

# Don't Come Off The Wall

Leadership Lessons From The Book Of Nehemiah.

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## INTRODUCTION

Those of us called to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ are called to a **great work**. Whatever our specific ministry or call may be, we are working together to see the Kingdom of God established. The work of God is a **great work**. It is an important work. It is a **great work** to set the captives free, to heal the sick and to minister to the poor. It is a **great** and important **work** to evangelize and to work as a missionary. It is a **great work** to preach the gospel and to see the lives of men and women and boys and girls changed by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

However, there is also opposition to the work of God that He has called us to do. In 1 Corinthians 16:9, Paul says, "A great and effectual door of ministry is opened to me, but there are many adversaries." As ministers of the gospel, we have an enemy who wants to stop the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants to hinder us and to discourage us. He wants to prevent us from fulfilling the call of God. It was true for Paul and it is true today -- many times where there is a great door of opportunity in ministry, there is also great opposition.

This message is written to teach you how to recognize and overcome the strategies that Satan uses to try to stop the work of God. It is written to reveal seven ways that the enemy brings opposition to the work of God. It is written so you can be victorious in the work of God and finish the **great work** that He has called you to do.

## **NEHEMIAH -- A MAN CALLED BY GOD TO DO A GREAT WORK**

(Nehemiah 1:1-- 3:32)

Nehemiah lived during the time when the Jews were captives in Babylon. The Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem and its temple. They broke down the walls that surrounded the city and burned the gates with fire. They captured many of the Jewish people and took them to live in a heathen land. Because of the sins of the Jews, God had said that they would be in captivity for seventy years, but at the end of the seventy years they would return to their land.

The story of Nehemiah takes place at the end of the seventy years. Ezra had already returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Nehemiah, a servant to the King of Babylon, heard about the work Ezra was doing. He also heard a very sad and disturbing report. Although Ezra was working on repairing the temple, the walls of the city were still broken down. This was a very serious problem; one that was a great burden on the heart of Nehemiah.

In those days, the walls of the city provided protection and safety for the people. If the walls were down, bands of thieves and robbers could loot the city. They could easily attack the city and harm or kill its inhabitants. To have a city without walls meant that the women and children were not safe. It meant that the possessions of the people were not safe. With the walls down, there was no peace or security. It was an extremely serious problem.

Because of his concern for the condition of Jerusalem, Nehemiah began to fast and pray. The king of Babylon asked Nehemiah why he was so sad. Nehemiah told the king of his burden for the city. Then the king agreed to let Nehemiah go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of the city. The burden and call on Nehemiah's heart have now given him a great work to accomplish for God.

Many times the Lord will cause us to have a special burden for a particular need. Out of that burden will come the call of God. From the call of God, we will have a great work to do. Perhaps the call is to evangelize a certain city. Perhaps it is to feed the poor. Perhaps the burden is for the youth. Perhaps it is for homeless children. God gives each of us our own anointing, gifting, call and ministry. Each one of us will have a passion and desire for the work that the Lord has called us to do.

After the call there will also be the vision, the opportunity and then the work. Nehemiah had the burden for the city. He had a vision to see the walls rebuilt. The king gave him the opportunity to go. Then there was **the work**.

## **THE OPPOSITION IS AGAINST THE WORK**

The devil is not concerned when you have a burden to do a certain ministry. The devil is not concerned when you have a vision for a ministry. The devil is not concerned if you have the opportunity to do a great work for God. **Opposition comes from the devil when you begin to work.**

Nehemiah experienced seven attacks against the work of rebuilding the wall. Seven times the devil tried to stop the work. Sometimes the attacks were from outside the city. Sometimes the attacks were inside the city. Some attacks were from enemies of the Jews. Some were among the workers and helpers. **All the attacks of the devil have one objective -- to stop the work of God.**

We are going to look at these seven oppositions to the work of God. We will see the many different ways that Satan will attack in order to stop the work of God. In Nehemiah 6:3, we read the words of Nehemiah as he was on the wall working. These are the words that I want you to remember as we look at each of the devil's strategies. Nehemiah said, **"I am doing a great work. I cannot come down."**

