

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 9

Surviving Opposition from Within

By

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We have been looking at the opposition to the work of God in [Nehemiah 4](#), and there is one thing you can be certain about—if you are doing anything at all worthwhile for God—Satan is going to oppose it.

I heard of a pastor who was constantly talking about how he was meeting up with Satan on the way. “I was going down the road the other day and I met up with Satan. What a tussle we had!” He was always testifying that every time he was going somewhere he would meet up with Satan. There was a liberal pastor in town who said to him, “Young man, I am sick of hearing you talk about meeting up with Satan. Every time you go someplace or do something, you are meeting up with Satan.” He said, “I want you to know I have been pastoring for thirty-five years and I have not met Satan yet.” The young fellow said, “Have you ever stopped to consider you might be going in the same direction?”

If you are doing something right for the Lord, you can know that Satan is going to try to oppose that work.

Satan sought to oppose the work of Nehemiah and others by ridicule, which is a very cruel and effective tool of Satan. He tried to oppose the work by inciting Sanballat and Tobiah, who became very angry at what was being done. And he sought to oppose the work of God by threatening to stop it. Unsuccessful in stopping Nehemiah with ridicule and threats, as we get to Nehemiah 5, we see that Satan becomes more subtle in his attack against the work of God. The opposition now comes from within.

Satan generally uses open opposition as his first tactic against you. When that fails, then Satan comes with a more subtle strategy. He says, “Let’s join hands together in the work.” And then problems begin to come from within. We often know how to recognize and deal with the problems that come from the outside; but when the problems begin to come from within, we are not always equipped to deal with them. We do not know how to handle that.

When the Lord first established the church, Satan tried to destroy it by a direct, frontal assault. We are well aware of *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* and the history of the early church with that direct frontal assault by Satan. He sought to destroy the church through persecution. We know the history of the church and it was during this period of persecution that the church flourished, it grew, and it prospered.

So then Satan changed his tactics. He began to work from within the church. He began to introduce into the church all kinds of corrupting Babylonian practices from the ancient Babylonian religion. Satan was far more successful in destroying the effectiveness of the church from within, and in bringing in compromises and corrupting the church from within. He was far more effective and successful with this approach than he was in the direct frontal assault from outside the church.

It is interesting to me that today the Mormons are seeking to join the church. The Mormons have a tremendous campaign on right now to change their image from a cult to a denomination. They want to be known just as another denominational church. They are doing their best to shed this cult mantle that they have had through the years so that they appear to be just another denomination. They are saying, “We believe in Jesus and we believe in God. We believe the Bible. We are just another church.” The Mormons believe in Jesus, but what Jesus?

Paul speaks about those who would preach another Jesus. The Jesus that the Mormons believe in was the brother of Lucifer. That is not the Jesus that I believe in. The Jesus that I believe in is the

only begotten Son of God. And He can say, “I am one with the Father. I and My Father are one” ([John 10:30](#)). Now I hardly think that Lucifer can say that. And thus, the Jesus I believe in is not the brother of Lucifer, as is the Jesus of the Mormon Church. The God that I believe in is not Adam, who came to this earth with one of his celestial wives, Eve. He was not a good Mormon in another era on another planet, who began to populate this world and oversee its development. Nor do I believe that one day my wife and I are going to head for some planet in the universe to begin to populate it. She is the only wife I have. By the grace of God, I am going to hang on to her and she will be the only wife I ever have, if she will stick with me. It has been a good forty-two years, but I do not expect to spend eternity on some planet doing our own thing. Adam, according to Brigham Young, is their god—the only god with whom they have to do.

Do you see how Satan tries to come in the back door? You close the front door on him and here he is. He says, “Hey, good buddy, how much will it cost me to join this church?” Satan is using this same tactic here in Nehemiah 5. Having failed at the direct opposition from without, he now seeks to oppose the work of God from within. Satan seeks to create a disgruntled people and conditions that are not good. As he so often does, he is using the greed of man to oppose the work of God.

They brought to Nehemiah their grievance.

There was a great cry of the people, and of their wives against their own Jewish brothers. ([Nehemiah 5:1](#))

Now the problem is all within the family. The outside forces have been dealt with. He has prayed. He has set up the guards. They are working with the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other. They have the trumpet ready. They have the whole thing set up. Now the problem is from within and they come with this grievance to Nehemiah concerning their brothers.

