Resolved to Keep — Delivery Transcript

Nehemiah 6:3 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, January 25, 2026 · *Standalone Sermon*

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As a church and I worked all week on a sermon for Matthew and then when the weather hit I thought I'm going to save this sermon for when everybody's back in church. So we're not going to be in Matthew this morning there's a great sermon, but you have to come back next week. I did have however a word that I wanted to share that I think is relevant to days like today and relevant to a season like we're in the life of our church and it's relevant. Really for all of us in an individual way, but it's also corporately as you think about where we're at as a church having kind of crystallized where we think God is leading us in terms of the next several years by way of facilities and building a wing for our students and expanding the seating here in the sanctuary and reuniting or creating energy around our vision to connect every person to new life in Jesus.

That dynamic of God putting on his people's hearts a vision and a calling, he's been doing that from the very beginning. And there's a story in the Old Testament about an individual who had a vision to rebuild walls around Jerusalem. And since we're renovating and building, I thought it would be appropriate to think about Nehemiah and the kind of challenges that he faced and how he overcame those challenges with God's help. And I want you to think about in your own life what God has called you to do. And one way He's called all of us to do the same thing and that we're Christians called to fulfill the great Commission to carry out the task of making Jesus famous across the universe, but you also probably have specific hopes and dreams, specific giftings and passions that God has put on your life.

And what do you do when in the midst of fulfilling that calling it gets really challenging and you grow discouraged? Have you ever found yourself in that kind of place where even why you were doing what you're doing was starting to get a little fuzzy and you just weren't as excited getting up in the morning, didn't have the same kind of momentum that you felt you should have. That same dynamic struck the person Nehemiah. God had given him a vision to rebuild the wall. He had uniquely put Nehemiah in a strategic location to get money, favor.

And supplies from the king. The king sends him to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. And as soon as he gets there, he faces some opposition. And for the sake of simplicity, I'm going to put those forms of opposition under three different headings. There is detractors that are from without. There is discouragement from within, and there is dis distractions all around him. So detractors from without discouragement from within and distractions all around. And those are the same three things that hit all of us. No matter what your calling is, no matter what God's called you to do, you're going to face those three things.

Detractors who talk trash from the outside, they talk big, having your sh not being in your shoes, you'll also have discouragement, maybe even bouts of depression, and then in our culture distractions all around the passage that I want to leave you with is in Nehemiah chapter 6, Nehemiah chapter 6, verse 3. If I could have you memorize one passage of scripture, this would probably be in my top 10. List because it is just so helpful for staying focused on the mission and the vision that God has given you in your life.

This is Nehemiah responding to Sanballat and some of his detractors. Who were trying to pull him away to have a meeting about what he was doing. And Nehemiah says in Nehemiah 6 verse 3, I sent messengers to them saying this. I am doing an important work and I cannot come down to you. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you? Nehemiah chapter 6 verse 3, I am doing an important work, and I cannot come down. Some of you may have a English Standard version. Any of you have that version of your Bible?

It says, I'm doing a great work and I cannot come down. I've always memorized it in that ESV, but it nonetheless it's a it's a it's a clarifying passage. When you find yourself fulfilling the call of God and there are detractors and a discouragement. And distractions. Remind yourself as Nehemiah reminded Sanballat, I'm doing a good work, a great work, and I cannot come down. So I want to show you in Nehemiah how he deals with each of these three things, detractors from without discouragement, from within, distractions. All around him. If you go to Nehemiah chapter 2 verse 10, you see the beginning of his detractors there in Judea.

When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard that someone had come to pursue the prosperity of the Israelites, It says that they were greatly displeased. Anytime you do what God's called you to do and it mounts an offensive against the world or the enemy that we fight in a in a spiritual sense, you can bank it on there being some kind of opposition. Sandballot had developed some kind of a power and influence on the presumption that these things weren't going to happen. So as soon as Nehemiah comes in and rebuilds the wall, He is very displeased.

And he starts to taunt him and say all sorts of negative things. If you turn to Nehemiah 4, verses 1 to 3, you can see some of the things that Sanballat accuses them of and some of the name calling and slander thrown their way. When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding

the wall, he became furious and then he mocked the Jews And before his colleagues and the powerful men of Samaria, he said, what are these pathetic Jews doing? Can they restore it, the wall, by themselves? Are they really going to offer sacrifices?

