

What Is The Best Way To Deal With Cruel Enemies?

- [Narrator] Nehemiah chapter six. Now, 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, Sanballat 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. And 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?" And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. In the same way Sanballat, for the fifth time, sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. In 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. And, 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." Then, I sent to him saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind." For 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. Now, 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're coming to kill you by night." But 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." And 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. For 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. Remember 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. So, the wall was finished on the 25th day of the month Elul, in 52 days. And 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. Moreover, in those days, the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them. For 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. And they spoke of his good deeds in my presence, and reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to make me afraid.

- All right, we're in this dramatic part of Nehemiah chapter six. You got a Bible, go there. Tell me if you've heard this phrase, "It's always a fight to the finish." That's true in a sporting event, the last few minutes tend to be the most exciting and dramatic. We're even in a season of elections, and a lot is riding on the line and it's gonna be a fight to the finish. What we see in Nehemiah six, it's literally the fight to the finish. For 141 years, God's people were vulnerable, they were endangered, they were unsafe and unprotected. They were supposed to live in the city of Jerusalem surrounded by walls. The walls were torn down, the gates were burned, God's people were scattered. Their version of the church, the temple, was closed for 141 years, and

then God appoints this guy, Nehemiah, to give it a shot to try and change the fate of human history and safety for God's people. And at this point, they're nearing the end. The wall is basically rebuilt. Just, in your mind, just envision if, somewhere, a politician was building a wall and it was coming to completion, how much hope a hypothetical people might have for their safety and future. So they're building the wall, it's almost finished, and now they need to hang the doors and hang the gates so that God's people can move into the city, that they can be secure, that they can be safe, that they can have a family that practices faith with freedom. And everything is riding on this. So as God's people are approaching the conclusion, their enemies are trying to stop them from completing this task. The big idea is this, if you're gonna do something, somebody's gonna try and stop you. If God's gonna send you, somebody's gonna oppose you. The critics that first "welcomed", quote, unquote, Nehemiah to the city in chapter one are there to this very day, and they're trying to stop the work of God. And they're going to attack him, they're going to oppose him, they're going to slander him. And this is the price of leadership. He ultimately needs to decide, number one, I'm gonna hear from God, and that's all I'm gonna listen to, my ears will be closed to everyone else. Number two, I'm not gonna allow fear to settle into my heart. Number three, I'm not gonna get distracted or diverted from the thing that God has called me to do. And so this is one of the most important moments in human history. And so we start in Nehemiah chapter six, verses one through four, that wise people understand evil people. In the story, Nehemiah's critics and enemies, they're evil and he is wise, he is a man of God. He's not a perfect man, but he's a good man. And here's what he says are enemies. So you're gonna have enemies. And if you're gonna be for God, someone's gonna be against you. If you're gonna try to do what is right, somebody is gonna try and stop you by doing wrong. For every action there is a reaction. And here, what he says is, "Our enemies, Sanballat and Geshem, sent to me saying, 'Come let us meet together. Hey brother, let's hug it out, let's talk it out, let's get together and mediate it, let's have a conversation, let's try and sort it out.' But they intended to do me harm. I sent messengers to them saying, I'm doing a great work, I cannot come down, why should the work stop? Will I leave it and come down to you? They sent to me four times, they just keep trying. And I answered them in the same manner." Here's the big idea, there are three kinds of people. There are wise people, foolish people, evil people. These enemies and critics, they're evil. Everything they say and do is against what God wants. They will use any information, any opportunity, and they will weaponize it. If someone has decided that you are their enemy, anything you give them will be used to harm you. If you have a conversation with them, it'll be twisted, used and abused to attack you. If you give them access, they'll use it to then get close enough to betray you. If you give them trust, or time, or energy, or money, they will weaponize it to attack and harm you. There are three kinds of people, wise, foolish, and evil, in the story. Nehemiah, he's wise, he's godly, he knows these are evil people. These guys are evil, and they're ungodly. And in the middle, the majority of people, most of the time, they're not wise and godly, they're not evil and ungodly, they're foolish and gullible, or susceptible. And their hope and prayer and goal is the evil people, that they can confuse the people who are a bit naive and a bit foolish to distrust their leader and to abandon their mission. Here's how you know that somebody is evil. Number one, we see it here, they're very pushy. He says four times, "no", push, "no", push, "no", push, "no", push. Like wow, that's a pushy person. And they've made it public. Everything that they have said and done is public. If