### **Opposition #1 -- Opposition through Ridicule** (Nehemiah 4:1-3)

Living in the area of Jerusalem with the Jews were three men, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. These men were enemies to the Jews. Sanballat was a gentile ruler in the region. Tobiah was an Ammonite. Geshem was an Arab. These men did not want to see the walls of the city rebuilt. They knew that Jerusalem was a blessed city. They knew that if the Jews rebuilt the walls that the city would prosper and that they would lose their power. They did not want Jerusalem to prosper; they did not want to see the work move ahead.

In the same way, Satan does not want to see the man of God and the work of God come into an area where he has had power and dominion. Satan knows the power of the Word of God. He knows the power of the Holy Spirit in the man of God. He knows that the Word of God will prosper. He knows you are blessed. God will bless the work of your hands. God will bless your work in the

Kingdom of God. It may take time, but if you commit yourself to God, you will prosper. The devil knows this. He will try to stop you just like Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem tried to stop the Jews.

When Sanballat heard that the Jews were beginning to rebuild the wall, he was very angry. He came and stood before all the people and the army and mocked the Jews. He laughed at them and scorned them. He said, "What are these weak and feeble Jews doing? Do they think that they can build the wall? Are they going to build the wall from this pile of stones? Can they bring life back from this heap of rubble?"

Then Tobiah joined in the ridicule. He said, "They think this is a wall! If a small animal jumps on it, it will break it down!" Together they made jokes about the Jews and laughed at them. They ridiculed the work.

When you begin to work for the Lord, the enemy will bring ridicule against you. When you commit yourself to the work of God, somebody will make fun of you. Someone will say, "You think you can serve God? Who are you?" Someone else may say, "What makes you think God will heal the sick when you pray for them?" Others will laugh and tell you, "You can't go to that city. They will never listen to you." Still others will declare, "Your vision is too big. You think too much of yourself."

Ridicule comes to intimidate you. It comes from the voice of people who will tell you that you cannot fulfill the call of God. It will also come from the voice of Satan whispering in your ear. Satan will bring negative and condemning thoughts to discourage you from your work. The devil will remind you of your failures and your weaknesses. He will remind you of your sins. He will mock you. Like Nehemiah, you must say, "**I am doing a great work. I cannot come down.**" You must determine that you will not quit when mockers come. You must focus on the power of God and on the Word of God. You must focus on the call of God and the work of God. Remember, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

## **Opposition #2 -- Opposition through fear** (Nehemiah 4:7, 8)

When Sanballat, Tobiah and the Arab saw that the work continued and that the gaps in the wall were being closed, they became very angry. When ridicule did not stop the work, they decided to try another attack. The second attack came in the form of threats and fear. They conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. By threatening the

people, Sanballat and his friends hoped to control the Jews. Fear and controlling spirits work together.

Fear is one of Satan's greatest tools. He will use fear to try to stop the work of God. The fear may be for your own safety or the safety of your family. Someone may say, "Don't go to that city, it is too dangerous." The devil may use fear of sickness. He may use fear that you will not have enough money or provision. He may use the fear of what others will think or do. Satan may say, "If you do that, they will be angry. If you try to minister there, the people will come against you." Remember, the attack of fear comes to stop the work.

You must say what Nehemiah said, "**I am doing a great work. I cannot come down.**" You must not allow fear to control you in the work of God. You must be confident in the One who has called you to do His work. You must remember the gift and the anointing of God that is in you. "For God has not given you the spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:6, 7) Do not allow fear to stop the work of God, but boldly declare your authority in the name of Jesus. Rebuke the spirit of fear and be strong in the Lord.

### **Opposition #3 -- Opposition through Discouragement** (Nehemiah 4:10-21)

The next attack against the Jews was a double attack. The first part of the attack did not come from their enemies, but it came when the workers became discouraged and weary. The scripture says, "In Judah it was said, 'The strength of the workers is failing. There is so much rubbish that we are unable to build the wall.' "Many times after we have been working in a ministry for a period of time, we come to the place where it seems that we are making no progress. We come to the place where it seems that we have been working and working with little success. We come to the place where it seems that there are not enough workers and that the workers we have are tired and weary. This is the place where the Jews found themselves.

