

Chosen Vessel - Surviving Opposition From Within

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing internal opposition within the church while maintaining a fear of the Lord.

Duration: 42:58

Scripture: Nehemiah 2:17, Nehemiah 5:7, Proverbs 14:29, Matthew 7:21-23, Luke 12:48, Romans 3:8, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not acting out of anger. He shares a story about Plato and his servant to illustrate the need for self-reflection and wise decision-making. The speaker then discusses the rebuke of the noble ruler in the Bible and how he confronted them for charging usury. He highlights the lack of fear of God in those who use gimmicks and devices to exploit people for money, and calls for a genuine fear of God in our hearts. The speaker also criticizes the misuse of money in the name of God and advocates for a simple lifestyle.

Transcript

We have been looking at the opposition to the work of God in chapter 4 of Nehemiah, and there's one thing you can be certain about. If you are doing anything at all worthwhile for God, Satan is going to oppose it. I heard of this pastor who was constantly talking about how he was meeting up with Satan on the road.

I was going down the road the other day and I met up with Satan and oh, what a, you know, tussle we had. And he was always testifying how every time it seemed he was going somewhere he would meet up with Satan. There was this liberal pastor in town and he said, young man, he said, I'm sort of sick of hearing you talk about meeting up with Satan every time you go someplace or do something, you're meeting up with Satan.

He said, I want you to know I've been pastoring for 35 years and I haven't met Satan yet. The young fellow said, have you ever thought to consider you might be going the same direction? If you are doing something right for the Lord, you can know that Satan is going to try to oppose that work. We see how Satan sought to oppose the work by ridicule, which is a very cruel and effective tool of Satan.

We see how then he tried to oppose it with this guy, Tambalat and Tobiah, who became very angry at what was being done and he sought to oppose the work of God by stopping or threats to stop the work. But unsuccessful in stopping Nehemiah with ridicule and with threats, as we get to chapter five of the book of Nehemiah, we see how that Satan now becomes more subtle in his attack against the work of God and the opposition now comes from within. Satan usually uses as his first tactic against you open opposition.

When that fails, then Satan comes with a more subtle strategy and he sort of says, let's join hands together in the work. And the problems begin to come from within. Now we pretty well know how to recognize and deal with the problems that come from without, but when the problems begin to come from within, we're not always equipped to deal with them.

We don't know how to handle that. When the Lord first established the church, Satan tried to destroy the church by a direct frontal assault. And we're well aware of Fox's book of martyrs and we are well aware of the history of the early church and that direct frontal assault by Satan as he sought to, by persecution, destroy the church.

But we know the history of the church. During this period of persecution, the church flourished, it grew, it prospered. So then Satan changed his tactics and under Constantine, Satan joined the church.

In fact, he became the Pope of the church and he began to introduce into the church all kinds of corrupting Babylonian practices from the ancient Babylon religion. And Satan was far more effective in the destroying of the effectiveness of the church from within, in the bringing of the compromises, in the corrupting of the church from within. He was far more effective and successful than he was in the direct frontal assault from without.

It is interesting to me that today the Mormons are seeking really to join the church. The Mormons have a tremendous campaign on right now to change their image from a cult to a denomination. They want to be known just as another denominational church and they are doing their best to shed this cult kind of mantle that they have had through the years to just another denomination.

But we believe in Jesus and we believe in God and you know and we believe the Bible and we're just another church. They believe in Jesus, want Jesus. Paul speaks about those who would preach another Jesus and the Jesus that the Mormons believe in was the brother of Lucifer.

Now that's not the Jesus that I believe in. The Jesus that I believe in is the only begotten son of God and he can say I am one with the Father. I and the Father are one.

Now I hardly think that Lucifer can say that and thus the Jesus I believe in is not the brother of Lucifer as is the Jesus of the Mormon church. The God that I believe in is not Adam who came to this earth with one of his celestial wives Eve because he was a good Mormon in another era on another planet and began to populate this world and oversee its development. Nor do I believe that one day Kay and I are going to head for some planet in the universe to begin to populate it and she's the only wife I have.

