

Ezekiel Ministry

Satanist Attacks

By Barry A. Wilson

Are you having a bad day? Does it seem that you cannot think? Do you feel that you cannot do the things that you have been doing with ease? It may be just a bad day, but it could be oppression from Satan.

I know that this is so true. I have been having a hard time writing. My mind just would not work. I would have an idea and then it would be gone. I would start writing and something would always happen so that I could not complete what I was writing. I felt like I was losing my mind. Then God spoke to me and told me that it was Satan. Satan was oppressing me. Satan is my enemy and he wants to defeat me.

Some signs of oppression are:

Powerlessness: If you feel that you have no power to work or do anything. If you feel that your energy is gone.

Inner turmoil: Emotional turmoil or depression can be a sign of an attack from Satan. If you are optimistic or hopeful and for some reason you feel that things are just hopeless, you may be under attack. If for some reason you just can't shake that feeling of fear, Satan is attacking you.

Doubt: You doubt that you are saved. You doubt that you are a child of God. Satan tells you that you are no good and have never been any good. Satan tells you that you can do nothing for God.

Evil: You feel that there is an evil presence around you.

This is only a short list of the things that Satan can oppress you with. Satan wants you to believe you do not have the power to defeat him. This is one of Satan's many lies. If you are a child of God, you have the power over Satan and all his demons. All you have to do is pray and rebuke Satan and his demons in the name of Jesus. God wants us to live life and to live life more abundant. If we allow Satan to oppress us, we cannot live that life. Give God total control of your life and use His powers to defeat Satan. You do need to realize that everything that happens to you is not from Satan. You need to pray and ask God to give you discernment about your problems. We are seeing all kinds of oppression from Satan as well as opposition from the world as we move to get out the message of the gospel. How do we respond to this opposition? We need to look at the Book of Nehemiah and see how he responded to the opposition that he faced when he was building the wall.

There will always be opposition. The enemy will try to get you sidetracked or to give up completely. Even though it was God's will for the wall to be rebuilt, He did not remove the opposition. Even though it is God's will for you to grow strong in faith and to labor to advance

His kingdom, God does not remove the opposition. If you respond properly, the opposition will drive you to greater dependence on the Lord and to greater determination to do what He has called you to do. If you yield to the opposition, you will quit the race in discouragement or settle in for a mediocre Christian existence. If you know Jesus Christ and attempt to accomplish anything for Him, the enemy will oppose you. These are the things that Nehemiah faced as he worked to build the wall.

The anger of others against you.

Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, became furious and very angry (4:1, 7). The Hebrew word means “burning mad.” A secure and independent Jerusalem would threaten his hold on the area and undermine his control of the trade route through the region, thus hurting his economy. So, for the time being, he dropped his differences with the Ammonites to the east, the Arabs to the south, and the Philistines to the west. In anger over what Nehemiah was doing they all came together, threatening to stop the work by violence if necessary. This new work of God in Jerusalem threatened their lifestyle, and so they got angry.

Mockery and sarcasm.

Sanballat and his buddies gather within hearing distance of the wall and ask a bunch of sarcastic questions (4:2): “What are those feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices?” He means, “Do they think that they can complete this project and offer sacrifices of thanksgiving?” “Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble, even the burned ones?” After each rhetorical question, his cronies probably roared with laughter. Then Tobiah threw in his sarcastic barb, “if a fox should jump on this poor excuse for a wall, he would break it down.”

Threats and intimidation.

If anger and ridicule don’t work, the enemy gets more aggressive. Nehemiah’s enemies had to be careful, since he was working under Artaxerxes’ permission. They couldn’t just rally their troops and march on Jerusalem, or they would be charged with rebellion against the king. But they could and did use threats of violence (4:8, 11), which they circulated among the Jews living near them (4:12). Small bands of terrorists could sneak in and pick off a few of the people working on the wall, and Sanballat would just tell Artaxerxes that it was a renegade band that he didn’t have control over. So, like the militant today, the threat of terrorist activity put the Jews under immense psychological pressure.

Discouragement and exhaustion

Apparently, there was a discouraging proverb or work song that circulated among the workers at this point (4:10): “The strength of the burden bearers is failing, yet there is much rubbish; and we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall.” The people were wearing out and the piles of rubbish didn’t seem to be diminishing. They had lost their earlier heart for the work that had resulted in the wall rapidly being built to the halfway mark (4:6).

Negativism

The criticism and mockery (in 4:2-3) came from the enemy without. This negativism came from the Jews themselves who lived near the enemy (4:12). These people were not involved in the work of rebuilding the wall. That is significant! They lived near the enemy, and thus were constantly exposed to his negative attacks on the work. And, they weren't involved personally in the work. So, they were hearing negative reports and threats and they didn't know firsthand what God was doing in Jerusalem. They came repeatedly ("ten times" is a Hebrew expression meaning "over and over") to warn Nehemiah and those working on the wall, "They will come up against us from every place where you may turn."

Fear.

