0:00:00
Book of Nehemiah, chapter number 6, verse number 10. And Lord willing, we will conclude this chapter this morning, Nehemiah 6, 10. And just kind of piggybacking on a couple of things. One, you might have seen a beautiful collection of water bottles outside, or should I say, Stanley's.

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I sell them at a discounted price on your way out. And so, but listen, ultimately, it's hard to discern what's coming in and what's coming out. As you know, about four or five months ago, we had all the carpet in here changed. Just trying to make sure that we are not putting more on those who come in and clean the building, which is why you're probably told if you could just leave your cup outside, you can then

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redeem it on your way back out again. We will make sure that there is water. I know that we love to come in, sit down, have a nice cup of coffee. Maybe a back rub. Maybe some doughnuts All these different things that'll help us get into the mood of hearing the word and you can do all of that Before you get here at 1015 and so I'm not saying you can't do it I'm just saying you probably can't do it here

0:01:04
Okay and so with that being said I pray that the Word of God will suffice in order to bring that calm that we all need and As LaSondra said next Sunday following service. We'll be having our next steps meeting. And so if you are been here for a while and you wanna know what we're into, or brand new and you wanna know what we're into,

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it's a really good time to come out. I'm inviting you out. I will be here, a chance to talk, meet some of the church leadership as well, to really get an idea of what we do beyond just Sunday morning.

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So again, take some time, scan the QR code on the back, reach out to LaSondra, let you know that you'll be here. And of course, we will be providing lunch. So again, that will be next Sunday following service, which is approximately about 1215 or 1230, unless I really get on one, then it could be 132 o'clock.

0:01:49
I'm just joking, all right? With that being said, Nehemiah 6.10, the scriptures record, now when I went into the house of Shemaiah, the son of Delilai, son of Mehebel, who was confined to his house, he said, let us meet together in the house of God within the temple.

0:02:03
Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They're coming to kill you by night. But I said, 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.

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And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced a prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sambal 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. Remember Tobiah and Zambolid, oh my God, according

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to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Nodiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid. So the wall was finished on the 25th day of the month of Elul in 52 days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and felt greatly in their own esteem. For they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

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Moreover, in those days, the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them. For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son of Log, Shekiniah, the son of Arah, and son of Jovaniah, and had taken daughter Meshulam, the son of Berechiah, as his wife.

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Also, they spoke of his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him, and Tobiah sent letters to make me afraid." Father, we just pray this morning, Lord, as we come to your word, that we are open to receive, that we reflect on the word as a mirror revealing

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things in our soul, things that we cannot change, but Holy Spirit, things that you desire not only to change, but to mature us in. So this morning, Lord, teach us, make us pliable, precious Holy Spirit, and cause us to grow so that Christ

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may be seen in the world. And this we pray in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. Be seated. So obviously, we're picking up our study here in chapter 6. And if you were here last week, we

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were made witnesses of an amazing feat as Nehemiah and the people drew near to finishing the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem, the wall that was completely destroyed as Jews were taken into Babylonian captivity. And now this building project, if you would,

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is coming to its completion. Now, we know that this project has centered around a particular cupbearer by the name of Nehemiah, a man who, like David, was a man after God's own heart. Cupbearer turned project engineer

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now became a true leader among the Jewish people as they appointed him to be governor. Nehemiah's leadership under the direction and power of the Lord was above reproach. He paints the perfect picture of what godly leadership looks like.

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Now, I don't want to go too far back, but what we've learned from studying the book of Nehemiah is that the godly leadership doesn't begin and end in the penthouse. In fact, we have said from the beginning, God's work done God's way will be marked by opposition.

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This isn't a theme in just this letter. It's a theme throughout scripture. And it's a reality for all godly leaders. As we left off last week, Nehemiah sitting in the governor's seat with the wall near done, with the exception of the doors and the gates

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that needed to be put in. People were united. They were no longer exacting interest from one another. They were standing side by side. It looked as though Nehemiah successfully accomplished God's plan, God's way,

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in the midst of continuing opposition. The end. Be a great place to stop. Be a great place to say that in the end, they had success, they had victory, and they lived happily ever after. However, as we learned last week,

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work that is almost done is still not done. So while there were no holes in the wall, the fact that the doors and gates still needed to be hung was enough for Nehemiah's enemies to continue their effort to stop him from finishing what he started.

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And if you recall, the enemy's plan was simple, just distract him. So he sent a letter inviting him down to the plain of Ono, to what appeared to be on the surface a nice, peaceful summit. Nehemiah saw it for what it was in an attempt to delay his work. He knew that they were also thinking about taking his life. So then we know Nehemiah said no to Ono.

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And it was a word that we said last week, every leader who desires to accomplish God's work, God's way, must understand. You're going to hear me say that over and over again. We said last week that discernment is key. If we're to know when the Lord has asked us to stop at work or to keep going, discernment, as we said last week,

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is where we need to make sure that we're growing in. As I said, discernment isn't some mystical voice speaking to us about situations or certain people. The spiritual discerner is the one who uses God's Word to discern truth from error. The discerner isn't simply being negative or cynical. True discernment sees the good where others might miss it, just as it is able to see the bad where others are

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deceived by it. This is what we said last week. Discernment isn't just a spiritual gift. All believers are enabled to discern truth from error as they mature in understanding God's word. Nehemiah discerned that Zabala was not interested in peace. Therefore, he replied, no, I am doing a great work. I cannot come down.

