

The Danger of Compromise (2)

Text: Nehemiah 6:10-19

Introduction:

1. 'compromise' = an amicable agreement between parties in controversy, to settle their differences by mutual concessions. Note: Some compromises/concessions are needed (e.g. in family or work life). However, the truth is never to be compromised. Introductory remarks to Ernest Pickering's book, "The Tragedy of Compromise" are insightful:

There are times when compromise may be wise and good. In the everyday interaction of life, there are times when individuals or groups must come from more extreme positions to a middle ground. Husbands and wives must sometimes yield to one another. Committees striving to solve problems and establish goals must agree to common terms. Persons of goodwill learn to surrender personal preferences to achieve a mutually agreeable solution. This kind of compromise is right and good and promotes a more harmonious relationship between human beings. In other words, not all compromise is evil. On the other hand, there are certain truths, convictions, and positions which cannot be compromised. Martin Luther, pressed by his political and ecclesiastical foes, rightly refused to renounce his writings and said to his opponents, "Here I stand; I can do no other." Athanasius, champion of the complete deity of Christ against the Arians who denied it, was warned by a colleague, "The whole world is against you." Replied Athanasius, "Then I am against the whole world." There would be no compromise for him on a matter so crucial.

2. The enemy uses four weapons against Nehemiah to try and get him to compromise. Review of last week's points: 1. The Lure of **Friendship** 2. The Lips of **Falsehood**

Tonight, we look at the final two weapons: 1. The Leadership of **Fear** 2. The Links of **Family**

I. 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 access to the temple (Vs. 10) and he makes a 'prophecy' (Vs. 12). He was likely a priest. It is hard to stand against those who claim to be spiritual leaders.
 - ii. Illustration: The old prophet and the young man of God – "I am a prophet also as thou art" (1 Kings 13:18)
 - iii. The play act: Shemaiah feigned fear by shutting himself up in his home
 - b. An insidious plan (Vs. 10, 13)

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- i. The ploy was to try and get Nehemiah to act upon an emotional impulse rather than being governed by objective truth. This would give them occasion to ‘reproach’ him. ‘reproach’ means “to expose by stripping, defame.”
- ii. The “just follow your heart/feelings” mantra is an extremely dangerous philosophy for decision making.
- iii. Hitler: “Mental confusion, contradiction of feeling, indecisiveness, panic; these are our weapons.” Fear is one of the chief weapons of Satan.
- iv. Note: If we allow our natural drive for self-preservation to dictate our choices, sooner or later, we will compromise on the truth.

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”
 - 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)

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. His commission was not from God
 - ii. His motivation was selfish

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- iii. His intention was harmful - 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.

II. 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.
- 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).

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

- 1. The enemies 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 it succeeds.
- 2. The enemies 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!

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

- 1. Marriages (Vs. 18)
 - a. Sympathisers within who cooperate with the enemy cause much damage to the work of God!
 - b. 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)
 - c. Butler: "Some of Nehemiah's worst problems from within the camp came from people involved with bad marriages. Unsanctified marriages are always a pain in the neck to the work of God. We have personally found in our over forty years of ministry that those who are problems (the murmurers,

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complainers, dissidents, discouragers etc...) in the church frequently have marriage problems. In fact, marriage problems are almost always present with troublemakers in the church. Either the marriage is a forbidden one (such as a saved person marrying an unsaved person or a divorced person remarrying), or the marriage does not follow Biblical guidelines (such as the wife wears the pants and is the dominate one in the marriage and not the husband).

- d. A. Redpath: "There are plenty of men in any church who know the right thing, but who often are afraid of petticoat government."
 - e. 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!
 - f. 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.
 - g. 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 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 helper or harmer of God's work? Are you taking a stand for God where it costs you?