

Rebuild

Pastor Carlos Sibley

March 8th, 2020

Some of you may think that Dustin looks a little sleepy in the eyes. It's not because of time change, he's a new dad this week. A second born son, so we can celebrate with him and Kristen and the birth of Elias. We're excited for y'all. It is time change Sunday, I'm glad you're here. Thanks for being here. This morning I drove to the church property, it's six miles from our house to here. I passed seven cars. I counted them because they were so rare this morning. One of those seven was pulling a boat, so I knew they weren't coming here, but I thought to myself, there's not going to be anybody here, but me and a bucket of hand sanitizer. That's all that was going to be here.

It's good to worship with you. I'm so thankful today, Carla and I have the privilege of having with us dear, dear people in our lives, Al and Kim Jackson, here worshiping with us. Some of you would even know that name, those names to be familiar. And Al and Kim were our pastor and his wife while we were students at Auburn. Right out of college, I was an intern at Lakeview where Al was pastor. That year that I was an intern, Al turned 40. I remember celebrating your 40th birthday that year and still just faithful pastoring at Lakeview after all these years. And several of you have heard me tell stories and you know the impact, you may not know sometimes that who I am as a pastor is related to Al, but so much of who I am as a pastor is related to Al and I'm so thankful for him. And so as a conviction and as an honor to him, I want to say to you what I say every single week. Let's open our Bibles to Nehemiah chapter six. Now the Nehemiah is not the same every week, but let's open our Bibles is the same every week. And I learned that from my pastor and it's something that we do every week, open our Bibles.

Nehemiah chapter six, we're talking about rebuilding. Rebuilding. We see in the book of Nehemiah the power, the impact of one life that is committed to the glory of God. And we're talking about how we can rebuild things, how the Lord can do miracles in rebuilding broken things. And maybe the Father has put on your heart something that needs to be rebuilt in your life. Several years ago in the city of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony was celebrating their 100 year anniversary. They took an entire year of doing concerts to mark their hundredth anniversary and then they came home to Chicago for their very last concert. They did something that had not been known to be done with the Chicago symphony or any other symphony, and they took their current conductor and their previous two conductors and they all served, led, conducted that evening in that closing celebratory concert. They gathered in that room and the concert began. It began with a piano concert and they were conducting. At about 9:15 that night, everything was beautiful, the environment of the room was wonderful, people are absorbing the music until something all of a sudden began to happen in that room. One by one by one by one, all over that room, this little sound started going off. Just this little beeping sound, not in one spot, not in one person, but all over the room and it continued and it disrupted the whole concert. The symphony continued to play and begin to continue to plow through it, but the whole environment had been disrupted by these tiny beeps all over the room. And then they figured out what had happened. They'd had a dinner that night before the concert and everyone that came to the celebratory dinner of their 100th anniversary each

received a memorial gift clock And the manufacturer of those gift clocks had set the alarm to go off on all of those clocks around 9:15 and in that room, one right after the other, the beep beep sound just took away the evening. This morning, I want to sound the alarm on one of the greatest threats there is to finishing the task of rebuilding. And one of the great threats to finishing the task of rebuilding in our life is the simple word, distractions.

We've talked about the opposition of the enemy already in Nehemiah, but there is this subtle strategy of the enemy to hinder or halt our rebuilding, and it's by placing distractions in our life, especially when things are looking really good and really close to being finished. And we can get picked off. We can, as Paul said in Galatians five, someone can cut in on us. Something can interrupt us in our rebuilding. And so today I want you to think with me for a few minutes about how to deal with distractions. So many of us in this room can finish this sentence with one word. You can finish the sentence, I've tried to rebuild so many times, but each time I get distracted. I've tried to rebuild my health. I've tried to rebuild my marriage. I've tried to rebuild my relationship with my parents. I've tried to rebuild my walk with Christ. I've tried to rebuild my career. I've tried to rebuild my finances, there are just so many different things that the spirit of the Lord may put on our hearts that need to be rebuilt. We would look at and say, I was almost there, we were so close, but we got distracted. Here's the take home sentence for today. Rebuilding is fraught with distractions. Rebuilding is fraught. F. R. A. U. G. H. T. If you don't like that word you could use the word laden. Rebuilding is fraught with distractions. We've looked at the book of Nehemiah and we've seen this truth that God rebuilds broken things. Can you say amen? Amen. God rebuilds broken things. That's our hope. If you're looking at your life right now and there's something broken in your life, the hope is not our skill. It's not our savvy. It's not our determination. The hope for us is that God will rebuild broken things.