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Why should I stop the work? Why should I leave the work and come down to you? The man of God was not filled with pride. He was finishing the work that he was called to do. Nehemiah knew it wasn't his great work, it was the Lord's. He was just merely a willing vessel that God had chosen to use to accomplish his will. He knew the work belonged to the Lord, and he wouldn't allow anything to distract him from finishing it. It's a position that we all need to take

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as we continue to serve him. But his enemies, they also would not relent. So even though Nehemiah refused the invitation to come, true to form, their nature emerges once again. So then they began to spread false rumors about Nehemiah. They figured if they would accuse him of conspiring

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to become king, that maybe he'd be afraid enough to come down and kind of stop the conversation. But remember, he was the king's cupbearer. Had an intimate relationship. King Artaxerxes knew the character of Nehemiah. And Nehemiah knew the character of the king.

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So Nehemiah wasn't moved by the lies that were spreading about him. He knew all they were trying to do again was to simply distract him. They thought that they could intimidate him. But beloved, as children of God, people

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are going to say things about you falsely. We talked about this a little bit Wednesday night. And can I tell you, it's not just going to be those on the outside. It'll come from believers as well. But we must remember the words of the Lord in Matthew 511.

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Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you, and there are all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you So we got home from Bible study my wife said something and I found it interesting and she turned to me and she said, you know, I was thinking about

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Things that people say in the churches, people say things about one another. She said, and we often hear the phrase, church hurt. And then she turned and she looked at me, she said, but boy, can I tell you something? There ain't nobody more church hurt than a pastor.

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And I looked at her and I said, well, how come you didn't say that when we were saying that's good? And she said, because I didn't want people to think I was just speaking about you. I mean pastors just as a whole. And so I was thinking about what she was saying. Believers and godly leaders have to understand

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that the enemy will talk. But Benjamin Franklin, writing in Poor Man's Almanac, he said this, since I cannot govern my own tongue, though within my own teeth, how can I hope to govern the tongues of others? In other words, we have hard enough time worrying about what we say, let alone what somebody else is saying. You're not going to be able to stop people from talking. Here's what you have to do. Be determined not to let it intimidate you, deter you, or to stop you. You have to be determined to move forward. This happens every day as people especially within the church complain malign and often speak

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falsely not just about the guy in the pulpit about one another this is what leads to rumors and gossip as ministry leaders and elders and and pastors people attempt to see their feelings justified or have their felt needs considered because maybe these leaders aren't doing what they expect them to do.

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It's interesting going through this section of scripture, right, because it's not something that I would just get up on one Sunday morning and preach about. Proverbs 26, 22 says, the words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels.

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They go down into the inner parts of the body. We have to make sure that we immediately shut things down when people begin to speak. You want to know why? Because it's enticing. They may strike something that you've already been thinking.

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I kind of felt this way about this. I kind of felt this way about that. Just remember what Solomon is saying. They are like delicious morsels. We feel like we're being justified. We have to make sure that we are careful

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Because that doesn't mean that we are So you look at this situation, right? The scriptures tell us to guard our hearts for out of it flows the issues of life We look at Nehemiah And here's a man who's in the midst of it all He's being attacked from every possible angle and look at what Nehemiah is going through and I'm like I haven't even come close to anything like that

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And then I look at what he does Over and over again. He does the exact same thing. He seeks the Lord for strength He understands that you can't overcome this by the power of your might The only way that we can overcome is by turning to the Lord and crying out to him in prayer All of us not just some of us. Now at this point, as we get to this letter, you think that the enemy would just give up. Nehemiah doesn't seem to bite on the letter.

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He doesn't seem to bite on the threat that he's trying to become king. He's not allowing them to intimidate him. It's a foregone conclusion. We are done here. Listen, we're about four weeks away from watching the 49ers go back to the Super Bowl. Just put it out there early, okay? Now, I'm not a prophet, okay? But I believe we're about four weeks away. And so if you are a football lover inside here, there's a word that you hear if you are on defense, and the word is blitz which is why they try to do to my man Brock Purdy but it's okay though all right and so the idea is that listen when the

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quarterback gets the ball everybody on defense all of them you got one objective get him okay now that's not every play they call it at certain times. Okay. And so the objective is the same. Sack the quarterback at all cost. And so I want you to think about this as it relates to Nehemiah because he's the quarterback right now. And it's an all-out blitz assault. We're trying to get coming over and over and over again. This is why the diligence of every believer has

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to be undergirded by prayer. So at this point their campaign of intimidation and fear, they're trying to take it to another level. So now I'm going to go back to verse number 10. When I went into the house of Shemaiah, the son of Deliah, son of Mehevel, who was confined to his house, he said, let us meet together in the house of God within the temple Let us close the doors of the temple for they're coming to kill you and they're coming to kill you by night Who is this man?

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Because it appears that he's called Nehemiah to his house And it's believed that at least the people saw him to some degree as being a prophet because he's speaking things and he's alleging that these things are coming to him from God. Why is he homebound? Could be because of some illness, could be because of who he thinks himself to be. Doesn't tell us. What we do find is that he's warning Nehemiah that the enemies are coming. So here's what he says, this is what we need to do. He says, let's you and I take refuge in the temple now the pagans also had temples

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And if you were a person that was believed to have committed some crime you could escape to the temple and avoid Punishment you could reside within it Except Nehemiah is no pagan And so he gets this I mean he's called to the house He's listening to the guy speak and the guys and listen let's me and you I'm trying to warn you because they're coming and they're coming at night so just when you close your eyes and you think that all is safe

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you're all comfortable in the bed and everything's okay he said that's when they're gonna try to sneak in and that's when they're gonna kill you so I just mean you let's just go to the temple because if we go there we're going to be safe now it's interesting right because as he's speaking Nehemiah is thinking. See, Nehemiah serves the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He knew the use of the words within the temple

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was referring to the holy place, a section within a temple that no layman was able to enter. So this takes us back to that word discernment and trying to understand what Nehemiah is thinking. In other words, he knew pretty quickly something, that he was lying.

