

James T. Jeremiah
Pastors Conference Devotional
September 11, 1980

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

I listened to the news this morning and of course we're debating whether we're going to debate and Jimmy has decided not to debate and that's good. But one of the news items I heard that was of interest is that in Canada a man was arrested for arson. He went into his cell after he was arrested and he prayed, Oh Lord, let me get away with it this one time. And they bugged his cell. And the judge said, you'll like this, "Conversation with God is not privileged conversation and not private." So they're going to use the evidence against him. Now, if it happened in the United States, the American Civil Liberties Union would be around to give that poor praying man help, wouldn't they? No, they wouldn't. Probably. Well, anyway, we better get down to business.

James T. Jeremiah:

Out on the table there are some duplicated copies of some of the material that I've read at the beginning and I have another one for you this morning. You're at liberty to take them and there are more copies of Light for Living there too if you want them. A good pastor, what must he have? Well, he must be the graduate of the proper institution of higher learning. Cedarville, Grand Rapids, where is my brother from? Liberty. Liberty. No, a good pastor must have the strength of an ox, the tenacity of a bulldog, the daring of a lion, wisdom of an owl, the harmlessness of a dove, the gentleness of a sheep, the industry of a beaver, the versatility of a chameleon, the hide of a rhinoceros, the perspective of a giraffe, the disposition of an angel, the endurance of a camel, the bounce of a kangaroo, the stomach of a horse, the loyalty of an apostle, the faithfulness of a prophet, the tenderness of a shepherd, the fervency of an evangelist, the devotion of a mother. And then he wouldn't please everybody.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well anyhow. I'm sure that all of you are better aware of the books on the Book of Nehemiah than I am, but there are a couple that I think might be helpful to you. One is Nehemiah, God's Builder by Richard Seume, a paperback book that's helpful. I haven't read all of this or modeled my messages after them, but I've gained help from what I've read of them. A new one by Charles Swindoll, Hand Me Another Brick. You'll like that one. And one that's a little bit older, Nehemiah the Executive by SE Anderson. Any other books I'm sure that will be helpful.

James T. Jeremiah:

In our brief time of devotion and study, we've been talking about Nehemiah as a pastor, we discovered that he was the kind of a man who faced reality and the conditions that were around him. He prayed before attempting to remedy the problem, he viewed the problem and considered the possibilities, he encouraged the people, he organized for work. He became watchful of the enemy. And we want to talk about that this morning. He stayed at the task, he made much of the book.

James T. Jeremiah:

Today we want to talk about a troublesome trio. Most of us have one. And we want you to look at Chapter 4 with us for a few minutes and we read before we come to that, however, back in Chapter 2 verse 19, who the trio really is. When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem or Gashmu, the Arabian, heard it they laughed us to scorn and despised us and said, "What is this thing that ye do? Will you rebel against the king?"

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James T. Jeremiah:

Now, probably if you'd study it a little bit, you could find out, I haven't done a whole lot of study on this, but I think that probably way back in history these fellows were probably distant relatives. Distant relatives sometimes can rise up to haunt you and maybe the distant relatives here are doing this to Nehemiah and his crowd. Sanballat was from Beth-Horon, a town of Samaria. He had been under the civil command of Artaxerxes and had some possible rule in the world. We might let him represent one of our troublesome trio or a part of our trio, we'll call him the world. Tobiah, he and his son married a Jewish woman. They were Ammonites. They were in high favor with a high priest. Ammon, of course, the son of Lot represents the flesh. Geshem or Gashmu, remember in Chapter 6, Gashmu said it the Jews think to rebel, Gashmu was a liar and a slanderer and you don't have to go far afield to show that he's related to the devil.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now whether we like it or not, ladies and gentlemen, we have a trio that is very troublesome, the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world around us, the flesh in us, and the devil above us. The prince of the power of the air. And how do they work? Well, this wonderful little book tells us some of the ways the devil operates and the world operates and the flesh operates.

James T. Jeremiah:

Let me give you, as we have the time, the things that I've discovered as you have in the study of this book, how these three men particularly, and their crowd of course along with them, how they oppose the work of God. And by the way, when they began to oppose them was only when they began to do something. Have you ever discovered that when God blesses your church or your ministry, or as we think about over the years gone by and as I'm sure Brother Dixon thinks about it now, and God especially blesses the college, we always can find somewhere the devil kicking up his heels and the enemy opposing.

