

## Rebuild

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March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Good morning. Hello Watkinsville, this is different, isn't it? I'm here on the property at Watkinsville First Baptist in our worship center and you're not. I have preached to some small crowds before, but I believe this is the smallest crowd that I've ever preached to. I'm preaching to an empty room, but I'm trusting that you're connecting in your homes, in your den or on your porch or out in the yard somewhere that you're gathered together this morning. And imagine this, I'm told that thousands of people actually have seen and watched and connected to our information that we're gathering like this. It would not be the way that I would choose to do every week, but I believe it's the right thing for us to do. And I'm thankful that we're able to connect in this way at a time like this. I just want to remind you that the reasons that we're doing this is to honor our government leaders who have asked us to kind of just separate a little bit. We're doing it by the counsel of healthcare professionals that believe that it could help them not be overwhelmed in providing care for people and whatever their needs might be. And we're doing it as a way to love one another. I read this week a guy who said, I'm not scared of getting the virus, but I am concerned about giving it to somebody else. And so a way for us to love one another is to just do what we can right now to not increase the spread of what's going on with the COVID-19 virus.

I am excited, I mean, think about how excited we are going to be when we do have the opportunity to come back together face to face. That'll be a great day. We'll wake up early, we'll get here early. We'll be excited to get to do that again, so I'll look forward to that day when that happens. And you say, when's that going to be? We don't know, we haven't made a decision about next week. And so as the week goes along, we continue to pray, we continue to listen, we continue to try to pay attention to what's needed. We'll make the decision later in the week and we'll get information out to you again. If you're not getting an email from the church, please sign up for that. That's the best way for us to communicate to a mass group of people right now. And so you could send us an email at [info@watkinsville.org](mailto:info@watkinsville.org) and give us your email address there and we can add it to our email list. You can call the church and give it to us or you can go to [watkinsville.org](http://watkinsville.org) and give it to us there and we'd be able to add you to the list and that's if you're not getting the emails already from our church.

Now some of you may have needs in the days ahead. You may be young or old and need something and not able to get it and we want to help with that. Our church is ready. We're going to be answering the phones this week. We're going to be answering emails this week. We'll be on property some this week. Somebody will be here and around. We'll be in the community, serving and ministering. And so if you need something, please let us know. You can call the church or you can email the church and we will do everything we can to be able to get those needs met for you. It's a chance for us to be the church even though we're not gathered physically in the church buildings. Now our president, president Trump, has called on our nation to have this day set aside as a national day of prayer. And we're going to do that. A part of us gathering right now together is for us to pray together. And I want to lead us in a prayer with some very specific words that are put down on paper for us to pray. And I want to invite you, wherever you are, if you're by yourself or if you're with others to bow together right now,

I'm going to give words to this prayer and I'm going to lead us in this time of praying, believing that all over our nation, millions of people are doing the same thing right now. So let me lead us in prayer.

