

A Spirit of Resilience

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Date: 19 May 2024

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[0 : 01] All right, good morning, everybody. Y'all doing well? It's good morning so far, and those of you who are listening online, glad that you're doing that. If you're new, and I've met a couple of new people, so glad to have you with us today.

We are continuing in our Nehemiah series, and Nehemiah, I've been really, really enjoying this, trust most of us have, and it's a story about renewal, and it really connects with us today.

Think about this. God's people, they're at a time where there is just a remnant left in Judah, and they're called to rebuild a temple, so an old temple is done away with, a new temple has been built, and yet the city of God is not as it should be, and so that's what Nehemiah has come to do, rebuild that, and we have a lot in common with them.

Like, the church today is a remnant. Jesus came, and he established a new temple, right? And just like, and then we're going on, and we're doing the work of rebuilding his kingdom, building up his church, and he's doing it through us, and we're doing it in his power.

And just like Nehemiah's day, as they're building up Jerusalem, they're doing it awaiting this Messiah King who was prophesied to come and yet hadn't come. Jesus fulfilled that, but we're the same.

[1 : 16] We are the people of God. We are the new temple, his church, and we are awaiting the return of our Messiah King. Isn't that amazing? And so we get to do this together.

And so that means for us, as God's people, as his church, we are the generation, every church, every generation, we get to do that same work of renewal that we are seeing here, taking our place on the wall, owning it, standing shoulder to shoulder.

See, renewal is spiritual formation. It is growing up. We are being built stone upon stone as living stones, 1 Peter tells us.

And that means that as much as we have to own this privately in our own lives, devotionally, we got to own this together. Spiritual formation can't be done in isolation. I want to say this. There has been a wonderful move and a return in recognition of how important it is to own our spiritual formation privately, and we should be doing that.

But oftentimes, and I heard a comedian say this, you know, human beings, we don't just react. We always overreact. And so there's a tendency to kind of swing the pendulum too far and say, like, I don't need anybody else.

[2 : 27] I just need me and Jesus and my alone time. That is not true. You do need that, but you can't do renewal in isolation. You need to be connected, integrated, a part of the people of God.

We do this thing together. And if you don't, you're going to hit a low ceiling. But in community with the people of God, spiritual formation, our growth together, the potential is exponential.

And so we need God to stir us through each other so that we don't become complacent and we don't neglect the thing of, you know, putting down, caring about the kingdom of God and seeking his kingdom first.

Our lives can easily become about our own little kingdoms, our own little plot, taking care of our own little homes. And if you choose to live that way, what is going to happen? Your world is going to shrink.

It's just going to get smaller and smaller and smaller. But renewal work, what it does, it enlarges you. Your vision is expanding and it expands to more and more and more to see what God is doing.

[3 : 29] And what he is capable of doing in you and around you. So my appeal to us is come and join in. Come and build. Find your place at the wall and let us help you find your place in the wall.

Let's do this together. Because it grows our capacity and our area of influence. Not for the sake of spreading the brand of One Harbor Church, but it's about Jesus.

It's not about us. God's revealing himself, his mystery of redemption through his church. New Bern City needs this. And that can go beyond us.

It can go beyond the city of New Bern. It could be regionally. Paul talks about, man, as your faith grows, your area of influence also gets enlarged. That's what we want.

We want Jesus, the proclamation of the gospel to spread and spread beyond us to Kingston and Little Washington, places like Goldsboro. And what if it was in God's plan to use us in that way?

[4 : 26] Could he not? Could he not? That's more people saved, more people renewed, more people restored, marriages reconciled, sickness healed, prodigals returning. What if we get to see the next generation rise up to be all in for Jesus?

Refusing to compromise, refusing to play footsie with evil and darkness. That's what's on the table for us. That's why we should be caring about renewal. But it needs disciples, again, like you and me, under the favor of God, in his power, giving our life, leveraging our life to this beautiful call of renewal.

