

THE GATES OF HELL WILL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST THE CHURCH

Next Steps Devotional Guide — Nehemiah 6

April 2, 2023 — Palm Sunday

Sermon Series > Nehemiah: Repair, Rebuild & Restore

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1. For the last few weeks in our study of Nehemiah, we have been looking at spiritual warfare.
 - a. How aware do you think people are in general to spiritual warfare? How serious do you think people in general live with a sensitivity that their real battle is not people — not flesh and blood — but the devil and his demons?
 - b. How aware do you think Christians are to spiritual warfare? How serious do you think Christians live with a sensitivity that their real battle is not people — not flesh and blood — but the devil and his demons?
 - c. How aware and sensitive are you that your real battle is not people, but the devil & demonic powers?
2. Pastor Kelly shared three areas the devil loves to attack the believer in your sermon outline. Look over each of these. Where have you experienced this in your own life? What happened and how did you deal with it?
3. Take your Bible and read Ephesians 6:16. This verse reminds us why we should take up our “shield of faith” to protect us from the fiery arrows shot at us by the devil. If you were sitting down with someone to use this passage, what modern day weapon would you say the devil uses and why? What modern day version of a “shield of faith” would you use as a picture that would counter-act the devil’s attacks and why?
4. The devil loves to launch his fiery missiles at us. Take your Bible and read 1 Corinthians 14:33. This verse tells one thing that God is not. What is that? Yet, the very thing God is not, the devil specializes in it. Why would you think this is one of the fiery missiles of the devil?
5. Take your sermon notes and read Nehemiah 6:1-4. Have you ever felt someone or some people were setting a trap for you? Why did you feel that way? If they were, what was that trap and how did you deal with it?
6. The trap Nehemiah’s enemies set for him was to come to a city named Ono for some R&R. The city of Ono was an oasis and was a frequent vacation spot for people. Four times Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshum tried to get Nehemiah to come to Ono under the ruse of a peace conference. Each time, Nehemiah saw it for what it was — a trap to kill him and that is why he declined their invitations. When people set traps for you, if you counter their attack of confusion, you must be willing to be misunderstood and penalized for it. Why?
7. We live in a world of scandals (i.e., Watergate, Iran Contra, Enron, Facebook, Covid vaccination, Jimmy Swagger, PTL—Jim & Tammy Faye Baker, and Ravi Zacharias). It is as if we simply have come to expect them and thus we have lost the “shock factor.”
 - a. Read Nehemiah 5:5-6 in your sermon outline. The end result of any scandal is that you are discredited. People no longer trust you and they will always look at you suspiciously. Who and what have you come to look at suspiciously and why?
 - b. The problem with any rumor or gossip is this — once it is out there, it cannot be taken it back, especially if the rumor or gossip is false and proven to be false. Rumors and gossip spread faster than fire across a dry Kansas wheat field. Have you ever been the victim of a false rumor or gossip? What was it? How did you deal with it? What finally happened in the end?
 - c. Read Proverbs 6:16-19 in your sermon outline. This passage lists seven (7) things God hates. Three of these have to do with our tongue (i.e., our words, especially gossiping, spreading rumors and lying). Why do you think we are so attracted to gossip and even spread gossip ourselves?
 - d. Take your sermon outline and read Nehemiah 6:8. Notice what Nehemiah did not say. He did not say, “*Here are ten reasons why you are wrong, and I can explain why some misguided people are saying I plan to make myself the next king of Jerusalem.*” Nehemiah did not give some long, drawn out defense. What we actually find is the total absence of self-defense. What do you think of his reaction and why?
 - e. Read Nehemiah 6:9a in your sermon outline. The enemies of Nehemiah shared gossip and false rumors to discredit him. Today, in America, we can sue such people for defamation of character. Nehemiah did not have that right or option. Nehemiah’s enemies’ attack was the worst kind — it was an attack to cause people to question his character and his integrity. Has that ever happened to you or someone you personally know? How was it dealt with and what was the fallout?
 - f. Nehemiah is one remarkable man and leader. He did not seek vengeance, or retaliate or lash out at his enemies. Read his reaction in Nehemiah 6:9b in your sermon outline. He prayed to God about the hurt and damage this did to his character and integrity rather than preyed on his enemies. How was this the best approach? How could you use this approach next time someone lies about you?
8. Pastor Kelly shared four (4) traits of gossipers from Chuck Swindoll.¹
 - a. The first one is very common by the modern media. They often say an “anonymous source” gave me this information. Why did you think they do this? When someone comes up to share some tidbit on someone without disclosing their source, say this, “*Before you say anything to me, who is your source because I will confirm what you want to share with me to them.*” How effective would this be if you responded this way? Is this a reaction you would use? Why or why not?
 - b. Many times a gossipers’ gossip is inaccurate and exaggerated. Why?

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, Hand Me Another Brick, Digital Version, p. 75-76.

