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Cancer of the Spirit

By Teresa Hampton

Fred Smith wrote, "Cynicism is cancer of the spirit. The bad cells of sarcasm attack the good cells of hope and, if undiagnosed, will eventually destroy them." Unfortunately, their attitude drips on their associates and the cancer grows. At one time or another, we may confront them, whether at work, in the home, or in the church. How should a Christian respond?

Nehemiah presents valuable lessons about dealing with criticism and cynicism. When he arrived in Jerusalem, he surveyed the broken walls and called the leaders of the Jews together (2:12-18). The men said, "Let us rise up and build." When Sanballat and Tobiah heard they were rebuilding the wall, they became furious and mocked them (2:19, 4:1). They threw out biting questions laced with sarcasm intending to frustrate them.

How did Nehemiah react? He went to God in prayer and continued overseeing the reconstruction (4:4). When his enemies saw that mockery didn't work, they conspired to attack Jerusalem (4:8-9). Nehemiah and the people prayed. Then he instructed them to set a watch by day and night, and they continued the work.

Not to be outdone, Sanballat and Tobiah conspired to kill him (6:1-14). They tried to lure him out of the city four times. He refused to leave the work. The fifth time they said if he did not meet with them, they would send a letter to the King Artaxerxes saying he had ulterior motives (to make himself king). Nehemiah refused to meet them. Finally, they sent a false prophet telling him his enemies were coming to kill him. He asked Nehemiah to go with him into the temple for refuge. He refused, knowing it would be sinful for him to enter the temple (6:10). He prayed, continued building, and after *fifty-two days* of uninterrupted work, the wall was completed.

How does a child of God respond to criticism and cynicism? Take it to the Lord, pray for your enemies, and press on. Cynics may cast doubt on the outcome. Take it to God and continue laboring. When jealousy prompts them to circulate unjustified rumors, take it to the Father and pursue doing good!

Today's Verse: *Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world* (Phil. 2:14-15).

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