someone is an enemy of yours, they will take things that should be private and they will make them public. They're weaponizing information and they're doing so to create a negative narrative to try and get you to engage with them. And if you do not engage with them, then they will publicly declare themselves to be godly and good and to be a victim. So that's the entire point here. Hey, we've been attacking you the whole time you've been here, and now we're losing the fight and you're concluding your work, so what we want to do, we want to distract you and divert you and discourage you and destroy you, so we're gonna publicly throw out a meeting invitation pretending that we wanna reconcile or be friends or just have a conversation. And so ultimately, be careful of people who are pushy. Some of you are nice, and you're sweet, and you're kind, and we love you. But some people are gonna take advantage of you. And they're gonna push once, and if they don't get what they want, they're gonna push again. And if they don't get it at that time, they're gonna push again, and they're gonna keep pushing until you move. Four times they push Nehemiah, "Let's meet, let's talk, let's meet, let's talk." "No, no, no, no, no." And he actually doesn't speak to them, he sends a messenger. What he says is, "I'm not going to directly involve myself with you. I'll send an email, I'll send a letter, I'll send a text, I'll send an attorney, I'll send a probation officer, but I'm not coming." This is incredibly important. Anyone who takes what should be private and makes it public, they're an enemy. There's no way that they can have some sort of personal conversation with people that are attacking him publicly. Anything that they discuss privately, is going to be weaponized publicly. In addition, these enemies of his, they're unrepentant, which makes them unsafe. They have never apologized or owned anything they have ever said or done. If they would've started with a, "Hey, sorry about threatening your life, sorry about hiring the P-R firm to attack you, sorry about threatening everyone who-", if they would've owned anything, there would've been an opportunity, maybe, to mend this relational breach. But they're unrepentant, they don't own anything. And as a result, they're unsafe. Sometimes the best thing you can do is nothing. Sometimes the best thing you can give is nothing. Sometimes the best thing you can say is nothing. Here, it's just like Satan showing up in Genesis three, looking at Eve and saying, well let's just meet and have a conversation. It didn't end well. She didn't need to have it. Here, the dragon sends a few of his sons and they wanna have a conversation with Nehemiah. Here's what Nehemiah says, "I'm busy, go pound sand. I've got stuff to do, my life is full." Now, how many of you have got somebody in your life, they want your time, they want your attention, they want your energy, and, maybe, a lot of their motivation is high control. And they have, publicly, kind of gotten other people involved that don't need to be involved. And they keep pushing you and pressuring you. And you think, "Well, maybe if I meet with them, that'll resolve it." No, it won't. This is a war. And in a war, if you take one step backward, it doesn't cause your enemies to stop the fight, it only emboldens them to press forward with more strength. So he needs to hold the line. The answer is no. The answer is no. So ultimately, then, what they move toward is, it's the ancient Persian version of fake news. So fake news is nothing new. Okay? He is a political leader, he's also a spiritual leader. He's a man of God. But what they're gonna do, they're gonna, they're gonna send out some fake news. Sanballat, for the fifth time, push, push, push, sent me an open letter. I'm gonna explain all of this in a moment. It was written, "it is reported among the nations", It is reported, we have an anonymous source. We got an unnamed, you know, insider, you know, which is in first and second liar, that's where we find these things. "We have this anonymous

source, and Geshem!" We have one guy we found on Twitter who's willing to raise his hand and be the source. Also says that "you, and the Jews", you see the antisemitism and the hatred for God's people, "intend to rebel, that is why you're building the wall. You're building the wall so that you can have an insurrection and overthrow the government. According to these reports, you wish to become their king. You're going to overturn the government, this is a coup attempt. You have also set up prophets to proclaim. There is a king in Judah, and now the king will hear of these reports, the real king, the Persian king, he's gonna hear about these reports. We've got documents, we're very official, they have stamps. We don't know who wrote them, but trust us." If any of this sounds familiar, it's because you're paying attention, okay? "So, now come and let us take counsel together." Let's meet and talk about it. Let's just have some sort of conversation, maybe even a hearing. Then I sent to, then I sent to him saying, "no such thing has ever been done. You guys are nuttier than a Snickers bar. You're inventing them out of your own mind. They all wanted to frighten us thinking their hands will drop from the work and it will not be done." So what they do, they send an open letter. Now, in that day there was confidential and privileged information. To this day, our medical records are at least supposed to be private. Now, a few years ago, we decided that was over. But, theoretically, your medical records are sealed, they're not everybody's business. There are certain legal documents or political documents that are sealed, meaning, they're not publicly available. In that day, when a political leader had something significant that they wanted to have investigated, it would be sent from one political leader to another in a sealed document. Literally, seal it, secure it, and then send it. And then the person receiving it would decide, is this credible, a credible threat to our government to my nation? Or is it not? Why would you send an open letter? Just to cause a P-R nightmare. See, times change, but demons don't. Leaders change, but demons don't. Governments change, but demons don't. When you start seeing the same playbook being played over and over and over, you may start to assume that behind it all is the same, the same demons at work. So the open letter is, this is from a political leader being sent to the king, and it is, "We think that Nehemiah is guilty of treason. He's a traitor, we can't let he and the Jewish people, God's people, we can't let them finish building a border wall. If we let them finish building a border wall, then they'll fortify. He has false prophets ready to proclaim him as king, and then he's gonna wanna overthrow the government in some massive military coup from the fortified empire. This is a national crisis." Someone please tell C-N-N, that's exactly where we find ourselves. Now, my job as a Bible teacher is not to get super political, but to be super biblical. And it's pretty crazy how when you're in the Bible, it starts to explain a lot of other things that are happening. 'Cause God's word isn't just about what happened, it's about what always happens. And it's not an old book, it's an eternal book, and it's timeless. That makes it always timely. Well, the point of an open letter was simply this, to put Nehemiah's life in danger. Let me just unpack a little bit of what is going on here. First and foremost, enemies only escalate. You can't negotiate with evil, evil never stops itself, so it must be stopped. And, in addition, evil is unreasonable. And so enemies will only escalate. Early in the book, they begin by seeking to disgrace him. They're mocking him and making fun of him. And then we just saw, a minute ago, they tried to divert him. "Well, why don't you leave the project, and why don't you come meet with us in our country? You know, trust us, it'll be safe." No it won't, it's a murder plot. You want me to leave my people? Leave the task that God has called me to before it is finished. Come

