

Finishing Well

Lesson #28 Enemies That War in My Soul: Amorite Spirit August 4, 2021

When Igor Sikorsky was 12, his parents told him that competent authorities had already proved human flight impossible. He went on to build the first helicopter.

In his American plant, he posted this sign:

According to recognized aero technical tests, the bumblebee cannot fly because of the shape and weight of his body in relation to the total wing area. The bumblebee does not know this, so he goes ahead and flies anyway (*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, by Paul Lee Tan, p. 945).

Nehemiah would have loved that sign! He was faced with an insurmountable task of rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem after they had laid in ruin for at least 164 years.

Neh. 1:3-4 Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.

When I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah's heart's desire: Go to Jerusalem and help his people rebuild the city and its walls. His ultimate purpose is to bring them back to prominence and to restore their dignity for the glory of God.

Neh. 2:1-9 King of Persia grants Nehemiah's request to send letters to the provincial governors granting him safe passage. Instruct Asaph, who oversees the King's forest, to give him the wood he needs to do the rebuilding and to build himself a house as well.

Neh. 2:10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of IT, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

Neh. 2:11-16 Nehemiah stays in Jerusalem for three days before stealthily heading out with a few men to inspect the city's walls. He does all this in strict secrecy, not telling the Jews, nobles, officials, or priests what he's doing.

Neh. 2:17-18 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach [be a disgrace]. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me.

And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

Neh. 2:19 BUT when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it [the enemy learns of the plan], they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? [king of Persia]

Neh. 2:20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore, we His servants will arise and build: but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem. [You have no interest in the affairs of Jerusalem and God's people.]

Background: While Judah was in exile and in captivity in Babylon, Sanballat and others took over Judah. For years, they had lived in cultural, political and spiritual prominence. It was like a utopia for him and his supporters. A secure and independent Jerusalem would threaten Sanballat's hold on the area and undermine his control of the trade route through the region, thus hurting his economy. Sanballat will lose his importance and significance in this territory. 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.

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, regional governors serving under the king of Persia, were a sinister trio of allies and reinforcers who will rally with "other enemies" to strengthen their mission against Nehemiah and God's people by using intimidation, insults, false accusations and distractions.

In anger over Nehemiah's determination to rebuild the ruins of Jerusalem, God's dwelling place, these 3 united in their threat to stop the work by violence if necessary.

Sanballat a Horonite = "secret enemy; hatred in secret;" bramble bush

Origin: Akkadian theophoric name: Sin-uballit, meaning "Sin [the moon deity] has given life."

- He stands for our biggest enemy, Satan, the hater of God's people.
- He was very wealthy with much influence, power and control.
- The main man behind most of the attacks.
- Critical opposer to that which God is establishing.
- Uses mockery and insult to discourage believers.
- Attacks the mind, criticizes the work and the people whose desire is to work and build.

Geshem = "Corporeality" = Physical, tangible, material, bodily

- This enemy speaks of the world. That which is physical, tangible etc.
- His form of warfare against Nehemiah is very subtle and is used when others have failed.
- Most likely from an area south of Judah; king of part of Arabian Peninsula
- The only Arab mentioned by name in the Bible.
- He is an enemy of the Jews and in a battle with them over who should control Jerusalem.
- Appropriate that the Jew/Arab relationship was born in strife.

The 1st and only conversation between a Jew and an Arab:

When Geshem and his cronies heard that Nehemiah was rebuilding the wall, they "mocked and ridiculed" him. Nehemiah responds by saying: "The God of heaven is the One who will give us success, and we His servants are going to start building; *but you have no share or claim or historic right in Jerusalem.*" 2,500 years have passed, and it is the same argument!

Tobiah = "Jehovah is good"

- An Ammonite governing an area east of the Jordan River.
- Old Adam, the flesh. Tobiah speaks of the sinful nature that not only does bad but has a great tendency to also do good!
- He will trick a large percentage of God's people through this means.
- The desires of our flesh come to us wrapped in godly motives.

