Motivation: Satan always attempts to discourage us from doing God's work. As illustrated in this Bible study, such discouragement may come from outright attacks, lies and deceptions or internal factions. Our one defense is to trust in our God.

I. Injustice and Oppression (5:1-19)

A. The Injustice: Rich vs. Poor (1-5) In chapter 4, Nehemiah weathered a crisis from the outside; now the threat to unity comes from inside the Jewish community. The "widespread outcry" came from four groups:

1. Large families, evidently without land, who needed food (2).

2. Families who mortgaged their land to buy food (3).

3. Families who mortgaged land and crops to pay Persian taxes (4).

4. Families who sold children into slavery to raise money (5).

The piteous complaints of the people reflected the hard times. Every Christian should be
reminded of the pitfalls of debt and financial overextension. “The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender” (Prov. 22:7).

B. Nehemiah Corrects Injustice (6-13)

1. Controlled Anger “I became extremely angry.” (6) Many people mistakenly believe that anger in itself is sin. Rather, it is a God-given emotion. Nehemiah was angry. Many of the prophets displayed anger over sin. Jesus became angry (Mark 3:5). However, misdirected anger can lead to sin. Ephesians 4:26 says “Be angry and do not sin...” Angry outbursts are not the answer (Ephesians 4:29). On the other hand, stuffing our anger deep inside can cause us harm. We must learn to give our anger over to the Lord and trust Him to resolve offenses, conflicts and perceived hurts (cf. Luke 6:22-36, Romans 12:20). And, as seen in Nehemiah, we must redirect the emotional energy produced by anger into positive actions.

2. Confrontational Approach (7) Notice that Nehemiah confronted the nobles and rulers before calling an assembly. As a spiritual leader, he did not talk behind their backs, slander them in private or try to do them harm without their knowledge. Instead he went to them (cf. Matthew 5:23-24, James 4:11). As Christians, we often need to forgive rather than confront (Ephesians 5:32); however, when the issue demands reconciliation, the more spiritual person must take the initiative to resolve it.

3. Called Assembly (7) Nehemiah did not take a “lone ranger” approach to the problem; rather, he worked through established recognized procedures. A congregational approach to church governance demands that each participant seek God’s will and express himself/herself accordingly.

4. Contrasting Activities (8) Nehemiah speaks of redemption, both as a personal activity and a national goal. At the same time that Godly Jews were trying to get other Jews out of bondage from the Gentiles, Jewish money lenders were selling their brethren as slaves! The implication seems to be that Nehemiah was spending his own money to buy back Jews while the money lenders were making a profit selling them! (1 Cor. 1:30)
5. **Contrite Application** (9-13) God’s Word records many illustrations of conflict resolution. The ultimate test of any approach is that a God-pleasing peace ensues, God’s people are unified, and a long term solution is found that resolves the problem. All those results are apparent in this account.

C. Leading by Personal Example (14-19) Nehemiah’s example is a reminder of Jesus’ words: “...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.” (Matt. 20:26).

1. **Personal sacrifice** “I and my associates never ate from the food allotted to the governor” (14b). In contrast to previous administrations which “heavily burdened the people,” Nehemiah as Governor identified with the people’s suffering by financing his staff from personal resources.

2. **Personal relationship** “because of the fear of God” (15b). Nehemiah wasn’t trying to be political or win polls; rather his actions stemmed from deep convictions aimed at pleasing God.

3. **Personal actions** “Instead, I devoted myself to the construction of the wall...” (16a).

**HCSB, p.784: 5:15-16** “The gap between Zerubbabel and Nehemiah was probably more than 60 years. Some scholars have argued that the governors whom Nehemiah criticized were the governors of Samaria, arguing that Judah (Hb *Yehud*) did not become a separate province until Nehemiah restored the city and its walls. Yet the historical evidence as well as the biblical record argues that *Yehud* had been a distinct political entity since the beginning of the Persian period. Archeological finds have identified the names of some of the governors between Zerubbabel and Nehemiah on seals and coins, including Yeho’ezer, Ahzai, several named Elnatan, and Yehezqiyah.

Unlike his predecessors, Nehemiah wanted to fulfill his mission from God in restoring Jerusalem without adding to the burdens of the people who were already hard pressed. Nehemiah and his **subordinates** (lit “my youths”; 4:10) instead devoted themselves to their task of rebuilding. His assertion that they didn’t buy any land...
is significant. Those at the center of power often use their power to get “sweetheart deals” to enrich themselves and their friends, but Nehemiah and his men did not take advantage of their power, especially when desperate people were willing to sell their properties for food.”