The Jews were discouraged because there were so many piles of stones and debris that they could not complete the work. This is when the second part of the attack occurred. While the workers were discouraged, weary and in confusion, the enemy threatened to rush in upon them and kill them. This further discouraged the people. They thought, "We cannot work and protect ourselves at the same time. There is no way we can complete this work. Wherever we turn, the enemy will attack us."

It is at this point that we see the strength of Nehemiah's leadership. In the midst of the rubble, in the midst of the chaos and confusion, in the midst of the discouragement, Nehemiah had a plan. Nehemiah did two things. He

organized the people and he spoke encouraging words to them. Nehemiah posted guards at strategic places along the wall. He organized the people so that some would work while others were in armor and equipped for battle. He established a warning system using men with trumpets. He organized the people to work from sun up until sun down. The second thing Nehemiah did was to tell the people to trust in the Lord who is great and awesome. He also reminded them of the importance of the work. He reminded them that they were fighting for their land, for their brothers and for their families. When we are discouraged in the work of the Lord, when it seems that we are making little progress and having little success, we need to remember that discouragement comes to stop the work. We need to remember the words from Nehemiah 6:3, "**We are doing a great work. We cannot come down.**" As the man of God, there will be times when you will have to encourage your workers and remind them of the vision and the Word of the Lord. When you face the enemy, you will have to remind them that it is the Lord who will fight the battle. There will be times when you will have to seek God and get His plan and wisdom for the situation that you are facing. Like Nehemiah, you will have to organize and lead the people so that the work of God can be completed.

#### **Opposition #4 -- Opposition through Strife** (Nehemiah 5:1-13)

The work on the wall and the leadership of Nehemiah were tested again when strife broke out among the people. Strife within a church or ministry is a powerful and commonly used weapon of Satan. Strife violates the fundamental law of our ministry and walk with the Lord - the law of love. That is why it is such a destructive force against the work of God. Furthermore, the Bible tells us that where two or three agree together in prayer, what they ask will be done by the Father in heaven. Strife not only violates the law of love, it also violates the principle of agreement. Strife also disrupts unity. In Acts, it was as the disciples were in one place and in one accord that the Holy Spirit was poured out. The power and anointing of God flows in an atmosphere of unity and agreement. Psalm 133 confirms this. It says, "Behold how good it is when brothers live together in unity. It is there that God sends His blessing."

The root of the conflict among the people began many years before the rebuilding the wall. When the Babylonians had come through the land and conquered it, some of the Jews were left in the land while others were carried off to Babylon. The ones who were left in the land of Judah bought the land of those who were taken captive. Now that the captives were returning to Jerusalem, they arrived to find that they did not have any land. Not only that but their brothers who had bought the land were charging them high interest to redeem the land. This was a great hardship on the returning captives and their families.

When this complaint came to Nehemiah's attention, he had a very serious problem to deal with. Sometimes leaders make the mistake of not listening to people who have legitimate concerns. Sometimes a leader would rather ignore a problem than to deal with it. But Nehemiah listened to the people. After he listened, he did not over react or make a quick decision even though the scripture says that he was very angry. Instead, we are told that Nehemiah gave the matter "serious thought".

As a result of careful consideration, Nehemiah dealt with the problem in a godly manner. He called an assembly and corrected the situation. He told the rich land owners that what they were doing to their brothers was wrong. He told them that they ought to fear God and allow their brothers to redeem their lands without undue hardship. The people repented and promised to do what was right. Then they all praised the Lord together.

