



<b>Series:</b> Nehemiah, Healthy Walls	<b>Reference:</b> Nehemiah 6	<b>Title:</b> Talk to the Hand	<b>Date:</b> 6.11.17
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Website Writeup:</b></p> <p>Nehemiah expertly navigates the storm of spiritual attack. And we learn that at times we just need not listen or engage with those inward or outward voices which seek to mislead or harm us. They may be voices in our own thinking, or voices from enemies, and even voices of friends &amp; family who are not seeing clearly themselves - and we need to Trust the Holy Spirit to lead us through these times under good counsel of the Word &amp; strong discipleship relationships.</p>			

## Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

### UPG Prayer of the Day...

One of the key principles of the Lampung Pesisir (Peminggir) is that of Pi-il Pesenggiri, the concept of 'guarding one's dignity above all else.' They usually live a simple life, yet they love to receive honor or praise. They typically do not hesitate to spend huge sums on ritual celebrations. They're followers of Sunni Shafi'i Islam. They are governed by the cultural tradition of Saibatin - a blue blood system with 4 subgroups, and each subgroup has only one autonomous leader - a Prince or Sultan. I was adopted as the 8th son of one of these Sultans. And if you go to the Joshua Project page for the Lampung Pesisir you'll see a short film called *Condemnation or Forgiveness* which I wrote the script for & helped to produce (kind of proud of that).

### Sermon...

Don Richardson, entered the jungles of Irian Jaya in 1962 as missionary to the Sawi Tribe. Headhunters, renown for their brutality. Over time he was able to share the gospel story, including the deceptive kiss from Judas. However, to his surprise the Sawi considered Judas to be the hero, not Jesus since there was a deep respect for treachery built into their culture. Warriors who killed in battle were considered great, but the real warrior was the one who could 'fatten his enemy with friendship' before killing them. Befriend your enemy, feed them, invite them to your camp. When they're comfortable, surround & tell them you only meant to lure him to death. Then kill him. Treachery. Judas, who had befriended Jesus only to betray him with a kiss was honored in their thinking. What's a missionary to do with that?

When rebuilding our spiritual lives, attack will come in many forms. We can be lured into treachery, or react in faith. Let's look today in *Nehemiah 6: When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates- 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono."*

*But they were scheming to harm me; 3 so I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I*



*leave it and go down to you?" 4 Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.*

Enemies have many tactics from full frontal assault to the friendly approach & a knife behind the back. Nehemiah faced various forms. His enemies had tried taunting & belittling, then a threat of frontal assault, which had been thwarted by Nehemiah's prayers & preparation as he stayed on task. God worked through this faithful man. *Today his attack comes in an extension of the false hand of friendship. 'Come, let us meet together and discuss our problem,' in enemy territory nonetheless.*

*Have you ever felt spiritual attack like this? When you set out to repair the spiritual walls of your life, to reinforce the strength of the Word, or purity, there seems to come ridicule & criticism? Maybe in the form of old negative voices? Voices which say you can't change - they're right! You can't change - but you can be transformed by the renewing of your mind, by offering your body as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God (Rm 12:1-2)!*

Sometimes attack comes from others making little of your efforts towards purity & holiness. They're patronizing & talk down to you as if they're a friend pointing out your folly. Maybe even someone close? They may not want you to be transformed! "Sure, go ahead, you follow Jesus...we'll see how that turns out." "Gonna get all religious on me, are ya!?" This ridicule is often strongest for someone just coming to Christ, or a person wanting to recommit themselves. Old patterns must be changed, the decision of offering your body & life as a living sacrifice often feels like going backwards - we come to trust those things which make us comfortable & so have others - the extra drink, the sensual touch or words of another, the complaining tongue, or bitter words - to seek purity often feels like ripping off a limb! We've birthed & reared our sin, nursing it over time, it's precious to us & those around us - it's a hard thing to change old patterns. We can't, but He can if we will submit ourselves to Him.

*Withstanding ridicule, you may then experience direct frontal attack - some may get mad at you, to the point of verbal and/or physical assault due to the choices you're making for Christ. The farther you go in walking with Christ, those old relationships & friends who expect the old you will grow increasingly more uncomfortable & angry with the new - but the old had died & been resurrected in Christ! Our part is to make sure their anger isn't a result of our pride; we want Jesus to be the stumbling block, not our own sin.*

*Your choices in following Jesus directly affect others in physical, financial, psychological, emotional & spiritual ways. You may be called judgmental, even when it's farthest from your mind to be so. Hurtful, even if it's beyond you. Arrogant & prideful, when you're feeling the most humbled. Sinful patterns are almost always shared with others. Destructive patterns take two to tango - those around you are used to the way you've operated, finding comfort in the patterns of your own indifference & sin, and they engage with you in it, to a greater or lesser degree.*



Al-Anon meetings reveal this. The family has always wanted the alcoholic to stop & change, not realizing they've been affected as well. They've developed destructive negative patterns/habits which help them to cope & have become part of their identity. They're addicted to the old alcoholic & don't know how to handle a healthy new person. When an alcoholic turns their life around saying no to behaviors from family & friends they get mad - the relationship stays broken, given they can't break patterns & grow together. Prophet's are never accepted in their hometown - we're like crabs in a bucket, when one wants to climb out, the others hold them back. When you grow in Christ, you disrupt those close to you - attack's inevitable. Your sudden seeking of purity & holiness makes them uneasy, they question themselves, which they may not be ready to do.