James T. Jeremiah:

That's a good sign. If I didn't find the devil opposing and some opposition, I'd think we weren't doing anything. The only people I know really that don't have much opposition are those who are living in tombs north of us, the cemetery people. I haven't heard any criticism of them recently at all. They're all dead, and as we heard the other day, plumb dead. The only folks that really have the enemy opposing them it seems to me are those who are trying to do something. Now, if you don't have any opposition, beware, because you ought to have. Oh, you don't mean that, I know that. Whether you ought to have or want to have is the fact you're going to have. Well, let's see what they did. First they tried derision, and this is the slander of the enemy's method. Chapter 4, 1 to 3, and we'll have to go look at that quickly and go by it in a hurry.

James T. Jeremiah:

Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed their character. He called them feeble Jews, no account crowd, this little church on the corner or out in the country. Feeble Jews. Criticized their motives, will they fortify themselves? Verse 19 of Chapter 2. Will they fortify themselves? They're going to do all of this for themselves. What they're doing in this little church is for themselves. Criticize their zeal. Will they make an end in a day? They'll soon tire out, give them a little time and it'll go. Criticize their ability, derided their ability. Will they revive the stones? They're going to do something here with this dead debris, make

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something out of it. And the devil will say to you and he'll say to me in the hour of testing, "You think God is going to do something out of this?"

James T. Jeremiah:

I can look back over a few years without any great difficulty and almost hear the derisions cried out loud. Can anything ever happen here? It can if God's in it. It can if God's in it and don't let the enemy deride you into defeat. The method, the slander of the enemy's method. Try to slander or deride their workmanship. He said, they said, if a fox walked on this wall it's going to cave in. What you're doing isn't going to last. It's just temporary, it's just froth.

James T. Jeremiah:

I heard of a man the other day, a pastor, when he'd had some building, God had built his work and given him a good ministry and one old boy, I don't know if he was Gashmu the Arabian or who he was, but one of his crew, one of his crowd, it still lives, accused all the growth of being froth. That's the same thing. Deriding. The devil's tricks to deride.

James T. Jeremiah:

Then the next thing is the way the enemy uses design or the strength of the enemy's organization. Count on it. He isn't working alone. In Chapter 4:7 and 8 it said they conspired all of them together. Look at that passage in verse 8, they conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem and to hinder it. The amplified Old Testament, as it often does, puts a little commentary in it and it says all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem, to injure and cause confusion and failure in it. We must be careful of the enemy's devices, his design, his strength of organization. You ever notice how it is true so often that former enemies become present friends, and then unite to be present enemies?

James T. Jeremiah:

Read in the word of God concerning the lord, Pilate and Herod. They weren't exactly bosom buddies, but Pilate and Herod made friends together. You get two kinds of enemies opposing the Gospel and they'll be enemies almost until death until somebody does something for God and the Lord begins to work and the enemies combine their forces against the Christ of God and the Word of God. In all of this, God makes even the wrath of His enemies to praise Him, and that's something we can take great comfort in.

James T. Jeremiah:

All right. Let's look at the next one, diversion. Diversion, the snare of the enemy's friendship. Chapter 6:1 and 2, this passage of the scripture came to pass when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arabian and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left therein. So on the story goes and what did they say? Well, let us meet together. Let us become ecumenical. Let's get together in this business and join hands. They didn't need Geshem and the rest of the crowd. They had the thing going pretty well for themselves. Why in the world should we as Bible-believing Christians find ourselves cooperating with a crowd that isn't doing anything anyway?

James T. Jeremiah:

They had been there a long time before Nehemiah came and hadn't done anything. And what in the world would they have, what would Nehemiah be doing going along with that crowd? Well, anyway,

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there was an appeal to compromise. Come let us meet together. Be open-minded. Talk it over. I'm not talking about believers working together. You understand that. I'm not talking about Bible-believing Christians uniting in whatever way they can within the framework of their convictions to do something for God or participating with other believers. I'm talking about this compromising worldly crowd of people that want to bring down the cause of Christ and they make an appeal. Come let us meet together.

James T. Jeremiah:

Then the purpose of it, Nehemiah says, they thought to do me mischief. Old boy had some discernment, thank God. Then the direction of the compromise, he said, I cannot what? Come down. Brother, that's the way you go when you go that way. I cannot come down. I like that. Don't you? I'm up here on the wall, Brother. Up here building the wall, I cannot come down.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now the answer to compromise is simple. I cannot. Now folks, I think you preachers ought to go home with at least one good solid lesson from Hebrew. That awakened you, didn't it? I want to give you the Hebrew of oh no. I ain't going to do it. Hebrew. I like the place where they called him, that's the Valley of the Craftsman and that's very interesting. But Nehemiah said, I'm not going to do it. I'm not. It's oh no to oh no.