And we need to dream big like this. We need to let that expand and grow in our hearts. But at the same time, as fun and beautiful as that can be, as exciting as it can be, man, we should walk into this soberly as well because renewal isn't going to come easy.

When renewal picks up momentum, God's enemies take notice and they push back. And that's what we're going to see today, like in the chapters that we're reading, the selection of verses that we're reading.

And today's sermon is titled, A Spirit of Resilience, because we need that. Resilience is endurance. Resilience is courage. Resilience is perseverance, even in the face of opposition.

[5 : 43] So let's look at how opposition comes and how resilient disciples respond. Nehemiah chapter 4, verse 1, it says this, Now when Samadlat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged.

And he jeered at the Jews. And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, what are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves?

Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish and burn ones at that? And Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him and he said, yes, what they are building, if a fox goes up on the wall, it will break down their stone wall.

This is God's word. See, devotion to renewal, like what's happening in this book, it's going to be met with opposition. And it comes from all kinds of directions.

Paul talks about in Corinthians, as they're doing ministry, it says, we are hard pressed on all sides all the time. And we have, as a people of God, we have opposition that we can see and we have opposition that we can't see.

- [6 : 57] And they do whatever they can to wear us down. Opposition to this, their purpose is to wear down God's people so the renewal work either slows down or it stops altogether.
- And we must be resilient because we will be held in contempt and we will be mocked. And this is kind of the psychological warfare, if you want to like go that direction and use some kind of modern parlance.
- It's the warfare of the mind and the soul, being mocked and held in contempt. Man, that's tough. It is deflating. It plays at our emotions and it plays at our desires, the thing that says, man, it's so good to be liked and accepted.
- And see, what happens is, is we were meant for blessing, right? We were meant for good things to be spoken over us. And so when we get the opposite of that, we don't know what to do. We are intrinsically, God created us not to get a condemnation heaped on us and to be belittled and treated this way, like what's happening to God's people.
- And so there's this tendency to want to compromise a little bit, to want to give in. Last week, Steve, he was with us. He taught about losing cultural respectability and coolness.
- [8 : 14] That's kind of the call of uncomfortable Christianity. And I'm not saying that we should make it our life's ambition to get people to hate us. That's not what I'm saying, right?
- There must be something winsome about our faith and how we live. We're called to live with hearts full of love and compassion toward others. We're meant to walk in kindness.
- But having said all of that, we must never, ever compromise the faith. We must never, ever compromise the truth in the way that Jesus has called us to walk in.
- And so you can be a nice person and a Christian. You can do all that. And Jesus said, you know what? People are still going to hate you because they hated me. I remember in my early 20s, and I had my own business.
- And, you know, one of the things you have to do when you have your own business, you got to drum up clients. And so I was sitting with some potential clients at a business lunch. And I don't know how the conversation weaved this way, but they began to mock Christians and Christianity.
- [9 : 21] They didn't know I was a Christian, you know? And you know what? I didn't say anything. I kept quiet to my shame because it was like, man, this is big money potential.
- I don't want to like, I don't want, I need this account. And so what I did is I shrunk back in fear in that moment. And so I had to go to God and I had to repent. And, you know, what's funny is I didn't get the account anyway.
- So I lost the account. I lost some of my dignity, right, at the same time. But I'm just kidding. God's grace, man, he covers that. And he gave me more chances in the future to stand up and not shrink back.
- And here's the thing. I'm not saying you always have to do that every single time. Sometimes in those moments, God's calling you to stand up for your faith in Jesus and take the hit that might be coming. And, you know, sometimes he doesn't call you to do that because it would be like casting pearls before swine.
- And that's not like the Christian version of throwing shade at the world, right? It's like a bunch of pigs out there. I'm not saying that. The whole idea of pearls before swine is like pigs, if you throw in food and pearls, they're going to treat it the same way.
- [10 : 24] They don't know pearls are precious. And so if you give people something precious, precious truth, you have to discern, man, are they even, sometimes they're just not in a place where they're even ready to hear it and listen to it.
- And so it just gets misunderstood and mistreated and abused. You have to be wise and discerning. So sometimes you've got to discern what God is calling you to do in the moment.

