

Dealing with Distractions¹

Nehemiah 6:1-19

PROPOSITION: The example of the people of Judah under the leadership of Nehemiah will help us to handle the distractions of our lives that keep us from focusing on the work at hand.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Life is a battle from the beginning to the end.
2. "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the ruler, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).
3. From Nehemiah 6 we learn that the devil has two main ways of working against us.
 - a. Fear (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8)
 - b. Flattery (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14)
4. The devil's aim is to distract and destroy (cf. 2 Cor. 2:11).

DISCUSSION:

I. The Intrigue (vv. 1-4)

- A. When Sanballat and his associates failed to stop the wall-builders, they decided to concentrate their attacks on Nehemiah himself and resorted to subtle persuasion.
- B. They suddenly become Nehemiah's friends and invite him to a conference on the plain of Ono, a beautiful resorts area on the Mediterranean Sea coast.
- C. It has been suggested that they intended to ambush the leader.
 1. Nehemiah said, "They intended to do me harm" (v. 2).
 2. Sensing the scheme, he refused the invitation four times.
 3. Do not give in to repeated pressure.
 4. Nehemiah said, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down" (v. 3).
- D. One of the most helpful things we can do to resist temptation is to remember that God has a great task for each of us. We must prioritize or we will be distracted.

II. The Innuendo (vv. 5-9)

- A. When the enemy cannot accomplish his purpose by offering peace, he switches back to the original sinister threats.
- B. Seeing it for what it really is, i.e. an enticement based on lies, Nehemiah resisted.
- C. He responded in three different ways:
 1. He denied the rumor (v. 8).
 2. He prayed to God for strength (v. 9).
 3. He went back to work.

¹ Brian Bill, www.sermoncentral.com. Accessed, 04/26/2006. Adapted by Andy Kizer.

III. The Intimidation (vv. 10-19)

- A. Again the enemy changes his game plan (v. 10). A false prophet claims to have hidden knowledge.
- B. What he said sounded logical, but Nehemiah immediately detected that something was wrong.
- C. He was not the kind of man to go into the temple just to save his life (v. 11). In verse 3 he said, "I cannot come down." Now he says, "I will not go in."
- D. Having his priorities right gave Nehemiah the courage to do what was right.
 - 1. Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the willingness to do what is right no matter how afraid you are.
 - 2. We must first say "yes" to the right things before we can say "no" to the distractions.
 - 3. We must keep the main thing the main thing.
- E. Fueled by jealousy and ambition, the enemies slandered Nehemiah and tried to trick him into yielding to their demands (vv. 12, 13).
- F. Nehemiah met the attack with prayer (v. 14).
- G. With attention and dedication to the number one priority, the wall was finished (v. 15), and even the enemies had to admit that "this work had been accomplished with the help of our God" (v. 16).
- H. That doesn't mean the enemy will cease his opposition.
 - 1. Tobiah intermarried with the Israelites (v. 18).
 - 2. Nehemiah said, "Tobiah sent letters to make me afraid" (v. 19).
 - 3. The devil never quits!

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Practice saying "yes" to God's priorities.
- 2. Practice saying "no" to the devil's distractions.