

Good evening. It's great to be together tonight as we look at the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah chapter 6 verses 1 through 9. The word of our God. Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem, the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it. Although up to that time, I had not set up the doors and the gates. Sanballat and Geshem sent to me saying, come and let us meet together at Hakafrim in the plain of Ano. But they intended to do me harm And I sent messengers to them saying, I'm doing a great work and I cannot come down. 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, Sanballat, 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 Grisham 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 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 have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind. For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking their hands will drop from the work and it will not be done. But now, oh God, strengthen my hands. It is through many tribulations that Christians enter into the kingdom of heaven. As Paul reports in the book of Acts, we are engaged in a great spiritual battle that is not just against flesh and blood. It's a battle depicted in the earliest pages of the Bible in Genesis chapter three, where the seed of the woman would be at enmity against the seed of the serpent. and that righteous seed of the woman down through our Savior, the Lord Jesus, versus the devil and his host and those who join him who are opposed to God and to God's people and God's truth, God's word, and God's ways. Many look at these verses and they study and analyze the tactics of the enemy. That is one approach to looking at these verses. But what I'd like to do for a few minutes tonight is talk about how Nehemiah, the godly and righteous leader, how he responds. What do we learn of his character? How does he deal with the tactics of the enemy that are coming against him? In verses one to three, a key phrase for me that summarizes it is the phrase or the words keen discernment. The wall is now built. Praise the Lord. All of their efforts, their many labors, the challenges and the difficulties are now at the very end. Although he reminds us Although up to that time, I had not set up the doors and the gates. So the doors would soon be set, and then the wall would be repaired

and restored. The city of Jerusalem would have greater security and protection. And the enemies, The many enemies who we are introduced to in chapter two rear their ugly heads because they know progress is being made. And they're at the final, the finish line is in sight. Just the doors are to be put in place. But what a time to try to throw the wrench in the whole thing. They don't have to siege the city and scale the wall if they can, caused them to stop before they put the doors in place. Several weeks ago, maybe five or six weeks ago, I was in a city where our church supports Christian gospel ministry in Spain, Toledo, Spain. And it's a walled, an old walled city with walled gates. These strong walls provide great Great effective security and protection. But without the gates, there's very, there's much vulnerability. And these enemies knew that. And they gathered together. They turned to a last tactic. And these are the same enemies that we've seen before. Sanballat, the governor of Samaria to the north. Tobiah, an Ammonite, an enemy from the west. The Arabs from the south. They sought to undermine and to discredit Nehemiah in the eyes of the Jews. To, much like the approach of those in Daniel's day, as it were, setting a trap for him. Because they could not bring charges against him in his not keeping the law of his God. So they sought to entrap him. And here, they seek to introduce a peace treaty. They send invitations to come to this area close to Samaria, an area that is more than a day's journey away. And they go, and they entreat, and they invite Nehemiah to come to this important discussion, and come to terms, come to agreement, to have civil discussion. to bring things to a close that they may come and let us meet together. And this word together means kind of let us come to an agreement, let's come to an accord, let's come to a treaty, a ceasefire as it were. But we learn something of the great keen insight and discernment of the leader Nehemiah. at the end of verse two, but they intended to do me harm. God gave Nehemiah discernment, understanding. It is the fear of God that leads to wisdom and understanding how to read situations. Many perhaps would fall prey to this ploy. A lovely appeal to go to the plain of Anno to join these great leaders. in a little debutante discussion, ending war, having peace, being the one credited with finally living in harmony with your enemies, all kinds of things that they were doing to appeal to him. But Nehemiah saw straight through it. He saw that their intention was not good, but harm. That may seem perhaps to some a throwaway phrase, but there's great importance here of our being those who are discerning people, who are able to read circumstances based from the lens of the scriptures, based from God's perspective. Understanding that their real