But here's what we get to do every single time. We get to pray. That's what Nehemiah does right away, right? In the face of all this jeering, in the face of being held in contempt and mocking, he runs to prayer.

When you, that's the first order of renewal work, guys. And we keep saying, I mean, you're going to, this is going to be repeated ad nauseum, just so you know, through this series because they always pray. In this book, when you're mocked or held in contempt, bring it to God.

Pray to him because he is the one who fights for you. I remember as a young kid in our neighborhood having these name-calling sessions with other kids in the neighborhood, right? And we would like, I don't know why, but we would just start calling each other things like poop face and tomato head and butt breath.

[11 : 32] I mean, we obviously didn't have a lot to work with here. We were very young. But at some point, we either ran out of ideas or someone finally got their feelings hurt and left. And even as a young boy, if I won that mock session, I never left really feeling any sense of victory.

And God's people, we have to realize, is like, we don't punch back. We don't fight back in the same way that the enemy comes at us. Like, we don't do the mocking like San Belat and Tobiah do.

What they do, what we do, is we go to our greatest help. We go to our greatest advocate just like they did. Listen to how bold they are. They go and they pray to God. Verse 4, hear, O our God, for we are despised.

Okay? They bring it to God. They name the thing that's going on. They're honest about it. We are despised. Now listen to this. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives.

Do not cover their guilt and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight. For they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

[12 : 44] And some of us read that and they're just like, and you're thinking, we're allowed to pray like that? That doesn't sound very Christian. Wait a second. But here's the thing.

And guys, the psalms are full of these, they call them imprecatory psalms, where the people of God and guys like David and other ones, they write these prayers for the people of God to pray that are like, God, come and judge our enemies.

Because they're your enemies. And here's the thing. We can do this. We can go to God for justice. We get to lay some pretty gnarly requests before him at his feet because you know what?

We do that knowing he knows better than we do. We can hand it to him. And then say like, ah, but you're the God of justice. You know what to do better than me. So I'm going to lay my complaint.

I'm going to lay my request before you. But you know what? Ultimately, I'm going to trust you with it to know what to do with it. It is okay to want God to fight for you.

[13 : 43] If you are a son and daughter of the king, it is okay to want him to fight for you and fight on your behalf and to go to him in that way. Especially when you are being mistreated and abused.

Now on the surface, I think we're disciplined in this way. On the surface, it sounds so much more mature as Christians to just like, no, no, I'm just going to pray for forgiveness.

Just let it go. Just move on. But think about this. Forgiveness without justice is a terrible thing. Consider this more deeply. Let's take something that's, let's just go to the extreme.

Something terribly oppressive and abusive like sex trafficking. If you just pray for the trafficker's forgiveness without praying for justice for their victims, that isn't very righteous.

That isn't very righteous. We should want both at the same time. We should want justice for those victims. We should want them to be safe. We should want them to be restored. We should want them to be healed.

[14 : 44] We should want them to be rescued and delivered out of those situations. And at the same time, we could pray for the hearts of those who are so jacked up that they'd be willing to be the kind of person that would do that to somebody.

In a similar way, Nehemiah is praying against the injustice being done toward God's people, right? And he's doing this over a couple of guys saying some mean words.

And so before we labeled Nehemiah a snowflake, there is a good reason for him to get angry over this. These words had a greater purpose behind them.

They are designed to discourage the people of God, to diminish the work that is being done. They are meant to make God's people feel stupid and insignificant and worthless.

They are intended to make them walk away from the renewal work, the purposes of God, and instead remain captive to trouble and shame and fear.

[15 : 48] These same words are whispered to us today in our minds all the time. They are sewn into our hearts all the time by the accuser, by Satan. And sometimes he uses people to do that.

Nehemiah doesn't get mad at the people for possibly being affected by these words. He gets mad at the right people. And being jealous for God's people, being jealous for his church, being jealous for one another means you fight for them by going to the one who fights for us.

