

## **Neh. 6 “Last Ditch Attempts”**

**For the Children:** Have you ever had an opportunity to lead? Perhaps it was in a game or sport, or in a study-group. It can be hard to do well, and make us feel rather nervous. It is even harder for a man to lead in the church. For the devil works very hard to destroy church-leaders. Church-leaders need to learn to rely upon the Lord, His Word, and prayer. They need to believe God has called them, and to concentrate on doing the things God has called them to do. **Questions:** Why would Satan want to destroy church-leaders? What are some of the ways He tries to do so? What is the most important thing for a church-leader to do if he wants to succeed?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: Plots Against the Leader**

- 1) **Assassination Attempt:** Tobiah et al make a desperate, last-ditch attempt to remove Nehemiah – for they perceive that he is a driving force in the re-building of Jerusalem’s nearly-finished wall. Four times they ask him to meet in an area near or over the border. Satan has often used assassination of leaders to weaken the church e.g., the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in France (1572). Nehemiah refuses on the ground he’s too busy with the “great work” God has set him
- 2) **More False Rumours:** The enemies ask Nehemiah to meet to deal with a rumour that he is planning a rebellion against the Persians – that he has even hired prophets to claim that he is to be the king in Judah. Satan often uses slander to undermine church-leaders. But Nehemiah denies the rumour, refuses to meet and simply gets on with the task at hand
- 3) **Bribing False Prophets:** The enemies bribe false prophets against Nehemiah. Shemaiah tries to trick the governor into locking himself inside the Temple because of an alleged death-threat. But Nehemiah is aware that only priests may enter the Temple. See 2 Chron. 26:16ff. Besides, a leader should not flee on rumour. Satan often attacks leaders by sending others from the church with false guidance
- 4) **Ecumenical Pressure from Within:** Many of the Jewish nobles had close connections to Tobiah – by marriage and perhaps business. They sought to encourage contact between Nehemiah and Tobiah. They spoke of Tobiah’s good deeds. But Nehemiah discerned the man’s evil. Satan often tries to use pressure from within the church to establish false ecumenical ties, to lead the church into compromise

#### **Second Point: The Secret of the Leader’s Success**

- 1) **The 52-Day Wonder:** It was amazing that the walls could be built in a mere 52 days, despite opposition from without and from within the Jewish community. It made the enemies realize that God was with His people, thwarting the various plots. This caused them to fear, losing confidence in themselves. The chief secret of success for the church leader is thus the Lord!
- 2) **Reliance on God’s Word:** Those who depend on the Lord also depend on His Word. Nehemiah shows this dependency when he is confronted with false prophecy. He rejects what is false on the basis of the Word of God he knows. See Dt. 18:20, Is. 8:19-20.
- 3) **The Right Priorities:** Instead of wasting energy worrying about all the plots, Nehemiah concentrates on the “great work” God has set him to lead. Leaders can easily be distracted by things of lesser importance. They need to focus on seeking first God’s Kingdom and righteousness
- 4) **A Sense of Calling:** When Shemaiah urges Nehemiah to flee, the governor asks, “Should a man like me flee?” He recognized the importance of the calling God had given him to lead God’s people. He did not wish to set an example of cowardice, but of trust in the Lord, courage and zeal. Leaders today need that same sense of calling
- 5) **Calling on the Lord:** Nehemiah responds to the various plots by calling on the Lord in prayer – for strength for himself (v. 9); and that the Lord may deal with his enemies according to their works (v. 14). A leader needs to be much in prayer to answer the devil’s stratagems. See Lord’s Day 48

### **Conclusion:**