The rich Jews had begun to oppress the poor. There was a drought and a scarcity of corn. Haggai, who was prophesying about this time, spoke of the tremendous drought and the shortage of corn and fruit that they were experiencing. With this shortage many of the people, in order to buy corn, were beginning to mortgage their property, their land, and their houses. The rich people were loaning the money to them to buy the corn, but they were charging usury. The interest that they were charging amounted to twelve percent a year. The people, being impoverished, began to spend the money that they were reserving for their taxes to the government. Not being able to pay their mortgages and not being able to pay their taxes, they were in desperate straits. Some of the people had begun to sell their children as slaves. The whole thing began to blow up because here they were with mortgages against their property that they could not pay. The twelve percent interest was just eating them up. They were going deeper and deeper into debt while the rich people were becoming richer and richer, taking advantage of the poverty and of the desperate need of those poor people.

Money is one of the chief weapons that Satan will use against your ministry to destroy it.

I believe that the chief weapon that Satan uses against ministers is women. Solomon said that she searches for the precious souls. And he tells us that “A whorish woman can bring a man to a crust of bread” (cf. [Proverbs 6:26](#)). I know many pastors whose ministries have been destroyed because of their involvement with women.

The next two dangers rank very close. They are money and pride. The minute you begin to have a modicum of success in the ministry, look out for these two snares of the enemy. As you begin to

have some success in the ministry and there is perhaps a little surplus now in the budget, watch out! You begin to look around and think, “My, I am the pastor of this large church. Look how it is growing. My, I really have the secret and I really am able to make it work.” Look out! Satan begins to use his snares the moment you begin to have success. As long as you are struggling, without success, you do not have that many problems from within. It is when you begin to have a little success that you have to really watch out. That is when the enemy is going to really come against you.

Now we know that it takes money to operate a church. There never seems to be quite enough money to do all of the things that we would like to do; and thus, it seems there is that constant desire for more money in order to expand the work of God. We seem to have a fallacious philosophy that money is the cure for all evils. That is not scriptural. In fact, the Scripture says something about money being the root of all evil (cf. [1 Timothy 6:10](#)). Somehow we think that all of our problems will be solved—“I could do such a great work for God, if I just had the money.”

You would be amazed at all of the mail that we get from people all over the world who have the most fantastic ideas of how to reach the world for Jesus Christ. All they need is the money to finance this idea. “It is sure fire. It will surely do it. If God will only wise up and finance this one, we could reach the world for Christ.” I believe that the church is guilty of funding a lot of ideas and programs that were not inspired by God. I believe that God is perfectly capable of providing for the work that He wants to do. I believe strongly when God guides, God provides.

I also believe that if you strive to gain, you are going to have to strive to maintain. Many tremendous projects have been built through a lot of strife, through a lot of begging, and through a lot of different conniving ways of getting people to give. They were able to build these vast monuments, but they could not maintain them because ultimately you get worn down, and the people get worn out.

Here is where people so often get into real trouble in the ministry. At this point they begin to buy into the false philosophy that the end justifies the means. “Let us do evil that good may come of it” ([Romans 3:8](#)). Paul said, “God forbid!” And people begin to develop all kinds of schemes and dishonest ways of raising money in the church.

I do not believe for one moment that God has ever shown a man how many people are going to give \$500 in a given service. I do not believe God does that. I do not believe God has ever done that. I believe that any man who stands up and declares, “God has shown me there are ten people here tonight that are going to give a thousand dollars,” that that man is a liar, a fraud, and a false prophet. I do not believe that you can buy the salvation or healing of your loved ones through a donation, as is often intimated in some of the telethons. “Their son was out living in sin and they pledged a hundred dollars a month, and bless God—He saved the son! If you have a relative that you want saved, send in and pledge.”

I believe that the computerized letters that are sent by some of the leading TV personalities, promising personal prayers or healing, are an abomination in the sight of God. After receiving one of these letters, I sat down and wrote to the sender. Among other things, I mentioned in my letter that I was awfully glad that I did not have to stand in his shoes when he stood before the Judge of all the earth. Personally, I am glad I do not have to stand in my own shoes. I am glad that Jesus is going to be standing in my shoes for me. I am not sure if that evangelist knows that or not, but at least he took me off his mailing list. Unfortunately, it did not stop him from sending these same types of letters to other poor people.

When God begins to bless and prosper the church financially, then even greater problems begin to arise in the proper expenditure of those funds. I do not believe that any minister has one scintilla of an excuse for living a lavish lifestyle on money that he has received through the ministry. Now if you have a separate, outside income, an inheritance or whatever, you can do whatever you want with it. It does not bother me. You can drive the fancy sports cars and cover your wife's fingers with diamonds. That is fine. I do not believe that you should take money that people have given for the work of God and use it for yourself and for a lavish lifestyle. I believe in simplicity of lifestyle. I do not believe that we are setting a good example before the people when we live lavishly.

