

All Saints Day ~ Sunday, November 1, 2015
“A Time to Build: Lessons From the Book of Nehemiah ~
Dealing with Distractions”
Nehemiah 6:1-14

“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12)

According to Paul, our battle is not flesh and blood, but _____.

2 WAYS THE ENEMY WORKS

#1: _____.

“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

#2: _____.

“But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness...” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

Like the snake in the garden of Eden, the enemy also comes to us with enticing _____ and _____ words, assuring us that what he proposes will cost us _____.

The enemy’s goal is always to _____ us from what God has called us to do and from the _____ life that Jesus wants for us. Ultimately, he wants to _____ us.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

“I don’t want Satan to outwit us. After all, we are not ignorant about Satan’s scheming.” (2 Corinthians 2:11)

“Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are.” (1 Peter 5:9)

Where do the attacks come from in your life? Who is the person that the enemy uses to intimidate, deceive, and distract you?

“Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies found out that I had finished rebuilding the wall and that no gaps remained—though we had not yet set up the doors in the gates.” (Nehemiah 6:1)

3 DISTRACTIONS TO KEEP NEHEMIAH FROM HIS SACRED TASK

Distraction #1: _____.

“So Sanballat and Geshem sent a message asking me to meet them at one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But I realized they were plotting to harm me, so I replied by sending this message to them: ‘I am engaged in a great work, so I can’t come. Why should I stop working to come and meet with you?’ Four times they sent the same message, and each time I gave the same reply.” (Nehemiah 6:2-4)

Nehemiah persists in his refusal because he knows what his _____ are.

Ono =

Plain of Ono =

“As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing.” (Matthew 13:22)

“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” (Matthew 6:24)

Like Nehemiah, we should never count the things of this world more _____ than the things of God.

“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

Distraction #2: _____.

“The fifth time, Sanballat’s servant came with an open letter in his hand, and this is what it said: ‘There is a rumour among the surrounding nations, and Geshem tells me it is true, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel and that is why you are building the wall. According to his reports, you plan to be their

king. He also reports that you have appointed prophets in Jerusalem to proclaim about you, ‘Look! There is a king in Judah!’ ‘You can be very sure that this report will get back to the king, so I suggest that you come and talk it over with me.’” (Nehemiah 6:5-9)

“Their lives are filled with all kinds of sexual sins, wickedness, and greed. They are mean. They are filled with envy, murder, quarrelling, deceit, and viciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, haughty, arrogant, and boastful...” (Romans 1:29)

“A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.” (Proverbs 16:28)

The rumours that Sanballat spread about Nehemiah were meant to _____ him, so that the people would begin to _____ his leadership.

NEHEMIAH’S 3-FOLD RESPONSE

- **He _____ the rumour.**

“I sent him this reply: ‘Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up in your head.’” (Nehemiah 6:8)

- **He _____.**

“They are all trying to frighten us, thinking, ‘Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.’ But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”” (Nehemiah 6:9)

- **He _____.**

Nehemiah took care of his own _____ and trusted God to take care of his _____—the only thing left to do was work.

“Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.” (Proverbs 29:25)

- **Distraction #3: _____.**

“Later I went to visit Shemaiah son of Delaiah and grandson of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home. He said, ‘Let us meet together inside the Temple of God and bolt the doors shut. Your enemies are coming to kill you tonight.’” (Nehemiah 6: 10)

This was just another way of getting him to _____ himself.

““Should someone in my position run from danger? Should someone in my position enter the Temple to save his life? No, I won’t do it!’ I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.” (Nehemiah 6:11-13)

Having the right _____ gave Nehemiah the courage to do what was right.

Courage =

Nehemiah shows us that it’s not just a matter of saying ‘no’ to the enemy’s distractions—we have to say ‘yes’ to the _____ things, so that our _____ line up with God’s priorities.

“Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)



“So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.” (Nehemiah 6:15-16)

One of the over riding truths of the Book of Nehemiah is:

No matter how hard the enemy tries, when God’s _____ become our _____, God’s kingdom work will _____.

**As we continue our sacred task of building this new community,
may the same be said of us!**

Notes: