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## Saying O NO to Flattery, Rumor & Trickery

### Nehemiah 6:1-19

#### Staying Focused On God's Will

Nehemiah shows us that he valued the work of God so much that he could not be bothered by a flurry of last ditch efforts on the part of Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem to stop God's work of building the walls.

In chapter 4, we saw a series of attacks from these guys, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, as they attacked Nehemiah and the workers.

First, they mocked and ridiculed and laughed at the workers. But, when the work continued, they threatened them with physical violence.

Still the work continued. So, in chapter 6, they are getting desperate. The walls were complete except for the major task of hanging the doors of the great gates. Sanballat & Company had only a little time to stop the work. I think they realized that their only hope now was to discredit Nehemiah and have him overthrown.

These three stooges use three different ploys in order to thwart the work of God. All of them are directed right at Nehemiah. Yet Nehemiah stays focused. Nehemiah had his priorities down. He kept his eye focused on God's plans.

If you can keep yourself focused on the proper goal, then you can withstand these same kinds of attacks that Nehemiah weathered.

#### Flattery

**<sup>1</sup>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),**

**<sup>2</sup>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.**

They couldn't stop the work of God with their threats and attacks, so they changed their strategy: All of a sudden, these guys are acting like Nehemiah's friends.

People will say all kinds of things to get what they want from you. They will act like your friend to your face and say nice things about you. But sometimes they have motives that can distract you from what God has you doing.

These guys invited Nehemiah down to the plain of Ono. What a perfect place of invitation to help us remember how to respond like Nehemiah.

**<sup>3</sup>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?"**

He said, "**O no**. I can't come. I'm right in the middle of a great work. I can't stop now."

**"Flattery and insults raise the same question: What do you want?"**

**--Mason Cooley**

**<sup>4</sup>But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.**

Four times they asked him to come and four times he says, "**O no**. Sorry, I'm doing something for God and if I leave, it might not get done."

One of the most effective ways to resist flattery is to remember that God has called each of us into service for Him, not to merely please others.

It's not like they were saying, "Hey, Nehemiah! Come down here to the plain of Ono so we can kill you." Quite the opposite. Their offer seems to promise peace and support.

And in the same way, the Devil is not going to tempt you by saying, "Hey, do this so your faith will grow weak; your life will be destroyed; and your work will amount to nothing." No! He is much more clever than that!

Instead, the temptation will sometimes sound good and look good — or at least it'll look harmless.

Sin is fun. If you let yourself be sidetracked into the temporary pleasure that sin offers, you will forfeit the unbelievable joys and riches that come with focusing on things that have eternal value. Those leaders that can stay focused on what has true and lasting value are those that can withstand all the junk like that which Nehemiah is able to withstand.

#### Rumor

The fifth time that Sanballat invited Nehemiah to confer at Ono, the aide who brought the invitation had with him an unsealed letter that accused the Jews of planning to rebel against Persia and to make Nehemiah their king. It ended with a threat: "Now these matters will be reported to the king."

<sup>5</sup>Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand.

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>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.

Now, one thing cracks me up about this whole thing: Look who Sanballat names as his confirming witness: His buddy, Geshem the Arab!

This is the way the world works as well. The world confirms its own false beliefs. When the world wants verification for something, it asks itself — just like Sanballat saying, "Right, Geshem?"

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*"Those who feed on rumors are small,  
suspicious souls."  
--Charles Swindoll*

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Let's see how Nehemiah responds to this: What do you think is his 2-fold response? Hint: Prayer might be involved.

#### **Nehemiah's Response**

<sup>8</sup>Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart."

- 1) He denied the rumor matter-of-factly-- He says, "**O no**...That's not true."

And that's the great thing about being a man or woman of integrity: you have nothing to hide and nothing to fear.

<sup>9</sup>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.**

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

- 2) So he prayed, "Now strengthen my hands." He asked God to enable him to ignore the gossip and to keep on keeping on.

What a simple prayer. What a practical prayer. When you're being attacked by Satan, you don't need to pray a long,

eloquent prayer. When Satan attacks you, try praying like Nehemiah: simply and practically. Just tell God what you need: "Lord, don't let my hands grow weak. Help me to continue Your work."

#### **Trickery**

So next came a man named Shemaiah who says what sounds logical. "Some people are out to get you. They are going to kill you." He didn't have to convince Nehemiah of this!

<sup>10</sup>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."

So Shemaiah says, "Let's go up and hide in the Temple. They won't dare attack you there." But Nehemiah refuses Shemaiah's invitation on two grounds:

**First**, it would be wrong for him, the governor, to run away! **Second**, Nehemiah refuses Shemaiah's invitation because he knows the Law of God about the Temple. The Temple building itself was reserved for the priests. (**Num. 18:7**)

<sup>11</sup>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!"

Nehemiah knows that a prophet from the Lord would never say anything that contradicted God's Word. Here is this man telling him, "Let's go into the Temple and shut the doors behind us!" So Nehemiah said, "**O no!**"

Sanballat and the others had hired Shemaiah to trick him into sinning against the Lord. If Nehemiah had gone into the Temple, Sanballat would have said to the people of Jerusalem: "Look at your leader — hiding in the Temple, breaking your own laws. He doesn't care about you, he just cares about himself. If you break the law, see what'll happen to you, but he can break it whenever he wants..."

Once again, Nehemiah responds to the attack of Satan with prayer.

<sup>14</sup>**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.**

#### **APPLICATION**

Stay focused on God and His work and say "**O no**" to Satan's ruses of Flattery & Rumor & Trickery that get us off track.

