Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

1 September 2013 Message 8 of 15

NLT 40 Minutes

**Guarding God’s Work**

Title

***Nehemiah 6:15–7:3***

**Topic:** Opposition

**Subject:** How should we respond when God gives us victory?

**Complement:** Guard God’s work!

**Purpose:** The listeners will guard God’s work in their lives

**Meditation:** God as Warrior

# Introduction

### Interest: [The biggest failure often comes just after the biggest victory.]

#### This past week one of my students sent me this email: “Rick, you mentioned last lesson on Elijah that after a spiritual triumph, there is usually a testing period. For example, Elijah went into depression. Why is this so? Is there a spiritual purpose?”

Email

#### Our biggest struggle often follows our biggest victory.

Mountain

##### Elijah hit depression after the great victory at Mount Carmel.

• Elijah

##### Abraham’s high point was Mount Moriah when he passed the test to sacrifice his son, Isaac––but the next chapter shows him burying Sarah.

• Abram

##### Moses got the law directly from God himself on Mount Sinai only to descend to a sexual orgy of people worshipping the golden calf.

• Moses

##### Watch out for those mountains!

### Need: Do you have your guard up when things are going well?

• Need

#### It’s easy to trust God during difficulty. When you are in the pit, the only way to look is UP!

#### But it’s harder to maintain spiritual momentum when you have seen a great victory over sin or the enemy.

• Subject

### Subject: So how should we respond when God gives us victory?

### Background: We continue our Nehemiah series today with message 8 of 15. Up to this point Nehemiah saw God’s hand in accomplishing his work on the wall.

Series

#### We have followed his story…[explain slides]

5 slides

#### Now, amazingly, the wall was finished in only 52-days (6:15-16)!

6:15-16

### Preview: Today we will see two responses to God’s work––to oppose it or to guard it.

Preview

### Text: Nehemiah 6:17–7:3 shows these two ways that people respond to God’s work.

(Even though God is clearly working among us, we should…)

# I. Expect some to oppose God’s work (6:17-19).

MP

[Don’t think that everyone is excited about the Lord’s victories!]

Newton

[Even Isaac Newton said to every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction!]

## Tobiah opposed the wall rebuilding (6:17-19).

Opposed (3 slides)

### Tobiah opposed the rebuilding through his connections (6:17-19a).

17-18

#### Tobiah sent many letters to influential nobles (6:17).

#### Tobiah used powerful people in his own family to oppose the rebuilding (6:18).

XINHUA

#### Tobiah used his family members as spies to Nehemiah (6:19a).

19b

19a

### Tobiah threatened Nehemiah through many letters (6:19b).

Are you?

## We should expect opposition to God’s work in our lives.

### Opposition comes from society.

Hugo

#### Victor Hugo quipped, “I’m religiously opposed to religion.”

Gays

#### Opposition to God’s definition of marriage is seen in the growing acceptance of so-called gay “marriage.”

#### Some are arguing that churches should not have any tax exemptions even though they are not-for-profit organizations.

Exempt

### Opposition comes from family.

#### Jesus said that one’s own enemies will be his relatives (Matt. 10:34-35).

Matt 10

Work

AF Bible

Title

#### Every one of us experiences this. In the 27 family members that Susan and I have––parents, children, siblings, nieces, nephews––only 9 of them are walking with Christ.

Afghanistan-2

### Opposition comes at work.

#### US Air Force personnel had been told that they might express their beliefs as long as they do not "make others uncomfortable." This rule led to an officer being asked to remove a copy of the Bible from his desk.

#### According to the Fox News report the "officer was told he could no longer keep a Bible on his desk because it '[might]' appear that he was condoning a particular religion."

### Opposition comes towards the church.

### Recognize that even opposition is needed to keep us trusting God.

#### Sheep need shearing.

##### Shrek the sheep became famous several years ago when he was found after hiding out in caves for six years. Of course, during this time his fleece grew without anyone having shorn (shaved) it. When he was finally found and shaved, his fleece weighed an amazing sixty pounds (27 kg) - 50 lbs (23 kg) more than normal and enough to make 20 men's suits.

Shearing

##### Shrek carried six times the regular weight of his fleece simply because he was away from his shepherd. It took a professional sheerer less than a half hour to rid him of his burden.

Before

##### Shrek died back in 2011, but his story has just recently resurfaced in news outlets and social media sites alike due to a new interest in the science of fleece growth:

##### Modern Farmer [an internet resource for the farming community] was curious: can a sheep's wool grow forever? Its writer, Jesse Hirsch, interviewed Dave Thomas, the University of Wisconsin-Madison's head of sheep studies. Thomas says a Merino sheep like Shrek will grow wool indefinitely.

#### Application: We are sheep too––and God shears us (even though we don’t like it) because it is good for us. One pastor notes in this regard…

##### “Apparently, when God created sheep he had their need for people in mind. More specifically, their need for a shepherd. The same is true of us. Life involves the accumulation of burdens. Burdens that can't be tended to without the help of the Good Shepherd.