and meet with you so you can murder me. So they're moving from disgrace, to diversion, to destruction. They wanna destroy. They're only escalating. This is where some of you are sweet, nice, dear people. But if they are evil, and if they have a murderous spirit, and their entire motivation is to hurt you or to hurt God's people, anything you give them will not help you. It will help them harm you. In addition, Satan is the father of lies. And this is just a lie. Does Nehemiah wanna overthrow the government? No. If you remember, end of chapter one, he says, "I was cupbearer to the king." That means that he had a secure government position where he was one of the most trustworthy advisors with the closest access to protect the life of the king. And the king's the one who sent him to go do the work, and to open the city, and to be the governor of Judah. So he's not against the king, he's actually completely trusted by the king. This is a complete and profound, baseless lie. And sometimes when people tell a lie, they tell a big one because the big one is more convincing. Well nobody would say, that's crazy, I mean, maybe it's true. It's a big lie. But what we see over and over and over again, is if you can't disqualify someone because of character, if you can't divert them from their mission, you try to destroy them with a lie. So, for example, I'll give you an Old Testament example. There's a guy named Joseph, he's a rapist, convicted, goes to prison, did nothing, did nothing. Jesus comes along, he's demonic, he's evil, he's a liar, he's a false prophet. Actually, he's got here to save us. Massive series of lies. But what this does, evil people tell lies about wise people, and then foolish people in the middle have to decide who they're gonna trust. "I don't know, you know, a lot of people, here's what I heard", lot of confusion. In addition, guilty people accuse innocent people of their wrongdoing. What these enemies of Nehemiah are saying is, "You have a false prophet who's gonna falsely prophesy that you are the coming king." Does he? Well, Nehemiah's got no false prophet, we're gonna see in a minute, they do. They hire, his enemies hire a false prophet, and a team of false prophets that includes some gal. So we're gonna do male and female, make sure we cover all our diversity bases and our false prophesying, and they're gonna false prophesy. And they're hiring false prophets. Sometimes what the most evil people do, what they'll say in psychology, this is called projection. It's actually a clinical category. And that is, if you're guilty of something and totally in denial, blind to your own sin and self-righteous in your own struggle, you accuse that person of being guilty of what you're guilty of, and they're innocent and you're not, and you're projecting your wrongdoing on them. How many of you have somebody like this in your life? And if you came with them, don't raise your hand, but just in your mind, just ponder for a moment. You're like, they're just an enemy and everything they accuse me of, that's what they do. This is what happens. In addition, fake news creates real problems. The fake news is the open letter, says, "Well, we have Geshem, we have one guy on the record and a bunch of, you know, anonymous sources and insider tips. And, you know, we have heard", "Bob, I'm standing here by the Persian White House, and, you know, there's a guy, we got his face all blurry, but you know, trust me, he's really got some inside information." Now, it's fake news, but it's a real problem. Because what happens if the Persian king thinks this is a coup attempt? Nehemiah and his head will no longer be doing life together, that's what's gonna happen. And this King Artaxerxes, according to history outside of the Bible, he was not somebody you wanna mess with. Like, this is Tony Soprano's big brother. That's who Artaxerxes, he is tough guy. His brother was supposed to be the king, but he wanted to be the king, so he murdered his brother so he could be the king. Then his younger brother tried to