This is what has happened with Nehemiah, he's followed the call of God to rebuild the walls & gates. But it's disrupted normalcy for others, they don't like change - crabs in a bucket. It may affect their economy, or frighten them to see the Israelites growing in strength & identity, they like their slave labor & the way things were. They're upset & the tools they've used thus far haven't worked; God has prevailed.

Now, these enemies resort to an invitation of friendship & compromise. Waving Nehemiah over with one hand, while holding a knife behind their backs with the other. There's no compromise with sin, although promising peace & friendship, it always has your destruction in mind. Satan's described as a roaring lion in Scripture, seeking whom he may devour in 1 Peter 5:8b. Lions are able to crush bone & cut through flesh like butter. Satan's depicted as one who can destroy & sin shouldn't be taken lightly. Satan's also depicted as an angel of light in 2 Corinthians 11:14b with flattery, promises, compromise & accommodation; always promising his way won't cost a thing. "Just this once, it won't hurt." "You don't have to go, stay, hang out." "Come on, what are you better than us?"

Nehemiah answers simply & rightly four times - 'not coming, got a job to do'. No need to defend, engage in conversation, or entertain the enemy, just said no. Jesus, tempted in the desert, answers simply using the Word of God. The spiritual equivalent of 'talk to the hand'. When rebuilding our spiritual lives, seeking purity, walking with Jesus, or deepening our understanding of the Word, there's no need to compromise, or to entertain the enemy. Whether voices in your head, or from others. Sometimes we need to break relationship with someone when it interferes with your walk with Jesus. Maybe for good, or only for a time. It's a question with which you may need to wrestle.

Let's continue: *5 Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter 6 in which was written: "It is reported among the nations - and Geshem says it is true - that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king 7 and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: "There is a king in Judah!" Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us confer together." 8 I sent him this reply:*



*"Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head."*

We've had ridicule, threats, false friendship & now more threats & gossip. This is the fifth try & since the false friendship didn't work, Sanballat sends an unsealed letter. When you hand an unsealed letter to someone & say, "Here, deliver this & don't read it!" it get's read! A great way to spread gossip! Listen to the lies: "It's reported everywhere" - "Everyone is saying it! It must be true!" - "My friend Geshem says it's true, so it must be!" We tend to back ourselves up with those who agree with us.

They say he's plotting revolt, pitting himself against the king. Or that Nehemiah's paying people to prophesy about him to cement his position. All lies. Remember Nehemiah's worked hard for the people, not taking what's owed him. The opposite of what they claim! He has the blessing of the king! Everything's done in the open. They're saying, "Look Nehemiah, you're digging your own grave, but we want to help you avert tragedy, come & speak with us." Lies, deception & manipulation.

When we face the rebuilding of our spiritual lives, remember The Horse Gate - spiritual warfare is evident & doesn't tire using whatever tactics it can. Attacks come in other ways, but sometimes in false accusation, gossip or the proposal of friendly compromise - seeking to inject insecurity into our thought process *as it continues... 9 They were 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."*

*In rebuilding we grow weary & Satan will pull out all stops. Temptation comes when we're hungry, angry, lonely, sick or tired. How does Nehemiah deal with it? He doesn't listen to the lies, but confronts them with Truth, then goes directly back to God where he can draw spiritual strength.*

Remember, what it says in 2 Corinthians 4, *...we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*

God fills us with his Word & Spirit like air in an inner tube. Without it we're stuck, you can't ride a bike with a flat tire. But with His filling you're lifted up to move the vehicle of life forward despite the pressure bearing down from the outside. But, we often times fill that inner tube with things which weigh it down, sitting in the bottom of the inner tube throwing it off balance - patterns, people, experiences which promise something they can't deliver - only Jesus fills you up enabling us to move forward - use The Dung Gate, expel those things & get back to the Fountain Gate, be filled with the Spirit, get back to the Water Gate, be filled with the Word. *Nehemiah continues...*



*10 One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home. He said, "Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you."*

*11 But I said, "Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!" 12 I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 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.*

*14 Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who have been trying to intimidate me.*

More attacks & now from within the family. Shemaiah had shut himself in - an armchair prophet, one of those who doesn't engage in the community of faith, but claims to hear the voice of God, and Sanballat & Tobiah have paid him off! Nehemiah couldn't shut himself in the Temple, it's the place for the High Priest, not him - a request to violate the law of God!

