

Series: Rebuild; *Sermon:* **Defeating a Conspiracy**
delivered by Josh Moody, senior pastor, on November 22, 2020

Bible text explored: Nehemiah 6:1–7:4

⁶Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), ²Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono.” But they intended to do me harm. ³And I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?” ⁴And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. ⁵In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. ⁶In it was written, “It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. ⁷And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, ‘There is a king in Judah.’ And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together.” ⁸Then I sent to him, saying, “No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind.” ⁹For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

¹⁰Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home, he said, “Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night.” ¹¹But I said, “Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in.” ¹²And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me. ¹⁴Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

¹⁵So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. ¹⁶And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. ¹⁷Moreover, in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah’s letters came to them. ¹⁸For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah: and his son Jehohanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah as his wife. ¹⁹Also they spoke of his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to make me afraid.

⁷Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, ²I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many. ³And I said to them, “Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their guard posts and some in front of their own homes.” ⁴The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt.

Review and application:

What barriers will foes devise to intimidate and defeat our rebuilding efforts?

What essential qualities will empower us to resist and ultimately to prevail?

1. How (6:1-4) do Nehemiah's foes move beyond their previous taunts and threats?

How did Nehemiah dispense with their attempts to lure him away from completing the construction project, and compromising?

2. How (6:5-8) do the adversaries up the ante to a believable form of blackmail?

How did Nehemiah use a firm grasp of the truth to discredit them?

3. What (6:9) was Nehemiah's overall response to this campaign to discourage the Jews?*

What are some verses that reassure you of Jesus' intention to bless you? (See, for instance, these verses to which Pastor Moody alluded: *Matthew 16:18; John 10:28; Colossians 1:19-20; Hebrews 4:14-16.*)

4. How (6:10-13) did the conspirators use a religious rationale to achieve their goals?

How did Nehemiah respond to the suggestion that he take shelter in the temple grounds?

5. How (6:17-19) did mixed marriages muddle what should have been a straightforward issue?

To protect a marriage from moving in a non-biblical direction, what order should be assigned to the following priorities for selecting a mate?

- A. Is reasonably attractive
- B. Loves Jesus
- C. Makes a compatible friend

What did Pastor Josh say is the best guarantee of a harmonious marriage?

6. Nehemiah's delegation of responsibility (7:1-4) shows that he was not an individualist. How can you benefit from carefully choosing and cultivating friends who are faithful God-fearers?

*Pastor Josh cited *1 Corinthians 16:13* in the King James Version as a vivid summary: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."