defeat him to become the king, so he got an army and then brutalized his younger brother. Twice during his governing reign, coup attempts came against him. He had a massive military army and there was bloodshed and he would slaughter his enemies. He ruled from a bloody throne with an iron fist. If he believes that Nehemiah is now an enemy, this is a real problem. See, most of the time, when we have an enemy, it's a Nerf gun war. You know, you're like, I got shot, you'll be all right. This is a real problem. This is a real threat. And so Nehemiah and God's people, they are in grave danger. And what they do, they have other people sign the letter, open letter, and people don't know who the signers are, but they're, like, "I don't know, a lot of people signed it, that looks very, it looks very credible." That's what liars do, they try to be credible, right? They're lying openly and publicly, but they're trying to do so credibly. Have you ever seen this? Just let that go, okay, so, what should Nehemiah do? Up until this point, he has not responded to all of their attacks and false accusations. Here, he finally responds. Here's the big idea, rarely respond. Rarely respond. If someone is attacking you, criticizing you, an enemy of you, and you try and answer every question or objection or criticism, guess what? You're gonna lose, the rest of your life. They got nothing else to do. So they're just going to attack you, exhaust you. So you ignore them to do the things that God has called you to do. But occasionally, there is something that is said that is so outlandish that it needs to be corrected. So on this one, he's like, "Wait a minute, I am not a traitor. I am not a terrorist plotting treason, I'm not." And our church is not, you know, we're not doing crimes, we're trying to worship God. We're not criminals, we're worshipers. And what he tells 'em, he doesn't give a long response. For those of you who are leaders or public figures, the less you say, the better you are. How many people, you're like, "well, they said all these things and I need to give my side of the story." Well then all they're gonna do is misquote you, weaponize it, and then they will play tennis with you for the rest of your life, and it's not a ball, it's a grenade with the pin pulled. The question is, what side of the net does it blow up on? It's like, why engage if all you're going to do is enrage? He doesn't answer other objections, but this one he does and here's what he says, is, "You're lying, you're crazy, I'm busy." Short statement, tweet, send there he goes. He just leaves it at that. And what's interesting, they're gonna later accuse Jesus of this same crime in Luke 23. They come to him, they said, "Oh, you wanna be the king and overthrow the government." They just, same lie. And here's the big idea, don't meet with your enemies, but do meet with your God. Like, if God's given you something to do, you're like, "You know what? I can't go argue with my in-laws 'cause I gotta hang out with my family." Stay on your priority. I'm not gonna go deal with all of, you know, the critics of my business, I'm too busy building my business. I'm not gonna live online and argue with everybody who's against Christianity, I'm gonna go be a Christian. I just don't have the time and the energy for all of it. He doesn't meet with them, but he does meet with God, and he prays. Threaded throughout Nehemiah are nine prayers, here is one, "But now, O God strengthen my hands." They're like, "Nehemiah, we want you to talk to us." He's like, "I'm busy talking to God." "Well we want you to meet with us." "I'm busy meeting with God." "Well we have some things that we want you to stop doing." "I can't, those are the things that God said to do." "Well then, would you please just meet with us?" "I can't, I'm meeting with him, and he told me not to meet with you." There are times that you just say no, you walk away, you let it go, because you have some important things to do. If Satan can't make you sin, he will just get you distracted. You're so busy worried about what they think,

you're overlooking the people and opportunities God has put in front of you and the responsibilities that God has assigned to you. And here in Nehemiah, one through seven, it's his personal journal. So what he's doing here, he's giving us a bit of a glimpse into his heart and his life as a leader. There's no indication that he ever had a wife and kids. Like Paul, like Jesus, like Jeremiah, it seems like he was single. Some would say that because he was working in the palace, he probably was castrated for the job. Perhaps the only reason that he can stay on this mission is he doesn't have a wife and kids. Can you imagine having a family? You're under death threat, P-R attack, constant threats. He's going through it alone, but God's with him. And let me just say, struggling to share some of my own testimony. I've seen a massive change in my life, it's very interesting. In high school, I was not a Christian, but I, I started writing for the school newspaper as a journalist. And we had two sections, this will blow your mind if you're young, this is crazy. We had news and opinion, and they were different. It's crazy. So I wrote for the opinion 'cause I, I only have opinions. I don't, that's all I have. So, then I became the editor of the school newspaper, and then we got involved in historic building, and bringing it back and raising money for our historically designated school. So I guess my first version of the Rebuilding Home campaign is when I was student body president in high school trying to take a broken old building and to get some tax dollars to renovate it. So then I started writing for a few other local newspapers and outlets and doing some political work. And then I went to college, I got saved reading the Bible that Grace gave me, and God spoke to me and said, be a preacher. So I, okay, I'll get a degree in speech. So I got a bachelor's degree in speech from the Edward R. Murrow School of Communication. Used to be one of the best in the country, I don't know about today. And I took a lot of journalism classes and I started writing for the opinion section of the college newspaper. And Grace has a P-R degree from that same school. And, just in communication, journalism 101, you have to name your source and they check it, and if you don't, you fail. An anonymous source is not a source. A source that's not credible, doesn't get you credit for the class. So then, I graduate, and then start preaching and teaching. And then there comes something, I dunno if you've heard of it, called the internet. So I have a, this is funny, I have a communications degree before the internet. One of the gals on staff, she's like, "How, what, what?" I was like, "Yeah." The classes role, how to put signs on dinosaurs to advertise goods and services. That was communications before the internet. So, then I start preaching and teaching, and we started with a college ministry. There was a lot of young high-tech creatives, and they graduated and they went to work for some companies you may have heard about, like Microsoft and Amazon. And they were on the ground floor. And so then they're like, "Hey, we need a website." What's a website? So I was one of the first pastors to have a website. "We need to give away your sermons." I was like, "Well that's what they're worth." So yeah, so, so we started giving away my sermons for free, one of the first pastors. And then they started social media. The first one was, I think, called MySpace. And if you still have that, you're amazing. So I was one of the first pastors, early adopters on social media. And then they came out with something called blogs. And blog is the Greek word for liar. So they started with blogs. And I'll never forget, the first time I heard about a blog, Grace and I had a couple over for dinner. He was a computer science professor, this was a long time ago. And he's like, "Are you interested in blogging?" I was like, "I have no idea what that is." He's like, "Well turn on your computer." So I went over to this huge box on a desk, and it took like 47 minutes for