By the grace of God I'm going to hang on to her and will be the only wife I'll ever have and she'll stick with me. The other day we were saying man I need two more days and it's going to be 42 years just if we can make it for the next couple of days. Things were looking a little shaky at that point but we patched it up and we made it and here we are.

And though it's been a good 42 years I don't expect it to be eternity on some planet doing our own thing. As Adam according to Brigham Young was is their God the only God with whom they have to deal. So you see how Satan tries to sort of come in the back door you close the front door on him and and here he is he says hey good buddy you know how much will it cost me to join this church.

And so we see that Satan is using this same tactic here in Nehemiah chapter 5. Having failed at the direct opposition from without he now seeks to oppose the work of God from within creating a disgruntled people conditions that were not good. Using as he so often does the greed of man to oppose the work of God. And so they brought to Nehemiah the grievance there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their own brothers their Jewish brothers.

Now the problem is all within the family. The outside forces have been dealt with he's prayed he's set up the guard they're working with the trowel in one hand the sword in the other and they've got the trumpet ready they've got the whole thing set up. But now it's from within and and and they come with this grievance to Nehemiah concerning their brothers.

For the rich Jews had begun to oppress the poor. Now there was a drought and a scarcity of corn and Haggai who was prophesying at about this time spoke of the tremendous drought and the shortage of corn and all that they had and of fruit. And with this shortage the people many of them in order to buy corn were beginning to mortgage their property their land their houses.

And the rich people were loaning to them the money to buy the corn but they were charging usury. The interest that they were charging amounted to 12 percent a year and the people being impoverished began to spend the money that they were reserving for their taxes to the government and not being able to pay their mortgages not being able to pay their taxes they were in desperate straits and some of the people had begun to sell their children as slaves. And the whole thing began to blow up because here they were with mortgages against their property that they couldn't pay.

The 12 percent interest was just eating them up and they were going deeper and deeper into debt while the rich people were becoming richer and richer taking advantage of the poverty and of the desperate needs of those poor people. Money is one of the chief weapons that satan will use against your ministry to destroy your ministry. I believe that the chief weapon that satan uses against ministers is women.

Solomon said she searches for the precious soul and he tells us that a whorish woman can bring a man to a crust of bread. And I know so many many many pastors whose ministries have been destroyed because of women's involvement with women. But then the next two dangers and they rank very close are money and pride.

And the minute you begin to have a modicum of success in the ministry look out for these two snares of the enemy. As you begin to have some success in the ministry there's perhaps a little surplus now in the budget. Watch out.

You begin to look around and think my you know I'm the pastor of this large church. Look how it's growing. My I really have the secret and I really am able to look out.

Satan begins to use his snares the moment you begin to have success. As long as you're struggling to have success you don't have that many problems from within. It's when you begin to begin to have a begin to start to have a little success is when you've got to really watch out.

When the enemy is going to really come against you. Now we know that it takes money to operate a church. And there never seems to be quite enough money to do all of the things that we would like to do.

And thus it seems there is that constant desire for more money in order to expand the work of God. And we seem to have a fallacious philosophy that money is the cure of all evil. That's not scriptural.

In fact the scripture says something about money being the root of all evil. But somehow we think that all of our problems would just be solved and I could do such a great work for God if I just had the money. You would be amazed at all of the mail that we get from people all over the world who have the most fantastic ideas of how to reach the world for Jesus Christ.

All they need is the money to finance this idea. And it's a sure fire. It'll surely do it.

If God will only wise up and finance this one we could reach the world for Christ you know. I believe that the church is guilty of funding a lot of ideas and programs that were not inspired by God. I wonder if it was God's idea to have Heritage USA.

I'm not going to answer the question I only ask it. I believe again that God is perfectly capable of providing for the work that he wants to do. And I believe strongly when God guides God provides.