Will they ever finish it? Can they bring these burnt stones back to life from the mounds of the rubble? And then Tobiah the Ammonite, who was beside him, said, Indeed, even if a fox climbed climbed up with their building, he would break down their stone wall. Quite an encourager, amen. What are these pathetic people doing? Notice the nature of his slander. Not only did he question their sincerity and why they were doing what they were doing. He questioned their giftings, their capacity, and spiritual commitment for what was animating their efforts to rebuild the wall.

And the same kind of mockery can happen today. People can mock your sincerity, they can mock your commitment. They can belittle the quality of your work. They can cast doubt on its longevity or endurance. It can create discouragement, it can deepen fatigue, it can, I don't know about you, create some kinds of insecurity and deepen your fear of failure of what might happen. How do you respond when people detract away from the thing that God's called you to do on your life? Maybe as a parent and the way you're raising your children?

Maybe as a business owner in the way you're forming your business, maybe as a church member in the way you lead a ministry, people like to throw shade from the cheap sheets, cheap seats. And Nehemiah faced all of those things. And it was before the big people in Samaria. Do you notice that in verse 2? He was before the colleagues and the powerful men of Samaria. These were the people Nehemiah would have needed relationships with, people that should the wall become erect and become successful. These were influencers he was going to have to engage with.

And so he's poisoning the well with all of this negativity. And that will happen as you pursue God's will for your life. There will be people who cast all sorts of negative energy to try to undermine what God's called you to do. And so how did Nehemiah respond? If you look in verse 4, the very next verse. He doesn't talk trash back. He doesn't really do anything other than turn to God and pray. He says in verse 4, Listen, our God, for we are despised. You hear what they're saying, Lord.

So what I am praying is that you would make their insults return on their own heads and let them be taken as plunder to a land of captivity. Do not cover their guilt, or let their sin be erased from your sight, because they have angered the builders. And then he goes on and we b we kept we kept building the wall. So essentially he prays for God to have them taken captive and have them have their lives destroyed. I don't know if you've ever prayed a prayer like that for the people who've talked trash about you.

I don't know that I can commend that necessarily. But there are lots of psalms that are called imprecatory psalms where you're appealing to God's character to defend his glory. If you think about anger, the Bible says, be angry, but don't sin in your anger. And one of the ways to measure whether your anger is holy or unholy is to ask yourself who's reputation is my anger trying to defend. And here Nehemiah's anger is not defending his own glory or his own reputation or even his own project. He's trying to defend God's reputation because the whole project was to restore the glory of God's holy city.

And so as you think about your detractors and when they throw shade your way, the way to respond to all of those things is to just leave them in the Lord's hands. Now how you do that may look different than Nehemiah. You may not pray that they get captured by a foreign army, but you can give the Lord the future of your detractors and take it upon yourself to leave vengeance in his hands. You don't have to respond to every word someone says. You don't have to defend your reputation. I had a friend that would always say, nothing to sell, nothing to defend.

And there's a great freedom and liberty in that because if you're remaining steadfast and focused on God's calling, he can handle your detractors in his way. If you take it into your own hands, it's only going to distract you further and undermine what God's called you to do. And so Nehemiah prays and leaves them in the hands of God, and he stays focused on his mission. But then the book transitions to a different kind of detractor, or not a different kind of distraction not from without, but from within. If you look down to chapter 4, verse 10, it says we prayed to our God and stationed a guard because of them day and night.

Verse 10 says, in Judah, it was said, the strength of the laborer fails. Since there is so much rubble, we will never be able to rebuild the wall. What you get an insight here is to their discouragement in their heart because they had been working really hard, and even though they'd been given everything that they could give, it felt like the needle was barely moving an inch. And so they failed in their strength and began to wonder if we're ever going to finish this wall. And anything of real significance in life is going to have a halfway point.

And it's usually at that halfway point that your strength will begin to fail as well. And you'll start to wonder, man, did I make a mistake? Is this really what God had called me to do? I mean, no one else seems to be having the trouble I'm having. Surely if this was God's will, it'd be a little easier. And I don't know where that thought comes from, but it's nowhere in the Bible. Any great work of God of any significance will create a discouragement in your heart because we live in a broken world surrounded by opposition.

