

NEHEMIAH: PATTERN FOR LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE IN HARD TIMES

Part VI: Godly Leadership's Handling Of PERSONAL, POLITICAL Attacks

(Nehemiah 6:1-16)

I. Introduction

A. One of the more strenuous conflicts a leader can face is **personal, political** attacks! It can cause fear and produce foolish knee-jerk responses which further entrap the one attacked!

B. There is spiritual victory over such personal, political attacks, and Nehemiah exemplifies it (as follows):

II. Godly Leadership's Handling Of PERSONAL, POLITICAL Attacks, Nehemiah 6:1-16.

A. When Nehemiah built Jerusalem's wall, there existed a "fifth column" problem in the effort:

1. Nehemiah's enemy, Tobiah was son in law to Shechaniah, and Tobiah's son was married to Meshullam, son of Berechiah **who worked on TWO parts of the wall**, cf. Neh. 6:18b with 3:4, 30!!

2. Because of these relationships, many in Jerusalem working for Nehemiah were allied to Tobiah, making it hard for Nehemiah to counter Tobiah's opposition directly, Neh. 6:18a!

3. On top of this, these people kept writing letters to Tobiah and he back to them, spreading all sorts of information regarding Nehemiah, making it hard for Nehemiah to know what plan was afoot, 6:19!

B. His enemies knew of the "fifth column" challenge, and went to work on Nehemiah with **personal political** pressure in order to get him removed from leadership and thus stop the work on the wall, 6:1-14:

1. Handling the **personal, political attack** of compromise, Nehemiah 6:1-4:

a. Wishing to keep Nehemiah in the dark as to their true motives of destruction, Tobiah apparently decided to hide behind his cohorts, Sanballat and Geshem in trying to lure Nehemiah out of the city in a pretentious "peace talk". Thus, they could kill him, Nehemiah 6:1-2.

b. Nehemiah knew of the intentions, but dared not openly charge his opponents with "attempted murder" lest the Tobiah's relatives would react and no more help Nehemiah work on the wall , 2d!

c. Thus, Nehemiah came up with a **true but effective alternate reason** for not meeting with them: Nehemiah said he couldn't come, for he'd be out of God's will by leaving his work to do so, 6:3!

d. Sanballat and Geshom tried **three times** to meet this way with Nehemiah, hoping that Nehemiah might eventually lose his "cool" and charge them with deception and look silly, Nehemiah 6:4a!

e. Nehemiah knew the high stakes of losing his temper, and neatly kept answering as at first, 6:4b!

2. Handling the **personal, political attack** of slander, Nehemiah 6:5-9:

a. Sanballat sent an **open** letter (whose contents would be known by all!) claiming that Nehemiah was really trying to build his own kingdom, a charge putting him in conflict with Persia's emperor! Sanballat claimed to want to meet with Nehemiah for **Nehemiah's welfare** to work things out, 5-7!

b. In reality, Tobiah had received word from relatives in Jerusalem that some probably hoped Nehemiah would be a Jewish king, and he used this as fodder for this charge! (B.K.C., O.T., p. 686)

c. The charge frightened Nehemiah as news of it put him at risk with Persia; accordingly, he denied the charge openly and prayed for strength to quiet his fears, Neh. 6:8-9!

3. Handling the **personal, political attack** of treachery, Nehemiah 6:10-14:

a. Shemiah urged Nehemiah to meet with him in the **temple** to supply secret, protective input to Nehemiah about his possible assassins, Neh. 6:10. Apparently Shemiah was one whom Nehemiah trusted as Nehemiah **did** previously meet him privately **outside** the temple, Neh. 6:10a.

b. However, Nehemiah knew that God would hardly ask him to **flee** as his job was to complete the wall instead of running (v. 11a), and that he would violate Scripture by entering the temple as a non-levite (Neh. 6:11b with Num. 3:10; 18:7)! Accordingly, Nehemiah perceived that Shemiah was doubtless sent by his opponents to entrap him, Neh. 6:12-13.

c. Nehemiah thus did not meet in the temple with Shemiah, but prayed to God for justice, Neh. 6:14.

C. Thus, the wall was finished in 52 days, foiling Israel's opponents who realized the feat was of God, 15-16!

Lesson: When attacked personally by political intrigue, Nehemiah kept out of trouble by (1) sticking to God's clear assignment (Neh. 6:3, 11a), by (2) obeying Scripture (6:11b with Num. 3:10; 18:7) and (3) praying for help in handling his fears and angers, Neh. 6:9b, 14. Note how Timothy could stay out of trouble with false teacher conflicts in the church by following the same prescription, 1 Tim. 4:12-16!