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How did he know? Because he knew that no layman could come into the holy place. Furthermore, if we go beyond the holy place to the holy of holies, the only person that could go in there

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would be the high priest. In the holy place were the priests, but no one else was allowed in. So he's listening to this guy saying, hey, listen, God's telling me that you and I should go hide in the holy place and Nehemiah thinking

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well wait a minute that's not biblically sound because that's not true back to discernment I keep saying it over and over again guys it's not some weird intuition that you have it's predicated on something okay and so Nehemiah's exercising discernment he knows that he's lying why because it's not consistent with the Word of God I can't stress enough that as believers we need to mature in the Word of God.

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We talked about this last week when we looked in Hebrews chapter number 5 verse number 12, verse number 13, but I'm going to read from verse number 12. I want you to listen to this. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness as he is a child but solid food is for the mature for those who have their powers of

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discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil listen for by this time you ought to be teachers he's saying listen some of us have been serving the Lord for a long time and yet when it comes to actually being able to discern what's happening within the church within our and within the world we turn on we want to listen to somebody prophetically speaking about something blah blah I shouldn't say like that somebody speaking about something or the gift of foretelling right

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But can I tell you that Hebrews 1 says in times past and in various ways God spoke to the prophets But in his last days he spoke it to his son period Who is a son in the beginning was the word the word was with God or the word was God? Verse 14 and the word became flesh and dwelt among us you want to know what God is saying go to the Word of God And so you want revealed truth go to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit is there giving us that discernment So there are a lot of people who say now listen by this time you ought to be teachers in other words

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You've been a believer for a while And so you should be able to sit down with somebody and begin to go through and discern truth from error And this is the picture right, but I love how he talks and he uses the word trained because it's really really key. He says, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. It's interesting because that word train is the same word that we get our English word gymnasium from. And when

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you think about going to the gym, you think about going to work out. Like when I was with Paco and Julian and I was bitching 225. I was just throwing it up. Okay, maybe 125. And so, and then I was in the hospital for a week. But anyway, that's a story for another day, all right? But nevertheless, I'm good now. We're going back. And so, my point in saying all that is that you go to the gym for a reason. To train the muscles. To get them to be able to respond, to mature, to grow, to develop, right? He uses this word, and it's the same idea

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for us as believers Have are you training? Yourself in other words the Holy Spirit on the inside of you the ability to be able to make spiritual decisions is based on spiritual Apprehension, but that only happens if we're going to the Word of God because that's where we're being trained. That's where we're becoming fit. So if I were to ask you today,

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how many of you just visit a regular gym on a regular basis? No hands, it's okay. I know some go to the gym often, okay? I used to go to the gym four or five days a week. You know, this is for seat, just don't just look this way for no reason.

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And so, but nevertheless, I don't go as often as I used to. And so, question, if this is my gym, how often do I go to this? If this is your gym, how often are you working out? Listen, I listen to some people, man,

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their regimen is off the chain. Like I do back on Mondays, I do legs on Thursdays, I do this on Tuesdays, I eat this in between, I get this kind of protein, I do this. I mean, they got it completely laid out. My son-in-law, he's forever working out.

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Every time I see him, I call his work out of prison ministry. Because he work like he been in jail for his whole life. Because he don't need no weights, he don't need anything. He's just forever working out. I'm like, dude, you go to the gym,

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I mean, every time you talk to him in the house, he's like this. He don't hold no regular conversation. When I say he's forever working out, he's leaning on the counter like this. I'm like, brother, we just have a conversation that don't involve you making me feel like I need to be exercising. And so he's forever training, right? But he's the same way spiritually.

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Every time I turn around, he's up in the morning. The first thing he does is he's outside the house and he's reading his Bible. See him in the evening, it's the last thing he does. He's constantly training. And so as believers, this is where we need to be. Why? Because we need to be able to discern.

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It's important for the church to be able to discern because the enemy is active. Remember, he gets this letter to go down to Ono. They're trying to distract him. It looked good on the surface. Now he has this gentleman inviting him in, Shemai,

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and he's telling him listen come hide in a temple because the enemies are coming to kill you All of this stuff on the surface it makes sense But numbers 18 7 reminds us that listen I can't just walk into the holy place in Nehemiah knew this so I love how it responds verse 11 Should such a man as I could go on to the temple and live I will not go in It sounds like maybe there's some arrogance there

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But it wasn't He knew the word wasn't from God And what makes this interesting is that Shemaiah isn't one of the enemies He's living there in Jerusalem So why wouldn't he heed this warning? It would at least appear to be credible.

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Listen, can I tell you something? We have to be careful when those who profess to believe entice you to do something that's contrary to the will of God. See, this is a picture that's developing. Sometimes our greatest enticement to sin

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comes from within the church. So, well, that's not true. Absolutely true We have to make sure that we understand what was happening to Nehemiah We equally need to be on guard Against those who may encourage encourage you to do some things which are contrary to God's will Key in on the word again discernment

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Being able to understand what God is saying to us Here we have Nehemiah. He's not refusing godly counsel. He's actually rejecting fear. They were trying to continue to intimidate him. Listen man, they're going to kill you. You might want to make sure that you're going to take refuge. Nehemiah's thinking about it. All of us would be thinking about it. Sounds like he's warning me. But you want to know what?

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I know truth, which means I'm going to reject fear. We said early in this series that courage isn't the absence of fear. It's the ability to respond in the right way in spite of it. Fear could have driven Nehemiah into the temple, except he knew it was wrong.