##### “One internet blogger had this to say of Shrek's plight:

Title

##### ‘Shrek is much like a person who knows Jesus Christ but has wandered. If we avoid Christ’s constant refining of our character, we’re going to [indefinitely] accumulate extra weight in this world—a weight we don’t have to bear.’

##### “When Shrek was found, a professional sheep shearer took care of Shrek’s fleece in twenty-eight minutes. Shrek’s sixty pound fleece was finally removed. All it took was coming home to his shepherd.”

#####  “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

MPI

(So we should always expect some to oppose God’s work. But what should we do in response to this? We should…)

# II. Guard God’s work (7:1-3 & MI).

MPII

[Take precautions to assure that the Lord’s victories are sustained.]

7:1-3

## Nehemiah responded to threats by guarding the city (7:1-3).

Gate

1

### Nehemiah appointed guards at the gates (7:1).

Lead-2

2

### Nehemiah appointed godly men to govern Jerusalem (7:2).

3

Guard

### Nehemiah appointed residents to keep the gates closed (7:3).

## We also need to guard God’s work.

### As an individual, guard God’s work in you. How?

Thoughts

#### Guard your thoughts.

##### How’s your Bible reading? Filter what you hear with what God says!

Stats

##### Few of us read anymore! The Lausanne Forum for World Evangelisation at Pattaya, Thailand, reported in 2004…

Title

Title

Title

###### 42% of university graduates never read a book after graduation

###### 80% of American families did not buy or read a book in 2003

###### 57% of new books published in the US are not read to completion

###### Most readers do not get past page 18 in a book they have purchased

##### How’s your Internet usage? Use Google SafeSearch to filter explicit results.

#### Realize that you can lose a lifetime of integrity in a few moments.

### As a church we guard God’s work in various ways.

CIC

Two deep

#### We seek to serve “two deep.”

##### Have at least two people who take each role: worship leading, preaching, singing, piano, bass, guitar, set-up, recording, signing checks, Man2Man, etc.

##### We try to avoid having ministries that are only “one deep” as they depend on only one person.

##### Rick Warren wrote an article called “Never Start a Ministry Without a Minister”: “Saddleback didn’t have an organized youth ministry until we had 500 in attendance. We didn’t have a singles ministry until we had 1,000 people in attendance.

• Warren

##### And I’m glad we didn’t.

##### It’s not because those ministries aren’t important. They’re vital! But God hadn’t provided anyone to lead them. Never create a ministry position and then fill it. It’s backwards. Your most critical component to a new ministry isn’t the idea to start it—it’s the leadership of the ministry. Every ministry rises and falls on leadership. Without the right leader, a ministry will just stumble along. It may even do more harm than good. I could tell you some horror stories about poorly led ministries.

##### Be patient and trust God’s timing. Don’t try to outrun or outthink Him. The staff at Saddleback never starts new ministries. We may suggest an idea but we let the idea percolate until God provides the right person to lead it.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### We try to remember that it’s not about us!

Missions

##### We support ministries in 10 countries.

Map

##### Last year we gave to 7 of them.

##### Manik reported recently about his efforts to plant an international church like CIC in Bangkok.

Manik 3 slides

##### We have supported Lewis in ministry trips to Mongolia (2010) and Myanmar (2012).

Mong/Myan

##### Last Friday 10 of us attended the Lakeside Family Services 20th Anniversary to support this outreach to the poor and to explore how 5 of us can serve there.

Detailed

Calendar

LFC-4

#### Plan ahead.

##### We plan our preaching calendar for the whole year in advance.

##### Lewis will be gone for a year beginning in June, so we’re making plans for me to share the pulpit with an experienced preacher who can preach over the summer.

Subj

(So how should we respond when God gives us victory?)

# Conclusion

MI

### Guard God’s work! (MI repeated).

### Summing Up…

Summing

#### Expect some to oppose God’s work (6:17-19).

#### Guard God’s work (7:1-3).

### Questions to Consider:

Questions

#### What has God entrusted to you…?

CIC

#### How can you guard God’s work here at church?

2 Tim. 1

### Paul commanded Timothy to guard the gospel in 2 Timothy 1:12, 14 (read).

Black

### Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

# Possible Applications

### At this church we are seeking to guard God’s work in various ways as we serve with these principles at work:

#### Serve “two deep.”

##### Have at least two people who take each role: worship leading, preaching, singing, piano, bass, guitar, set-up, recording, signing checks, Man2Man, etc.

##### We try to avoid having ministries that are only “one deep” as they depend on only one person.

##### Rick Warren wrote an article called “Never Start a Ministry Without a Minister”: “Saddleback didn’t have an organized youth ministry until we had 500 in attendance. We didn’t have a singles ministry until we had 1,000 people in attendance.

##### And I’m glad we didn’t.

##### It’s not because those ministries aren’t important. They’re vital! But God hadn’t provided anyone to lead them. Never create a ministry position and then fill it. It’s backwards. Your most critical component to a new ministry isn’t the idea to start it—it’s the leadership of the ministry. Every ministry rises and falls on leadership. Without the right leader, a ministry will just stumble along. It may even do more harm than good. I could tell you some horror stories about poorly led ministries.