I also believe that if you strive to gain you're going to have to strive to maintain. And so many of these tremendous projects that were built by God through a lot of strife, through a lot of begging, through a lot of different conniving ways of getting people to get. They were able to build these vast monuments but they couldn't maintain them because ultimately you get worn down and the people get worn out.

Here's where people so often get into real trouble in the ministry. For at this point they begin to buy into the false philosophy that the end justifies the means. So let us do evil that good may come of it.

But Paul said God forbid. And people begin to develop all kinds of schemes and dishonest ways of raising money in the church. I do not believe for one moment that God has ever shown a man how many people are going to give \$500 in a given service.

I don't believe God does that. I don't believe God has ever done that. And I believe that any man who stands up and declares God has shown me there are 10 people here tonight that are going to give a thousand dollars that that man is a liar, a fraud, and a false prophet.

I don't believe that you can buy the salvation or healing of your loved one through a donation as is often intimated in some of the telethons. As these people sent in their son was out in sin and all and they sent in and they pledged \$100 a month and bless God he saved the son. Just you know you have a relative that you want saved send in you know and pledge.

I believe that the computerized letters that are sent by some of the leading tv personalities promising personal prayers or healing are an abomination in the sight of God. After receiving one of these letters from Oral Roberts I sat down and wrote to him and among other things I mentioned in my letter that I was awfully glad that I didn't have to stand in his shoes when he stood before the judge of all the earth. Personally I'm glad I don't have to stand in my own shoes.

I'm glad that Jesus is going to be standing in my shoes for me. I'm not sure if Oral knows that or not but at least he took me off his mailing list so what can you say. But unfortunately it didn't stop him from sending

these same type of letters to other poor people.

Now when God begins to bless and prosper the church financially then even greater problems begin to rise. The proper expenditure of those funds. I do not believe that any minister has one centilla of excuse for living a lavish lifestyle on money that he has received through the ministry.

Now if you have a separate and an outside income an inheritance or whatever you can do whatever you want with it. I don't you know it doesn't bother me. You can drive the fancy sports cars and cover your wife's fingers with diamonds and all it's fine.

But I don't believe that you should take money that people have given for the work of God and use it for yourself and for a lavish lifestyle. I believe in simplicity of lifestyle. I do not believe that we're setting a good example before the people.

Now you'll find that an interesting thing about money there is never enough no matter how much you have. Even Donald Trump is finding that out isn't he. Now in the days of Nehemiah the the rich were living by the golden rule but it's a different golden rule.

They were living by the golden rule that says he who has the gold rules and they were using their money to oppress the poor. I have a problem with people who are taking advantage of other people's problems, illnesses. I have a problem with doctors, the profession, lawyers, psychiatrists and ministers who take advantage of people who are going through severe problems maybe legal problems, maybe medical problems and they charge them undue amounts of money.

No man is worth eighteen thousand dollars an hour. I don't care how delicate the operation and men who take advantage of the misfortunes of other people to enrich themselves. I believe we're going to have to answer to God for it.

That's what was happening in Nehemiah's day. These people were going through unfortunate circumstances. It was a drought and things were hard and there was a shortage of corn and so the rich people began to take advantage of those poor people in this condition and began to charge these unreasonable rates of interest.

Now, I believe that there is a legitimate place for charging interest. I think that if a person is going into a business venture and he has the opportunity of perhaps making a lot of money that to loan them money for something like that that you should share in the profit that the person is going to make and I think that's legitimate. A lot of the houses today you can buy a house and it's worth twice as much in a couple of years and thus to charge interest on those kind of loans I think is legitimate.

But to charge interest when a person is borrowing for very livelihood itself I think is wrong. And under the law they weren't to charge interest to their brothers. It was contrary to the law of God and thus what was going on was something that was definitely contrary to the law of God.

It was the oppression of the poor and it created this problem. It brought the whole building process to a halt as they had to first of all deal with this problem before they could go on. Now, Nehemiah in coming to the solution, first of all we read in verse six, I was very angry when I heard their cry in these words.

