

## The Danger of Compromise

**Text:** Nehemiah 6:1-19

### Introduction:

1. This chapter: The opposition from the enemy resumes but in a more subtle and dangerous form. Having failed to stop the progress of the work of God through open, frontal attack (contempt & conspiracy), the enemy now resorts to an under-cover operation to disrupt the work of God. The enemy tries every crafty tactic he can come up with to get Nehemiah to compromise.
2. The word 'compromise' refers to "an amicable agreement between parties in controversy, to settle their differences by mutual concessions." This can be a necessary thing in certain contexts (e.g., marriage) in things which are purely a matter of personal preference/opinion. But in relation to the truth, there can be no concessions.
3. The enemy uses four weapons against Nehemiah to try and get him to compromise: 1. The Lure of **Fellowship** 2. The Lips of **Falsehood** 3. The Leadership of **Fear** 4. The Links of **Family**

### I. THE LURE OF FELLOWSHIP (VS. 1-4)

#### A. The Enemies Proposal (Vs. 1-2)

#### B. Nehemiah's Refusal (Vs. 3-4)

### II. THE LIPS OF FALSEHOOD (VS. 5-9)

#### A. The Report (Vs. 5-7)

#### B. The Response (Vs. 8-9)

### III. THE LEADERSHIP OF FEAR (VS. 10-14)

#### A. The Promoting of Fear (Vs. 10)

##### 1. The prophet Shemaiah (Vs. 10)

##### a. A deceptive presentation (Vs. 10)

- i. The person: Shemaiah was one of the spiritual leaders in Israel. He appears to have had access to the temple (Vs. 10) and he makes a 'prophecy' (Vs. 12). He was likely a priest. It is a travesty when those who are supposed to be spiritual examples and leaders are caught up in compromise against God's Word and work but it is all too common.

- ii. The play act: Shemaiah feigned fear by shutting himself up in his home.

##### b. An insidious plan (Vs. 10, 13)

- i. The play was to try and get Nehemiah to act upon an emotional impulse rather than being governed by

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objective truth. This would then give them juicy material for an “evil report”. The word ‘reproach’ means “to expose by stripping, defame.”

- ii. The “just follow your heart/feelings” mantra is an extremely dangerous philosophy for decision making. Be guided in your decision making by the word of God, not your emotions.

- iii. **Fear is one of the chief weapons of Satan.**

### B. The Prevailing over Fear (Vs. 11-14)

#### 1. Nehemiah’s Refusal (Vs. 11)

- a. Nehemiah was courageous (11a) – Nehemiah was a man of spiritual steel. He faced the winds of adversity head on and didn’t run away in panic like many do today. Prov. 28:1 “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.”
- b. Nehemiah was humble (11b) – Though he had a high position in the land, he did not have an inflated opinion of himself. He might have been the king’s cupbearer, but he was not a priest and he would not presume to enter a place that was forbidden him.
- c. Nehemiah was Scriptural (11c)
  - i. Nehemiah knew the recommended course of action was not from God as it required him to violate the Word of God. He did not succumb to “situation ethics”. It is hard to stand against those who claim to be spiritual leaders but Nehemiah would not follow unscriptural advise.
  - ii. We need to run our decisions through the filter of God’s Word, asking ourselves the question “*What saith the Scripture?*” (Rom. 4:3) Our rule for life is “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*” (1 Thess. 5:21)
  - iii. Only the priests were authorized to enter the holy place in the temple (Num. 3:10). Uzziah is an example of a king who violated this and was judged by God (2 Chr. 26:16-21).

- iv. **Be guided by the Word of God, not by fleshly fear.**

#### 2. Nehemiah’s Discernment (Vs. 12-13)

- a. Nehemiah’s perceptions were not carnal but spiritual. **Nehemiah was a man of prayer and of the Word, hence his godly discernment.** Nehemiah cut through the deceptive façade and saw the real intent of the enemy. He smelt a rat!
- b. He discerned several things:
  - i. He (Shemaiah) was not sent of God. No matter what title or position a man may hold, if he is giving council that is contrary to Scripture, he has not been sent of God.