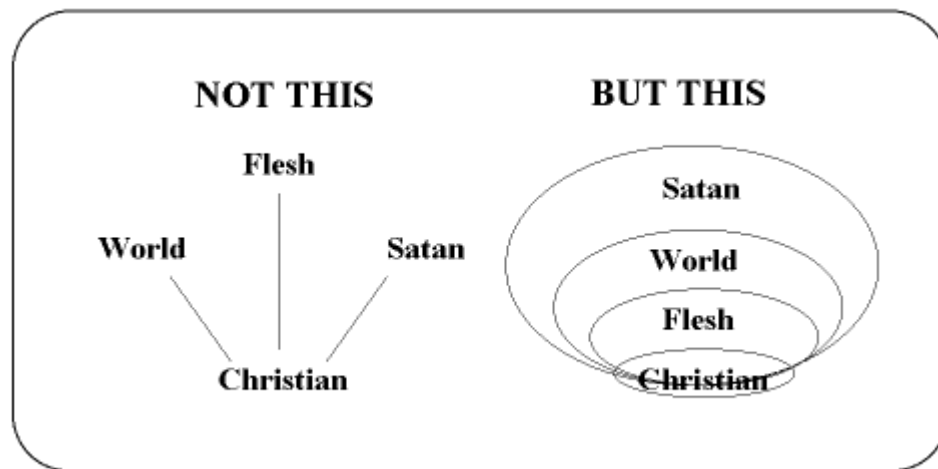
Satan is seeking to oppose God's plan by promoting evil in every way possible.

He works indirectly through:

- The world in which he has great freedom and power John 12:31 I John 5:19
- The flesh Gal.5:19-21

The world, the flesh and the devil are not three separate enemies of the Christian.

Rather Satan works through the evil world system [I John 2:13-15] to exploit the fleshly nature that still wars within us [Rom.7:18; Gal.5:19-21].



"Amorites" is found 73 times in the KJV and the name "Amorite" another 14 times.

Occupied mountainous terrain of the land; Fearsome military prowess; of great stature

The word for Amorite in Hebrew comes from another Hebrew word, *amar*, which means,

- "to speak against someone so as to boast about yourself, to speak in order to cast down, to murmur against another, to say something in a wrong spirit."
- All evil speaking is used by this demonic power.
- All coarse jokes, slander, gossip, angry speech, lies, exaggerations, boasting and loud talking is the power behind this evil giant. This wicked spirit convinces us to use our tongue to condemn, to cruelly tease, to speak sarcastically, or to degrade one another.
- All murmuring and complaining is the source of this strong wicked spirit.
- Amorite means "mountain people; renowned;" high and mighty
- Amorite spirit is a spirit of self-exaltation.
- Fame-seekers; seekers of human glory and greatness
- Use words or actions that make them feel more special than others.
- Control and manipulate others by their words, actions or attitudes.
- They tend to establish an imposing and seemingly immovable presence.
- Most dictators have this spirit > love to dominate and control others

Nehemiah Reveals At Least 8 Types Of Opposition

A. Ridicule & Intimidation *Before the Work Starts*

Neh. 2:19-20 BUT when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it [the enemy learns of the plan], they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? [king of Persia] Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore, we His servants will arise and build: but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem. [You have no interest in the affairs of Jerusalem and God's people.]

Thomas Carlyle: Ridicule is the language of the Devil.

Note #1: The accuser is grieved when you seek to rebuild your life in Christ.

Satan never bothers with half-hearted people who are content with a ho-hum spiritual existence. But if you come on fire for Christ, look out! As long as you live with one foot in the world, living according to the world's values and for the world's goals, Satan won't trouble you. You can go to church, even pray and read your Bible, and he won't mind. But the minute you wake up from your spiritual lethargy, shake off the worldly mindset, and commit yourself to radical obedience to Jesus Christ, you will encounter spiritual opposition!

Note #2: While Nehemiah was putting into effect his plan of action, they mocked, laughed, and accused the people of rebelling against the king. This bold, menacing spirit will come back more than once. When they saw that Nehemiah and the crew were progressing in the work, they came back 3 more times.

Note #3: Nehemiah refused to be moved by false accusations and fear.

Stay in Position when facing Opposition. Don't flinch, move, or shake.

Let them talk all they want to. **STAY ON THE WALL!** The more you stay on the wall, the more agitated they become. The more agitated they become, the less they have strength and control. The less they have control, the more God gets the glory!

If we only had chapter 3, we would get the impression that the work on the wall went without a snag. "So-and-so built this gate, and these people built the wall to this point, and next to them, these people built the wall further, etc." It sounds as if there were no problems. But such was not the case. Chapters 4-6 show us some of the problems that had to be overcome in the process of rebuilding the wall. There is a cycle of advance and setback through chapters 3-6:

Advance	Setback
Neh. 3	Neh. 4:1-3
Neh. 4:4-6	Neh. 4:7-8
Neh. 4:9	Neh. 4:10-12
Neh. 4:13-23	Neh. 5:1-6
Neh. 5:7-19	Neh. 6:1-14 Attempted by Enemy
Neh. 6:15-16 Final Advance	Neh. 6:17-19 Attempted by Enemy

This cycle shows that the Christian life is a conflict. 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.