Heavenly father, we bow before you believing that you are sovereign and we praise you for that. You are in control and we are not. And Father, we want to present these words before you today, these requests before you. Father I want to ask you to guard our church from fear and anxiety. I want to ask you to help us to trust that you are in control. Father, I want to ask you to provide relief for those that are suffering from the effects of the virus throughout the world. I want to ask you to be glorified in drawing people to you and your word during these days of sickness and in many cases, fear. Father, I want to ask you to guard our church family from the schemes of the enemy. Don't let the evil one, Father we pray, get a foothold, to get an open door and cause us to become calloused or bitter or judgmental or divisive in a time of trial. Father, I pray that we might count times of trial as an opportunity for joy. Father, I pray that you had guard us from being consumed in these days with the news and entertainment. Father, I want to ask you to help us find our hope and refuge in you and in your word. Father, equip us to be wise in the use of our resources, in the use of medical resources without our hope being placed in them. I pray we would find our hope in you. Father, we pray that you would help us to be creative and to find ways and to be bold in reaching people who do not know you during these days. Help us to be ready to give an answer for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Help us to be sensitive and wise and bold with the good news of Jesus. Father, I pray that we would be humble with the reality of our weakness, of how fast things can change. Help us to number our days in order to gain hearts of wisdom. And Father, I want to ask you to stir our hearts with hope. Stir our hearts with hope in the return of your son Jesus. Give us the hope of a new heaven and a new earth and help us to be quick to celebrate that one day we will be in a place, because of Jesus, where sickness will be no more. We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Long before we knew that we were not going to be meeting face to face, I was already singing the words to the song, It is well with my soul. It's a hymn that starts out talking about good things and then talks about bad things. It's a song that starts off by saying, when peace like a river attendeth my way, and then the next phrase says, when sorrows like sea billows roll. It's a hymn that was written by Horatio Spafford. Some of you know the story, some of you maybe are unfamiliar with the story, but in 1871 Horatio Spafford was married to Anna. They had five children and in 1871 Horatio Spafford lost his young son to pneumonia. A couple of years later, Horatio Spafford sent his wife to Europe. She sailed on a ship with their four remaining children. On their way across the sea to Europe from America, their ship collided with another ship. In a matter of minutes, the ship sunk. Horatio and Anna's four children died when that ship sunk. Anna survived. She was picked up by someone in a boat, she was taken to Wales. She got a note back to Horatio Spafford and she said, "Saved alone. What shall I do?" Eventually Horatio Spafford was able to make his way to Europe. He sailed and as he sailed four days into that trip, Horatio Spafford's captain of the ship he was on called him and said, I want you to come here. This is the spot in the sea where your children were lost.

The story goes as told by a future daughter that Anna would give birth to, that on that trip across the sea, after passing that spot in the sea, that Horatio Spafford penned the words to the song that we sing that's become so familiar to us. When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll. He declared, it is well with my soul. I want to ask you, wherever you're gathered right now to join in worshipping by singing this song with our worship

team. They're going to lead us right now in the singing of this great hymn. It is well with my soul.

Let's open our Bibles now to Nehemiah chapter eight, Nehemiah chapter eight. And we continue to work through this book of the old Testament. And we're working through this book under the heading, under the thought, under the idea of rebuilding. Specifically, we're referring to this book of Nehemiah as as Rebuild, the impact of one burdened heart. Now, in these days, I've asked you to let the Holy Spirit show you something that you're broken over, that you realize needs to be rebuilt. And for some of you that has been your own walk with Christ. For some of you, you have since God's leadership in leading you to rebuild something in our culture. Maybe in these days or in the future, that God might be preparing you to be a part of leading something broken down in our culture to rebuild it for his glory, for his namesake. Some of you really see that God wants to rebuild your career, wants to rebuild relationships with other people. People have shared with me also that God is using this study in Nehemiah to rebuild their marriage. And so we're thinking about this not from the standpoint of what will benefit us, not what will make us happy, not what will give us success, but we're talking about rebuilding things that are broken and torn down for the glory of God. For it to be something that happens that gives him glory, that gives him fame and makes his name great, he gets the praise for it. And that's what was happening in Jerusalem as they rebuilt the walls around that city.

Now as we've worked through this, the great news of this story of Nehemiah is that God rebuilds broken things. That's a message of hope. And so whatever is broken in our life, God has the power to rebuild those broken things. Now, when we begin to let God rebuild those broken things, oftentimes we want to just jump right into it. We want to grab a hold of it. We're going to fix it. Finally, this is the day we're gonna make it right, but one of the first things we see in the book of Nehemiah is that it takes some time. We have to be patient, we have to give God room to work in us and through us and in situations around us. And that's why we said that God powerfully works when we patiently wait. We start building and we're waiting on God and he gives us the go ahead and we're doing some things. He's up to something. We realize in the book of Nehemiah next that there's opposition to our rebuilding.

