

BEN WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

Dr. Michael O. Oyedokun II, Pastor

Wednesday Noon Bible Study

February 4, 2026



The Book of Nehemiah – Chapter 6

CHAPTER 6

The Walls Completed

Nehemiah is attacked in three phases.

(Nehemiah 6:1-4) The snare of the enemy's friendship.

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), 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. 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?" But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.

The wall was almost finished — the gaps were closed, but the gates were not yet finished. For the enemies of Nehemiah and the work of God, this was a “now-or-never” time. If they didn't do something immediately to stop the work, the walls would be completely finished.

At this time, Sanballat and Geshem tried to arrange a meeting with Nehemiah — by appearances, a friendly meeting, perhaps even a reconciliation or a vacation. Their invitation may have had the sense of a break for a few days of rest and relaxation out on the plain of Ono.

But they thought to do me harm: Nehemiah was equipped to see through the outward appearance, and to understand what Sanballat's friendly offer was all about.

Nehemiah was equipped with **discernment**.

- Discernment is the ability to judge matters **according to God's view of them**, and not according to **their outward appearance**. We are often deceived by outward appearances; For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7).
- Many people confuse being discerning with being negative or cynical; but discernment is just as able to see the good where others might miss it as it is at seeing bad where others might see good according to the outward appearance.
- Christians today suffer a great deal because **they lack discernment**. They follow leaders and teachers who give a good appearance, but don't walk in the nature of Jesus. They accept things blindly because it looks good or sounds good, **without carefully judging it against the whole counsel of God's Word**. We might even picture Nehemiah going to the Word of God and equipping himself with discernment. Perhaps he read Proverbs 27:6: Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. That passage alone would remind him to not look to outward appearances, but to judge soberly.
- **How can we develop discernment? First**, if you want to see things as God sees them, get to know His Word. **Second**, discernment comes through spiritual maturity; Hebrews 5:12-14 says that discernment is something spiritual babies don't have (a baby will stick anything in his mouth).

Third, discernment can be given as a gift from the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:10). Seek Him for it.

- Without discernment, we can think a dangerous invitation from an enemy is really an offer of reconciliation. We can think presumption is faith. We can think our own noble desires are God's promises. We can think God is saying "now" or "later" when He is really saying "later" or "now." We can think someone is a great guy or a spiritual leader when they are really doing damage to God's people.

Nehemiah, using discernment will not only escape their trap; he won't even be distracted from his work.

- If the enemy can distract God's people, then he has won; if we can start majoring on minors, and minoring on majors, we've lost our effectiveness for the work of the LORD.

Discernment gave Nehemiah focus; he knew what God wanted him to be doing and he did it. He wouldn't be sidetracked by things that sounded good but weren't of the LORD for him.

- Anyone doing a work for God must contend with a hundred different noble causes, and a hundred things that might look good — and be good — but they are not what they are called to do at that time. Discernment gives us focus.

(Nehemiah 6:5-9) The subtlety of the enemy's slander.

Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. 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. 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. Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart." 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.

Sanballat's slander began the way many verbal attacks do, as a report of what others have reportedly said.

These lies probably outraged Nehemiah. He had worked hard and trusted God greatly, so this work would be done with the blessing of the king; and he had embraced great personal sacrifice to demonstrate that he was not in this for himself. And Nehemiah would never dream of going to "rent a prophet"! Now he is accused of the very things he has worked so hard to not fall into!

- We may as well accept it: the devil knows our hot buttons. He knows those lies, those accusations, which really get to you — and he knows how to throw them in your face. We can't stop it, **so we have to learn how to deal with it!**

Nehemiah replied by calmly and straightforwardly telling Sanballat that he was a liar, and by carrying on with the work.

- Nehemiah did not mount an elaborate defense, trying to prove Sanballat wrong point by point. He wasn't going to waste his time. You don't satisfy men like Sanballat with facts, explanations, and evidence. You satisfy them by giving in to their demands, **and Nehemiah would not!**
- Sanballat would not be defeated by being told he was a liar. He didn't care if the whole world thought he was a liar if he could only cause the work to stop. But Nehemiah was steadfast!

Nehemiah had the discernment to see the slander strategy was all about fear, and he wouldn't give into it. No enemy can make us afraid; all they can do is try to make us choose fear — but it is up to us to choose it.

- Many people live paralyzed by the fear of what others are saying about them, or what they might say about them. Instead, we should forget about it in these situations. People will talk anyway and there is little you can do about it, other than be determined that they will not make you afraid.

We must do what Nehemiah did — pray for God's strength, His power in our lives. We cannot overcome slander and our fear of our enemies in our own strength. It will be said, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God.

(Nehemiah 6:10-14) The scandal of the enemy's religion.