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- ii. His motivation was selfish. He had been hired by Sanballat and Tobiah. If you want to trace evil to its root, follow the money trail!
  - iii. His intention was malicious - The intent was to trip Nehemiah up so they could have occasion for an evil report. Previously they had manufactured their own false reports. Now they sought to lead Nehemiah into a trap that would allow them to have something with a little more weight to use against him.
  - iv. Illustration: The Pharisees and Sadducees tried repeatedly to trip up the Saviour in a similar way.
3. Nehemiah's Prayer (Vs. 14)
- a. Nehemiah sets down a good example for us as we are faced with similar trials and tests. His most important response in the face of all these things is prayer!
  - b. Nehemiah simply asks the Lord to look upon the situation. Effectively He places the issue before the Lord, trusting that He will respond with perfect justice.

## IV. THE LINKS OF FAMILY (VS. 15-19)

### A. The Success of the work (Vs. 15-16b)

1. The speed of the completion – 52 days! This is a testament to the diligence and dedication of those involved in the work. Never underestimate what can be accomplished in Christian service by a unified people who have a mind to work, a heart to pray, an eye to watch, an ear to hear and a godly leader like Nehemiah with the faith and courage to stand.
2. The secret of the completion – God was behind this project! In any work of God there are two aspects: 1. The Divine 2. The Human. The reason this work was blessed of God was because it was initiated by God and empowered by God (A. Redpath). The work was initiated by God's prompting, maintained by God's protection, and completed through God's power.

### B. The Sadness towards the work (Vs. 16a)

1. The enemy's perspective – they were saddened at the success of the work of God! There are those that rejoice to hear of damage to good churches and who are secretly distressed when they succeed.
2. The enemy's perception – despite their hatred for the work of God, in the end, even the hard-hearted opponents of the work had to recognize that this was not a work that could only be explained in human terms. God was behind the success of this work!
3. The local church owes its life, existence and success to the power of Christ. In Revelation, Christ is pictured standing amongst the

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candlesticks which are His churches. He empowers and sustains them by the oil of His Spirit. He also has the power to remove a candlestick. Above all else, we cannot hope to survive as a church without the hand of God continuing to be upon us.

### C. The Subversion of the work (Vs. 17-19)

1. Marriages (Vs. 18)
  - a. Sympathizers within who cooperate with the enemy cause much damage to the work of God! Tobiah had a close relationship with Judah through his wife and daughter in law (6:18-19). Marriages of this kind with the heathen were forbidden by God. “The ties of marriage were stronger than their bonds of commitment to the Lord” (Wiersbe) Many in Judah at that time put **loyalty to compromised family** ahead of loyalty to God, God’s work and God’s man.
  - b. Alan Redpath: **“There are plenty of men in any church who know the right thing, but who often are afraid of petticoat government.”**
  - c. Note: A laid back personality is no excuse for a lack of leadership. You do not have to be laid back and relaxed when it comes to the Word of God!
  - d. Warning! We have a tendency to invoke the **“its family”** exception clause in order to make compromises that violate God’s Word. But this exception clause is not found in Scripture! The real test of the fabric of your Christian walk is whether you are willing to uphold the Scriptures when it is going to cut across the most sensitive of human emotions. If we are prepared to allow our emotions to lead us with our family problems rather than the truth, sooner or later, **Satan will exploit that weakness** to his advantage and damage the work of God.
  - e. Matthew 10:37-38 “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”
2. Messages (Vs. 17, 19)
  - a. Written communication – subversive letters.
  - b. Verbal communication – they represented God’s man negatively and the rebels favorably!
  - c. Butler: “Every pastor and other Christian leader who has been serving God for any length of time knows Nehemiah’s experience here. It is a very disgusting experience to say the least. Those people who oppose your work and continually work behind your back to disrupt and hinder your work are the ones others in the church praise to you. The praisers’ theme seems to be, “How wonderful are the dissidents.” But the Bible says, “They

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that forsake the law praise the wicked” (Prov. 28:4), so you know that those who praise the wicked to you are not good people themselves.”

**Conclusion:** Are you a supporter or detractor of God’s work? Are you being led by faith or fear? Is it Christ first or family first for you?