

Fellowship Group Notes April 22/23 - Nehemiah 6 - The Tale of the Distracters

"Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds" Einstein

In this session we see that just as the building project is about to reach completion, Nehemiah – who has already dealt with opposition from outside and pressures from within – now faces various personal attacks designed to try and distract him from finally finishing the work that God has called him to do.

v1-4

- What do you think the 'unholy three' are thinking? We can see that this is a last ditch effort to distract and stop Nehemiah's work. The 'three' are foolish. The work is 98% complete and yet they still keep trying to stop Nehemiah, they are certainly persistent! In what way do we see people distracting our ministry today?
- What is Sanballat's and Gesham's invitation like? Is it outwardly distracting or devious?
 - It's simply fruitless at best, and harmful to Nehemiah at worse.
 - What kinds of distractions do we have like that in our own lives and ministries in church?
- How does Nehemiah respond? And how consistent and persistent is his response? What do we learn about Nehemiah from his response? What words would you use to describe him?

v5-14 - the distracters up their game

- The public nature of the letter intended to exert public pressure on Nehemiah. What's the claim of the letter? How are they twisting the situation? How do we see those same kinds of claim made of us and Christians in general today? How can we stop people twisting our actions and words?
- In v10 we meet another distracter, this time a devious one. Can we see a pattern in the way Nehemiah responds to these distracters? (v3, 11)
- For what reasons is praying so vital in this scenario? How should we be better at 'little and often' prayer?

Some lessons from Nehemiah

- Discuss the following points.
 1. Evil is always hot on the heels of good - and we shouldn't be surprised, 1 Peter 4:12-14. In fact we can be encouraged!
 2. Nehemiah was single-minded, doggedly persistent, razor sharp and he definitely wasn't going to be diverted from his mission. How can we be more like Nehemiah? Do we have the same single mindedness about our calling/mission? What can we do to change?
 3. Sport clearly shows that opposition can sharpen us. In what areas of life do you need to be sharpened? What one distraction does Satan often use to entice you away from your mission? When should we run from opposition or face up to it? In what areas of life do we/and us as Christians need to stand up more?

A summary lesson from Pilgrims Progress

As Christian was making his journey with Hopeful they travelled across a plain called 'Ease' where they progressed contently. But then a gentlemanly figure named Demas appeared to try to lure them to a nearby silver mine. Demas said, "Look, turn aside from your journey and I will show you something". Christian replied (much like Nehemiah) "**what thing is so deserving as to turn us out of our way to see it?**" Demas replied, "it is a silver mine, you may richly provide for yourselves". But Christian was persistent in saying no. He continued, "**let us not stir a step but still keep on our way**".

Prayer points: pray that we as a church would firstly know more and more what our mission is and that we would firmly grip hold of our mission and not let go, pray the same for us as individuals. Pray that the vision process might sharpen our thinking and practice. Pray that we would face up to opposition as Nehemiah did.