Fear is the cumulative effect of all of the above factors (4:14). The people had seen the enemy's anger and had heard their mockery and threats. They were wearing down through exhaustion. Then they repeatedly heard gloom and doom from their fellow Jews who lived near the enemy. Nehemiah saw their fear and exhorted them not to be afraid.

Whenever you encounter opposition, you have several options. You can run from it; you can try to dodge it or go around it; you can try to work out a compromise; or, you can meet it head on and work through it. The last approach is usually the only biblical way. Nehemiah's approach can be broken down into four aspects: They lifted their voices in prayer; they put their hearts into the work; they kept their eyes on the enemy in vigilance; and, they kept their minds focused on the Lord in faith.

They lifted their voices in prayer.

Often when we face opposition, our first response is to get angry and hit back or defend ourselves. But our first response should always be prayer (4:4, 9). John Bunyan wisely observed, "You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." Prayer reminds us that God is sovereign, even over those who are attacking us. He has allowed this trial for a reason. In prayer we submit our hearts to Him and acknowledge our trust in Him.

"Then I prayed, "Hear us, our God, for we are being mocked. May their scoffing fall back on their own heads, and may they themselves become captives in a foreign land! Do not ignore their guilt. Do not blot out their sins, for they have provoked you to anger here in front of the builders." (Nehemiah 4:4-5)

But what about Nehemiah's prayer in 4:4-5? It doesn't seem to fit with, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44) Should we pray as Nehemiah prayed?

As Christians, we should pray that God would "destroy" our enemies by converting them. But if He so chooses, God may also destroy them by pouring out His wrath on them, as He will surely do at the final judgment if they have not repented of their rebellion against Him.

We need to guard our hearts against any selfish motives or personal delight in seeing our enemies brought down. But we must also remember that the saints will rejoice when God finally

judges the wicked. If our hearts are right, we can pray that God would subdue the enemies of the cross, either by conversion or by His justice. Prayer should be our first response to opposition.

They put their heart into the work.

“The people had a heart to work” (4:6). Although there was a slight pause while Nehemiah organized the militia, they didn’t abandon the work to chase down the enemy. They didn’t allow the enemy’s threat to get their focus onto other issues. They just kept building the wall, and pretty soon the enemy was outside looking up, instead of looking straight across at them over the wall.

There are times when it is necessary to refute false teachers and defend sound doctrine. In fact, this is one of the tasks of the elders (Titus 1:9-16). But we should never get so distracted by fighting false teachers that we forget our main purpose, which is to proclaim the gospel both here and around the world through missions. Both the sword and the trowel are necessary, but the reason for the sword is so that we can use the trowel. We defend the faith with the sword of God’s Word so that we can build His kingdom with the trowel. To get sidetracked onto defending the faith to the neglect of winning and building people is to forget our goal.

They kept their eyes on the enemy in vigilance.

Nehemiah prayed first, but then he set up a guard. “Trust God and keep your powder dry!” Also, notice that Nehemiah’s prayer did not make the enemy go away; instead, the enemy upped the threats to attack! Prayer isn’t a magic cure-all. Prayer doesn’t mean that you can ignore the enemy’s threats or pretend that they don’t exist. Nehemiah was vigilant to arm the workers and post guards around the clock. Also, he put into place a warning system, so that wherever the trumpet was blown, the workers would quickly rally there to defend their families and the city. The workers didn’t take off their clothes at night so that they would be ready to defend the city.

Yet many Christians are oblivious to the dangers that come from our adversary the devil, who prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8). They go out into the world without putting on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10-20). They hang out with worldly friends and fill their minds with the crud of Hollywood. They let their kids watch the trash on TV, and after the kids are in bed, the parents tune in the shows for “mature” audiences—mature in evil, but not in godliness! And then they wonder why they have family problems!

Nehemiah and his people responded to the enemy’s opposition by lifting their voices in prayer, putting their hearts into the work, and by vigilantly keeping their eyes on the enemy. Finally,

They kept their minds focused on the Lord.

Nehemiah reminded them (4:14), “Remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.” The people were discouraged because they had gotten their focus onto the enemy’s threats, the piles of rubble, and all the work left to do. Nehemiah rightly directed their focus back to the Lord who is great and awesome and to the things that were at stake if they yielded to the enemy, namely, their families.

When opposition hits, it's easy to get your focus off the Lord and onto your problems. At such times stop and, as Paul says, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). If you're tempted to some sin, remember the devastating effects that it will have on your family. Get God's perspective on your situation. "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Keep your mind focused on the Lord!

Historian Will Durant observed, "Rome remained great as long as she had enemies who forced her to unity, vision and heroism. When she had overcome all her enemies, she flourished for a moment and then began to die" Opposition kept Rome strong.

If you know Christ and try to accomplish anything for Him, you will experience opposition, especially if you are in leadership. Respond as Nehemiah did, with prayer, keeping on with the work, vigilance against the enemy, and keeping your focus on the great and awesome God whom we serve.

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