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." 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!" Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so that they might have cause for an evil report, that they might reproach me. 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.

This man Shemaiah was said to be a prophet (he pronounced this prophecy), but he was not. Shemaiah offered Nehemiah a safe haven in the temple. The idea was that though Nehemiah was said to be threatened, he could find refuge in the temple.

- It sure sounds reasonable — and one might even take some Scripture to support it: Psalm 61:4 says, I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Nehemiah needed discernment now more than ever.

Nehemiah, knowing the heart of God as it is revealed in the whole counsel of God's Word, had discernment. Shemaiah tried to create fear in Nehemiah and tried to get him to disobey God based on this fear.

- Only priests were allowed in the temple, and Nehemiah was not a priest. He would have been disobeying God if he had done what Shemaiah suggested. In 2 Chronicles 26, King Uzziah — who was not a priest — went into the temple, and God instantly struck him with leprosy.

Nehemiah stood brave against this religious deception. In his commitment to obedience, God revealed to him the heart of Shemaiah — who was no true prophet. Instead, he was on Sanballat's payroll.

Best of all, instead of lashing out against Shemaiah and his fellow false-religionists, he simply committed these wicked men — and the situation — to God. If God could take good care of Nehemiah, then He could take also take care of Shemaiah according to divine wisdom.

- Nehemiah's response to the three-fold attack of pretended friendship, slander, and false religion makes us admire him as a leader. But we can love and admire Jesus far more.

B. Completion of the wall.

(Nehemiah 6:15-16) The wall is completed in 52 days.

So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

The amount of time it took to finish the job was remarkably short. The walls were in ruins for more than 100 years, and then they were set right in a period of only 52 days.

- Why wasn't the job done in the more than 100 years before? It wasn't that no one saw the problem; it wasn't that walls were not wanted. Many people saw broken walls, knew how they ruined the lives of the people of Jerusalem, but no one got past the place of just wishing there were walls.

At the beginning, when he saw the need, Nehemiah prayed for four months (the difference in time between Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1). But the work itself took less than two months. Nehemiah worked longer in prayer than they needed to work to do the job.

- This shows the spiritual battle was actually greater than the material battle. We are often told this, but it can be hard to believe!

And all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes: When the wall was finished, their enemies were very disheartened. It is a glorious thing to dishearten the enemies of God's people and to let them be discouraged for a while.

- The battles were hard; the work was big; there were challenges from within and without. But the job was now finished, and victory was sweet.

Their enemies were disheartened not just because the wall was finished, but especially because it was evident that God did the work. When something has the fingerprints of God on it, all our enemies notice it also.

(Nehemiah 6:17-19) The work is finished despite some who were friends with the enemy Tobiah.

Also in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them. For many in Judah were pledged to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.

Tobiah was the man who had opposed the rebuilding work with Sanballat. In Nehemiah 2:10 he was disturbed that Nehemiah came to rebuild the walls. In Nehemiah 2:19 and 4:3 he mocked Nehemiah's work. In Nehemiah 4:7 he was angry that the work was being done. In Nehemiah 6:1 he was one of the men who tried to get Nehemiah to stop the work and come to the plain of Ono where he could be attacked.

Yet, the nobles of Judah had no trouble being friends to such a man — because he had family ties to many in the tribe of Judah. In fact, they tried to recommend him to Nehemiah (they reported his good deeds before me).

- These Jewish brothers of Nehemiah could not see what was so plain to Nehemiah. Perhaps they did not see much of the evil work of Tobiah first-hand, so they had a hard time believing it. We imagine them saying, "He's always been nice to us; look at all the good he has done."
- It is also possible they just didn't have the shepherd's heart, and shepherd's eyes Nehemiah had. Nehemiah was called of God to protect God's people and God's work; he was watching and on guard in a way that others were not.

Undoubtedly, they saw Nehemiah as the bad guy. They figured Tobiah's deeds were good, and Nehemiah spoke some strong words against Tobiah (in Nehemiah 4:4, Nehemiah prays the evil Tobiah planned be turned back upon him, and that he be captured and carried away).

- Nehemiah had to be willing to be seen as the bad guy in order to do what is right by the people of God. He could see what the nobles of Judah could not. He knew that Tobiah's good deeds were not the whole story — all the while, Tobiah was sending frightening letters to Nehemiah. Those letters were not one of Tobiah's good deeds.

Tobiah sent letters to frighten me: Nehemiah wrote no more about this situation. He wasn't going to demand the nobles change their minds about Tobiah; but he wasn't going to deny what he knew to be true about Tobiah either. He seems willing to let it go and let God take care of it.

i. Nehemiah had a work to do, and that work was not really going out to attack people like Tobiah. He could leave the Tobiahs alone, as long as they weren't attacking the work of God.