You and I have to believe that God cares about things like words that attack us and tear us down. Some of you have had stuff said over you. Maybe earlier in your life, maybe more recently, things like you are an idiot.

You are just a mistake. You are worthless. You are a waste of space. You've got nothing between your ears. You'll never amount to anything. And those are painful things.

When those things come from our peers, our parents, or our authority figures, they have a way of working into our hearts that we start to believe them and then we live toward them.

[16 : 54] They become self-fulfilling prophecies. Satan does the same thing. He whispers accusations. He whispers discouragement. He says to us, I know what you really are. You put on this facade towards everybody else, but I know you're such a hypocrite.

You aren't qualified. How dare you think you could minister to anybody else? How could God someone love someone like you who's done X, Y, and Z? That's the accuser.

He comes in and he sows and he whispers those things to us all the time to tear us down, to heap condemnation and accusation upon us so that we will lay down the work of renewal.

We become so discouraged and so disheartened, we actually begin to believe it. Nehemiah calls those things evil. He calls those things what they are, sinful.

He names them rightly and he sees how it provokes God to anger. A massive part of resilience, a massive part of us being resilient disciples is believing that God is jealous enough for you and for me that he hates when we are sinned against.

[18 : 02] He hates when we are treated this way. And we get to go to him with that, but we can give it to him. And it doesn't mean he's going to fix it the way we think he should or in the timing we'd prefer, but he is going to be angry about anything that stands in the way of the renewal work he wants us to engage in.

The renewal work that should be going on in his people's lives. Resilience and resilience fights back. How? By bringing it. We don't white knuckle it and say, I got this.

No, no. It fights back by going to God in prayer. He's the one that can do this. He fights for us. He fights for ourselves and for others. Prayer is an act of faith.

It's a belief and trust that God cares and he is for you and he is for me. He is for his church and that this God that we come to, he says true and better words.

Words that infuse us with strength and hope and courage to continue doing this work of renewal. And we need to be people of prayer.

[19 : 04] We do. We absolutely do. This isn't an optional extra as the people of God. This should be central part of our lives that we're engaging in on a regular basis, on a daily basis.

And that's how we fight the psychological warfare of the enemy because that is a very real thing. Words are powerful things. Prayer is necessary for resilience.

And look what happens because they pray. Verse six, so we built the wall. All that negativity, all the jeering that was happening to them, they prayed to God and they continued the work on the wall.

And it was joined together to half its height for the people had a mind to work. And that is an amazing victory in that moment. God's people pushing through in prayer, the wall being joined to half its height.

God's people being resilient, seeing success, seeing things happen and taking place. And in that time, when we step back and we see those victories, it's like, yes, God, you've done the thing.

[20 : 04] And you know what? We're tempted to let our guard down. We did it. We've arrived. But as much as the good, as nice as that sounds, that is never a possibility for God's people.

Because right on the heels of that, looks like there's some success, something else happens. Verse seven, when Sambalat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites, look, man, they're gaining some allies now.

Now it's not just Sambalat and Tobiah and Samaria. Now it's a whole lot of folks. They heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed.

They were very angry. And they plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. So their discouraging words didn't work.

The enemy tries that. If that doesn't work, he's going to try something else. And these guys, they did that. They tried something else. Be aware, you and me, we need to be aware that the enemy is always seeking to bring confusion and destruction.

[21 : 10] This happens all the time in the church. We get busy. We get some success. Looks like we're getting some momentum. We're just like, we have arrived. Everything is going well.

We put our guard down. And then we get our right hook out of nowhere. And that can even happen in our own lives. Let me tell you a little story. Like in my early 20s, like I had a pornography problem. And I gained victory over that.

Like to God be the glory. And for years, I had victory over that. And I was like, man, I got this thing licked. And as soon as I let my guard down, you know what happened?

The enemy came in and he hooked me in again. And I had to find victory in that again. But this time around, I was a little bit wiser. I said like, uh-uh-uh.