As leaders there are several things that we can learn from Nehemiah's example. First, when we are faced with opposition to the work of God because of strife, we must truly listen to the facts and not ignore them. Avoiding a problem does not make it go away. Secondly, we must not over react and make an emotional decision. The man of God must not be motivated by anger. James 1:20 tells us, "The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God." Therefore, when dealing with strife, the third thing that the leader must do is carefully and prayerfully consider the situation. It is important to seek God and His wisdom. Number four, the man of God must confront the problem and speak the truth of the Word of God so that repentance, forgiveness and restoration can occur. Finally, the man of God must be an example to the people. At the end of chapter five of Nehemiah, the Bible tells us that Nehemiah set an example for the people because he did not receive tribute from them even though he was governor in the land.

### **Opposition #5 -- Opposition through Compromise** (Nehemiah 6:1-4)

So far Nehemiah and the workers on the wall overcame ridicule, fear, discouragement, and strife. Through the wisdom of God, Nehemiah led the people victoriously against each opposition to the work. As a result, the work continued and progressed to the point that there are no gaps in the wall. However, the gates were not yet hung. When Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, learned that the wall was nearing completion, they launched another attack to stop the work. Remember, all the opposition of the enemy comes for one purpose -- to stop the work.

Since all of their other attempts at stopping the work had failed, the gentile leaders plotted against Nehemiah. They invited him to a meeting in the villages of a nearby plain. The invitation was issued to appear as if they wanted to

negotiate with Nehemiah, the true motive was to keep Nehemiah from finishing his project. Nehemiah believed that they intended to harm him. Many times if the direct attack of Satan fails against us, a more subtle attack will occur. Often that attack is to tempt us to compromise and to distract us. These distractions are aimed at taking our attention off the vision and the work that God has called us to do.

Nehemiah sent a message to the men. He said, **“I am doing a great work. I cannot come down. Why should I stop working to come down to you?”** When Nehemiah refused to meet with them, they sent him another invitation. Nehemiah refused again. They tried a third time and then a fourth. Each time Nehemiah sent the same message. **“I am doing a great work. I cannot come down. Why should I stop working to come down to you?”**

The temptation to compromise the work of God for other things is one that comes to the man of God over and over again. Distractions come to keep the man of God from prayer. Distractions come to steal his time. Distractions come when he is studying the Word of God. People stop by to talk. They call and say, “Oh Pastor, will you come here?” Or “Oh Pastor, will you go there?” We must be like Nehemiah and remain focused on the work that God has given us to do. We must set our priorities and manage our time. We must be good stewards of what God had given us. We must not be distracted from the work.

### **Opposition #6 -- Opposition of Slander** (Nehemiah 6:5-9)

When their attempts at compromise failed, Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem tried yet another strategy against Nehemiah. They sent another letter to Nehemiah. In this letter they accused him of plotting to rebel against the king. They were spreading a rumor that Nehemiah and the Jews were building the wall so that when it was completed Nehemiah could be king over Jerusalem. These enemies called into question Nehemiah’s integrity and the motive of his heart.

Nehemiah’s response was to send them a reply. He said, “The things you have been saying are not true. You have invented them in your own mind. I am doing what God has called me to do. I must be obedient to God.” Nehemiah refuted the lies of his enemies with the truth. But Nehemiah did not let the slander of the enemy stop him from continuing the work.

Sometimes people will invent lies against the man of God and the work of the Lord. But the man of God must not let the lies and slander of others stop him from doing the work of God. He must not get involved in disputes and arguments. He must trust the Lord to be his shield and defense. He must seek to walk in the truth and to walk in love and forgiveness with those who speak evil against him. He must follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus “did no

sin, neither was guile in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously.”

### **Opposition #7 -- Opposition through Religious Treachery** (Nehemiah 6:10-15)

The final opposition that Nehemiah had to face came from a religious person. Nehemiah went to the home of a religious man named Shemaiah. This man gave Nehemiah a prophecy. He said, “Let us meet together in the house of God within the temple. Let us go inside and close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you at night.” Shemaiah was telling Nehemiah that he should hide in the temple because his life was in danger. Nehemiah perceived that God had not sent Shemaiah. He discerned that Shemaiah had been hired by Sanballat to frighten him. They wanted Nehemiah to sin and come off the wall to hide in the temple so that they would have an evil report against him. Nehemiah discerned that this word was not from God because it was inconsistent with what he knew that God had called him to do. Nehemiah had already determined, **“I am doing a great work. I cannot come down off the wall.”**

The attack of religious treachery can be difficult to detect. Because of its spiritual nature, it can come as a word from the Lord when in reality it is a word that is sent to confuse and distract the servant of God. It takes discernment from the Holy Spirit to determine if a word is truly from God or not. There are several ways to judge a word.