Don't believe the lie of the enemy that it's too late for you. God can rebuild what's broken in your life. Not only does God rebuild broken things, but we see in the book of Nehemiah that God powerfully works when we patiently wait. Proverbs 16:32 says that better is a patient man than a warrior. And we see in Nehemiah that there were days and actually months where he waited and waited on the Lord to work, waited on God to do what he needed to do before they started rebuilding. God rebuilds broken things. God powerfully works when we patiently wait. We also see that when we rise to rebuild, opposition rises to resist. And then last week we saw that rebuilding is a group project. We cannot rebuild alone. We cannot do it by ourselves. And the best of leaders, the most skilled of leaders can only rebuild with others rebuilding with them.

This morning I want us to see that rebuilding is fraught with distractions. The subtle threat to getting traction in rebuilding is distraction in rebuilding. And we try and we try and we try and we get started a little bit. We can't hold on because we get distracted. Listen, look this way, we will finish preaching through the book of Nehemiah before you finish rebuilding. It'll only take us about seven weeks to get through this book of Nehemiah. That's about how much time we're going to spend, but for some of you, the rebuild process is going to stretch way beyond that. And when we stop standing here on Sunday morning and thinking together in God's word about rebuilding, when we've kind of set that word aside, the process of rebuilding for you is still going. One of the great threats is going to be will you get distracted before you finish?

I hope today that we would glean here from Nehemiah some things that we can take with us to confront and deal with distraction so that we're not picked off before we finish. Look at

Nehemiah chapter six. Nehemiah chapter six and begin reading in verse one, you'll notice the distractions as they come in these verses.

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),

Now that's in parentheses in the ESV that I'm reading from, and it doesn't need to be taken with any less importance. I think it's critical for this story. What Nehemiah was saying is that we were close to being finished. We were close to being done. We rebuilt the walls, but we weren't completely done. The gates and the doors had not been set up yet. And right at this point where it looked like so much had been accomplished, the opposition, these distractions are still there. Verse two,

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. ³ 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?" ⁴ And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. ⁵ In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. ⁶ In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Geshem^[a] 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. ⁷ 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." ⁸ 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." ⁹ 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,^[b] strengthen my hands.

¹⁰ 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 are coming to kill you by night." ¹¹ But I said, "Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live?^[c] I will not go in." ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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.

How do we deal with distractions? How do we keep distractions from sidetracking us and sidelining us? Let me show you three ways to do that. Number one, we need to focus on the vision. Focus on the vision. What Nehemiah did in verses three and four here was, in many ways, restate the vision. I'm on this wall doing a great work. I'm rebuilding. That was the vision. It even says as he talks about Sanballat and Tobiah that he had built the wall, hadn't put the gates in, had not put the doors in the gates yet, but that was the vision. Rebuild the walls. And so Nehemiah, when he's confronted with these distractions, what is the work? He's rebuilding the walls. What is the win? To finish the walls, to get the doors hung in the gates, to get the walls up, to get the people secure, to have the walls rebuilt so that when the people saw the people of Jerusalem, they would see that God was their God, that he had done a great work in

establishing them as a city and as a people and they were secure and they were protected. He revisits the vision. He focuses on the vision when the distractions come.

Let me ask you to think with me. You're rebuilding, and maybe five weeks ago when we started this series, God burdened your heart, God broke your heart with something in your life that you know that you needed to rebuild. Many of you for a couple of weeks came and knelt across this front as you were dealing with things broken in your life that need to be rebuilt. And I want to take you back there again in your mind and heart and just see what is the word that God's called you to? What is the win? The win is not getting close to rebuilding. The win is not the distraction that's kind of coming along right now to lure you away to something else. Where was it in your life that God's character and his attributes were being distorted? When people see your life and you'd say, man, people don't see God in my life. It's broken. Remember that vision of what God wants you to do, this work that God wants you to do.