- c. Gossipers lack wisdom. Wisdom convicts a person to ask, *“Is this necessary to share this? Is this confidential information? Do I have even the right to share this?”* Why is this wise response?
- d. A gossip loses sight of the proper setting for sharing information. A godly person, rather than a gossip, asks, *“Will this benefit the person who hears this and more importantly, can they do anything about it or am I just spreading information to confuse and discredit someone?”*
 - i. Here is the wrong setting — When you give unverified information to people who are critical and negative, knowing they can't do anything about the situation anyway, that's slander. Why? Have you ever done this? If so, what happened? Has this ever been done to you? How did you feel and what happened?
 - ii. When you go to an individual who can do something about relevant information and in a spirit of love share it, that is constructive criticism.” Why?
 - iii. Have you ever played, “The Gossip Game?” This is where you whisper something in someone's ear and they turn and do the same and this repeats itself going around a circle or in a group. What is always the result when the last person receives the whispered information and then shares it? What are the implications of this for your life and walk with Christ?
9. Take your sermon notes and read Jesus' words in Matthew 16:18b. Contrary to what we might believe, Jesus made it clear that even though we might believe the greatest threat to the church is hell, is not the greatest threat to the church. The greatest threat to the church is the church itself because that is a threat that comes from within the church. It is an internal threat, not an external. Why is this the worse threat?
10. Pastor Kelly shared with you an acrostic on the word, T.H.I.N.K. by Rev. Alan Redpath. Redpath came up with this acrostic to help the church he was pastoring as they were going through some very stressful times. Look at this in your sermon outline. If your speech is running down your co-workers or your boss, you are wrong. As a believer, you have no business working with that attitude. If you are speaking out loud against spiritual leaders or members of your own church, stop and think. How can the T.H.I.N.K. test will revolutionize your life for Christ?
11. There are some who feel that any compromise is wrong and bad. That is not true. Married couples have to learn to compromise because if they don't, their marriage will end.
 - a. But there are some ideas, theological truths, biblical accuracy and biblical authenticity that can never be compromised. What are the dangers to compromising these?
 - b. Read Nehemiah 6:10 in your sermon outline. A bribed priest tried to get Nehemiah to compromise under the rouge it would save his life. Now read Nehemiah 6:11-13 in your sermon outline. They tried to get Nehemiah to violate Old Testament commands from God about who can enter the Holy of Holies (i.e., Leviticus 16). Nehemiah knows the Old Testament Law on this. He refused to go. He knew that if he did this, his compromise would still cost him his life. God laid out in the Old Testament Law that only the Jewish High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies. Anyone else who did must be put to death. Nehemiah would rather risk losing his life than risk losing the pleasure of God in his life. Where have you compromised that it hurt you walk with Christ, your witness, your life and it hurt others?
 - c. How much sin will you allow in your life before you become even a little bit bothered?
 - d. In your sermon outline you were given 3 questions to ask when pressured to compromise. Read these. How would these 3 questions help you the next time you feel pressured to compromise?
 - e. Read Nehemiah 6:14 in your sermon outline. Take your Bible and read Deuteronomy 32:35 and Romans 12:17-19. Nehemiah ask God to deal with his enemies. Do you do that with people who hurt you? Why or why not? Why is leaving vengeance to God the best response?
12. Read Nehemiah 6:17-19 in your sermon outline. All of sudden Nehemiah gets word that his enemies are building up Tobiah's character, one of his enemies, to the people working on the wall. Their goal was to divide the people's loyalty against Nehemiah. Yet in spite of all of this, the wall was totally finished in 52 days. To move blocks weighing between 2,000 pounds up to 16,000 pounds to finish a wall whose height was 40 feet is miraculous.
 - a. The devil loves to divide Christians over petty issues such as color of the carpet, the kind of music sung, the length of the sermon and/or service. Put yourself in the shoes of a person who decides to visit a church and they visit a church dividing over these issues. What would this say to them? What would it say to you? Would you ever attend a church like that? Why or why not?
 - b. Read Nehemiah 6:15-16 in your sermon outline. Now reread verse 16 again. Why do you think the enemies of Nehemiah and Jews had this realization?
 - c. When believers resist the lure of the devil and keep on building, keep on serving two things will eventually happen: God is glorified and God's cause is galvanized. Why is this true?
 - d. From the very beginning, the devil went after what God had built — the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. He laid out the bait for them to take and unfortunately, they took it. The devil knew that if Adam and Eve took the bait, all that God had built and created would be destroyed due to sin. What bait from the devil are you vulnerable to take and why?
 - e. This means there is never an opportunity for the kingdom of heaven without opposition from hell. Expect it. Do not be shocked when it comes. Why do you think we are shocked when it comes?
 - f. Read Ephesians 6:12 in your sermon outline. What does this tell you?
 - g. Take a moment and either read and/or sing the hymn, “Stand Up! Stand Up For Jesus.” Where in your life do you need to do this now? Why?