James T. Jeremiah:

You know, brethren, we need to have an open heart for fellow Christians and fellow pastors. Believe the Book and stand where we stand. We also need to have a backbone to say oh no when we need to say oh no. Nehemiah had that. Now that doesn't mean that we say oh no to every brother who may disagree with us, and he believes there are three hairs on the nose of the antichrist and you think there are four. Or you've got some of the details all worked out that this dear brother hasn't had the enlightenment to get. And therefore he's a compromiser. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about liberals, I'm talking about people who try to justify the word of God on the basis of modern thinking without taking God's word at face value regardless of what man thinks. We have no business fooling around with that crowd. Neither did Nehemiah.

James T. Jeremiah:

Satan used every effort to keep Christ from the cross. He didn't want him to go to the cross. I thought he wanted him to die, yes, but not on the cross. He tried the temptation, Gethsemane was an attempt. The stones that were thrown at him, when he tried to get him thrown over the precipice in Nazareth, and when he was on the cross, they said, "Come down from the cross." What an awful plight we would be in, dear friend, if Jesus Christ had listened to the cries of derision and had given up and come down. The devil is always trying to ensnare us with the enemy's friendship.

James T. Jeremiah:

The fourth thing, it was dishonesty they tried. Here's the subtlety of the enemy's attacks. You'll find that in Chapter 6 verses 5 and 9. In verse 6, there was a dishonest accusation made. It is reported the Jews think to rebel. They didn't think about that. They came in there under the direction of Artaxerxes and they came in there to do a job and they didn't come to rebel. They came to do a task. Dishonest accusation, and all the dishonest, crooked, devilish accusations that fly around these days against the

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people of God. Dishonest, just downright dishonest. The dishonest appeal. Let us counsel together. Verse 7, "Let us counsel together," appealing to get together to talk things over so we can go the way of the guy who wants to compromise. A dishonest attempt.

James T. Jeremiah:

Verse 9, they made us afraid, tried to weaken our hands. The devil is a liar, he's the author of such actions. Again, Christ was falsely accused. What accusation bring they against him? He's a malefactor, lying against the savior. Dishonesty. The troublesome trio will try it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Last of all, the troublesome trio tried deceit, and I think this is probably one of the most subtle. This is the scandal of the enemy's religion. In Chapter 6, verses 10 to 14, this crowd said to Nehemiah, let us meet in the house of God. Nehemiah, they're going to kill you. Better meet in the house of God where they can't touch you. Should such a man as I flee? I like that. They tried to use their religion as a cloak to cover up their dishonesty and their deceit. The fear of man brings a snare and old Nehemiah didn't fall for that one either. The wall is finished, the work was wrought of our God, we read.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now just closing briefly, let's consider Nehemiah's answer to his attackers. And that can be the answer that God can give us against the attackers that come against us, empowered as they are by the devil seeking to defeat the cause of his people. I think Nehemiah's secret was be busy, be prayerful, be watchful. Be busy. They had a mind to work we read in Chapter 4 verse 6 and 6:3. Be prayerful, they had a heart to pray, Chapter 4 verse 9, "Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God. Set a watch against them day and night because of them." Be watchful, they had an eye to watch. I can just see those people with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other doing God's work building and defending.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now they'd been a sad business if all they did was defend. No building. Let me say something to you, brother, with all the importance of defending, holding the sword, we need to do that. But if we just do nothing but defend and have no positive approach to building, all we'll be doing eventually is defending a whole big pile of stones. On the other hand, if all we do is seek to build without watching the tactics of the devil, what we build will be ruined. Old Brother Spurgeon had a pretty good idea when he called his paper The Sword and the Trowel. Pretty good idea.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, how do you handle the troublesome trio today? There hasn't been any temptation from Gashmu and Sanballat and Tobiah since you've been on the Cedarville College campus, but just about the time you get your Cadillac out on the highway for home, or you draw near and you wonder, as some of us have done often, what happened while I was gone? Well, you'll soon learn, except you fellows who have enough foresight to put it a long way as far as possible and play golf for the next two days. But the golf game will only do one thing, it'll only prolong the reality of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Gashmu. They'll be there with open arms to welcome you and they've probably been busy as all get out since you've been gone.

James T. Jeremiah:

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It's a nice thing to be a Christian, isn't it, and to be a preacher? No troubles. Great to know we got a God who solves them though. Takes care of them. Well, I got-