- 1) Does it line up with the Bible?
- 2) Is it consistent with what God has already spoken to you?
- 3) Is it consistent with the nature and character of God?
- 4) Is it consistent with the vision and call of God?
- 5) Does it produce peace and faith or confusion and fear?
- 6) Is it confirmed by the Holy Spirit in your heart?
- 7) Is it confirmed by others you respect and those in authority over you?

It is important to judge any word that comes to you. I Thessalonians 5:21 says “Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good.” As you seek the Lord, He will give you the wisdom that you need to discern the truth. You have the Holy Spirit who has been sent to lead you into all truth. When in doubt, wait. Don’t be pressured into making a quick decision or a sudden change. The word of the Lord will have wisdom, strategies and plans on how you can manage difficult problems, but God does not lead His children with pressure. God leads His people with peace.

**THERE IS A MIRACULOUS VICTORY  
IF YOU STAY ON THE WALL (Nehemiah 6:15, 16)**

There are three results of staying on the wall.

**(1) If you stay on the wall and will not come down,  
you will have a MIRACLE!**

Nehemiah 6:15 says that the wall was completed in 52 days. It was finished because the opposition was overcome. It was finished because Nehemiah refused to be distracted. It was finished because Nehemiah refused to give in to fear. It was finished because Nehemiah was a godly leader and example. It was finished because Nehemiah refused to come down off the wall. If you want miracles in your life and ministry... ***don't come off the wall!***

**(2) If you stay on the wall and will not come down,  
YOUR ENEMIES WILL BE DISCOURAGED!**

Nehemiah 6:16 says that when the enemies heard that the wall was completed, they lost their confidence. Because Nehemiah stayed on the wall, because he encouraged the people to continue to work, because he would not quit, the wall was completed in such a miraculous way that all his enemies were disheartened. If you want to cause the people who are accusing you and making fun of you to become discouraged, ***don't come off the wall!***

**(3) If you stay on the wall and will not come down,  
GOD WILL BE GLORIFIED!**

The last part of Nehemiah 6:16 says that when the enemies learned that the wall had been completed, they knew that the work had been accomplished by God. When you overcome the opposition of the enemy and finish the work of the Lord, God will be glorified. If you bail out, if you quit, if you run, it will cause your accusers to say, "We knew it all the time. We knew he would not make it." But if you stay on the wall, you will have a miracle and God will be exalted. So, ***don't come off the wall!***

## CONCLUSION

Nehemiah overcame seven attacks against the work of God. He was victorious over ridicule, fear, discouragement, strife, compromise, slander and religious treachery. Nehemiah was a man of prayer, a man of the Word, a man of wisdom, a man of integrity. Nehemiah was a godly example and faithful leader. Nehemiah said, “**I am doing a great work. I cannot come down off the wall.**”

After many years of pastoring, I can say that there have been days when the pressure was so great that all I wanted to do was quit. But I have learned that pressure from the enemy comes to stop the work. I have learned that if I will stay focused on the work and trust the Lord, He will bring miraculous results.

What do you do when fear and distractions come? **Stay on the wall!**  
What do you do when people are in strife? **Stay on the wall!**  
Don't be moved by ridicule or discouragement - **stay on the wall!**  
Seek the wisdom of God and obey – but **stay on the wall!**  
Encourage the people and work hard – but **stay on the wall!**

**Stay on the wall...**  
and you will have the victory!  
**Stay on the wall...**  
and you will have the reward!  
**Stay on the wall...**  
and God will be glorified!

### SAY THIS OUT LOUD

I am doing a great work.  
I *cannot* and *will not* come down off the wall!