And one of the truths we learned was, is that when we rise to rebuild, opposition rises to resist. Then we learned that rebuilding is a group project. We might want to tackle this alone, but even if it's our own personal walk with Christ, we can't rebuild that by ourselves. We need others in our life and so many areas that we're trying to rebuild, just be reminded that we need others in our life helping us. Maybe prayer warriors, maybe counselors, maybe mentors. We need people traveling with us to help us. Rebuilding is a group project. And then last week when we met, we saw that rebuilding is fraught with distractions. And the way that we deal with distractions that are always there is to remember the vision for what we had when we were rebuilding what God called us to do. To remember the value of the great work that God is doing, and then think about the victory that God's going to bring. One day we'll be able to look back and see what God has done and that'll help us deal with the distractions that come when we're trying to rebuild.

This morning in Nehemiah chapter eight, I want us to see another truth about rebuilding and it's this: Rebuilding projects that last are those done by the book. Rebuilding projects that last are those done by the book. Rebuilding projects that are going to stand the test of time, that are gonna be able to stand up when the storms of life come, are gonna be projects that we do

by the book. Have you heard that phrase before? It's almost, I guess trite in some ways, it's a phrase that we use about things when we say, well, if we're going to do that, we've got to make sure we do it by the book. And what we're saying is, is that there's a standard, there are a ways to doing something and we cannot hedge on that. We can't fudge on that. We can't take shortcuts. And for us, there is a book for us to rebuild on. There is a book for us to rebuild by and that book is the word of God. And so when we come to Nehemiah chapter eight we see that they have rebuilt the walls, but they bring in the word of God. And for them to be able to keep moving ahead as a people, they weren't able to just celebrate that the walls had been rebuilt. They also had to deal with the spiritual needs of their life and of their city and of their people.

Look with me in Nehemiah chapter eight right now. Hope you've got a Bible close by. Hope you can read along or you can listen to me as I read here just these first few verses of Nehemiah chapter eight.

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. <sup>2</sup> So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup> And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. <sup>4</sup> And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. <sup>5</sup> And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. <sup>6</sup> And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup> Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, <sup>[a]</sup> helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. <sup>8</sup> They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, <sup>[b]</sup> and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

Now when I read those verses, it is a description of the people of God having the walls built and then they go immediately to the word of God. They go to the book, the Israelite people had a book and you and I have a book and sometimes we ignore the very words of life that we have for rebuilding. We may try to rebuild with a lot of different things, and we get the counsel of others and the skill of others and the input of others. But what we rebuild, if it's gonna last, we gotta make sure that the word of God is what we are building on. That comes through loud and clear in these verses of chapter eight.

In the 1970's the country of Somalia was experienced in a tremendous famine. In fact, this is hard to comprehend, but the country of Somalia in the 1970's went through three consecutive years of no rain. Three years of no rain. Relief agencies responding in the 70's and they would come and they were trying to help the people survive. They were trying to stop the starvation. Different camps in the country of Somalia would have different agencies working. I read recently that there was one camp called camp Howba, and in camp Howba they tried to train

the children on how to fish in the Juba River. Well, the people in that camp had never tasted fish before. And here's what was going on, in the Juba, it was literally slammed full of a fish that you and I know very well now, a fish type called tilapia. And they trained those children to catch those fish and it began to meet their needs and it began to stop the starvation that was going on in that country. Now, think about it, here they were in eyesight of what they needed to have life, but they didn't even know it was there. You and I have the word of life. You and I have God's word. We have the book and our life when things are, when we're starving spiritually, when we're broken down in our life, we have right beside us, in front of us, we have access to the word of God.

One of the reasons that we find ourselves in position of needing to rebuild often is because we've abandoned the word of God. We've abandoned the words of life. We've abandoned the commands of God and we've gone our own way and we find the walls figuratively in our life broken down and we find ourselves in trouble. Gathered where you are right now, maybe God would bring a revival in our hearts for the word of God. Imagine that. What if the spirit of God worked in your home, in your life, all across our city, all across our community, to give us some kind of fresh hunger for the word of God? Who knows what God's up to in us meeting like we're meeting right now. Maybe God would show us, do something fresh in our heart to show us our absolute need for the word of life. For us to physically rebuild is one thing for us to spiritually rebuild is the lasting thing.

