

CHIEF MINISTRIES

January 2023

Happy New Year! First, I want to thank those of you who sent cards, letters, and holiday blessings to us this season. Sometimes we wonder if we really make a difference in your lives and the feedback you have given was surely a blessing and an inspiration in knowing we do. Even if there were just one it would be worth it, because God wants that ONE to come to Him and know Him. This ministry is all about Christ's Heart In Every Felon, so again thank you, I believe this year is going to be better than the last. This is a new season, and God is up to great things. Let's endeavor on this journey together. 😊

Hopefully you have had time to confer with the Lord and establish some/a plan for this year 2023. But I want to remind you that a plan of God is not going to come without obstacles and hinderances. This is not going to be a newsletter giving credit to the enemy in any way. However, we (any believer in Jesus Christ) have an enemy, and it is his mission to kill, steal, and destroy the people and plans of God and the fulfillment of God's purpose for each of our lives. But remember, no matter the battle or the hinderances, "WE WIN". With that being said, I want to encourage you to be aware of the tactics that the enemy uses to thwart the plans for you even when made with God and according to God's will for your life. Unfortunately, he uses the same plans over and over....why?, because they work, why?, because we are not cognizant of them until we are already snared. So, this is going to be about being aware of the snares/signs and what we are to do when we recognize them. First, we must recognize and accept our role in this process. I am sure you have all heard the saying; "the devil made me do it", well, each one of us has a responsibility and therefore accountability in that. **We may not have control over the situation we are presented with....BUT....we do have control over how we respond!** It is all about the choices, ours.

Now think about a situation that you have been or maybe are in now, that due to a choice, or choices, is not where you expected or intended your life to be. I would venture to say, prison, is probably the main theme in that. I am not going to get into right, wrong, guilt, innocence, or crime. Think about Joseph, he spent, some say 15 years, in prison for not falling into the trap of Potifer's wife and scheme. Think about Paul, the years he was imprisoned for spreading the gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ. Or Jesus, who was without sin and yet was crucified next to two thieves. You see sometimes even when you do all the right things, for the right reasons, you can still end up "de-railed" from the plans you made. But God, can take that situation and turn it into a season of growth and development of character....IF WE LET HIM!

So, besides our own choices, the other way the enemy attempts to thwart God's/our plans is with people. Now according to Ephesians 6:12 says; *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this [present] darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) places (AMP).* However, he (satan) uses people, and yes sometimes even people who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, in his work.

One of the greatest tests of character is how you handle opposition. In fact, opposition is part of God's will for your life; it prepares you for the opportunities ahead.

The Bible says, *"There is a real opportunity here for great and worthwhile work, even though there are many opponents"* (1 Corinthians 16:9 GNT).

If you're going to make something of your life, not everyone is going to like it. You're always going to find people who feel it's their job to criticize every dream or project God puts on your heart. Their favorite word is "no," and their favorite phrase is, "You can't do that."

So, let's look again at Nehemiah (from last month), he was given permission/resources/blessings from the king (his present employer) to go rebuild Jerusalem and yet when he got there what happened?

One tactic people use to try to stop you from doing God's will is ridicule. Nehemiah 4 shows three ways people might use ridicule to oppose you.

People will attack your character and identity. In Nehemiah 4:1-2, one of Nehemiah's critics, Sanballat, heard the wall was being rebuilt. He *"flew into a rage, became indignant, and mocked the Jews . . . saying, 'What are these pathetic Jews doing?'"* (Nehemiah 4:1-2 ISV)

When someone attacks you, it's typically with their emotions, not their logic. In fact, by the time they're attacking you, they've stopped thinking clearly. When people are angry or afraid, they resort to name-calling and even lies. Their words can hurt, but those words do not change your identity or purpose.

People will accuse you of having wrong motives. Nehemiah's critics questioned his motives. Sanballat, one of his critics, said, *"What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves?"* (Nehemiah 4:2 ESV) Sanballat suggested that they were rebuilding the wall for their own glory and selfish purposes.

The truth is, no one ever really knows another person's motivation for doing something. We all have mixed motivations. We often can't even figure out our own motivation for doing something! Only God knows *"the hearts of all mankind"* (1 Kings 8:39 NASB).