B. Anger & Contempt Of Others Against You Neh. 4:1-3

Neh. 4:1 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we built the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

- Sanballat [bramble bush; enemy in secret] furious > Hebrew = burning mad; growing anger

C. Mockery & Sarcasm Neh. 4:2-3

And he, Sanballat, spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What are those feeble Jews doing? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

Consider: After each rhetorical question, his cronies probably roared with laughter.

Neh. 4:3 Then Tobiah threw in his sarcastic barb, "if a fox should jump on [this poor excuse for a wall], he would break [it] down."

- Tobiah & Sanballat join forces to demoralize God's people.
- They don't talk TO Nehemiah...they talk ABOUT Nehemiah.
- Their spirits carry characteristics of:
 - ❖ fear, depression, mockery, doubt, discouragement and unbelief.

Satan frequently uses ridicule against those who take a stand for the Lord.

If you become a Christian and let it be known, your fellow workers will mock you and call you a holy Joe. They will be waiting for you to fall into some sin, so that they can hoot about it:

"We knew you were no different. Christians are a bunch of hypocrites!"

Your commitment to Christ threatens their godless lifestyle.

Key Point: The outside opposition to the work came in the form of mocking and ridicule.

This opposition had a 3-fold plan of attack.

1. It was aimed at morale.
 - Feeble Jews Attack their morale; demolish self-worth; weaken their resolve
2. Nehemiah's motives were attacked
 - Selfish; for their own glory
 - There are always "Sanballats" around who cannot understand why we would attempt to do something for God's glory alone.
3. Scoffers attacked the mission
 - Rebuilding the wall is too big a job for you to accomplish

D. Threats & Intimidation

Neh. 4:7-8 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

⁸ And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

Nehemiah and his builders, the Jews, vigorously hurried the work, while Sanballat and his associates organized their forces to fight against Jerusalem

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' [King of Persia] 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.

Sanballat could tell Artaxerxes that it was a renegade band that he didn't have control over.

Truth: Satan uses subtle or overt threats and intimidation to oppose Christians.

Key Point: The more Nehemiah moved toward his goal, the more the opposition increased.

Arab Proverb: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

- This principle played out in the life of Jesus as He bore the brunt of an evil conspiracy.

Luke 23:12 And so Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for previously, they had been enemies toward each other.

E. Discouragement, Despair And Exhaustion

Key Point: Opposition now comes from within. It can be the most devastating.

- Loss Of Initial Motivation

Neh. 4:10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed [failing], and there is much rubbish [not diminishing]; so that we are not able to build the wall.

- Judah was the tribe from which the Messiah, the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" would come.
- Fatigue pulled their focus from their goal and placed it upon the rubbish which led to frustration.
- When fatigue and frustration are coupled together, then failure is not far behind.
- Lost their confidence to continue

Note: Opposition from within often shows up in the form of the word, BUT.

- It's true we have built half of the wall, BUT there is too much rubbish to finish it.
- That is a great idea, BUT I don't think it can be done.
- That is an intriguing thought, BUT we don't have enough resources.

Note: In Neh. 4:6, the wall was rapidly built to the halfway mark.

Satan knows that the halfway point is the most effective time to strike. When a new project begins, there is plenty of enthusiasm. "Let's arise and build! Let's do it!" If you get over the midway hump and see the completion drawing near, there is another surge of enthusiasm. "We're almost there! Let's get it done!" But right in the middle of things, exhaustion and discouragement set in. People have lost the initial zeal and all they can see are the piles of rubble still waiting to be removed. They feel like quitting.

When you first get on fire for the Lord, it's exciting. Every Bible study you go to seems fresh and challenging. Your times in the Word and in prayer are rich with new discoveries. You just can't get enough of it. But somewhere down the line, the newness wears off. You become aware that you are not where you intended to be at this point in your journey. You begin to notice the piles of rubble in your own life and in the church, problems and sins that just don't seem to go away. You begin to grow weary, wondering if all your efforts are making any difference for the cause of Christ. Your weariness leads you to discouragement. Result:

- **Loss Of The Vision:** When you focus on what is instead of what could be, you will lose your vision. [mature, image of Christ, Victory, Devoted Heart, etc.]