I'm so glad Nehemiah, good fellow, I'm so glad he was angry. I'm so glad that he got angry at wrong things. You know we're living in sort of a soft age where people don't want you to say anything bad about

anybody.

And every time I say something bad about somebody I always get letters, you know, you should love brother and forgive brother and all. I love David, Lord break their teeth in their mouth, smash their noses, Lord. Do not I hate them, Lord, that hate thee, yea, I hate them with a perfect hatred.

And I think we should be angry over sin. We should be angry over abortion. We should be angry over child pornography.

We should be angry over these things. Jesus looked with anger upon them because they were holding back people from the work of God. That should tell us something.

Be careful that you don't stand in the way of people coming to the Lord by your attitudes or your actions. Remember the Sabbath day in Capernaum? Jesus came in the synagogue and there was a man there that had a withered hand. And immediately they looked at Jesus to see what he was going to do because it was a Sabbath day.

And it says, and Jesus looked with anger upon them. Why? Because of their religious traditions they would keep this man from the work that God wanted to do in healing him. Nehemiah was angry.

The complaint that was brought to him was a legitimate complaint. These men were wrong. He sat down and consulted with himself.

Now, I think that that's always wise when you're angry. Don't react immediately. You can really mess things up if you go out in anger.

Plato said to one of his servants, I would beat you, but I'm angry. And so he sat down and consulted with himself, sat down and mulled this over, thought this over, thought upon the course of action that he needed to take. And then he said, I rebuked, verse 7, the noble, the rulers.

And it goes on to speak of his rebuke of getting after them for charging usury. And he gathered the great assembly against him, gathered them all together. And then he talked about how that he had set an example for them.

He said, after our own ability, we've redeemed certain of these men from their captivity. They're your brother. And now are you going to sell them as slaves, take advantage of their poverty? And they had no answers.

And he said straight to them, it's not good what you are doing. You ought to walk in the fear of the Lord. And there, my friend, is the key.

As I look at these people who are using all of these gimmicks and devices to get money from the people, as I see the abuses, horrible abuses, I wonder how can they write those things? How can they send out that little cloth and say, you know, send this cloth back to me with your request and I'll anoint it with oil and, you know, send it back to you and God will heal. Just write your request and be sure to enclose a check because it's this present time, you know. How can these guys go with all of that stuff? How do they sleep at night? How can they do that? And the answer is they are lacking a fear of God.

They don't have a real fear of God in their heart. And that is one thing we need to examine our own hearts. Do I have a genuine fear of God in my heart? Do I realize that one day I am going to answer to God for

what I have done? We are even warned in the Scriptures about being minister, knowing that we will have the greater condemnation.

For to whom much is given, much is required. And I don't take the ministry lightly because I know that one day I'm going to stand before God and I'm going to give an account of myself. I surely don't want to be one of those that say, Lord, Lord, did I not prophesy in your name? Did I not cast out devils in your name? Did I not heal the sick in your name? And hear him say to me, depart from me.

You worker of iniquity, I never knew you. Fear of the Lord. That was their problem, the lacking of the fear of the Lord.

That consciousness and awareness that one day I will answer, I am responsible to God. For I stand before the people as God's representative. And they are looking to me as God's representative.

And they are judging God by what they see in me. And they are judging the validity of the gospel by what they see in me and what they hear from me. Feeling this awesome responsibility of standing before the people as God's representative to give them God's word.

I want to be careful that I don't give them vain speculation, but I give them the word of God just as pure and unadulterated as I possibly can. Proclaim God's truth without hypocrisy. Fear of the Lord, beginning of wisdom.

But to fear the Lord is to hate evil. And that was the problem, the lack of the fear of the Lord. And so he pleaded with them, I pray you, stop this usury and restore to them their land, their vineyards, their olive orchards, their houses, and the interest that you charged them to buy the corn and the wine.

The glorious thing happened, the people hearkened to Nehemiah and they said, we will restore to them and require nothing from them. We will do as you say. And so then he called the priest and he made them take an oath that they would also keep that promise.