And you can just expect it to come. And so when you find yourself dealing with discouragement, here's what you can learn from Nehemiah. This is scattered throughout chapter 4, 5, and 6, so I'm just going to summarize them under a couple of headings. The first is to enlist some help the second's to remember your why, and the third is to just keep

moving forward. So in your commitment to that long obedience, when you hit the halfway mark and get discouraged, remember to enlist some help, remember your why, and keep moving forward no matter what.

The first thing he does is he enlists some help. He basically gets more people on the team, but instead of having every person do the same job He splits up their work and spreads it out so that it wasn't too much on any one person. He had some people defend the wall with a sword, he had other people work on the wall with what was called a trowel. And he gives different assignments to different people and reinforces the workforce in that way. In a local church setting, or in your own Christian life, I think it's as simple as remembering that you are connected to Christian community and to never isolate yourself from that gift never when you find yourself in a place of discouragement, make the next step checking out of church.

As easy as it is to skip church when you're discouraged, that's actually the worst thing you can do. Or checking out of your small group or stop showing up to your D group or stop answering the text on your text thread. God's one of God's greatest gifts for you to achieve his it's for you to advance his kingdom is brothers and sisters who come alongside of you to help and so don't check out don't don't quit or give up continue to surround yourself with those people the second thing is to remember your why, and that's simply the vision for why you do what you do.

It's easy, even as a church and as a pastor, to get caught up in all the daily grind and responsibilities. You got to you know get the live stream going, you got to get the lights on, you got to you got to melt the ice out there so no one slips and falls. Oh, didn't have time to get that done. But you just get so consumed with the menial tasks. And if you know if you're not careful, you can forget the why, the what gets you up in the morning. It's different than the what you do.

It's why you do what you do. And Nehemiah had to remind his people of that. We're rebuilding this wall for the glory of God. We're rebuilding this wall for the glory of Jerusalem. We are God's people. This is God's holy city. What we're doing has eternal significance. In our culture, in our inch in our church, our why is pretty simple. We exist to see every person find new life in Jesus. There's a lot of people in Abilene from all different stripes, all different backgrounds and stories that they come from. But every person desperately needs the new life that Jesus alone can bring.

Jesus says, I've come to give them life and life abundant. And the life that people live today may be sufficient from a worldly standard or they may be living the American dream, but deep down it won't truly satisfy. So we want to connect every person to new life in Jesus And when you get discouraged, remember that why. Or when you think about raising your children, don't get lost on the teenage years where they think that you're dumb. And they've

lost their brain and they're talking nonsense. Look up and beyond that to their 25th birthday when their brain comes back.

And you see that polished product of a child who fears the Lord and survived those wondrous those those crazy years. Because you never forgot your why. If you get distracted, if your head gets tied down into all the menial things, you can lose your vision for what God's called you to do. And so when you find yourself discouraged, just take a minute and remember why you're doing what you're doing. And then the last thing is just to keep moving forward. It's like that old saying in Finding Nemo, just keep swimming, just keep swimming.

That's so important when it comes to discouragement. Because discouragement is it really is like a cloud. It comes in, but it also goes away. And if you can just keep pressing forward every single day, eventually that discouragement will go. It's not something you decided to bring on yourself and that way it's external to your will. But just like you didn't decide to bring it in, you won't you also won't be able to push it away. All you can do is continue to remain steadfast until circumstances change around you. But if you'll keep swimming that cloud will pass and you'll be continuing the work.

And so don't let discouragement distract you from the calling of God on your life. Enlist some help. Keep pressing forward and remember your why just like just like Nehemiah did. And finally, when it comes to distractions. In chapter 6, Sanballat and the crew, they see that Nehemiah's not slowing down and he's probably about to finish the work. And so they try to get him called away to a big important meeting. It kind of has the vibe that they're they're tempting him to compromise. We'll let you be part of this establishment here in Samaria, but you've got to stop doing what you're doing.

And Nehemiah, even given that inclination or temptation is clear in what he was steadfast to do, when Sanballat and Geshem sent the message, hey, come, let's meet together in the villages of Ono Valley, they were going to plan to harm him. I sent messengers to them saying, I'm doing an important work and I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you? And like I said, if there's one passage I could get you to memorize, it would be this passage in every respect.