I'm not going to fall prey to that again. I'm going to be vigilant. I'm going to be on guard. And I'm going to understand like just because he comes one way. And I seem to have some victory. It doesn't mean he's going to not come back again in a different way.

[22 : 07] Satan, what he does, if he gets us discouraged, what he's going to do, he's going to get us to turn on one another. He likes to get the church plotting against one another. He gets us to nurse our disappointments and our disagreements.

And then we go and we find others who share that common ground. We find some Ashtodites, right? We find some other ites that are just like, oh, yeah, I see it how you see it.

I don't like what's going on here. And then off we go. We've got a faction. There's gossip and there's slander and there's murmuring. And those are all surprise attacks that bring confusion into God's household.

And that confusion feeds discord, which in turn breeds more confusion. And what that is, it creates a downward spiral of destruction. Where there is confusion and discord, renewal work will stop.

Verse 10, the people of Judah are affected by this, this possibility of this coming attack. In Judah, it was said, the strength of those who bear the burdens is failing.

[23 : 17] There is too much rubble. By ourselves, we will not be able to rebuild the wall. And our enemies said, they will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.

So what is the response of God's people? They're feeling it. They're afraid. So what do they do? Verse 9, oh, there it is again. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

And at that time, the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us 10 times, you must return to us. So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall and open places, I stationed the people by their clans with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

They were ready for warfare. And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome and fight for your brothers, fight for your sons, fight for your daughters, fight for your wives, fight for your homes.

And when our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. And from that day on, half of my servants worked on construction and half held the spears, shields, bows, coats of mail.

[24 : 41] And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.

And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, the work is great and widely spread.

And we are separated on the wall far from one another. In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us. So we labored at the work.

And half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out. I also said to the people at that time, let every man and a servant pass the night within Jerusalem that they may be guard for us by night and may labor by day.

So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes. Each kept his weapon at his right hand. And you see how they respond.

[25 : 50] And there is a simplicity how they dealt with this thread of confusion. Resilient disciples watch each other's back through prayer and readiness to rally.

We have to pray to God for each other. We have to do that. Notice it didn't say Nehemiah prayed. It said we prayed. The people of God are engaged in this prayer.

Otis, he's got a tattoo that says, I got your six. And the whole idea is I got your back. When you're in a combat zone, you have to do that for each other. Spiritual warfare, we have to have each other's back.

We need to protect one another prayerfully. Look what they did in Nehemiah's day. The leaders rallied. The people rallied. Everybody rallied.

While one was working on the wall, there was another watching out for the enemy. That's what we call praying for one another today. I got your back in prayer. It's what we are supposed to be doing when we get together.

[26 : 57] We gather in community groups. And when we're not together in those places, we're holding each other up in prayer. Or I got your six. And so, man, we should do that.

We should know. We should have our community group list. And we should, through the week, be praying over the people on that list. Watching out for one another. Because we need each other's support. We need to be thinking, man, how can, Lord, how can I support them in prayer?

How can I lift them up in prayer? I might hold them in prayer. How might they be vulnerable to the enemy's attack? And we could even ask them, hey, how can I be praying for you? That's front-footed back-watching.

Which I don't even know if is a word. It sounds really strange when you say it. And that front-footed back-watching, that means I'm proactively praying over you and you're praying over me.

Let's be front-footed to do that. Let's be front-footed not to just be proactively having each other's six. But let's be front-footed to ask for help. Right? He says, like, whoever, sound the trumpet.

[28 : 05] Like, man, if you're the one being attacked, sound the trumpet. And we will rally to you. Rose Omer, she's this precious lady in our church. She's been going through chemo.

She's been fighting cancer. She's sounded the trumpet. And we rallied to her in prayer. And thus far, you know what? God has been working some miracles out in that situation. I'm not saying she's cancer-free, but, man, it looked very dire.

And she keeps getting little victory out of little victory and little victory. And you know what else? She knows she's not fighting alone. She knows there is a ton of people praying for her who's got her back.