You will find an interesting thing about money—there is never enough no matter how much you have. Even Donald Trump is finding that out, isn't he?

In the days of Nehemiah the rich were living by the golden rule, but it was a different golden rule. They were living by the golden rule that says: "He who has the gold, rules." They were using their money to oppress the poor.

I have a problem with people who are endlessly taking advantage of other people's problems. I have a problem with doctors, professionals, lawyers, psychiatrists, and ministers, who take advantage of people who are going through severe problems—maybe legal problems, maybe medical problems—and they charge them undue amounts of money. No man is worth \$18,000 an hour. I do not care how delicate the operation. Men who take advantage of the misfortunes of other people to enrich themselves, I believe that they are going to have to answer to God for it. That is what was happening in Nehemiah's day. These people were going through unfortunate circumstances. There was a drought and things were hard. There was a shortage of corn. The rich people began to take advantage of those poor people in this condition and they began to charge these unreasonable rates of interest.

I believe there is a legitimate place for charging interest. I think that if a person is going into a business venture and he has the opportunity of perhaps making a lot of money, if you lend to him financially, then you should share in the profits that the person is going to make. I think that is legitimate. You can buy a house today and it can be worth twice as much in a couple of years. To charge interest on those kinds of loans, I think is legitimate. But to charge interest when a person is borrowing for their very livelihood, I think is wrong. Under the law, the Jews were not to charge interest to their brothers. It was contrary to the law of God. And thus, what was going on was something that was definitely disobedience to God. It was the oppression of the poor and it created this problem that brought the whole building process to a halt. They had to, first of all, deal with this problem before they could go on.

Nehemiah said in [5:6](#), "I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words." I am so glad Nehemiah was angry. I am so glad that he got angry at wrong things. We are living in sort of a soft age where people do not want you to say anything bad about anybody. Every time I say something bad about somebody I get letters. "You should love, brother." I love David because he said, "Lord, break their teeth in their mouths. Smash their noses, Lord. Do not I hate them, Lord, that hate Thee? Yea, I hate them with a perfect hatred" (cf. [Psalm 58:6](#); [139:21-22](#)). I think we should be angry over sin. We should be angry over abortion. We should be angry over child pornography. We should be angry over these types of sins.

Jesus looked with anger upon them because they were holding back people from the work of God. That should tell us something. Be careful that you do not stand in the way of people coming to the Lord by your attitude or your actions. Do you remember the Sabbath day in Capernaum?

Jesus came in the synagogue and there was a man there who had a withered hand. And immediately they looked at Jesus to see what He was going to do, because it was a Sabbath Day. It says, “And Jesus looked with anger upon them” (cf. [Mark 3:1-5](#)). Why was He angry? Because of their religious traditions, they would keep this man from the work that God wanted to do in healing him.

Nehemiah was angry. The complaint that was brought to him was a legitimate complaint. These men were wrong. He sat down and consulted with himself. I think that is always wise to do when you are angry. Do not react immediately. You can really mess things up if you go out in anger. Plato said to one of his servants, “I would beat you, but I am angry.” So, Nehemiah sat down and consulted with himself, as he mulled things over. He thought upon the course of action that he needed to take. Then he said, “I rebuke the seven, the nobles, the rulers” (cf. [Nehemiah 5:7](#)).

It goes on to speak of his rebuke. He gets after them for charging usury. He gathered the great assembly against them, gathered them all together, and then he talked about how he had set an example for them.

Nehemiah said, “After our own ability we have redeemed certain of these men from their captivity. They are your brothers. And now are you going to sell them as slaves and take advantage of their poverty?” They had no answer. And he said straight to them, “It is not good what you are doing. You ought to walk in the fear of the Lord.” (cf. [Nehemiah 5:8-9](#))

And there, my friend, is the key. As I look at these people who are using all of these gimmicks and devices to get money from the people, and as I see the horrible abuses, I wonder: How can they write those things? How can they send out that little cloth and say, “Send this cloth back to me with your request and I will anoint it with oil, return it, and God will heal you. Just be sure to enclose a check!” How can these guys write all of that stuff? How do they sleep at night? How can they do that? The answer is that they are lacking a fear of God. They do not have a real fear of God in their hearts.

That is one thing we need to examine in our own hearts. Do I have a genuine fear of God in my heart? Do I realize that one day I am going to answer to God for what I have done? We are even warned in the Scriptures about being ministers, knowing that we will have the greater responsibility or accountability. “To whom much is given, much is required” ([Luke 12:48](#)). I do not take the ministry lightly because I know that one day I am going to stand before God and give an account of myself. I surely do not want to be one of those who say, “Lord, Lord, did I not prophesy in Your name? Did I not cast out devils in Your name? Did I not heal the sick in Your name?” I do not want to hear Him say to me, “Depart from Me, ye worker of iniquity. I never knew you” (cf. [Matthew 7:22-23](#)).