Whatever we are rebuilding, listen real close, whatever we're rebuilding will fall apart in the future if we don't have the word of God at the very core of whatever we're rebuilding. So let me ask you, think about this. Teenager's listening right now, senior adults listening right now, maybe some children are watching right now. How are you connected to the word of God? How are you feeding on the word of God? How are you building on the word of God? What's gonna last is going to be what's built on the foundation of the word. Not on man's wisdom, not on man's counsel, not on our skills, not on our abilities, not on our education. I mean, so many things that we've put our trust in and we've put our affections toward have actually been stripped away from us in these days. There are no sports, education is shut down for awhile, a lot of things are just kind of taken away. What about the word of God? Are you connected to the word of God? Now, the people of Israel, the Israelites, they come to this point in chapter eight and they want the book. They show us that they are people of the book. Look at it. When you look at these verses, I have it underlined in different places of chapter eight. In verse one there's this phrase, bring the book. Bring the book, Ezra. He brings the book to the people. It's the law of Moses, it's Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. It's the Torah most likely, and that's what he would read to the people. It says, bring the book. Down in verse three, it says, they were attentive to the book. Down in verse five, it says, they opened the book. And then later it says they read from the book. How are you connected to the book? How are you connected to the word? Bring the book, attentive to the book, opened the book, they read from the book. In fact, when you look through chapter eight, there were eight ways that they were connected to the word of God here. There were eight ways that they began to not just physically rebuild, but spiritually rebuild their city. Eight ways they feasted on the book. Let me just mention these to you.

When you look at this whole chapter, chapter eight, they read the word, they listened to the word, they explained the word, they understood the word, they grieved over the word, they rejoiced in the word, they obeyed the word, and they continued in the word. Now, I mentioned those kind of rapidly to just give you more of the feel of how much they were

feasting on the word. I wonder if that could be a characteristic of my life, if that's a characteristic of your life? Would I say that what I'm trying to rebuild in my life is being built first and foremost on the word. You're trying to rebuild a marriage and maybe you're getting a lot of counsel. If it's going to last, then you're going to have to rebuild that marriage and continue that marriage by reading the word, listening to the word, having the word explained, understanding the word, grieving and rejoicing over the word, obeying the word. Doing what the word says related to your life and to your marriage.

It's interesting to see the picture here. He brings the book, Ezra the priest does. They're gathered around the watergate. He begins to read the word and it gives this dramatic scene of when he opened the book that all the people stood. You see this reverence, this thirst for the word, this revering of the word, and as he opened the word and began to read the word, all the people rise to their feet. All of those names, you heard me struggle through all of those names. They're trying to get all the -iah's pronounced like Zechariah and Malchijah, alot of "-iah" words there. Who were they? It'd be like me standing here this morning and having seven people on one side of me and six people on the other side of me all standing here. What is it that they're, they were there for? I think what they did was that they wound up being the very ones who worked through the crowd of people to help them understand what was being read.

You look at it, it says in verse eight, "They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly,[b] and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading." What is that, they gave the sense? They explained, they made sense of it. I don't think it's a stretch to think about those that were initially gathered around him, working through the crowd to explain, to teach, to expound on the word. In some ways, if you're a teenager here, kind of our version of that would almost be like table coaches. It'd be like Daniel, who stands in front of the room and he teaches all the students. But then when he stops, there are those that are with you and smaller groups that are explaining the word and taking your questions and helping you apply the word. That's the literal scene. Now, one thing that's here that's really difficult to to get a feel for is how long they did this. It was early in the morning, it says, until mid day. This scene that is described here on this first day of gathering would have been like about six hours. Six hours of standing and hearing the word of God read and taught. Listen, they were hungry for the word. They were feasting on the word. This really was a revival of the people's hearts for the word of God. It was the only way that they were going to last and the only way that they were going to be able to continue.