Consider: When rebuilding our relationship with the Lord, we already have a solid foundation of Jesus Christ. We need to remove our accumulated rubbish so the solid foundation can be exposed again. Sometimes we attempt to build on the rubbish instead of first removing it. This perpetuates an endless cycle of rebuilding and collapse.

We do not need to lay a new foundation.

Our opposition can be in the form of rubbish that first needs to be confessed and removed. As we remove the rubbish, we can continue moving forward toward the goal of Christ-likeness.

- **Loss Of Security**

Neh. 4:11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

Consider: Jesus was not immune to opposition from within His own closely knit band of followers.

- Peter tried to divert Him from the cross right after making his great confession.

Matt. 16:21-23 From that time Jesus began to point out to His disciples that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem and to suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and to be killed, and to be raised up on the third day. ²² And yet Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You!"

²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's purposes, but men's."

- Judas Iscariot?

Consider: Meeting with opposition isn't necessarily a bad thing. It can CONFIRM that you are on the right track. If you are in the process of rebuilding and you do not encounter "spirits of opposition," it could be you are going the same way they are! Yikes!

But Satan isn't out of tools.

F. Listening To Negativity

Neh. 4:12 When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, [over & over]

"They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,"

Negative is coming from the Jews themselves who lived near the enemy.

- They were not involved in the work of rebuilding the wall.
- They lived near the enemy and were constantly exposed to the negative attacks.
- They were hearing negative reports and threats and didn't know firsthand what God was doing in Jerusalem.
- Living so near the enemy caused them to alter their focus and place their immediate attention on the enemy itself.
- They began listening to the scoffers instead of listening to their God.
- Invariably, negativism in the church comes from professing Christians who live near the enemy and are not involved in the Lord's work. Such negativism is the enemy of faith.

"There are giants in the land. We were like grasshoppers in their sight.

- There's no way that we can take the land" [Num. 13:28-29, 31-33].

Nehemiah didn't ignore the very real danger that existed, but if he had listened to these prophets of doom, he never would have finished the wall.

G. FEAR The Cumulative Effect Of All The Above

Neh. 4:14 When I saw *their fear*, I stood and said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people: "Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome,

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: Do Not Be Afraid

But Satan isn't out of tools.

H. Craft & Deception: Compromise > We will help you work

Purpose: To distract him from the work [Note: Who has joined the list of enemies?]

Don't Be Distracted Nehemiah was about to fix the doors of the gates - to close the gaps and make Jerusalem secure - and so the enemies of the Lord did not want to be shut out.

Note: When the opposition did not work, the world [Geshem] decides to join hands.

The struggle within the Church has been that it is been found with the world inside of it.

Bonar: I looked for the church and I found it in the world.

I looked for the world, I found it in the church.

Neh. 6:1-4 Now when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall, and that no breach was left in it, although at that time I had not installed the doors in the gates, ² Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying, "Come, let's meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono." But they were plotting to harm me. So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and am unable to come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"

⁴ Then they sent messages to me four times worded in this way, and I answered them with the same wording. [4 attempts to lure him to meet where they can harm him.]

➤ Ono = grief; strength and vigor to cause trouble

(Adapted from Donald Campbell, *Nehemiah: Man in Charge* [Victor Books], p. 55.)

The local *Samaritan Daily Sun* might have reported the incident like this:

Nehemiah Says No to Ono

Samaritan officials have disclosed that Nehemiah, governor of Judah, has again turned down the offer of Governor Sanballat of Samaria to meet at one of the villages in Ono, on the Judah-Samaria border. The proposed conference would include the Big Four of the area: Geshem, leader of the Arabs; Tobiah, leader of the Ammonites; Sanballat, and Nehemiah.

Sanballat issued a statement today in which he sharply criticized Nehemiah for his repeated refusals to cooperate. He reports that the purpose of such a meeting would be to work on a formula for lasting peace in the region. The Samaritan leader said with evident frustration, "This is the fourth time Nehemiah has turned down my invitation to meet and discuss our mutual concerns. These repeated refusals mean that the responsibility for increasing tensions and any violence that may result, rests solely upon Jerusalem."

How we finish our race is what ultimately matters the most.

Neh. 6:15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.

Note the aftermath: Neh. 6:16 And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

Our Commander in Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the rallying point for all who are engaged in the process of rebuilding. One day we will hear His trumpet call. We will lay down our tools, leave our work and rally around Him. But until then, we must continue the rebuilding process. Our Lord stands at the finish line, waiting for each of us.

Are you ready for the Rapture and the Judgment Seat of Christ?