##### Be patient and trust God’s timing. Don’t try to outrun or outthink Him. The staff at Saddleback never starts new ministries. We may suggest an idea but we let the idea percolate until God provides the right person to lead it.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

#### Never neglect missions.

##### Some churches have financial difficulties and the first thing they cut is the missions.

##### Instead, we have chosen to give 20% of every dollar to missions. This means our commitments are always up-to-date, as the ministries we are committed to regularly comprise only about 10% of our budget.

#### Plan ahead.

##### We plan our preaching calendar for the whole year in advance.

##### Lewis will be gone for a year beginning in June, so we’re making plans for me to share the pulpit with an experienced preacher who can preach over the summer.

**Guarding God’s Work**

***Nehemiah 6:15–7:3***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The way Nehemiah responded after completing the walls and gates was to guard against threats to the city.

# I. The result of God quickly completing the wall was frightened, humiliated, and amazed unbelievers (6:15-16).

## Jerusalem’s wall was rebuilt in an astonishing 52 days (6:15).

## Jerusalem’s enemies were frightened, humiliated, and amazed with God’s work (6:16).

# II. The way Tobiah opposed the rebuilding was by connections and intimidation (6:17-19).

## Tobiah opposed the rebuilding through his connections (6:17-19a).

### Tobiah sent many letters to influential nobles (6:17).

### Tobiah used powerful people in his own family to oppose the rebuilding (6:18).

### Tobiah used his family members as spies to Nehemiah (6:19a).

## Tobiah threatened Nehemiah through many letters (6:19b).

# III. The way Nehemiah responded to threats even after completing the gates was to guard the city (7:1-3).

## Nehemiah appointed guards at the gates (7:1).

## Nehemiah appointed godly men to govern Jerusalem (7:2).

## Nehemiah appointed residents to keep the gates closed (7:3).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will guard God’s work in their lives

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Our biggest struggle often follows our biggest victory.

### Need: Do you have your guard up when things are going well?

### Subject: How should we respond when God gives us victory?

### Background: Nehemiah saw God’s hand in accomplishing his work on the wall (6:15-16).

### Preview: Today we will see two responses to God’s work––to oppose it or to guard it.

### Text: Nehemiah 6:17–7:3 shows these two ways that people respond to God’s work.

# I. Expect some to oppose God’s work (6:17-19).

## Tobiah opposed the wall rebuilding (6:17-19).

### Tobiah opposed the rebuilding through his connections (6:17-19a).

### Tobiah threatened Nehemiah through many letters (6:19b).

## We should expect opposition to God’s work in our lives.

### Opposition comes from society.

### Opposition comes from family.

### Opposition comes at work.

### Opposition comes towards the church.

# II. Guard God’s work (7:1-3 & MI).

## Nehemiah responded to threats by guarding the city (7:1-3).

### Nehemiah appointed guards at the gates (7:1).

### Nehemiah appointed godly men to govern Jerusalem (7:2).

### Nehemiah appointed residents to keep the gates closed (7:3).

## We also need to guard God’s work.

### Guard your thoughts (Bible reading, Internet, Google SafeSearch to filter explicit results, etc.)

### Realize that you can lose a lifetime of integrity in a few moments.

(So how should we respond when God gives us victory?)

# Conclusion

### Guard God’s work! (MI repeated).

### Main Points

### Questions to Consider:

#### What has God entrusted to you?

#### How can you guard God’s work here at church?



**Rick Griffith**

1 September 2013

*Message 8 of 15*

**Guarding God’s Work**

***Nehemiah 6:15–7:3***

# Introduction

### Our biggest struggle often follows our biggest victory.

### How should we respond when God gives us to ?

### Nehemiah saw God’s hand in accomplishing his work on the wall (6:15-16).

# I. Expect some to God’s work (6:17-19).

## Tobiah opposed the wall rebuilding (6:17-19).

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## We should expect opposition to God’s work in our lives.

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### Opposition comes at work.

### Opposition comes towards the church.

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## Rick SSD:Users:griffith:Desktop:Reading Stats.pngWe also need to guard God’s work.

### Guard your thoughts––How?

### CIC takes measures to guard God’s work.

# Conclusion

###  God’s work! (Main Idea).

### Questions to Consider:

#### What has God entrusted to you?

#### How can you guard God’s work here at church?

**Thought Questions:**

1. Read Nehemiah 6:15–7:3 aloud. List as many ways as you can find where Nehemiah sought to sustain the city after the wall was finished.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Verses** | **Strategy to Guard Jerusalem** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |

1. Was Nehemiah’s ultimate goal the rebuilding of the wall? Why or why not?

Text

Text

1. What victory have you experienced that needs to be guarded? How?

Text

Text

1. http://pastors.com/never-start-a-ministry-without-a-minister/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://pastors.com/never-start-a-ministry-without-a-minister/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)