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But we have to make sure that we remain true to what we know to be right in spite of the things that might make they be making us nervous, afraid, or uncomfortable. Listen, we want to follow the path of least resistance when we feel like we're being tried, but we have to make sure that we hold to what is true. They were trying to distract him. They were trying to discredit him. And now, through his fellow kinsmen, they sought to intimidate him. Back to that word, blitz. It's an all-out assault. In order to stop that, which for all intents and purposes

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was pretty much done. This is why it wasn't about a wall. This is about God's glory. Listen, the enemy's tactics are subtle, but effective if we give in to them. God's work done God's way meets opposition from every angle, from every side, inside and out. But the

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opposition that comes from within, man, it's subtle. That's why it trips us up so easily. Can I tell you something? You need to weigh the advice of a friend the same way you weigh it as an enemy. Take it to the Word of God. Listen, this doesn't mean you just start walking around everybody talk to you just like mmm pirates gave me some advice like mmm that's not what I'm saying. What I am saying is that we need to make sure that we are taking a step back and at first the Word of God is in us. When people are

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talking to me the Word of God is always running through my head. So I listen to people say different things and sometimes I don't say anything. Ezekiel likes to call me out on that. He says, why don't you say what you're thinking? I said, sometimes it's not the right place at the right time. And so you're sitting and you're listening and there are a ton of scriptures that are running through my head and I'm like, that ain't true. That's not what the Word says.

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That's not right. And so again, right place, right time, right? First go home and I pray. Make sure that my discernment and what I'm reading in scripture is true. Then go back and say, hey, can we have a conversation? Can we sit down and can we talk about it? Making sure that we go back. Beloved, this is important because the enemy does not stop. God's work needs to be done and God's going to accomplish his work through you. Therefore, we can't let distractions move us. Nehemiah didn't flinch. He said said a man like me run

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In other words, why would I run from doing what the Lord commissioned me to do to go do something that I know the Lord? Hasn't called me to do Does it make sense to me? Why would I run from that? I'm not gonna run. I'm gonna stay right here I'm not going to do what I know to be wrong and stop doing what I know to be right and What you're asking me to do to go hide in a temple,

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that ain't right. And he knew it. Listen, when that Christian friend suggests, hey, you can get drunk just as long as you don't do it all the time, hello. Or when the preacher suggests, remember,

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your first priority is always your family before the work of the Lord, hello. or when that friend or that preacher says to you, well, we should go about doing it this way. Maybe go about doing it that way. Or maybe what you're doing, you want to sit there

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and think about it. You're talking about it isn't really sin anyway. People always have stuff to say. That's why discernment's key. I keep looking at this section of Scripture. You see, it keeps going back to the same thing,

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because they think that part of the struggle of the church is a lack of maturity but a part of the lack of maturity is a lack of discernment. No maturity there can be no discernment. So what you see are a lot of babes leading babes and then those who think they're mature really aren't because if you knew the scriptures you'd know that they're not as mature as they think they are. So it's getting back to this place right where we begin to understand what's the Lord saying to us. When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment? What did he say Matthew 22 37 and he said to him?

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You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind with all your strength This is the great and first commandment and the second is like it You shall love your neighbor as yourself on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets ain't see anything in there about your family I Didn't say it doesn't include your family What I'm saying is I'm not just highlighting that like we like to do in the church today because that's not what it says

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And so we're to love God with all our heart soul and mind sometimes that means you're at home Sometimes that means you're out in the field We're to love our neighbors. We love ourselves That's what the scriptures say. That's what they teach So I hear people say a lot of different things, but you sure you aren't placating to what you want Versus what God's telling you to do

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You want to know what that's not really sinful. You know what you might be right But I believe Paul said in first Corinthians 10 23 all things are lawful, but not all things are helpful All things are lawful, but not all things build up. You're absolutely right It may not be sinful, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be beneficial to me or to the body Genuine believers will never suggest a thought process or way of life that would be contrary to God's revealed word and actions. Now, let me acknowledge that yes, immaturity exists.

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We come in as babes. So this isn't an indictment on those who are learning. But the key is we have to be learning because we need to be discerning. Nehemiah was discerning. Verse 12, and I understood and saw that God had not sent him

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but he had pronounced a prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sam Ballard 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 in other words listen I've seen this game before you're just trying to get me off you're just trying to get me to respond to react that's what we all find ourselves in situations like that I find myself in situations like

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that where somebody's saying something to me and I want to respond like I have a response that's in my head and sometimes I have to slow down and go don't say that because you know you're gonna say it flat out out of anger and that's not a place where I can go because then all the individual has to do is say well what he said may have been true how he said it matters and it would be 100% correct and so you find yourself slowing down and thinking about what's going on. He said listen. I understand

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God didn't send him. He's pronouncing prophecy against me, but I know they hired him What was the purpose to try to make me afraid to try to shake me up again? He's not being arrogant Okay, I'm speaking a lot where this is more first-person me because I stay in this pulpit, but this isn't just about me But it is the things that a pastor and or elder and or person Experiences because someone always has something to say and it has affected me throughout the years. I'd be lying if I said it didn't It has caused me not to do things

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It has caused me to hold on things. It has caused me to pause on things It has caused me to lose sleep in ways. I can't even begin to describe And I don't think that that just ends when I deliver this sermon because I care about what people think. I care about how people feel. I care about how it relates to them, how it affects them. But I need to remember three letters, G-O-D, I ain't God.