And then Nehemiah again set the example, even as we are the ones to set the example for the people. He said, verse 14, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah from the 20th year, even to the 32nd year, so 12 years, he was appointed by our exercise to be the governor over the people during that 12 years time, neither I nor my brethren have eaten the bread of the governor. That is, they did not take any of the taxes for their, though they had the right as governor to receive the taxes and to receive salaries as governor, he did not take a salary.

They did not eat the bread of the governor, but the former governors that had been there before me were chargeable under the people. They'd taken from them the bread and the wine besides 40 shekels of silver and their servants even bore rule over the people. But I did not do this because, why? The fear of God.

Oh, how important to have the fear of God in your heart. And so Nehemiah, knowing that he is responsible to God, the fear of God in his heart kept him on the right path, as it will keep you on the right path. Yes, he said, I continued the work of this wall and I didn't buy any land and all of my servants were gathered together unto the work.

We all got into it. We set the example ourselves. And then he tells that he even took care of 150 people, the Jews and the rulers who sat at his table and he tells the provisions that it took.

And then he sort of says, Lord, think upon me for the good according to all that I have done for this people. Well, he didn't know the grace of God and he was presenting to God his works. I wouldn't dare do that, but I'm thankful for the grace of God.

And think upon me, Lord, for the grace that you've given and mercy through Jesus Christ. But the practical results were the people took the oath to quit their evil practices. And it says, and all the people praised the Lord and the work continued.

Dealing with the opposition from within, when it's finally done, people rejoice and praise God and the work of God goes on, continues as God builds up the defenses to protect his people from the enemy. Father, we thank you tonight for the privilege of working, laboring for you. Thank you, Lord, that as Nehemiah, you have called us to lead the people in the work of the Lord.

And Lord, we are cognizant of the enemy. We are not ignorant of his devices. We have faced the open opposition and we have seen you defeat him.

We have faced the ridicule, the attacks, and Lord, by your strength, we have stood. Lord, we have seen how the enemy has tried to come in and corrupt from within. And we thank you, Lord, that you've given us wisdom in dealing with those corrupting influences from within.

We thank you, Lord, that the work continues, but help us, Lord, that we might always walk in the fear of the Lord and not be careless and not be carried away with divers lusts. May we, Lord, feel that heavy sense of responsibility as your representative delivering your word to your people. May we do so faithfully in Jesus' name.

Amen. I like how Paul so many times said, that which I have received from the Lord, I also give unto you. I believe that you should be able to make that as a preface to every sermon you preach.

I don't think that you should say it, but I believe that you should be able to say it. When you stand before the people, I believe that you should have had such preparation in prayer and waiting upon God, that as you stand there and you look over the congregation and as you open your Bible, you would be able to say, that which I have received from the Lord, I will also deliver unto you. Wait on the Lord for your ministry, and may God bless you and prosper you in helping the building of the walls and the defenses for the people of God.

Because though we are right now in a moment of world history that is exciting and doors seem to be open all over, I believe that we are probably in one of the most dangerous periods of history in the world. Jesus said, and when they begin to say, peace and safety beware, sudden destruction. I really believe that that is what we are seeing today.

I read an interesting article. I don't know if you know it or not. Those from England surely do.

They have now started the first European newspaper. It's the newspaper for all of the nations in the European community, called the first European newspaper. The first volume had an interesting poll.

It was talking about how that the Europeans, 80% of them believe that they should move immediately to a common currency, 80% of the European people, and that they should have a unified government. In the poll, if they could vote for their president, the majority of the people would vote for Gorbachev as the president of the European community. That was in the first European newspaper, some polls that have

been taken.

Hey, we are in interesting and exciting times. I believe that, as James said, go to now ye who say, well, tomorrow we'll do such and so. You should rather say, if the Lord will.

We are at the place where we should say, if the Lord tarries, we will do thus and so tomorrow. So, the Lord should tarry. We'll see you tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.

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