Number two, not only focus on the vision, but focus on the value, the value of the work. He says here, come and let us meet together. They intended to do harm. Verse three, "I sent messengers to them saying, I am doing a great work." He didn't say, I'm rebuilding the walls. I love the way he described it. It wasn't, I'm out here laying bricks. I'm not out here building walls. He said, I am doing a work. I'm doing a work here. There's something happening here that's bigger than just brick and mortar and it's amplified by him saying, I'm doing a great work. He shows the value of this work. He shows the conviction of this work. He shows the vision of this work. Nehemiah knew that this task that he was a part of in rebuilding for the glory of God, that he had been convicted about it. He knew that God had taken the time to convict him. God had taken the time to communicate with him. Think about the work that God had done to get his brothers to Susa so that Nehemiah could ask the question of how are the my people? And they communicate that the people are in trouble and that the walls are broken down. God convicted Nehemiah. He fell into a time of mourning and grief and fasting and praying and God called him to rebuild. Think about this. It was a great work to Nehemiah because God had taken time to convict him, to communicate to him and to call him to do this work. And this morning when you're dealing with distractions that want to pick you off and say, I don't know if I, there's something else over here, maybe we need to work on now, or there's something that comes along that tries to get you off task, be reminded that the vision that God has given to you is something that God took the time to convict you of.

That's no small thing. It's something that God took the time to communicate to you and it's something that God called you to do. What is it that God has called you to reveal? What is it that God has called you to do? Don't get sidelined, don't get sidetracked. More than 10 years ago, a friend of mine in ministry, and there's no reason not to tell you his name, but David Landreth, some of you've heard me speak of him over the years. He's passed away now, but David and I were talking and we began to talk about the possibility, very briefly, about me coming to Nashville and working with him at Long Hollow. I remember just briefly, David kinda mentioned that, he threw that out and he said, man, we could do this together. And I don't know all that was going on right at that moment, but I do remember a message back to him that was just kind of knee-jerk, I am doing a great work and I cannot come down.

And it was like at that moment, here's a good guy, well meaning guy, dear to me, doing a great work. You know why it was a distraction? It was a distraction because it was not what God had convicted me to do. It was not what God had called me to do. It was not what God had communicated to me to do. And to do anything else other than what God had called and

convicted me about would be taking a side road to what God had called me to do. I think about in your life, well meaning people, fine people, good causes, things that could even matter for eternity may not be what God has called you to rebuild right now. And you have to say no to some things because the value of this work you're doing right now is a great work because of God's glory, his name, and what he wants to do through your heart in your life.

And it's the third piece of our focus. We have to focus on the vision of the work, the value of the work and the victory of the work. Look in verse 15 of chapter six. It says, " So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 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."

That's victory. That's victory. The chapter starts with the doors not being set. By the time you get to the end of chapter six he says, we've finished. We withstood the opposition, we withstood the distractions and now we have rebuild the walls. It's been finished in 52 days. And notice how Nehemiah writing this book, the report that he gave is, "For they perceived that this work had been accomplished" listen, it wasn't that he didn't write, "They perceived that this work had been accomplished by an amazing leader" He didn't write, "This work had been accomplished by some foolproof plans." He didn't write that, "This work had been accomplished because of the skill of the people." Why this was victory, was that when they got the walls rebuilt, God got the glory. And in our life, we've got to keep reminding ourselves when we're facing distractions and rebuilding, that it's not about our benefit. It's not about our blessing. It's not about what's going to be good now in our life, but our driving passion for victory has to be, when this is all said and done, God's going to get the glory. He's going to get the praise.

Think about some of you in this room right now and you're not rebuilding anything, but you have a testimony of something that's been rebuilt in your life. Your walk with Christ right now is on fire. You're excited. You can't get enough of his word and of God's people. But there was a time, you know of when it was dry, when it was cold and you needed revival and you needed life. But you look back on that time now and you're celebrating because what has God done? He's rebuilt you. Some of you have marriages in this room that have been through some hard, hard stuff, but you sit here together linking arms and you're going on together and your marriage has never been stronger and you look back and your heart smiles because of the victory in your life. And you're able to say to other people, the only reason we're in this spot right now is because God did it. God did it.

Let's run this forward about a year. Lets go out there, March 8th, 2021, you're rebuilding right now but by God's grace and God's power, how beautiful will it be a year from now for you to be able to say, God did it. God did it. But the distractions by the enemy will be relentless. Did you pick up the descriptions in these verses? There literally was six times in this single chapter that distractions came. Six times. You may miss the first four. But he states it. Verse four, chapter six, "And they sent to me four times in this way and I answered them in the same manner." Come meet with us. I mean, how did that work? Was it four times in the same day? Was it four times in the same week? Was it four times in the same month? This messenger keeps saying, "Hey, come down to Ono and meet with us. Let's have a conversation." "I'm doing a great work. I'm not coming down." "Come down to Ono, we want to talk." "No, I'm doing a great work. I won't come down." "Come to Ono, I want to talk. Let's get council together."