it to boot up. And then I plugged it into, I kid you not, what, for you seasoned saints, what did it into? A telephone line!

- [Audience Member] Yes, yes.

- Okay, and then, now we gotta explain what's a telephone? I mean, that's how bad it is. So I plug it into a telephone line, and then it sounds like a cat getting a bath. That's what it sounds like. So it makes a lot of noise, and then you've gotta wait for it to come on. And then he said, "Okay, let me show you what a blog is." Blog was on the internet. I was like, "Oh, this is where people kinda write whatever they want." He's like, "You should start blogging." So, started all of these things early on, and I will say this, I started public ministry before the internet, which is crazy, and I've kind of grown up with the internet, I've kind of lived and died a little bit by the internet. And I will say this, as a young man, I said some things that I regret, and I've apologized for and I wouldn't say it that way today, and hopefully I mature and I grow. As a young man, I did, first of all, I didn't know that anyone would ever listen to me. And second of all, I didn't know we'd have the internet, and that's no excuse, but it's my excuse. So then, I'll never forget, I had one day, one of the weirdest days, there was, I got done preaching and a older woman came up to me. Older, now that I think about it, she's about my age. So an older woman came up to me, and she says, and I got done preaching, I was in front of the church, and she's like, "Pastor Mark, I just wanna let you know I'm leaving the church." And I was like, "Okay", I said, "Well, are you moving or did something happen?" Or, like everybody else, "Was it the sermon?" You know, what, what caused this? And she said, "No, I can't be in a church like this." This was 20, 25 years ago. I said, "Church, like what?" She said, "I can't be in a church where the pastor beats his wife." I was like, "Well, tell me which pastor that is, I'll deal with him." She's like, "No, I can't be in a church where the pastor", I was like "Me?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "You, you think I beat Grace?" She's like, "Yeah, I know you do." I said, "Where in the world did you hear that?" She said, "I read an article." I was like, "Where was this article?" She said, "It was on my computer." I was like, "That's not an article. That's not news, that's not journalism. That's not true." She said, "Well, they, they said that you beat Grace, and it had a headline and had their name, I mean it looked official." I said, "I've never raised a hand against my wife, I love my wife." I said, Grace was like 15, 20 feet away. I said, "You can go ask Grace." She said, "Well, they said in the article that abuse victims cover for their abusers because they're scared if they admit what's happening to them, then they'll get abused more, so I know she's gonna say that you don't hit her." I was like, "Oh gosh." I said, she walked away. I never saw her again. This was 20, 25 years ago. But I remember in that moment, as a young man, asking myself this question, "Oh my gosh, I wonder what the future looks like?" Now I know. Now I know. This is what we see. We see the same spirit at work in Nehemiah six. Open letter, signed by some people with a credible byline and a few anonymous sources. I've had a weird life. I have been on "The View" with, I got my makeup done between, first time I've ever got my makeup done, last time I ever got my makeup done, I got my makeup done for "The View" between Barbara Walters and Whoopi Goldberg.

- [Audience Member 2] I'm sorry.