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And so therefore, I need to care more about how he sees me and what he's telling me to do, and stop trying to step into his role and do exactly what he's asking me to do. And so that means that you hear a lot, you hear a lot as Christians from non-believers,

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from family members, even from believers who don't believe the same thing you believe. And so we're constantly going back and forth. How do we handle this? How do we move forward? It's clear that Tobiah and Sam Ballard

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are up to their same old tricks. Can I tell you, Satan's up to the same old tricks and he always has been. And so you turn on the radio and you listen and pastors and teachers and different people are preaching things that are inconsistent with the Word of God. And then we find ourselves listening to some of the same people and we

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say, well, that wasn't that bad. Well, that was okay. Well, it wasn't sinful for me to listen to it. Beloved, Acts 17, 11, now the Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica. They received the Word with all eagerness, examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so if you find But you're examining truly examining what's being preached You only need to hear it once To know that's a well that you need not to go back to

0:33:24
It doesn't take a hundred times We hear it we examine it Then we move on It's discernment. Why because people are watching what you listen to, who you watch. If you listen, I very rarely will mention names of people who are alive. I mention names of dead people.

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I trust the dead dudes. But a lot of the alive preachers, I don't know what's going to happen with them, because I don't know what's going to happen with me. And so the reality is, is I'm quoting the guys who have passed on, but I'm quoting certain sections of text and looking at the whole of their life. Mine's not done yet In either a mini or preaching alongside me today

0:34:07
And so not dead or alive. We're not the standard the Word of God is And so we need to make sure that we keep coming back to it There are a lot of people talking today But I love what Jeremiah said in 23 16 thus says the Lord of hosts Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes.

0:34:28
They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, it shall be well with you. And to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, no disaster shall come upon you.

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Skip to verse 21. But I did not send the prophets, yet they ran. I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied." I need us to make sure that we understand, yes, God is giving gifts to the church in the forms of shepherds, teachers, evangelists, prophets.

0:35:01
I'm not suggesting that you ignore them, because then you would be ignoring me. What I am saying is you must test what's being said against the word of God. 1 Thessalonians 5 20 don't despise prophecy but test everything hold fast what is good it means that you're like the Berean it means that you're looking

0:35:29
at it and you're discarding what you know isn't from God and you're holding on to that which is why because the enemy's not gonna stop coming he's going to keep coming over and over and over again. Satan will never wave the white flag. That's never going to happen. So we wait for these ebbs and flows in life like we can just kind of settle down and everything is going to be okay. But beloved, we have to make sure that we understand it will be okay when you hear, well done my good and faithful servant. In the meantime, we're in a battle. I'm going to read the end of

0:36:06
this chapter and then come back to the other two verses. He says, Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them. For many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he was son-in-law of Shekiniah, the son of Arai, and his son Johanna had taken the daughter of Meshulam, the son of Berechiah, as his wife. Also they spoke of his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him, and Tobiah sent letters to make me afraid.

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See if I can't sum all this up. From the beginning, Tobiah was opposing the rebuilding project. So now, here we have his letters going back and forth between the nobles of Judah and Tobiah. Now, we know Tobiah is the governor of the Amorites. So we're trying to figure out what this means.

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But more than likely, he was at least half Jewish. In fact, his name is Jewish. It means Yah is good. And as we continue to read, we figure something else out. He's married to a Jewish woman. Hold on, not just him, so is his son. So he isn't just some run-of-the-mill governor. He's infiltrated the ranks. He's got people on the inside. He's got business dealings with the

0:37:10
nobles. You remember, Nehemiah went to the nobles because they were exacting interest from the other people. He said, oh no no you can't do that. If you listen to what's being said here, he had contracts if you would. They were bound by oath to him. He had business dealings. So Tobiah wasn't just some run-of-the-mill dude. He was able to infiltrate the ranks in a way by family, by business, by being closely connected. And here's what's interesting, the communication was going back and forth.

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Nehemiah is aware of it. He says, listen, they're writing letters to him. He's writing letters back to them. They keep coming to me saying, you know, Tobiah. Oh come on, man. Tobiah is not that bad. He's alright. Why don't you just look at some of the things he's doing. Meanwhile, they're going back to Tobiah and saying, let me tell you what Nehemiah didn't do? Walk around looking over his shoulder. But he was aware of the strong

0:38:11
undercurrent. The treachery was always present. Looking for the right time to create havoc. Can I tell you? We've said it before and we'll always say it. That Satan prowls around like a roaring lion. He's always waiting to strike. It's his calling card But do you remember when Jesus was tempted by Satan? And after he resisted I like what Luke says in 14 413 and when the devil had ended every temptation He departed from him

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until an opportune time It's an interesting word. Here's basically what he's saying Saying just wait for the right time to attack. You know when you think everything is good? He said, okay, you won this one, but you do know that I'm still in the battle, right? And so, he just waits for the opportune time and he waits you out. He's patient. Everything seems like everything's okay, everything's going to be

0:39:07
okay. No, no, no, no, no, it's good. Because remember, he waited David out and then David saw Bathsheba across the way and you know what happened you see he has this tendency to wait His faith secured he knows what it is, but until he comes back All's fair. I'm gonna keep coming and keep coming and keep coming so I'm gonna wait for the opportune time It's important for us as believers to know that why? back to guarding your heart Listen, sometimes we think the most opportune time is when everything is good. Can't say something

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Sometimes the most opportune time is when everything is bad What do you mean it all depends on what he's trying to do Okay, if I'm trying to prevent you from coming to Christ, maybe when things are good, I'll strike If you're already serving in the Lord, maybe I'll just strike your family like I did Job. I'm just waiting for the right opportunity.

0:40:06
Here's what you have to be mindful of. You can't let your circumstances dictate the ministry. Your service is to God in spite of whatever you may be facing, doesn't matter what it is. Because if we all took that position, the church would be empty, plain and simple.