intent was not good, but instead harm. As we're engaged in spiritual warfare, we must be wise. Are we not called to be as crafty as serpents, but also as innocent as doves? And I think the church has suffered greatly because we have not been crafty and innocent in the right kind of way. We've not been discerning, we have fallen prey to the designs and intention of the enemies of God. He refused to settle with the enemy that he knew who was against God and against him and against the people of God. Let's press on, that's just the first one of several of Nehemiah's response. We read further of Nehemiah. He has keen discernment or insight. Secondly, he had a focus to his life, to his ministry, to his mission. He knew who he was. what God had called him to do, and he would not be dissuaded or deterred from it. What is his response? Look at verse three. And I sent messengers to them, saying, I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you? He knew what he was about, what he was called to do, just like the men of Issachar in David's day understood the times and knew what Israel should do. We need to have a clear understanding of our mission, of our purpose, what God is calling us to do and to be in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is that temptation or that invitation, the summons to distraction, to lay aside the work to which God was calling him to do. Isn't that not one of the tactics of the enemy today? It's okay to look at your Bible every so often, but you don't need to read your Bible every day. Or you don't need to share your faith with that coworker or fellow student. What will someone think about you or maybe say about you? Is that not a tactic to dissuade us, to get us off to distract us from the great work to which God has called us. Hasn't he not given us a great work in Christ? The scriptures are very clear with some of the designs and purposes that God has for his children to work, to which we're called together as we worship our great God on Sundays, as we gather around his word in our homes as we take his word and gospel to work or to school, to the neighborhood, across the city or across the globe in his name's sake. And we must say, I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. It may have seemed unkind, perhaps. But Nehemiah's delight was in loving and serving his God. It was the Lord his God whom he fears. And that led him to great boldness and focus in life. What is the gospel focus that God has given you? What is it that he's given us as his people? We learn much in the Book of Acts of the early church and the things that they were committed to, the preaching of the word and the prayer of the saints, the breaking of bread in terms of the Lord's Supper and fellowship, these key things of making the Lord Jesus known. And there would

be those who would come to distract us. Why don't you take on this project? This is a great and noble thing to do. Have you thought about doing that? And like Nehemiah, we're to know what God has called us to be and to do and say, I cannot come down. I'm doing a great work. He was focused. People that are successful by God's grace are people that know their God and know their calling. and are steadfast and faithful to that, not dabbling here and there, trying this and trying that, but have a clear sense that what they're engaged in is a great work, that they cannot depart from it. It's so instructive for us, and we must be those who really understand increasingly the tactics of our enemy, Paul in 2 Corinthians 2, 11, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs. Though our focus tonight is primarily on Nehemiah's response, we are to be people who understand what are the stratagems of our enemy in the ultimate triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we find here that Nehemiah was one who had keen insight and discernment. And then secondly, he was one who was focused, who knew his mission. And then thirdly, in this passage, in verses eight and nine, excuse me, in verses five and seven, we realize that he is a man committed to truth. Not so as enemies. When they realize they can't get him away from the wall, to go to the peace treaty, the peace talks, and then when they realize that they were ineffective in getting him to stop the work, they next resort to gossip, to innuendo, to speak against him when they realize that they could not entice him away. This is a much more devious ploy. Four times they went to appeal to him. Now, in the fifth, they bring an open letter, seeking to discredit him in the eyes of the Jewish people, those who labored with him, those who worked by the sweat of their brow with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. Now they're saying, that Nehemiah is a rebel, that he is creating treason, that he's making a name for himself, that he's overambitious. Do you not realize that he sees himself as a king? that he wants to be the ruler, that he's taking advantage of all your efforts and this grand accomplishment on the wall to build his own resume, to demonstrate his prowess, that he might be a true and great leader. Gossip can be such a destructive thing. on truth, and he faces it straight on. He brings a challenge to them here, and he makes it very clear that what they are doing is wrong. I'm sorry, I'm looking for it here. If you see it, let me know. Thank you. Verse eight. No such things as you say have been done for you are inventing them out of your own mind. He speaks the truth. He's committed to the truth. He's a man of integrity. And while he doesn't go on the offense against them physically, he is not gonna let this rumor,