People will predict your failure. One person after another predicted that Nehemiah would fail. One guy even said of the wall Nehemiah was rebuilding, *"That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked along the top of it!"* (Nehemiah 4:3 NLT)

If you set a goal, announce a vision, or begin a business, many will be quick to forecast your failure. But you always have the choice to give a godly response. So, what might that look like?

Life is full of God-given opportunities. But with every opportunity, there will be opposition—especially in today's increasingly divided culture. The Bible confirms it: *"In fact, anyone who belongs to Christ Jesus and wants to live right will have trouble from others"* (2 Timothy 3:12 CEV).

So, how do you respond to that kind of criticism?

Tell God how you really feel. When people put you down for doing great things, don't get back at them. Instead, talk it out with God—and be honest with him. Don't hide your hurt. Tell God exactly what you're feeling. Prayer is a great stress reliever when you feel ridiculed and under attack.

Nehemiah's habit was to always pray first. Notice how gut-level honest Nehemiah got when he prayed: *"Then I prayed, 'Hear us, our God, for we are being mocked. May their scoffing fall back on their own heads, and may they themselves become captives in a foreign land! Do not ignore their guilt . . . for they have provoked you to anger here in front of the builders'"* (Nehemiah 4:4-5 NLT).

God doesn't want you to tell him what you *think* he wants to hear. When you're criticized, demeaned, or demoralized, he wants to hear all about it—and that includes how much it upsets you.

Confidently state your trust is in God. Whenever people oppose you for following God's will, reaffirm what he has told you to do and commit to following him. When you act on God's orders, you're not trusting in yourself; you're trusting in Almighty God! The greater the opposition in your life, the more you need to depend on God.

How did Nehemiah respond when his opponents ridiculed him? He confidently stated his trust in God: *"The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall. But you have no share, legal right, or historic claim in Jerusalem"* (Nehemiah 2:20 NLT).

Opposition can never stop God's work in your life unless you let it. When critics put you down, don't stoop to their level. Don't retaliate. I know in my own life this is an area I must keep in tow. I want to take things into my own hands and deal with it, however over my years, I have realized that is really not the best way, for me or anybody else. And it isn't God's way. We are to pray for and bless our enemies, even at the cross Jesus said *"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34).

Instead, like Nehemiah, be honest with God about how you really feel, and say with confidence, "The God of heaven will help me succeed."

When people criticize you for living a life that is pleasing to God, remember: You have a great reward waiting for you in heaven.

The Bible says, *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven”* (Matthew 5:11-12 NIV).

Focusing on eternity is the antidote to insult and ridicule. Why? Because the opinions of others won't last. Their disapproval won't last. Yes, you can listen to their opinions, but don't overvalue what they say.

The only thing that *will* last is God's church. Only God's family will be with Christ forever. That's why you don't want to waste your life worrying about what people say about you. Instead, God wants you to spend your days doing the things that please him—using the gifts, talents, and abilities he's given you to worship him and make an eternal difference with your life.

If God likes what you're doing, then you know you're doing the right thing. Imagine how simplified your life would be if you lived for an audience of One!

But so often you care too much about what people think, and you put yourself at the mercy of their judgments. If someone thinks you're a loser, then you must be a loser. If someone thinks you're odd, then you must be odd. I don't want to live that way—do you?

The truth is, you won't be in the presence of God one minute when you'll say, “Why did I worry so much about what other people thought about me?”

As the apostle Paul said, *“What I want is God's approval! Am I trying to be popular with people? If I were still trying to do so, I would not be a servant of Christ”* (Galatians 1:10 GNT).

Today, instead of living for the approval of people, live for the joy of the Father. And know that your reward will be great when your only concern on Earth is to please God. You may be surprised by the number of naysayers after a period of time that come to you and because of the choices you made, the life you live/lived, and the faithfulness in serving and pleasing God, not man, that now are walking where God wanted them to all along. You see He uses people to build our character but also theirs, in their season. Next month we are going to look at another hinderance that impacts our plans.

Forge on fellow warriors and take back the ground and continue to build the Kingdom according to His plan, till He returns! Blessings to each of you and again Happy New Year!

Ms. Chief (aka Ms.G)

If you want to know more about CHIEF Ministries or would like to be a part, please go to www.chiefministries.com

Christ's

Heart

In

Every

Felon