- First time I felt like Jesus between two criminals, little bit. Then we got on the set, and it was Grace and I, with, they added Joy Behar. And I'm like, I'm not sure who the beast, the false prophet, and the anti-Christ are. I was sitting there thinking, we might have found him, okay? And I've been on ABC "Nightline" a few times and did some debates, and I tried early on to work with the media because I thought, you know, I believe in journalism and journalistic integrity and all the things that I was taught and trained in. And then I went on CNN, and I was being, I got debated and dialogued with Piers Morgan for about half an hour. And so, I think somebody just threw up in their mouth in the second row. So, we were talking about how you need Jesus or you're gonna go to hell and Jesus is the only way. And I'll never forget it. I thought it went well for me. And then at the end, I pulled out a Bible with his name on it. And I remember sitting there with Piers Morgan, and I said, "You sit in that chair, and it's like a throne and you're, like, God. And everybody sits in this chair, and they give an account to you and you judge them." I said, "At the end of your life, you're gonna be sitting in my chair, not your chair. At the end of your life, you're gonna be sitting before the Lord Jesus Christ who'll be seated on his throne. And you're gonna give an account for everything you've ever done and anything you've ever said, and unless you repent of your sin and receive Jesus, you're not ready for that day, so I brought you a Bible. And my life got changed when Grace gave me a Bible, so I'm giving you a Bible with your name on it. And he thanked me, he said, "Thank you, nobody's ever given me a Bible." I was like, "You need a Bible and you need Jesus." And they edited that out. And I just remember walking away, going, even when you try to get Jesus in, they find a way to get Jesus out. I have been canceled by whole countries. Never forget, one day there was a week where I was dealing with, I met with a whole bunch of women who were assault and abuse victims from boyfriends and husbands and fathers. And I was in a book of the Bible where it tells men to protect women and children. So I got very intense, and I rebuked the men who abuse women. And I was getting ready to do a tour of another country, this was many years ago. And they, my tour got canceled, because, this was before cancel culture, but it was the beginning of it. So a national news outlet took me being very intense, rebuking men, and they flipped the whole story. They said he hates women, and here's a clip of him yelling at them. I was like, you just, you just, I yelled at the men who abuse women, and you just said that I want women to be abused and that I'm yelling at women. You just literally flipped everything I believe and everything I said. That news story went national, and it got me canceled. I've never been back to that country. I read Nehemiah six and it brings a certain amount of oppression on me. Now, Nehemiah is a very godly man, more godly than me, and he's being attacked and accused. Some years ago, we were in a season where massive media firestorm, lots of conflict and controversy. I said, "Okay, investigate everything, I know I'm not disqualified, I know who I am. I can't wait to stand before Jesus, it's gonna be a great day for me." Not that I'm perfect, but I, I know who I am, and I know who he is. And we were asked to return, and I'll share something with you I've never shared. I don't know if it's a good idea or not, I'll ask Grace. She just, she did this, so, okay, so. So, I was in one end of the house, Grace was in the other. God spoke to us both, said, "You're released, you need to resign immediately." And God told me a trap is set. He didn't tell Grace that. So she came in, she's like, "God just spoke to me." I was like, "God just spoke to me." And I said, "What did you hear?." She said, "We're released." I said, "I heard we're released and that

a trap was set." So, we walked away, didn't defend ourselves. Took 18 months, didn't do social media, didn't do public ministry, just wanted to heal up and be with my family, get them into safety in a very dangerous season of our life. And so during that time, I met with some of my critics and enemies, one on one or small group, people that had been friends, people who claimed to be Christians, some who were pastors, some who still are pastors. And I asked them, I said, "God told me a trap was set." So I asked them, I said, "Do you know what that might be?" And these people that we had known said, "Yeah, the nuclear option was we were going to accuse you of adultery." This was at Panera, multiple meetings at Panera. I was like, "You guys discussed accusing me of adultery? You know, that's not true, I've been faithful to my wife my whole life. I adore my wife, I love my wife and she loves me. We've been faithful to each other. We've been open our whole marriage about any struggles we have had, because we know that every married couple has some hardship to go through, and we have never been dishonest. But we have never done that, we've never done anything remotely like that." They said, "Yeah, that's why we kept it as the nuclear option." I was like, "To get me what?" They said, "To get you out of the pulpit." They said, "Because we knew that if we accused you of adultery, and enough of us signed the open letter, that ultimately there would be such a media firestorm that you would have to exit ministry, exit preaching God's word for probably a year while a full investigation was done. During that time, we could take over and lead and be in charge, and then we figured one of two things would happen. Either you would come back, but we would be in charge, or you would never come back, and you'd be done forever." I came home, I told Grace, I was like, "Oh my gosh." Multiple people told me that to my face on separate occasions and days. I want you to be, if I'm gonna be your pastor and I love you, I promise you this, I'll always tell you the truth. And I want you to love and honor and respect Christian leaders and pastors. Don't assume the worst, assume the best. And don't believe everything you hear and don't contribute to the gossip. That just takes lies and gives them life. The old preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon, he once said, he said, "A lie can get around the world before the truth can get its shoes on." And today, every algorithm and every social media platform exists to send bad things about God's people as fast as possible, whether it's true or false. God spared us, gave us a break to heal up. We moved to Arizona. God has been very, very gracious to us. But let me tell you the nefarious nature of this media world in which we live, and I've not left Nehemiah six, he's having to navigate it in his day, we have to navigate it in ours. The first question is, is the person being attacked, are they a public figure? Because if you're a public figure, libel, slander, and defamation laws don't necessarily count. That's why late night comics can mock, you know, presidents or presidential candidates but not private citizens. The first question is are they a public figure? And when it comes to pastors, they're not sure 'cause it's not been tested in court. So I've had lawyers tell me, you're a public figure. I have others say you're not. In addition, number two, if you're going to sue them, the question is, was it done in a blog, social media, was it done in YouTube, or was it done on some legitimate news platform? Because social media, YouTube, and blogs do not qualify as journalism, therefore you can get away with murder, like murdering someone's reputation. And so what platforms will do, let's say there's a news platform, they will use their social media, their blog, or their YouTube, to say things or do things that are criminal. And because they have the brand name of the parent company, you think it's news, it's not. And then the third question is, if a crime was committed, do you have