II. When Falsely Accused (6:1-9)

If Satan cannot rob us of the victory, he endeavors to rob us of the joy of victory. Having overcome both opposition from without (chap. 4) and within (chap. 5), Nehemiah was on the very brink of completing what he had returned to do. However, his enemies “were planning to harm me” (2). In Nehemiah’s response to attack, we can find an example for responding to false accusations.

A. Don’t Neglect Your God Given Purpose “I am doing a great work and cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” (3) Satan will often use criticism and false accusations to discourage God’s people from continuing in the work He’s assigned (9). We must rise above the natural tendency to defend ourselves and our pride if, by doing so, we neglect God’s purpose.

B. Don’t Expect Criticism to Cease “Four times they sent me the same proposal…” (4) We often feel that if we’re doing God’s work, we should be immune from critics. However, we must realize that Satanic inspired attacks are often the best evidence that we are doing God’s work. Rather than resenting critics, we should pray for them and, if possible, learn from them.

C. Don’t Assume that Accusations will grow Milder “you and the Jews plan to rebel” (6) In Nehemiah’s case, the attacks began with mockery, escalated to accusations and now reach the point of high treason.

D. Rely on the Truth “There is nothing to these rumors you are spreading; you are inventing them in your mind.” (8) Nehemiah understood the purpose behind the false accusations. Rather than reacting with an emotional response, he relied on the truth to ultimately win the day.
Nehemiah Lesson 2: “Be Faithful in Adversity”

Written by David Self
Monday, 19 January 2015 00:00 -

E. Trust God with your Defense “But now, my God, strengthen me.” (9) HCSB, p.785: 6:8-9
“Nehemiah was not cowed by their slander. This translation of the end of verse 9, like most English translations, takes Nehemiah’s words to be a brief prayer. However, the phrase “my God” (Hb `elohay) does not appear here as it does in the other brief prayers of Nehemiah (v. 14; 5:19; 13:14, 22). Also, none of the early ancient versions (Gk, Lat, Syr) understood the closing phrase to be a prayer. With this in mind, a possible translation would be “So now I increased my efforts.”

III. When Promised False Security (6:10-14)

The most dangerous attacks come from those who appear to be your friends. The informer/false prophet Shemaiah tried to lure Nehemiah to his death. Although he promised Nehemiah security, the temple could have been his place of death since only priests were allowed in the temple. Nehemiah’s strong principles and dependence upon God protected him from this evil. Notice, once again, that instead of exacting personal revenge, Nehemiah turned his enemies over to God (14).

IV. When Factions Arise (6:15-19)

Nehemiah’s dedication and ‘round-the-clock urgency paid off in the completion of the wall in fifty-two days. Amazingly, in spite of all opposition, Nehemiah had completed the strenuous journey from Persia to Jerusalem and completed his task of rebuilding the wall in less than six months. Having finished something great for God, one’s desire is to relax and enjoy the moment. However, the text is clear that opposition did not cease (17-19). Various factions within Judah communicated regularly with God’s enemies and continued to question Nehemiah’s leadership. We should be reminded to “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Pet. 5:8 NIV)
HCSB, p.785:
6:15-16 “…While Nehemiah’s enemies had tried to intimidate him (vv. 9, 14, 19), they themselves were intimidated. They reluctantly understood that the completion of such a formidable task was due to God’s help.”
Application:

1. Expect spiritual opposition.

2. Keep your eyes on Jesus’ directions.

3. Trust God.

Leader Pack Items 1-5

Illustrator: p. 25, “Sanballat and Tobiah”

Notes: **You may access David’s Lesson Preview in MP3 format and notes at: www.hfcbiblestudy.org

Dates: 1/4-24 – Missions Expo; 1/21 – Milestones preview; 1/23 – Midnight Madness; 1/25 – Fitness Expo;
1/28
– Milestones begins;
1/30-2/1
– Passion Conf. in Houston;
2/1
– Super Bowl Sunday;
2/8
– HUB Girls Event;
2/15
– Parent Commitment;
2/15-17
– Next Gen Staff Retreat;
2/20
Nehemiah Lesson 2: “Be Faithful in Adversity”

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– Scott Nute Global Ministry Benefit Dinner;
  2/22
– MIYCO;
  2/27
– ReCreate Date Night;
  2/27-28
– Legacy 685 Conference;
  2/28
– Men: Serve;
  3/8
– Daylight Saving Time starts;
  3/7-12
– RUSHMORE 1;
  3/15
– AMP/WIRED Sunday;
  3/16-17
– Senior Adult Revival;
  3/14-19
– RUSHMORE 2;
  3/18
– CBU Concert @ 7:00 in WC & Main Foyer;
  3/28
– SPF Hippity Hoppin Easter Event.