0:40:21
Scriptures don't call us to that. It constantly warns us about the things we're going to go through, the persecution we're going to face. And so as believers we have to sit back and take a look at a man like Nehemiah and think, man, Satan attacked him before his work, Satan attacked him during his work, and now he's at the brink of success and he's still attacking him. He just never

0:40:47
He doesn't just roll over and die Excuse me, he recognizes that the right place at the right time for him to strike depends on the individual Depends on where we're at and what we're going through taking me back to inside Below it outside the church inside the church inside the church outside the church. Satan's constantly at work.

0:41:17
Why couldn't I have just finished this little part and just added to the sermon last week? Because I need us to be mindful. I need us to take a step back because either you're participating in it or you're stopping it.

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But you're not neutral to it because you can't be. You can't be neutral to the gossip that comes to you. You can't be neutral to the rumors that you hear. Why? Because you're either to stop it and correct it. Because if you ignore it and don't say anything about it, then you're complacent and you're

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compliant with it. We don't get to be neutral. Why? Because it affects the body. It affects the body as a whole. And it's important for us to understand this. So now you see this man is appealing to Nehemiah. He's trying to get him to understand, listen, I just need

0:42:12
you to trust me. I just need you to listen to what I'm saying. But what's often missing is what God is saying. Listen, if somebody has something to say about a particular individual. The Scriptures tell us, right? Especially in the church. If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you gain the brother. Okay, well, I mean, he didn't necessarily sin against me.

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Then why are we talking about this? Because if he hasn't sinned against you, you're just complaining, then why are we having this dialogue? Because we shouldn't be. Because if he hasn't against you, then you have a responsibility to go to him. Look at all those rumors around me every day.

0:42:59
I ain't going to rap. The old people knew what I was talking about. The young people were like, look at all those rumors. What song is that again? Anyway, so I want you to think about it for a second, because it happens more often than not. What does Matthew 18, 15 say?

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If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault. Hold it between you and him alone. Not after you told everybody else. Between you and him alone. That's how you keep the gossip in the room of Male quiet. If he listens to you, you gain the brother. It's important for us to understand that. Understand that It's important to understand that listen. Hey, you know what this right here

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My name is will my birth certificate does not say pastor will my birth certificate says will Russell Okay, that's who I am. All right now when I'm here I'm operating as a shepherd, but not just here This is part of what the Lord calls me to do right in preaching and teaching and providing oversight. But I love what Paul says. He's writing and he's talking about pastors, shepherds, elders, and he says this, do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two

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or three witnesses. What's he basically saying? He's saying, listen, you got something to say against the elder, the pastor, the shepherd, you need to make sure that you can confirm this and before you go and just start saying hey I think ABCDE and so it's important how do you do that with other godly leaders you do it with other godly leaders you do it with other believers but it's always an attempt to edify not to tear down the key is

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edification pastors are wrong elders are wrong ministry leaders are wrong. They're not always right. Leadership does not mean that you're always going to be right. In doing any type of premarital counseling, I'm always talking to the husband and the wife, and we always say, you know, the husband's responsibility is to lead, and the wife is to submit to that leadership. Hold it. Only when it's good. That ain't what it says. Submit to that leadership only when you agree with the decision they're gonna make. That's not what it says. Now if they ask you to do

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something contrary to the revealed will of God, 100%, that's a negative. But when they're not, what does it ask you to do? It asks you to submit. Now can I say this? Do you think your husband's always gonna be right? Lysandra, do you think Jordan's always right? Pyrus, do you think, Lisa, do you think Pyrus is always right? I would ask my wife, but she knows I'm always right. So that no wasn't directed towards me, although my wife said amen, all right.

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And so I want you to get the picture, right? Being a leader doesn't mean you'll never get it wrong. It just simply means that you're willing to deal with the consequences, continue to put everybody before you. That's the idea of leadership, right? What's best for them, not what's best for me. A man is supposed to die for his wife just as Christ died for the church. What woman wouldn't follow a guy like that? Well, there it is there. You got big shoes to fill, right? So with that being said, I want you to think about this, right?

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Why am I kind of camped out here? Not every criticism is wrong. It isn't. There's things that I clearly know that I can be better at and improve on. Here's what's interesting. Most of the time when people are talking about me, they're talking about things that are completely wrong,

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because there's plenty of things jacked up with me that you actually could be talking about. But you don't know that. And so often what's being said isn't true. And what could be said, no one knows. And so it's it what's in my life. And so with that being said, it's interesting, right? Because I haven't arrived. I'm not perfect. But I do pursue he who is perfect. And as I stand before you on a Sunday morning, I know I'm riddled with sin. I'm a person who's saved by the same amazing grace as you are and not for one minute Do I think that if you pour down water I can walk on it. I know my sin is ever before me

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It's constantly before me and I don't look back to my sin. I'm talking about yesterday So I'm under no illusion as to who I am But I know exactly who saved me and know exactly what his grace means And I know exactly what he's continuing to do in my life every moment of every day. So that's why it's easy for me to stand and speak because I got nothing to hide. I know I got issues but I know who took care of my issues and

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it's continuing to mature me and grow me every moment of every single day. Nehemiah knew who he was. He wasn't trying to be someone that he wasn't. Back to discernment. There are ways in which we're called to come alongside, to confront, to do certain things. What we see with Sanballat and Tobiah and the rest of them

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is that's not what they were doing. They just kept coming at Nehemiah. Again, understand that he had people on the inside, and they're going back and forth. Understand the man who told him to go hide in the temple was living on the inside. Guys, people can look spiritual. That don't mean they aren't.