If your enemy can't get to you directly, he'll go through friends & family asking you to do things you can't do. That's not to sow distrust, but to let us realize where we get council is important - is the person engaged & walking with the Lord? Are they a trusted & tested member of the community? Is there spiritual fruit in their lives? Or, are they the fringe member who doesn't listen to others? The person who downplays & degrades leadership in the Church proclaiming they know better? Do they church hop? Do they speak as if it's only they who hear from God?

Remember, that person can be used to sow dissension, distrust & insecurity. Surround yourself with people of spiritual maturity, who'll walk along with you & others. Not those engaging in sidebar conversations who think they know better. I'm not saying cocoon yourself & cut off all relationships where you can witness, but gain council from the right people, avoid those who want to pull you down into sin & indifference.

*15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.*

*17 Also, in those days the nobles of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and replies from Tobiah kept coming to them. 18 For many in Judah were under oath to him, since he was son-in-law to Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah. 19 Moreover, they kept reporting*



*to me his good deeds and then telling him what I said. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.*

Nehemiah's getting hammered on all sides. Prophets within his own ranks undermine him & now nobles of Judah are involved - and to our surprise we find Tobiah's actually married into Israel - in a sense he's family!

*As it says in Psalm 55, 12 If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. 13 But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, 14 with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.*

Attack from within, the hardest to endure (attack vs correction - different things). These guys don't give up, using all tactics within their means; ridicule, direct assault, undermining, gossip, friends & family. When the attacks come from your own brothers & sisters in the faith it's that much harder to deal with, because you don't expect it. But the wall was finished in 52 days! God wouldn't be thwarted...working through a faithful man & others who didn't listen to the lies. Will you be the one who folds, or the one who is faithful? Let's recap:

- Don't be naive, attack will come, but don't fear it
- Make mature spiritual decisions about your relationships
- Surround yourself with good council (discipleship)
- Don't believe the lies, rather fight with Truth
- Ask for the indwelling of the Spirit
- Immerse yourself in Scripture
- Remember, Jesus said, "I am with you even to the end of the age!"
- Don't give up, don't fold, react in faith

Jesus is the fulfillment of the sacrificial lamb on the Day of Atonement known as Yom Kippur. The great High Priest who was the only one able to enter the Holy of Holies & make atonement for the people. Leviticus 16 outlines this process, read it when you can. Realizing how much had to be atoned for & not only was the sin atoned for, but the residual power that it leaves behind - sin leaves residual effects in our lives which we must allow for Christ to expunge. There were two lambs, one sacrificed to atone for the sin of the people, and the scapegoat on which the Priest laid his hands confessing the sins of Israel, then sent it out into the wilderness to expunge the community of the residual power of sin.

In the days leading up to Yom Kippur, the people were expected to go to their neighbors & ask forgiveness for the sins they'd committed against them for the previous year. The other had 3 chances to forgive. If they didn't it was considered hurtful & harmful to community. Sin has communal effects. As we come to this table let's remember how seriously God took this & that the whole system was set up to remind us we couldn't transform ourselves. Transformation comes through the blood of the sacrificial lamb, Jesus. Only by the power of his death & resurrection can we rebuild & be transformed.

**Community Group Leader Questions:**

1. How have you experienced spiritual attack?
  1. Ridicule & belittling?
  2. Inner negative voices shaming you, or speaking lies?
  3. Direct anger from others?
  4. Any others?
2. Have you ever been attacked by a friend?
  1. *Psalm 55, 12 If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. 13 But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, 14 with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.*
3. Sometimes we just need to say to temptation or spiritual attack, "Talk to the hand!"
  1. But...if our spiritual attack is coming from others, how do we know we are not just being arrogant and mislead ourselves - maybe we need to listen to their wise counsel?
    1. Are they a Shemaiah? An armchair prophet disconnected or disengaged from true spiritual community?
    2. Are they bitter & angry against the church?
    3. Are they obedient in their walk & maturing in Christ?
    4. How do their words match with Scripture?
    5. How do we 'listen to the Holy Spirit' and be able to trust what we hear?
4. How do we make mature decisions about our relationships? Putting up healthy walls & boundaries with some, and allowing others in through the proper gates?
5. How do we enter into healthy discipleship relationships surrounding ourselves with 'good counsel'? And is that important to you?
6. Do we see how not listening to untruth enabled Nehemiah & others to stay on task and finish their rebuilding? How does that speak into your current life stage & situation?
7. Discuss & challenge everyone to memorize 2 Corinthians 4:7-12...
  1. *7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. 12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.*