And we've got to be a community that stands together, that stands at the ready for each other, to rally to one another. It's how renewal work keeps pushing forward.

It's how we can be resilient disciples. Renewal doesn't wait until your life is perfect and grand.

[29 : 09] It isn't. The whole context of Nehemiah, they're in a deep, dire situation. Renewal typically happens when life is tough. Life is messy.

It happens in every circumstance, every season of life. And so we always have to be ready. We always have to be ready for one another, for one another's sake.

And this next round of opposition, it happens after the walls are finished. So Sambalat 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 and the gates. Sambalat and Geshem sent to me saying, come and let us meet together at Haciferim in the plain of Ono.

I said it that way on purpose. But they intended to do me harm. And I sent messengers to them saying, I am doing a great work and I cannot come down.

[30 : 09] Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you? And they sent to me four times in this way. And I answered them in the same manner. In the same way, Sambalat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand.

In it was written, it is reported among the nations. And Geshem 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.

And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, there is a king in Judah. And now the king, the king of Babylon, will hear of these reports.

So now come and let us take counsel together. Then I sent to him saying, no, such things as you say, no such things as you say have been done. For you are inventing them out of your mind.

For they all wanted to frighten us. Thinking their hands will drop from the work and it will not be done. Prayer. Prayer. But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

[31 : 15] And now I went into the house of Shemaiah, the son of Deliah, son of Mahitabel, who was confined to his home. And he said, let us meet together, Nehemiah, in the house of God within the temple.

What a great place to meet. Let us close the doors of the temple for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night. But I said, should such a man as I run away and what man such as I could go into the temple and live?

I will not go in. 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.

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. Prayer.

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.

[32 : 21] Sanballat, Tobiah, they're schemers, man. They couldn't get the work to stop through mocking, through contempt, through confusion, through a surprise attack that got revealed.

So now they're trying one more thing. They first start by offering Nehemiah an olive branch. Nehemiah, come out. Meet with us.

They schemed to get Nehemiah to compromise his leadership by going into the temple, which would be breaking God's law. That was a no-no. It's the same for you and me.

There will be temptation away from renewal through false peace and fearful compromise. It's going to hit us all the time. The enemy, he is a tricky little dude.

The irony is the place where Sanballat and Tobiah say, come out and meet with us, right? That plane of oh-no. In English, that means the plane of grief.

[33 : 22] And when you seek peace through compromise, that's where you're heading. You're heading to grief. And we often compromise with those who attack us for what we believe, who attack us for our faith and for what it stands for.

It's a biblical theme throughout the Bible. When the Israelites were enslaved by Pharaoh, God comes and says, I'm going to rescue you. Pharaoh makes their lives even worse. The Israelites don't go to God.

They go to Pharaoh for help. Even as he oppressed them. Sanballat, he's here offering Nehemiah a meeting. Come together. Let's make an agreement.

Let me be your friend. Beware compromising with people who hate God and hate his people. Little things. I'll be nice if you just keep quiet about your faith.

If you affirm my choices and my lifestyle, I won't cut you out of my life. Those are false offerings of peace. It's finding peace on the enemy's terms.

- [34 : 27] Here's what you and I have to discern. People are going to do this. They will leverage things like peace and relationship to intimidate you into compromising your faith and obedience to God.

It's hitting us more and more these days, friends. One of the great tricks of the enemy today, one of his great schemes, is that you will compromise fidelity and faith in God for the sake of relationship.

People want, and the enemy's desire is this, to exert power to get you to live on their terms.

And as Christians, we have to remember that no political party, no ideology, no philosophy of man, whatever the current cultural orthodoxy is today, it doesn't get to dictate how you and I live.

No relationship is more important than your faithfulness to God. As a disciple of Jesus, no relationship is more important than that. Our job is to love God, to do his will, and to walk according to his truth without compromise.

- [35 : 44] And we don't have to be jerks. We don't. But that doesn't mean we should compromise. See, the enemy is going to use comfort, convenience, or fear to seduce us.