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They can answer all the questions for you in the Bible. Doesn't mean that they know God. Satan can answer questions about what's written in the Word. Not calling anyone here Satan. But making sure that we understand. Because I love what the prophet Isaiah said Behold you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist

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Fasting like yours is they will not make your voice be heard on high The people were crying out to the Lord like, you know, we're doing all these different things and you haven't noticed And then Isaiah responds. Well, I haven't no it's not that I haven't noticed you think you're doing something your heart tells me you're not or not. This is what we find with Shemaiah who's saying, listen, come hide with me in the temple. So we have to make sure that we understand that we are called to not be fooled, to not be

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hoodwinked, tricked. Why? Because we have the revealed Word of God in front of us. We have the Holy Spirit on the inside of us. Beloved, I'm going to keep saying it. Inside the church, you've got to be on guard against even the people who know him. Why?

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Because we're all fallen. We wrestle with that unredeemed humanness. And it's so easy to get caught up. But just in case you miss it, sometimes it's not a wrestle with unredeemed humanness. Sometimes it's just a person who pretends to be one thing

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and is another. 2 Corinthians 11, 14, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it's no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. Listen, it's really simple. Tobias saying things, but it's not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob he's focused on. Shemaiah saying things, but again it's not the God of

0:50:23
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he's focused on. Every believer and every church leader must remember that their primary focus is to serve the Lord. They should be able to say based on all the stuff that's being said, should a man like me run and try to save myself by doing something that I actually know to be wrong? We have to begin to cry out like Jonah did in the belly of the well, Jonah 2 9, what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

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We have to remember God's faithfulness and our responsibility to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind, trusting that he will save us as trouble comes. And the interesting thing is that we get to the end of this letter,

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Tobiah's not gone. Actually, when we get to the end of this letter, he actually has a room in the temple so how does this dude continue to be this vein this pain if you would in Nehemiah's neck and in the end you see him with a room in the temple because Satan doesn't quit and the church always seems to give in to compromise so we have to make sure that we understand

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back to what are we to do discernment we are to be discerning when I know where Discernment We are to be discerning when I know where that begins with prayer Discernment comes through the Word of God, but it doesn't come without God People can just read the scriptures I'll just read the scriptures discernment comes through the Word of God, but it doesn't come without God first Corinthians 212 now

0:51:57
We have received not the Spirit of the world But the Spirit who is from God So we might understand the things freely given to us by God and when you part this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual, the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God,

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for they are folly to him. He is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Apart from God, we can never discern his truth. Nehemiah knew this, which is why he constantly stayed before God in prayer.

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Which takes me to verse 14, and we'll close. Remember Tobiah and Sambaled, oh my God, according to the things that they did, and also the prophetess Nodiah, and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid. In order to defeat fear when intimidated,

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in order to resist the onslaught of Satan, in order to remain discerning, we must remain in prayer before God. Let me tell you the best person to talk to about the best person to talk to about your enemy God he's the best person to talk about to talk to when you have somebody that you seem to be struggling with. Wanna know why? Because God don't gossip. He's the best person to talk to. You

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want to know the best way to defeat an enemy is not to verbally attack them is to turn to the Lord in prayer, because the Lord hears. Heard a preacher say this, no one will ever sustain leadership in the people of God unless God makes their shoulders broad enough, their mind expansive enough, their heart strong enough

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to deal with the kinds of undercurrent. Because of the God Nehemiah served, he called them, he equipped them, and he made his shoulders broad enough to be able to handle it. Beloved, it's no easy feat, because it is no feat. The work's not mine, it's God's.

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We say it, come alongside, all these different things, but it's always interesting to me, because you get to the brink of the place to where you think, okay, well, what do you have next? And the same thing that Nehemiah faces, every pastor, every teacher, every elder,

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many godly leaders face all the time. It's not exclusive to Will, but it's not exclusive of me either. And I don't always get an opportunity to stand and just go to a section of scripture and say, this is what it says, because this is what it says but

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here's what I can tell you verse 15 says so the wall was finished on the 25th day of the month of Elul in 52 days in 52 days in less than two months Israel laid in ruin for years and in less than two months the wall is around it It's interesting to me, but what's even more important is that it wasn't about the wall Verse 16 and when all our enemies heard of it all the nations around us were afraid and for greatly in their own esteem For they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God

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Hello, I said all the nations remember how we started for Nehemiah this wasn't about the wall it was about God's glory and In the end the people saw what took place and they didn't give glory to Nehemiah They didn't say man. You did a good job Nehemiah could have wrote his ticket after that check it you want to build a wall I'm your man Okay, let me tell you how to do it how you can do it in this amount of time you could do it this way Nehemiah could have said listen right here in the center. Can we put Nehemiah was here okay no he doesn't do anything

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like that he's not looking for people to look at his work Nehemiah recognized it wasn't mine I was never a building for me all the time I was trying to get everyone to see that there is a God in Israel that there is a God in Jerusalem that God is with his people that God is present he's trying to get everybody to understand that just because Israel went into captivity and just because the walls are broken down and just because all these things are happening

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You think God doesn't have a plan you think God isn't here you think God is a concern with his people you think God is? Not worthy of all the glory of all the honor of all the praise of course he is and so I'm not gonna show you he is And so God works through Nehemiah and the people Their own esteem is lowered They're looking and they're thinking what the heck just Happened the great I am that I am just happened and so you can keep coming

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But psalms 27 and 1 says unless the Lord builds the house the builders labor in vain When I come here throughout the week I Think about a lot of different things. I think about the first time I preached. I think about this first sermon that I ever written. I pray for those people. I think about the first time that I counseled someone, the first time I sat down. I think about the first time I put my hands to different work outside of here. I think about so

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many different things and I sit back sometimes and I look at what's before me, and all I can say is, my Lord and my God. You took a guy who couldn't figure out how to tie his shoes, a guy who spent so much time in and out of trouble I didn't think I was going to be able to make it, a guy who either should have been dead or in prison

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for the next 50 years, a guy who loved nobody but himself. How do you take something that broken, that low down, that dirty, that deceitful, that wicked, how do you do that? How do you use him here? That's the picture. I'm telling you, I'm not everything

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that sometimes you guys think that I am. And what I simply mean by that is I'm you and you're me. No matter what plight you find yourself in, what you're struggling, what hurt you've been through, what you've experienced, I'm you and you are me. We're the same. And so there's nothing special about will. The only thing is I'm willing to just go down on one knee and say use me. That's all I'm willing to do. Can you just use me in any way you see fit in any way you see possible? Can I just serve you?