The fear of the Lord is the issue. Their problem was that they were lacking the fear of the Lord—that consciousness and awareness that one day they would have to answer to God. I am responsible to God for I stand before the people as God’s representative. They are looking to me as God’s representative. They are judging God by what they see in me. They are judging the validity of the gospel by what they see in me and what they hear from me. I feel this awesome responsibility of standing before the people as God’s representative to give them God’s Word. I want to be careful that I do not give them vain speculation but that I give them the Word of God, just as pure and unadulterated as I possibly can. I want to proclaim God’s truth without hypocrisy.

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“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” ([Psalm 111:10](#)). “To fear the Lord is to hate evil” ([Proverbs 8:13](#)). And that was the problem, they lacked the fear of the Lord.

Nehemiah pleaded with them.

I pray you, stop with usury and restore to them their lands, their vineyards, their olive orchards, their houses and the interest that you charged them to buy the corn and the wine. (cf. [Nehemiah 5:10-11](#))

A glorious thing happened. The people hearkened to Nehemiah and they said, “We will restore to them and require nothing from them. We will do as you say.” Then he called the priests and he made them take an oath that they would also keep that promise ([Nehemiah 5:12](#), paraphrased).

Then Nehemiah again set the example, even as we are the ones to set the example for the people. He said in [Nehemiah 5:14](#),

From the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year, even to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, that is twelve years, neither I nor my brethren have eaten the bread of the governor.

Even though he had the right as governor to receive the taxes and to receive salaries as governor, Nehemiah did not take a salary. He did not eat the bread of the governor.

But the former governors that had been there before me were chargeable unto the people. They had taken from them the bread and the wine, besides forty shekels of silver. And their servants even bore rule over the people, but I did not do this—[Why?]—because of the fear of God. (cf. [Nehemiah 5:15](#))

Oh how important it is to have the fear of God. Nehemiah, knowing that he was responsible to God, allowed the fear of God in his heart to keep him on the right path. It will keep you on the right path too.

“But yes,” he said, “I continued the work of this wall and I did not buy any land. And all of my servants were gathered together unto the work.” (cf. [Nehemiah 5:16](#))

They all got into it. They set the example themselves. And then he tells that he even took care of 150 people, the Jews and the rulers who sat at his table. He tells of the provisions that it took and then he says, “Lord, think upon me for the good, according to all that I have done for this people,” (cf. [Nehemiah 5:19](#)).

He did not know the grace of God. He was presenting to God his works. I would not dare do that because I am thankful for the grace of God. “Think upon me, Lord, for the grace and mercy that You have given through Jesus Christ.”

The practical result was that the people took the oath to quit their evil practices. It says, “And all the people praised the Lord and the work continued.” When the opposition from within is dealt

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with, people rejoice and praise God; and the work of God continues, as God builds up the defenses to protect His people from the enemy.

Father, we thank You for the privilege of laboring for You. Thank You, Lord, that as Nehemiah You have called us to lead the people in the work of the Lord. Lord, we are cognizant of the enemy. We are not ignorant of his devices. We have faced the open opposition and we have seen You defeat him. We have faced the ridicule, the attacks, and Lord, by Your strength we have stood. Lord, we have seen how the enemy has tried to come in and corrupt from within, and we thank You that You have given us wisdom in dealing with those corrupting influences from within. We thank You that the work continues. Help us that we might always walk in the fear of the Lord and not be careless or carried away with diverse lusts, but may we feel that heavy sense of responsibility as Your representatives, delivering Your Word to Your people. May we do so faithfully. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I like how Paul, so many times says, “That which I have received from the Lord I also give unto you” ([1 Corinthians 11:23](#)). I believe that you should be able to make that the preface to every sermon you preach. I do not think that you should say it, but I believe that you should be able to say it. When you stand before the people, I believe that you should have had such preparation, prayer, and waiting upon God, that as you stand there and look over the congregation and as you open your Bible, you would be able to say: “That which I have received from the Lord I will also deliver unto you.”

Wait on the Lord for your ministry. May God bless you and prosper you in building the walls and the defenses for the people of God.

Though we are now in a moment of world's history that is exciting and doors seem to be open all over, I believe that we are probably in one of the most dangerous periods of the history of the world. Paul said, “And when they begin to say, ‘Peace and safety,’ beware for sudden destruction is coming” ([1 Thessalonians 5:3](#)). I really believe that is what we are seeing today.