To seduce us into compromising somewhere and ultimately to put down God's work of renewal. But renewal does not compromise. We need to be able to discern temptations like this.

Temptations towards false peace, offerings of false peace, and fearful compromise. Resilient disciples need discernment to avoid being deceived into compromise and sin.

And we're going to land here. The enemy will distract us and tempt us any way he can. And Sanballat was luring Nehemiah with false peace in order to kill him.

That didn't work, so he tried the more religious version. Hired a false prophet. Told Nehemiah, why don't you break God's law? Come into the temple.

- [36 : 49] Save yourself. They're coming for you. I heard God say this. Nehemiah was able to sniff that out. He was able to discern. Discern that deception.

Deception. You and I, we need discernment. You know what that comes... That means you and I have to be in God's word. Nehemiah knew he wasn't supposed to go into the temple because he knew God's word.

He knew God's law. He knew God said, you can't do that. And when you and I, when we are illiterate to the word of God, it is easy for us to get tempted and deceived into things.

We have to be people of the word. We have to be people that know and understand and are able to discern the nature and the voice of God. Friends, renewal work will have opposition.

We will be tempted by discouragement, confusion, distraction, and fear. So what hope do we have? What hope do you and I have to not fall prey, to not give up?

- [37 : 55] Here's the thing that I want to leave us with. Remember this. God led his people through it all. He did. Verse 20 of chapter 4.

Nehemiah says, remember this. Our God fights for us. That's what we need to hold on to. God, it will lead us through every opposition and he will lead us through it together.

He will fight for us. And as he does that, we must turn to him and pray and trust him and help each other to do the same. Nehemiah 4.20.

Our God will fight for us. So we labored at the work. There are two options in life, friends. Join in with God's work of renewal and he will fight for you.

Or don't. But you'll be in danger of ending up on the side of Sanballat and Tobiah fighting against God. Or being deceived and being taken out.

[39 : 01] The good news of the gospel though is that Jesus came. He came first and he fought for you and me. He won the victory over our greatest opposition.

Much greater than Sanballat and Tobiah represented here. He won the victory over sin and death. Jesus in his life and in his death and his sacrifice, he was resilient and he stayed true to the very end.

He saw it through. He saw the work of renewal through. And he calls his disciples, you and me, to take our place with his church to carry on his work of renewal until he returns.

Jesus fought for us. And he continues to fight for us. As the band comes up and we respond, if you're here, you're not yet a follower of Jesus, I want to say to you, man, if you're not on God's side, you are fighting against him.

Stop fighting against God and just surrender to him. And here's the thing. Jesus loves to turn enemies into disciples and friends. That's what he does. Takes the enemies of God and he turns them into sons.

[40 : 08] He turns them into the daughters of the king. He wants to save you, not destroy you. Come to him. Surrender your life to him. Turn it over to him.

Trust in him for salvation. In a moment, there's going to be an opportunity for you to respond. There's going to be a prayer up on the screen for you to pray. And if you're here, you're listening, you're already a follower of Jesus.

In a moment, we are going to take communion. But I want us to prepare for it and come to it this way. Let's examine our hearts. Let's respond to what God's been saying to us, how he's been convicting us or maybe stirring us or encouraging us today.

Communion, as we come to it, think about this. It reminds us that Jesus fought for us and won the victory for us, the one we couldn't win. And he did it for his church.

And he unites us together. We come around one person as the body of Christ together. We're not alone. We're not isolated. And when we take it by faith in a mysterious way, wonderful way, we experience this amazing means of grace.

[41 : 10] And it works renewal in us. It strengthens us. It encourages us. And it does that for one another. It builds, it can build the bonds of peace towards one another as well.

And so let's take 30 seconds right where we're at. Take time to examine your hearts. Respond to God. And when you're ready, go to the table nearest you. When you get back, you can take communion.

Father God, as my friends around the room prepare to come to the communion table, I pray that you would bless every single one of us. Work powerfully in this moment.

As we come and we take of these beautiful things, your body broken for us, your blood shed for us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.