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Can I wash your feet? Can I come alongside? What do you want me to do? I recognize that I don't deserve the grace that you gave I recognize I don't deserve the mercy that you poured out upon me I recognize I don't deserve I deserve hell and you've given me heaven So Lord, whatever you want me to do I will do That's where I'm at. So I need you to build the house because I can't build it I need you to show me how because I'm just a child trying to figure it out. These are your people

0:58:57
I'm just a kid if you don't give me the sermon. I can't help them because it's not in me. It's in you This is what he's calling us to And this is what he's calling the church to so as I look at you Mike said to me today when I came in, he said, you're in a good mood. I said, I'm in a great mood.

0:59:18
You want to know why? Because I recognize that in all my sinfulness, he's still God. I recognize that he is Jehovah Jireh. He will always be my provider. I recognize that he's always here leading and guiding me. So when I look at a man like Nehemiah,

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and I look at him looking back, and he's saying, Lord, look what you did. Look what you're building. I have one job. First Peter 2.12, keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you

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as an evildoer, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation He's seeking to equip us all And so please I don't know what wall your back may be up against coming in here today I don't know what you're facing and what you're going through But can I tell you if you don't know Jesus in here?

1:00:16
He's the way the truth and the light as they were talking about learning how to abide, how to grow, you have to first come, you have to first surrender. Listen, this local church is not perfect. This local church, you will find that there will be some people you draw close to, others you won't. People will have many things to say, but can I tell you something? I love this body and I love this work. And And guess what not because I did it Because God's doing it not just coming and leaving

1:00:54
And so I am thankful to serve you And so just know if you need me Call me The Lord willing in his strength and in his power. I'll be there But it won't be me it'll be him stand with me. If you reach behind your chair, we're going to partake in the Lord's Supper as we close. Okay, there's nothing behind your chair. So as the plates

1:01:36
Plates come around. I want you to do me a favor. Over the next couple of minutes, here's what I'm asking you to do. Spend some time. Because the Scriptures are very clear. Partaking of the Lord's table isn't something that we just do. It's remembrance of something. It's not about being perfect.

1:01:56
It's about recognizing your sin and being able to turn to God and say, Lord, I repent. It's about understanding that you're seeing through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, not your own. If you're not a believer, I'll ask you not to partake. Not because... that doesn't mean heaven's not your home, but you should

1:02:30
understand what it is that you're doing. I have far more respect for the person who understands where they're at with Christ than those who act as though they know. Again to the believer, Paul writes in 1st Corinthians, he talks about when we partake in an unworthy manner. Beloved, at this moment, at this time, the only thing you have to do and the only thing you have to say is that, Lord, forgive me.

1:03:01
I've sinned and I've fallen short. And I'm just asking you to continue to see me as I know that you are Because that's what he's asking. Can I tell you I'm praying that for me right now So I ask you to pray for yourselves Lord we just asked it as we come to this table or we come

1:03:24
With a heart that says Lord where we were yesterday and where I was last week and where I was an hour ago It's not where I am now Then I come Lord in a moment in time where I recognize that my sin, though be scarlet through the blood of Christ, it becomes white as a driven snow. Forgive me. Lead me. And I pray that's the prayer individually of everyone here. So as we come to your table, we don't come in our righteousness, we come in yours. On that faithful night, the Lord, sitting at the table with the disciples, He took from

1:04:10
the loaf, He broke, and He said, take and eat, for this is My body. And then, as He drank from the cup, as He poured into the cup. He passed to His disciples, and He said, drink, for this is My blood. For as often as you eat of this table and drink of this cup, you do so,

1:04:41
until He returns. And beloved, He is going to return. And service ends as I close in prayer. If you don't have a relationship with him, I'll be standing at the front Please come talk to me. I Can't save you

1:04:56
But I can definitely say come see a man who can Graciously father. Lord. We just thank you for your word this morning We thank you for all that you are then in section of scripture Lord. We see what Nehemiah was faced with Unrelenting opposition from within, from without, tied in so many different ways. But we also see as a man who did not flinch, a man who did not run, a man who exercised discernment, a man who trained, who was trained to discern.

1:05:16
And so we pray, Lord, as we leave today, that that resonates in our mind. And we begin to exercise that discernment so that we can be the disciples you have called us to be. Teach us to abide. Guide us as we continue to move forward. Be with us in our service later on this evening. We'll continue to guide us as your body as we go somewhere. Because you're the one that's sending us. And we pray that your word, Father, will be preached there just as it was here this morning.

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For the man and woman doesn't know you. I pray their heart is not only stirred, but that as I am praying, they're saying, Lord, I see myself. I repent. I believe. Guide me. Where do I go next? Well, that's the prayer of your church. And this I ask in the precious name of your Son, Lord Jesus Christ, we pray and let everyone say, amen. Hug somebody before you leave.

1:06:31
Andrew.

Transcribed with Cockatoo