I mentioned to you that they grieved over the word and that's actually what happened later in chapter eight. Nehemiah speaks to the people and he sees their emotion as the word is being read and he says, "Do not be grieved. The joy of the Lord is your strength", and he sent them away to rejoice it. It was like he was saying, this is what happens when you read the word. Yes, you see what God has said. You sense the conviction of God from his word and you see what you've done wrong in the past, but rejoice, rejoice. Why? How do you both grieve and rejoice over the word? We grieve over what we have done in disobedience to God, but we rejoice that he's gone to the effort, that he's made the effort of showing us what we've done wrong. It's how we go from death to life. We're convicted, we're judged, we're dealt with about the wrong things in our life, what maybe led to us needing to rebuild, but then we rejoice because we get to this point where God cares so much for us and it means so much to him that he would communicate to us words of life and Nehemiah is saying, go celebrate this. There is judgment, there's conviction, but there's joy and there's joy in the Lord. You'll find strength for continuing in the word.

How did they obey the word? They obeyed the word by doing it says. They discovered that they weren't celebrating the feast of booths and so they did it. In verse 13 it says, "On the second day, the heads of the fathers and houses of all the people with the priests and Levites, they came together to Ezra, the scribe in order to study the words of the law. And they found it written in the law that the Lord had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month." And they discover here again the feasts of the booths and this celebration, and what happens and transpires here is this seven day revival. I grew up in a timeframe where there were August revivals and they would last from Sunday to Saturday. We don't do that much anymore. This was not something necessarily that was put on the calendar for this particular day, but they discovered that there was something in God's word here that that they needed to do. And they obeyed God when they saw it in his word. What a great lesson to us. We read the word, we see that God instructs us to do something and we do it, and that's what the people did.

Let me just kind of wrap this up and bring it to a close. It's an amazing scene here, the people hungry for the word, hungry for the book, hours upon hours of just wanting to hear the word and then obeying the word. They grieve, they rejoice, they do what God says. How do we put this into our life and Watkinsville, how do we put that into our life on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning? Well, these next few days are going to be real different. Different when it comes to school. Different when it comes to work for some people, different in our community as we kind of distance ourselves and we're going to have opportunities to do things that we haven't ever done. Maybe years ago there was a shutdown for a week because of an ice storm, but for there to be kind of this sense of at least two weeks of things just kinda pausing, slowing, stopping some for many. How can we reconnect to the word?

How can we build on the word? Stay with me here for just another minute, just a few more minutes here. Those eight ways that we talked about, how they handled the word. Let me kind of reduce that down to five things that we could do over these next few days. I want to exhort you to listen the word. Listen to the word. There are so many ways we can do that. This is demonstrated even by the way that we're communicating today. We have so much technology. We have so many different avenues to listen to the word and I want to encourage you over these days ahead to saturate your home, saturate your life, saturate whatever it is you're trying to rebuild by listening to the word. Number two, memorize the word. Memorize the word. You say, I just don't have time to memorize the word. We've got some time. We've got some time. Memorize the word. Find a verse and memorize it this week. Find a passage and memorize it this week. Memorize the word over these next few days. Build by hiding the word in your heart. Number three, sing the word. Sing the word. A lot of us, we have devices where we've loaded music on it and we walk. I want to encourage you in your house to just let the words of music of the word of God that declare the word of God. Let it play. In your walk and your exercise, sing the word. Listen to the word. Memorize the word. Sing the word, prioritize the word. Make it important. Make it number one,

I heard this week that for many of the school systems, the teachers will have their assignments loaded and ready by 8:00 AM. Well, here's an opportunity for you to set your own schedule. What about it, teenagers? Why don't you prioritize the word. To set a time. Think about it, maybe when I leave your screen in just a moment, one of the things you could talk about as an individual with the Lord or as a family together would be, all right, let's talk about it. When are we going to read the word? When are you going to read the word this week? Let's set a time. We've got a chance to make a schedule. Let's do it. Let's stick to it and let's do it this week.