this false rumor, this malicious gossip, discourage and divide the people of God and undermine what God has called him to do as their leader. This is often the tactic, is it not, in Christ's church? where someone will start a rumor against someone else, they'll seek to undermine them, they'll cause those that follow their leadership to question them. It's an old trick, but he responds

to it forthrightly, in great clarity. In very few words, often things, the best response is with few words. He speaks direct, he's honest, he speaks with great integrity here. It's quite a, it's very important that we be men and women of truth. And here, he's not afraid of their accusations. It doesn't cause him to leave the wall and go join them in their blackmail against him that they might, while he's away, undermine the work and attack the city. No, he maintains his position as well as his position of his character. of who he is. It's great instruction for us. And then finally, here towards the end of this passage, I'm looking now at verse nine. So we've seen his keen discernment And then following his keen discernment, his focus in mission to what God was calling him to, his commitment to the truth. And then here in verse nine, his confidence in the Lord. And this is what we find throughout the whole book. When he encountered previous opposition, In chapter two, remember they came saying, well even if a fox got on the wall, it would collapse. And other such things. And Nehemiah, we find him always turning to his God. For he knows that the Lord God is mighty and omnipotent. That he's able to defend and protect his people and advance his own cause. And here again, we find his confidence

in the Lord, his God. For their design, as he says in verse nine, was to frighten us. Here, Nehemiah's speaking to his fellow Jewish believers who have come to do the work that God has called them to do, that God might be worshiped, that they may be protected in the city. as well. They were trying to frighten us. And fear can be a very crippling thing in the work. If the people of God become afraid, the work can become heavy. They can not fulfill what the Lord has called them to. It can become very weary. They all wanted to frighten us thinking their hands will drop from the work and it will not be done. Perhaps you've been overwhelmed physically, perhaps spiritually, emotionally, and you're just not able to move forward. You're about to collapse. That is kind of the picture that's described here, is their hands are dropping. The doors need to be put on the walls, but their hands have dropped. Their shoulders have also drooped down, and the work would not come to an end. But look at the end of verse nine. Nehemiah's expression. But now, now God in light of these enemies, now in light of their efforts to discourage, but now, oh God, strengthen my hands. He's praying for God's help, God's strength at the very place of weakness, of vulnerability. The very area

that was the design
of the enemies to diminish the effort of their
hands. He's praying once again that
God would establish the work of his hands and strengthen them
in this final work. And it speaks of his great confidence
in God. Do you have a growing confidence
in the Lord, in the truth, the power of his word? That he's
a God who keeps his word of promise that it will come to pass. That
he is a God that though while you are weak, he indeed is mighty
and he will be your aid. He will strengthen you. He'll
strengthen your hands to do the very work to which he has called
you. Nehemiah realizes his need of
God. O'Howsby, in a book called Prayer,
defines prayer as pleading our helplessness before God. And here we find Nehemiah
crying
out to God for he and the people's need of God's strength and power
and presence, that they might finish the good work that the
Lord God had called them to do. And in prayer tonight, as we
come united as the Lord's people, we have access to that great
throne of grace. Our prayers go beyond, way beyond
the ceiling of this room to the very throne room of God, where
he hears us and where he can strengthen us. And tonight, as
we approach the Lord in prayer, we want to have this settled
peace and confidence that he's a God who delights in hearing
the prayers of his people, that we can cry out ourselves to God,
oh God, strengthen my hands. So let's share together in a
season of prayer Let's begin acknowledging who the Lord is,
his character, his greatness, his glory, our need of him, our
need of his help, and our need of his strength. So let's just
pray together as one man, as a people together, going to the
Lord in unity, bringing before God our joyful praises. Let's pray together.