

Nehemiah 6: Standing Firm Under Resistance

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Nehemiah / Nehemiah 6

Introduction

- Drinking my first energy drink before a half-marathon. Mile 8 - heart began racing - it didn't help me finish the race more quickly - it caused my body to revolt. I could feel the resistance as my legs grew heavier, my heart beat faster, and my breathing became heavier.
- You know what it's like to experience resistance when you are trying to accomplish something. Whenever we are trying to accomplish a goal, we can expect obstacles that make us want to slow down or quit.
- If our goal is to follow Christ well and live for His mission, we can expect resistance.
- Following Jesus is not easy because you struggle with a sinful nature. There's a war within your heart.
- Following Jesus is not easy because there's an enemy that resists you. We often live life unaware of the spiritual battle for our allegiance.
- [Ephesians 6:11](#) - The enemy does not attack randomly. He schemes. He uses different strategies in different seasons. He works through temptation, fear, accusation, discouragement, division, and deception. His attacks can touch our families, our work, our relationships, our suffering, and our areas of weakness.
- We feel that resistance. [James 4:7](#): "Submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

- How do you resist the enemy? By understanding the enemy's schemes and choosing to submit to God rather than falling to the enemy's schemes.
- In [Nehemiah 6](#), three ways the enemy attempts to resist the work of God in us and through us and how we must respond.

Do not let distraction derail your assignment.

- Nehemiah and the Jewish people are well into a month of rebuilding the wall. It hasn't been easy. In [Nehemiah 4](#), direct opposition from the enemy. The enemy plotted to fight against the Jewish people, but the Jews stayed on the wall while at the same time readying themselves for battle.
- In [Nehemiah 5](#), the opposition was from within. The Jews opposed each other as the wealthy took advantage of the poor.
- In [Nehemiah 6](#), more opposition. A reminder that when you strive to accomplish something for the sake of God's Kingdom, you can expect opposition over and over again. The enemy doesn't give up and say, "Well, I guess I can't get to them..." His attacks are relentless.
- In [Nehemiah 6](#), the tactics change. Instead of an outright physical attack on the Jewish people, the attacks are much more subtle. They personally target Nehemiah.
- The first strategy was to distract Nehemiah. The enemy often attempts to distract you from God's work.
- The distraction: "Come out to Ono..." They wanted him to come off the wall and make a 25 journey northwest of Jerusalem. It would have taken an investment of time for Nehemiah to go to Nehemiah. He would have to abandon the work and his people.
- Tempted to go? Maybe this was an opportunity for a peace treaty? BUT... Nehemiah knew not to trust the enemy. He also knew his calling.

God did not send him to Jerusalem to merely negotiate peace treaties. He sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem to build a wall. Nehemiah had a God-given assignment.

- vs. 2- Nehemiah knew this was not going to be an attempt at peace-making. The enemy was out to harm him.
- Vs. 3 - “I’m doing important work and cannot come down.” Nehemiah saw it for what it was - a distraction.
- vs. 4 - The enemy was persistent - four times they sent for Nehemiah, but Nehemiah said “Oh no to ono.”
- Distraction is one of the enemy’s most effective tactics, and we easily give in to distraction. So many different things pulling our attention away from what God desires for us.
- Sanballat did not need Nehemiah to renounce the mission. He only needed Nehemiah to leave the wall. Distraction doesn’t cause us to abandon God completely. Distraction simply pulls our attention away from the work God has placed before us.
- **Know the distractions that tend to pull you away from God’s work.**
What tends to distract:
 - The need to answer every criticism
 - Comparison with others
 - Constant digital noise
 - Opportunities God has not assigned to you
 - The pursuit of recognition
 - Minor controversies
 - Other people’s urgent demands
 - Busyness that crowds out prayer, Scripture, family, and church

- **Know what you will do before the distractions come.**
 - Settle your priorities.
 - Decide in advance what gets your time, attention, and energy.
 - Decide before your schedule fills up that you will make time for prayer and study of God's Word or a discipleship group.
 - Decide before criticism comes that you will not give up on the work simply because of someone's opinion.
 - You cannot predict every distraction, but you can determine now what matters most.
 - Determine to stay faithful to the assignment God has entrusted to you.

Do not let intimidation weaken your resolve.

- When distractions did not work, the enemies came to Nehemiah a fifth time, but instead of distracting Nehemiah, they intimidate.
- A messenger sent to Nehemiah with an open letter in his hand. A sealed letter would have been for Nehemiah's eyes only, but Nehemiah's enemies likely wanted the contents of this letter to become public.
- An open letter in an attempt to expose Nehemiah as someone that he was not - all in an attempt to intimidate Nehemiah so that Nehemiah might become fearful and stop the work.
- Notice how the enemy intimidates Nehemiah:
 - Accusation - Nehemiah's motives and character are attacked. (vs. 6 - You plan to rebel. vs. 6-7 - Accused Nehemiah of wanting to be a king.)
 - Rumors - vs. 6 "According to these reports..."