"I'm on the wall. I'm doing a great work. I can't come down." He's like, Oh no, you don't. Oh no, we won't. We're not coming.

Relentless. But it goes further. Verse five, "In the same way, Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand." What does that mean? This means that it wasn't like certified mail. It wasn't just private and you read it yourself and you'll know what's in it. An open letter meant that as it traveled and came, it would be read publicly. It would be read out loud. Everybody would hear the charges that were in this letter and the charges were, Nehemiah is doing this for himself. He setting this whole thing up so he can be king. He's got his profit station to make good statements about him. So it'll look like he has authority.

Distractions. The first four times the distraction was just leave the work. Let's just hold up just a little bit. Let's slow it down. The fifth time, it wasn't leave the work, but it was lies about the work. And sometimes distractions that we deal with in rebuilding will be lies that have absolutely no truth or bearings to them. But then there was a sixth distraction, and it's described in verse 10 where he was invited to come to the temple with Shamaya and Daliah and the trouble for this was is that that would be sin for Nehemiah because he was not a priest. And for him to go into the temple Holy place would be for him to take a position that he did not have. That's why he said, "What man such as I could go into the temple and live?" That would be sin for me. There was this lure for him to sin and one of the distractions for us, not just leaving the work, not just lies about the word, but lures to sin again, in the midst of the work.

Satan's strategy is to hinder, to halt us from rebuilding. So how do we confront that? We confront it with truth and trust, truth and trust. Nehemiah says, this is the truth. I am not doing this to be king. You've just made this up. What's really going on? This is for God's people. It's for God's glory. Where did the trust come from? You see it in his prayers, not long winding, winded prayers, but pointed and precise and powerful prayers. And when the lies came, listen to this prayer, we ought to memorize it for day to day distraction work.

"Oh God, strengthen my hands." I feel so distracted. God strengthen my hands. I'm just getting off course. Oh God, strengthen my hands. He calls out to God for his help and then he gives the distractions over to God. He says, "Remember Tobais and Sanballat, oh my God, according to these things that they did." God, you take it, you remember it. I'm not going to be able to deal with it. You take the distractions, Lord, you bring about your justice. I need you to strengthen me. Maybe today you walk away from this, the whole purpose for being here this morning would be for you to grab ahold of that prayer. Oh God, strengthen my hands.

What has God called you to do? Don't let the distractions sidetrack you. Finish, finish. You're getting close and the enemy will ramp up his work. Jesus himself dealt with this. Jesus had a mission. We know that Jesus came to give his life as a ransom. To die on a cross. Jesus began to predict that with his disciples. Listen to this. In Matthew chapter 16 verse 21 it says, "From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem", his mission, "And suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed. And on the third day be raised." That was the vision. That was the plan. That was the great work. But then listen, Peter, somebody very close to him, somebody he had picked to be one of his apostles, one of his disciples, Peter speaks up and it says, "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, far be it from you, Lord, this shall never happen to you. But he turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan." Get behind me, Satan. "You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." You know what Satan did? He got behind

him. And today when you're on this mission, the enemy tries to hinder you. Speak to the enemy. Oh God, strengthen my hands, and Satan get behind me. God has called me to rebuild. I'm going to ask you to stand your feet. I want to ask you to bow your head and I want to ask you to do something this morning. I want to ask you to turn your distractions in. Remember that clock story I told you? At that concert when they stopped at the first break of that concert, they figured out what had gone on and someone stood in front of the whole crowd and said, during this break between movements of the concert, we need everyone with a clock to turn them into an usher. They just took them out of the room. And in your life right now, what about symbolically you doing something in prayer in this room this morning to where you'd say, this is a distraction. Lies, giving up, temptation to sin. Whatever it might be. If you just go to the Lord and say, Lord, here it is. Let me finish. Let me finish. Get behind me, Satan. This altar is open, the steps are open for you to come and pray. I'll be here at the front. If you want to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior today, I want to help you with that. Maybe you want to follow the Lord in Believer's baptism. You've already been saved, I'd love for you to come and share that with me and we can schedule that for the days ahead. Just bow and pray and be obedient to the Holy Spirit right now as he speaks to your heart.