enough money to sue them? And if it's a large platform, they've got a lot more money than you. And if it's someone who is lying, if you sue them, do they have enough money that if you win, then you can get damages to repay your legal bills? And so the situation that Nehemiah's in, is the situation that, eventually, every high-profile Christian leader finds themselves in. And here's what's really interesting. We're a few years removed from Nehemiah, but fake news has been found out. Here's the latest gallop poll. 7% of Americans have a "great deal" of trust and confidence in the media. I would say that means 7% of Americans are drunk, okay? 34% have a "great deal" or "fair amount" of confidence in the media, 38% have no trust at all, which outpaces "great deal" and "fair" for the first time. 70% of Democrats, 14% of Republicans, 27% of independents trust the media. Okay, that's interesting, isn't it? It's interesting. Here's the quote, "Notably, this is the first time that the percentage of Americans with no trust at all in the media is higher than the percentage with a great deal or fair amount combined." So, ultimately, what Nehemiah is up against is political leaders who have P-R campaigns that are using the media platforms, supported by the lawyers, to promulgate an open public letter and lie against him with fake sources and supporters. And in his day, it probably was very difficult for the people 'cause they're like, "Is that true or false?" Today, most people are like probably false. But, then they do something that is strategic but demonic. The enemies of God's leader and God's people know that the best way to tell a lie is to get a believer, to tell it to the believers. So then the story continues. Here's the big idea. Don't believe all quote, unquote, "believers". Shemaiah, he's a false prophet, said, "Let us meet together in the house of God within the temple." Nehemiah six, 10 through 14, I'll rush through the end. "They're coming to kill you by night. But I said, should such a man as I run away? And what man as I could go into the temple and live, I will not go in. I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy", quote, unquote, "prophecy", false prophecy, "against me because Tobiah and Sanballat", the enemies and critics, hired him. "He was hired", how do you get a hireling? You hire them. "That I should be afraid and act in this way in sin so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O God, you deal with them, according to these things that they did. And also the prophetesses", multiple female false prophets, "Noadiah and the rest of the false prophets who wanted to make me afraid." Let me say this real briefly. A prophet does two things, a revelation and illumination. Revelation is, God tells them something, usually about the future, and about 25% of your Bible, when it was written, was prophetic in nature. The whole of Nehemiah is prophetic. It's preparing the city of Jerusalem and the temple for the coming of the Lord Jesus. So everything that they're doing is prophetic. It's to prepare for God's future. A prophet, sometimes God will give them new revelation about the future to warn or to rebut God's people. Second thing a prophet does is not revelation but illumination. They'll take something that is already written in God's word, and they'll apply it to the circumstances or the politics or the cultural dynamics, and you're like, now I understand what's going on. Before that, you're like, I'm so confused. And then they say, okay, here it says in the Bible, and you connect it. You're like, oh my gosh, that's the key that unlocks understanding for what's going on right now. And it's not new revelation, but it's new illumination of old revelation. There are prophets and there are false prophets. The Bible has a lot to say about false prophets. What false prophets do, they lie about the future, and it doesn't happen. Or they weaponize the Bible, and they teach it in a way that isn't trustworthy and true. Every cult, let's say Jehovah's Witnesses or

