the best."

You cannot do everything. You can only do a few things well. What should they be?

- Connect with God every day. STARTING PLACE.
- Love and serve your spouse and family.
- Make your job your mission.
- Connect with other believers.
- Find a place to serve God's kingdom.

If you keep these priorities much of the pain and weariness you go through will be headed off by God who promises to smooth out the road. But, we have to make right decisions.

How you respond. Why should I stop what I'm doing? Is this better than serving God? Is this a good choice? Is this worth it? How does this activity glorify God?

How many lives could have been saved from destruction if someone would have just stopped and asked, "Is this worth it?"

Nehemiah rejects their requests because he has the gift of discernment working. This is a gift of the Holy Spirit the apostle Paul referred to as discerning of spirits. It is the enablement of the Holy Spirit to sense the true motives behind someone. Not to be confused with the human gift of suspicion.

The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out. Proverbs 20:5

It is said of Jesus, "he knew what was in their hearts." God will give you this gift if you will throw up one of those micro-prayers we talked about.

I've had this happen so many times. I wasn't be cautious or judgmental. It was God who gave me the sense to say that something wasn't right. Parents have this gift to.

YOUR ENEMY WILL TRY TO DISCREDIT YOU.

1. BY SPREADING RUMORS.

⁵ Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter ⁶ (so everyone could read it and start rumors) in which was written:

"It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king ⁷ and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: 'There is a king in Judah!' Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us meet together." Neh. 6:5-7

The truth is the more you do for God the more accusation and opposition.

No person has ever been in the spotlight without facing accusation. Sometimes that's all it takes, just a rumor.

If you read the previous chapter 5 you see that Nehemiah was not in this for personal gain he is doing this for God. He gives his own resources to feed others. He knows these accusations are false. He frankly doesn't care about false accusations. He deals with them the same way you need to, **IGNORE IT** and take it to God the way Scott described, take truth out of it and ignore the rest.

⁸ I sent him this reply: *"Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head."*

⁹ They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, *"Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed."*

But I prayed, "Now strengthen my hands." Neh. 6:8-9

REINFORCING PRAYER

Nehemiah discerned their strategy but then responded by seeking God that the very area they were going to attack would be strengthened by God.

Reinforce your weaknesses with prayer. What are the weak points in your walls? Where does the enemy access your life? Temptation?

"I can withstand anything but temptation."

These access points in our lives come through sins, generational sin, fear, hurts. Paul said, "Give no place to the devil."

Unforgiveness one of the biggest. Someone legitimately hurts you and then the devil beats you down further by convincing you to hold onto bitterness and unforgiveness.

Jesus said, "the god of this world is coming and he has nothing in Me."

God can set you free from these issues.

Now there is a new obstacle one of the toughest. It doesn't come from the outside it comes from within the church. He is a religious guy named Shemaiah.

2. BY TEMPTING YOU TO COMPROMISE.

(Shemaiah) said, "Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you."...12 I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me. Neh. 6:10, 12-13

Response: I'M NOT GIVING UP.

But I said, "Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!" Neh 6:11

The temptation here was to play it safe. By going into the temple which was orbidden for anyone other than the priests Nehemiah would have violated God's law.

The suggestion was made out of fear, just go to church, but don't anyone know you're a Christian.

Tom and Jack Harris's cross. *"It's not my cross."*

When are especially men of the church going to make a stand, stop trying to just be good little boys and rise up to become men of God. Warriors, champions who model sacrifice, integrity, perseverance, boldness and at the same time humility and tenderness.

¹⁵ *So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days.*

¹⁶ *When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.*

REMEMBER WE ARE IN A THE MIDST OF A 52 MIRACLE AS WELL.

You cannot do great things without God. In the end it is about who gets the glory and the accolades. Attempt something great for God that is beyond your means and requires God to come through so that you get to see Him work and He gets credit!

CLOSING (Movement and Flow)

1. Some of you are battling **DISCOURAGEMENT**. You need **ENCOURAGEMENT**. People around you are going to pray and then share what God is putting on their heart to tell you or what they see.
2. Some are battling **DISTRACTION**. Identify the distraction, repent for allowing it to distract, and ask God to strengthen your wall of defense.
3. Some feel **DECREDITED** by other or yourself. Suffer from condemnation. Remind yourself of how much God values you and worship Him.