And when you think about what God's called you to do as a parent or a small group leader. Or any other number of things to commit to your memory that when it comes to God's work, it's an important work from which you cannot come down. No matter who's inviting you, no matter how compelling the inclination may be, the work of God is more important. Than that which would distract you from it. And we are surrounded with distractions today, from the screens in our pockets to the events happening around us. Cable news will really keep you well informed, but it is powerless for you to enact any change, right?

And so you get really worked up about what's wrong with the world, but you don't have any real resources to fix it, and that can distract you from what you can change and what you can do here and right now. Your screens are tempting, but don't let it take you away from the greater work of being a father or a mother. Life is busy, your job is demanding, but don't let it take you away from the greater work of spiritual formation. There's a lot of reasons you can skip church on a Sunday, especially on a snow day like this, but the fact that you're tuning in from live stream or here right now is like Nehemiah saying, I will not come down.

Why should this work stop while I come down and go to you? And because he was willing to be steadfast in those ways, he finished the wall. They covenanted together, they renewed the covenant, and God's people restored the glory of Jerusalem. In all of these ways Nehemiah's a blueprint, but he's not the best blueprint that we have. If you think about the greatest work that anyone's ever completed, that work would be the work of Jesus Christ. And if you think about how Jesus dealt with his detractors, he did pretty much the same thing.

He was on the cross, he cried out, Father, forgive them because they know not what they do. He entrusted his detractors into the hands of the Father, and he set his face like a flint to Jerusalem. And when he was discouraged, you think about the Garden of Gethsemane. He was there on his knees. Sweat drops of blood, but he wasn't alone, was he? He brought his disciples and he said, come pray with me for a while. He knew he needed their support, even though they weren't the best. He surrounded himself with the help.

He remembered his why and raised the question, it was for this hour, I was sent into the world. Why would I say, God save me from this hour? It was for this reason I was sent into the world. Father, not my will be done, but yours. And he kept he kept moving forward towards the cross. And even while he was on the cross, people mocked him and said, You worship God, save yourself. And he could have called down myriads of angels, but instead he entrusted himself to the Father and said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

And as a result He breathed his last. He was buried in a tomb but three days later. God raised him from the dead because he dealt with his detractors and discouragement and distractions just like Nehemiah did. And in that same pattern, I would encourage us 2026, whatever God has set out for you to do, to not let those things take your eye off the ball but to stay focused and stay committed to God's calling on your life. And as a church family, I would encourage much the same. The tractors will probably look different.

For one, don't be a detractor. For two, when they come, don't take vengeance into your own hands. Leave them to the Lord. Stay focused on the prize. And we'll keep swimming no matter the oppositions that may come. And so we're going to enter into a time of response and invitation. I'm going to ask you right here where you are to bow your heads. And if you're watching online, you can pray as well. And take just a moment to allow the Holy Spirit to take these truths and to orient them to the challenges in your life.

As you think about your detractors. Who might they be? And what would it look like for you to leave them in God's hands. Would you be reminded like Joseph? What they intend for evil, God can work for good. To leave vengeance in the hands of the Lord, for it is his. None of us are a. An impartial judge. Maybe for you this morning the application is to shoot a text to the people in your life that you've alienated. Maybe it's recommitting to joining a small group this year or showing up to church because you've been out for too long.

Lord, as the old hymn writer said, our hearts are prone to wonder. We can feel it. Would you take our hearts and seal them? Seal them for your courts above. We thank you that you're a God who speaks through your word and to our individual hearts. And we're thankful that you've called us into a great work of advancing your kingdom to the ends of the earth. That you would use humble jars of clay like us is really wild, and so we pray we would be vessels available for use and moldable in the potter's hands.

For the individuals here and also the ones watching online, I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would take your word. And bring it to bear in very specific ways and bring conviction so that our response is one of humility and obedience. Lord, we surrender to you our plans. We surrender the opposition to those plans, and we recommit ourselves to the big why the big answer why of why you're calling us to do what you've put before us. And whether that's raising children or grandchildren or starting a new venture or creative project.

We pray that you would take your word this morning and strengthen us by your grace. So that we would not grow weary in doing the good thing you've called us to, but that we would keep persevering and receive the reward. Because we kept working and keep pushing and decided not to give up. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. And God's people said, Amen.