Let's prioritize the word. And then number five, apply the word. Like read it and don't just check the box and say, all right, read the word now on to the next thing. But read the word and say, now what do I need to do because of it. It might be that the Lord would prompt you to go to someone and meet a need, or go to someone and make a relationship right, or write someone, or share your faith, or fill in the blank. Let the spirit of God do his work. And so I would challenge you to do one thing intentionally each day this week that is applying the word. It's expressing encouragement or gratitude. Maybe it involves leaving your house to go do something. Listen to the word, memorize the words, sing the word, prioritize the word, apply the word. We got some time to do it in the days ahead. And maybe if nothing else, it would be God saying, I'm taking away a lot of excuses you've had for getting in the word. And here's your chance in your rebuilding project to prioritize the word. Read the word, build your life on the word.

I saw some pictures this week of people hoarding supplies. One guy posted, he said, I've been hoarding supplies for weeks, and then it showed a picture of a large stack of books and he said, this is what I'm going to do while I am isolated by myself. These are my supplies. Well, you may have a stack of books too. You may have a stack of old movies. You, you may have a to-do list of things, but here's what I want to say to you. Whatever it is you're trying to build, whatever it is you're trying to rebuild, don't miss the book. Don't miss the book. You might say, I don't really know if I'm very hungry for the word, I would ask you to just see this book as a love letter from God. This book is God telling us how much he loves us.

In my office here at church, I walk in and I look at my lamp and there's a post it note there that is from my wife Carla, that says, I love you. - Carla. I turn around and on my shelf there there's a note that says, Carlos, I love you and I'm proud of you. I walk into the bathroom there and on the mirror is a little post it note that says, I think you're handsome and I love you. You know what I love? I love reading those notes. I love hearing what she thinks about me. I love that she thought about me enough to post a note. I love that she thought about me enough and cared enough about me to put it on a piece of paper and leave it for me. I want to encourage you to think about this book is God's note to you. God's note to you. Listen to this verse from Galatians 2:20

He says, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose." That's what you're going to find in this book. That's what we're going to read in this book. That's what we can build on from this book. Maybe somebody today, you're listening to this and you hear about the word of God and you say, I just don't understand it. Well start right here. Start with this part where God loves you. God loves you so much that he sent his son to die for you. And he lived a sinless, perfect life. And then he went to a cross and he died. He was crucified. He was taken off that cross and he was placed in the tomb and he was buried. And on the third day he rose back to life. He died to pay for your sin. He died demonstrating his love for you. And then he rose again guaranteeing for us that there is life eternal.

And if you today would start building right there on that word, on the word, your life will change forever. And right in your home or wherever you are, you could pray right now something like this. Father in heaven, God, I've sinned. I'm not right. I need you to change my life. I need you to rebuild me. I want to start with you. I want to live my life for you. And ask



him, tell him you want to turn from whatever you've been trusting in and you want him to be the Lord and Savior of your life. Do that right now. And if you do that, turn your life over to him, for him to forgive you and save you. I'd love for you to tell me about it. Email me, call me, send me a note. Today, start building on the word. Give your life to him. He's given his life for you.

Father, right now, all over our city where people are gathered. I pray that you'd continue to do your work in the hearts and lives of people, that they would be changed forever. I pray you'd bring a revival in us for your word. Lord, do it in me. Start it in me. I pray, Lord, that the first thing on all of our minds to the next day, tomorrow morning when we wake up, would be wanting to get in the book. I pray there'd be a revival in our land for your word or because of what the word tells us and who the word tells us about. We love you. In Jesus, we pray in your name. Amen.