
Sermon Notes

March 4, 2018

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

Intrigue, Innuendo and Intimidation

Nehemiah 6:1-19

Personal Attacks

- ❖ Mudslinging, political hardball, dirty tricks
 - Nehemiah's opponents attempt a direct hit on his spirit and his character
 - "sack the quarterback"... "assault the commanding officer"
- ❖ The importance of knowing and holding onto the truth
 - knowing the truth keeps us from believing the lies of the enemy
 - holding onto the truth keeps us focused on our work
 - knowing, speaking, and holding onto the truth results in us overcoming rather than in our being overcome

Intrigue

- ❖ Let's have a "peace conference" (v. 2)
 - wouldn't it be a good idea for Nehemiah to "bury the hatchet" and try to open up diplomatic relations with his opponents?

- isn't it better to talk than fight?
- ❖ God gives Nehemiah the wisdom and discernment to realize this is some sort of trick
 - the job is NOT yet finished, and Nehemiah will not be distracted from doing the Lord's work
 - Nehemiah is a leader who knows how to say, "NO"
- ❖ But... some people just can't take "no" for an answer!

Innuendo

- ❖ Hoping the 5th time's a charm, Sanballat sends his servant with an open letter
 - an unsealed letter is a sign of disrespect and open criticism
 - the open letter is an attempt at character assassination
- ❖ *It is reported among the nations* (v. 6)
 - "people are saying..."
 - one of the characteristics of a rumor is that the source is never quoted and is actually seldom known
- ❖ The goal of this document is to make enough waves that Nehemiah will lose credibility because of all the rumors
- ❖ Nehemiah calmly yet firmly makes a direct denial of these charges, and he keeps on working (v. 8)
 - telling the truth simply and directly disarms the devil
 - God gives Nehemiah clear insight into their motives and he keeps on praying (v. 9)

- ❖ Even when rumors are later proven to be false, the victim of gossip inevitably suffers
 - the NT puts gossip on the same lists of sins as quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, conceit, disorder, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry (*cf.* 2 Corinthians 12:20 and Colossians 3:5-8)
 - the Lord hates *those who sow discord among brothers* (Proverbs 6:9), and such gossip arouses His wrath (Colossians 3:6)
- ❖ Guidelines for gossips
 - is it necessary to say this?
 - is this confidential information?
 - do I have any right to pass this on?
 - will this benefit the person who hears me?
 - can this person do anything about what I am passing on?

Intimidation

- ❖ Like the other two forms of attack, intimidation is subtle
 - an attempt to trick Nehemiah by using someone from right inside his own ranks
 - Shemaiah is a false prophet who tries to lure Nehemiah into the Holy Place in the temple under the guise of trying to protect him from an alleged murder plot

- ❖ Because only priests are allowed to enter the Holy Place, Nehemiah's entry into it would have been a desecration of God's house
 - because Nehemiah knows God's Word, he does not fall for this scheme
 - God will never contradict Himself by overriding His own revealed will
 - doing what Shemaiah suggests would be a sin on Nehemiah's part
- ❖ Once again, Nehemiah prays & continues his work (v. 14)
- ❖ It is impossible to overstate the role prayer plays in Nehemiah's defense against these enemy attacks

Personal Application

1. How have you been subjected to the kinds of personal attack experienced by Nehemiah? How has God equipped and enabled you to stand strong while under attack?
2. Nehemiah is a leader who knows how to say "NO". This sermon mentioned that the power of "no" is a stronger "yes." What are some things you need to say "no" to so that you can say a stronger "yes" to other things?
3. Are you prone to gossip and/or guilty of any of the forms of innuendo mentioned in this sermon? What will you do about that? How will you guard your tongue and use your power of speech for more godly purposes in the future?