Mormonism, founded and led by a false prophet. Here, they, here's the, the man of God, here's the enemies of God. And the enemies of God realize that the people of God are more likely to believe the man of God than the enemies of God. So they go get religious spiritual leaders with some measure of public credibility. They've got a degree, they're ordained, they wrote a book, they've been on tour, they're an influencer on social media, at some point they had a hit song. Now they're an apostate woke creative artist. And all of a sudden, now, the people of God are more likely to believe the false prophet because they say that they're still a believer. This is the Judas on the team. And it's Shemaiah, the false prophet, it's the female false prophets and the other prophets. And we know two things on false prophets. Number one, they are false prophets. P-R-O-P-H-E-T-S. He says, quote, "God had not sent them." That's a false prophet. They are working for false profits. P-R-O-F-I-T-S. Tobiah and Sanballat hired them. I could get a giant book deal if I was pro-abortion. I can't get one social media platform to even let me pay for advertising to give my anti-abortion book away for free. I could, if I deconstructed Christianity, I could be absolutely global news overnight. But I won't, because Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. And that's just the way that it is. But if someone has any credibility with God's people, and then goes woke or apostate or deconstructing or negative, they are false prophets and they get false profits. That happened in their day, it's happening in our day, it happens in every day. So my encouragement to you is this. Number one, watch out for people who claim to be Christians but are not saying that, which is Christ-like. Number two, beware of platforms that claim to be Christian. Just because it says Christian, doesn't mean it is Christian. Just like Jesus had Judas, so do Christian outlets and platforms. But what they will do, they will weaponize faith to deceive God's people, so you've gotta be discerning. If I had to put one big word over Nehemiah six, it's discernment. What's truth, what's lie? What's from God, what's against God? Who's the real believer telling the truth, who's the false believer getting paid to preach the lie? And so what Nehemiah needs to maintain is his freedom. It's why he doesn't meet with Sanballat and Tobiah. It's why he doesn't negotiate a peace treaty. It's why he doesn't show up in their town hoping that they treat him well. Because he loves God, because he loves people, he needs to maintain his freedom so he can hear from God and do what is best for the people, which means it's not best for himself. This is the true test of leadership. Do I do what is glorifying to God and good for others, or benefits me? If he will join them, they will not attack him and they will fund him and they will pay him and they will protect him, but God will not bless him. The most important thing you have is the anointing of God on your life. Lastly, here's the good news. And first and foremost, too, let me say this. What they're telling him to do is run into the temple to hide 'cause they're gonna kill you. That's a sin, and you could be put to death for it. King Uzziah got leprosy for it. So what they're saying is this, abandon your people, betray your God, to save yourself. Nehemiah's answer is, basically, I love God and people more than myself. That's it. Here's the good news, your beating comes before your blessing. I don't know why that's funny, but apparently it is, okay. Usually when the enemy is beating you, it's because God has planned on blessing you. And the enemy wants you to quit because of the beating before you get to the blessing. You wanna have a good marriage, you're gonna take a beating. You wanna raise godly kids, you're gonna take a beating. You want to have an integrous company that ties to the Lord, you're gonna take a beating. You wanna plan a church and stay open, you're gonna take a beating. And ultimately it's to get to your blessing. The wall was finished in

52 days. It took 141 years of trying, and then in 52 days, these people got it done. And what's amazing is a lot of the commentators are like, that's not possible. It takes a miracle. But it's amazing when God's people pull together, don't get distracted, don't turn on one another, don't go negative, but stay positive and focus, God supernaturally allows them to do incredible things in shortened periods of time. So they get the city secure, now they can open the church, now people can move in, now they can be God's family, now they can worship God freely, everything's about to turn. "When all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their esteem." They went from very courageous to very fearful. Courage and fear are both contagious. If you lead in fear, all your people are gonna have fear. If you lead in courage, all your people are gonna have courage. Nehemiah stayed in courage, not fear, and then fear went to the enemies and courage went to God's people. They perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. God helped us get it done. God does his work through his people. Now God does his work, but he does it through his people. And so they give him glory. Many were bound by oath to Tobiah, just goes on to, so what it's saying is this, let me just summarize this. They succeed, but they still have an enemy. And this enemy still has his lawyers and his P-R firm, still has his social media handles, still has his paid protestors, still has his fake anonymous sources, and actually has his family marry into a family that was part of the rebuilding effort back in Nehemiah three. And what he does, he gets one of his own sons on the inside with God's people to be a counterintelligence agent, to be a spy, and to report back to the enemies what God's people are planning. Satan's always trying to get somebody on the inside. Satan's always trying to get a mole, an undercover agent, somebody who's a double operative involved in leadership. And so this is gonna be a liability for God's people. But here's the question, is the beating worth the blessing? It is. I need you to know that the Christian life is going to be a bit of a beating to get to your blessing. Jesus says, "Pick up your cross and follow me." That's your beating, and it's gonna end in your blessing. And what happens is everybody wonders, "I'm taking a beating, am I in God's will?" Probably, that's why you're taking the beating. "God, are you doing this?" "No, I don't beat my people. My enemy does, just like he beat my son. And I'm for you, I'm not against you, but I'll never leave you nor forsake you." Ultimately, at the end of the day, their beating is worth their blessing. They get the city secure. God's people are safe for the first time in 141 years. The world isn't for God's people, but the church needs to be. The government isn't for God's people, but the church needs to be. The culture is not for God's people, but the church needs to be. And finally they get God's people safe and they get God's church open. And the Holy Spirit falls, and there's revival. Nehemiah who's not, he's not a man who wants the glory. He builds the platform so that Ezra can stand on it. And Ezra's not a false prophet, he's a true prophet. He opens the word of God and he tells the truth and people's hearts are changed. And there's mass revival, and the Holy Spirit falls, and they have a great, tremendous, amazing worship team that's not woke and apostate. And they get up with their Converse high-tops, and they worship God and spirit and truth. And then ultimately, this prepares for the coming of Jesus. Their beating is not just for their blessing, but for our blessing. It says in Malachi chapter three, verse one, one of the last lines in the Old Testament, the Lord will come to his temple. Jesus goes through these gates. Jesus passes through these doors. Jesus enters through this wall. Jesus enters into that temple. And you and I, we're in this place in human history. They took their beating so that Jesus could come as their

blessing. We're taking our beating, waiting for the second coming of Jesus and the blessing that never ends. That's where we are in the story of God's people. Let me release the real faith live show online and just speak for a few moments to the people in the room.