

## Nehemiah 5-6 – Thursday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017

- Because it's been three weeks since we were in Nehemiah, I think it would be good to do a quick recap of what's happening.
- Actually, chapters 4-6 are a great "go to" when it comes to identifying the tactics of the enemy in his attempts to destroy us.
- In chapter 4 we saw how the enemy will seek to use mocking and ridicule as well as threats of force and violence to derail us.

- Here in chapter five, we see something very interesting in that God's people basically do the devil's job for and instead of him.
- If there's any unresolved sin or carnality in the life of a Christian or in the life of a church spiritual warfare will always expose it.
- Such is the case with what happened among the Jewish brethren as we're about to see they we're sinning against each other.

**Nehemiah 5** -- 1 And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. 2 For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live." 3 There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine." 4 There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards." 6 And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. 7 After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, "Each of you is exacting usury from his brother." So I called a great assembly against them. 8 And I said to them, "According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?" Then they were silenced and found nothing to say.

- I find it interesting that Nehemiah would stop and consider his righteous anger after serious thought before he rebukes them.
- I have to confess that this really searches me and convicts me because of my propensity to react in the emotion of the moment.
- We do err greatly when we forfeit that moment of time to, like Nehemiah, seriously think about what we're going to say first.

9 Then I said, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? 10 I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury! 11 Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them." 12 So they said, "We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say." Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. 13 Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!" and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

- Interesting to note that Nehemiah is no respecter of persons, such that, he rebukes the noblemen who were the power brokers.
- What these men were doing was in effect becoming a poor advertisement, as it were, for what God's people are to be about.
- In other words, the God of Israel and the people of God are never to be about or have the mindset of every man for himself.

- This holy boldness on the part of Nehemiah begs the question of why and how he was able to do the right thing, the hard thing.
- I believe we need look no further than to Nehemiah's private life in the sense that he had not compromised in his own integrity.
- It's when we compromise in our own lives that we're stripped of that sanctified confidence to rebuke others for sin in their life.

14 Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor's provisions. 15 But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God. 16 Indeed, I also continued the work on this wall, and we did not buy any land. All my servants were gathered there for the work. 17 And at my table were one hundred and fifty Jews and rulers, besides those who came to us from the nations around us. 18 Now that which was prepared daily was one ox and six choice sheep. Also fowl were prepared for me, and once every ten days an abundance of all kinds of wine. Yet in spite of this I did not demand the governor's provisions, because the bondage was heavy on this people. 19 Remember me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

- What Nehemiah prays here in verse 19 could be seen as him wanting to take the credit for all he had done for God's people.
- However, upon closer examination, he's actually just privately praying to God for the praise from God and not praise from man.
- As such, I think what he does here is not only appropriate but wise in the sense that he's seeking to lay up treasures in heaven.

**Nehemiah 6** -- 1 Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), 2 that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono." But they thought to do me harm.

- You'll forgive my play on words, but I think this plain of Ono is appropriately named. I never want to go to a place called oh no.
- Be that as it may, I can't help but notice that the enemy is always about attacking the leader as he does here with Nehemiah.
- This is textbook in the strategy of the enemy by virtue of how smiting the shepherd will result in the scattering of the sheep.

Matthew 26:31 (NKJV) — 31 Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’

- This is an attempt to assassinate Nehemiah and he knows it. Not only is Ono a days travel away, it's a very dangerous place.
- I point this out because this is what the enemy seeks to do. He tries to get us out of where God wants us into a perilous place.
- If and when he succeeds in doing this to us, it's just a matter of time before he's got us all because he got us into his arena.

3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” 4 But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner. 5 Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. 6 In it was written: It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, that you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king. 7 And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, “There is a king in Judah!” Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come, therefore, and let us consult together. 8 Then I sent to him, saying, “No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart.”

- Here we have yet another device of the devil to destroy us, and it's that of slander, gossip, and false accusations against us.
- This speaks to a reality for those in leadership positions, in that; we will always be on the receiving end of this carnal dynamic.
- Again this goes back to the aforementioned truth of how the enemy will always seek to smite the shepherd to scatter the sheep.

9 For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, “Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done.” Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. 10 Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was a secret informer; and he said, “Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you.” 11 And I said, “Should such a man as I flee? And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!” 12 Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so that they might have cause for an evil report, that they might reproach me. 14 My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the most devastating devices of the devil, it would have to be that of fear.
- The reason being is that fear is utterly and totally crippling, and if that weren't bad enough, fear can also be very contagious.
- By that I mean if the devil can get a leader to succumb to fear, all of those under his leadership will also become very fearful.

15 So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God. 17 Also in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them. 18 For many in Judah were pledged to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. 19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.

- I can't think of a better way to end a chapter and with it a Bible study than to be told that the wall was finished in fifty-two days.
- It's not just that the work was finished, it's that God's people are victorious so much so that the enemies became disheartened.
- However, this victory came packaged with those professing to be God's people working covertly to undermine God's work.

Alan Redpath - “Whether you be a pastor or a teacher or evangelist or Sunday school leader, or whatever your position may be in Christian leadership, let me say that there will always be those who are friendly to your face, but who plan your downfall behind your back. Beware of the fawning, flattering Christian who is always fluttering around you, and who behind your back will be the first to rejoice when you go down.”

- There's one last thing I want to mention before we close and it has to do with the victory coming vis-à-vis the power of prayer.
- Here's how I get there, Nehemiah had prayed for a total of four months before he ever started the work of rebuilding the wall.
- I point this out because the wall was rebuilt in half the time that Nehemiah spent in prayer, which was the answer to his prayer.