- Pressure - vs. 7 - “You need to address these rumors before they are heard by the king of Persia. Come confer with us.”
- vs. 8 - By spreading rumors, the enemy tries to intimidate and cause Nehemiah to fear. But, Nehemiah knew there was nothing to these rumors.
- vs. 9 - “They will drop their hands...” This is what the enemy wanted - weakened resolve.
- The enemy wants to intimidate us as well. He wants us to fear what others may think, say, or do. If he can fill our minds with the opinions of other people, he can take our attention away from God and weaken our obedience.
- Far more important to fear God rather than fear people.
- Perhaps you hear the voices in your head, “What does so and so think about you?” You start to fear what others think about you.
 - What will my parents think of me if I make the decision to go into ministry, or if I make the decision to move to another country for Gospel work?”
 - What will my friends think if I stop participating something that I now believe goes against my convictions?
 - What will people at church think if I admit I’m struggling?
 - What will my friends think if I walk away from a relationship that is pulling me from Christ?
 - What will people think if I forgive someone who doesn’t deserve it?
- We hate to admit it, but we make a lot of decisions NOT based on what we believe to be best for God’s Kingdom, but instead based on what people think of us because we fear how people might perceive us.
- This is a tactic of the enemy.

- vs. 8-9 - Notice how Nehemiah responds. He doesn't give much time or credibility to the rumors. He denies the rumors. Recognizes the tactic for what it is, prays, and moves on.
- When the enemy intimidates us through the negative opinions of others:
- **Don't consume yourself with what people say about you.** The more time you devote to thinking about what others think about you, the more you will move away from the work of God.
- **Correct what needs to be corrected.** It's ok to help people understand the truth of a situation, but you shouldn't devote endless time and energy to defending yourself.
- **Trust God to reveal the truth.** In His time, God is more than able to vindicate you as you continue you in faith.
- **Keep doing what is right.** Instead of asking, "What do think people think about me?" Ask, "What does God want from me?"

Do not let deception compromise your character.

- The final tactic the enemy used in this passage was outright deception.
- vs. 10 - Nehemiah goes to Shemaiah's house. Perhaps Nehemiah thought Shemaiah was a trustworthy prophet. The text doesn't say why, but Shemaiah was confined to his house.
- Nehemiah knew something was wrong when Shemaiah tried to lure him into the temple.
- Shemaiah attempted to deceive Nehemiah by telling him that the enemy was coming to kill him, and he would be safe in the temple. However, Nehemiah was not a priest. It would have been a violation of God's Law for Nehemiah to shut himself up in the temple.
- vs. 11-14 Nehemiah questions Shemaiah, and Nehemiah realizes that Shemaiah is a false prophet (vs. 12). He was hired to discredit

Nehemiah and harm his reputation because if Nehemiah would have hid in the temple he would have been seen as a lawbreaker among his people. His reputation would have been damaged among his people. In vs. 14, Nehemiah trusted that God would judge his enemies who attempted to intimidate and deceive him.

- In verses 15–19, the wall is completed in only fifty-two days. Israel's enemies lose confidence because they recognize that the work had been accomplished with God's help.
- Opposition does not disappear. Tobiah still has influence among the nobles of Judah, continues exchanging letters with them, and keeps trying to intimidate Nehemiah.
- The wall is finished, but the battle is not over. God gives His people success, yet they must remain watchful and faithful even after the victory.
- The enemy tries to deceive you as well. The enemy will make compromise look like the safe thing to do. The enemy deceives by saying things like:
 - "You need to protect yourself."
 - "You have no other choice."
 - "This is the wise thing to do."
 - "God will understand."
- Nehemiah would have not been discerning and given into the enemies deception, it would have harmed his reputation among his people.
- **Test every voice by God's Word.** You combat deception by being grounded in truth. Do the voices that are trying to influence you line up with God's Word?

- **Remember that sinful options are never wise options.** The enemy wants you to think that it's wise to violate God's Word. When making decisions ask:
 - Does this option require me to sin?
 - Do I think this is wise simply because it is easier?
 - Do I want immediate relief more than long-term faithfulness?
 - Will I obey God's Word even if it costs me?
 - Nehemiah refused to come down from the wall because the work God had given him was not finished.
 - Centuries later, Jesus was mocked by His enemies as He hung on the cross. They told Him to come down and save Himself. But Jesus remained.
 - He did not stay on the cross because there was nothing He could do about it. He stayed on the cross to accomplish the work of redemption.
 - Nehemiah faced false accusations, intimidation, betrayal, and deception, but He remained perfectly obedient to the Father. .
 - We have not remained faithful. We have been distracted from God's purposes, controlled by the opinions of others, and deceived into compromise. But Jesus died for our sinful failures only to rise again defeating our greatest enemy: sin and death. Now, we wait for His return when He will come to make all things right. Today, if you have not placed your faith in Christ, trust Him as Lord.
 - Because Jesus did not come down from the cross, we do not have to come down from the work He has given us. Empowered by His Spirit, we can serve Him faithfully.

