

**(Intro Slide)**

# **GAIN & SUSTAIN FOCUS**

**Last week we talked about how important it is to . . . READ  
SLIDE**

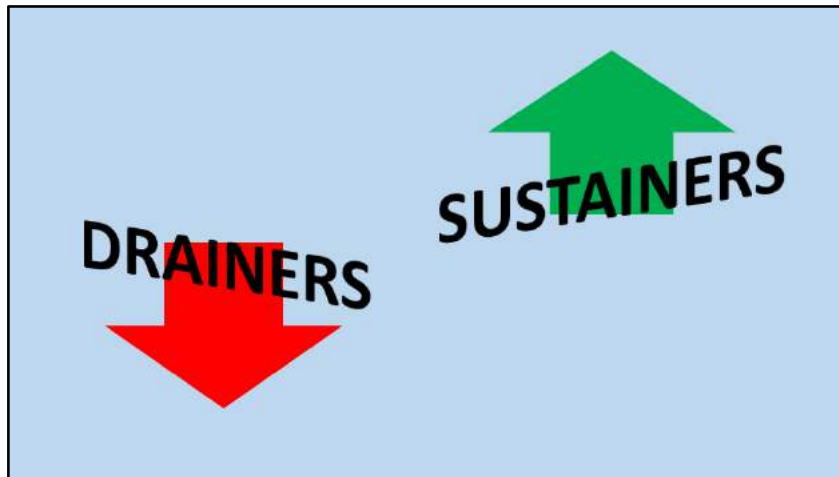
**-- If we are to follow God's call on our lives . . . a CALL TO MORE**

**. . .**

**-- . . . then we need to gain focus on His vision for us . . .**

**-- AND sustain that focus as we move from what COULD BE to  
what SHOULD BE to what, by God's grace, WILL BE**

**TR: We saw in Nehemiah's historical example a warning and an  
encouragement . . .**



**. . . to be wary of drainers . . . and make sure that we ourselves are sustainers.**

- There's another way to think about sustaining focus**
- It is a concept used by chiropractors, orthodontists, gunsmiths, project managers, mechanical engineers and . . .**



. . . mechanics. It is **ALIGNMENT**.

-- With our vehicles, it is where the rubber meets the road that we see if our camber is off and whether we are toed in or out.

-- Last week we saw how dangerous attacks from the outside are . . . how they can easily get us to lose focus and not finish well.

-- This week we see how there is also danger from within the ranks.

-- Last week we learned how the mockery and threats can worm into our hearts and cause discouragement.

-- And it is that discouragement that is so devastating.

**TR: Sometimes the discouragement is caused by those who are**

**much closer to us. Let's turn in our Bibles to Nehemiah 5.**

Nehemiah 5:1-2  
Page 441 in Handout Bibles

Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives **against their Jewish brothers.** <sup>2</sup>For there were those who said, "With our sons and our daughters, we are many. So let us get grain, that we may eat and keep alive."

ESV

It is on page 441 in the Handout Bibles.

-- READ SLIDE

-- First complaint: we aren't able to feed our families

TR: Verse 3

**Nehemiah 5:3-4**

There were also those who said, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain because of the famine." <sup>4</sup>And there were those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards."

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- Second and third complaints: We've had to mortgage our property AND borrow money just to pay the tax.

TR: Verse 5 continues the great outcry

**Nehemiah 5:5**

**“Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children are as their children. Yet we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards.”**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- Fourth complaint, the consequence of the others spun into a whirlwind: We have to sell our kids into slavery to survive.**
- Others own the mortgages on our land and we have no choice.**

**TR: Fulfilling God’s call on our lives is easily set aside when we . . .**



***Losing Alignment (5:1-5)***

- ***Destroyed from within***

**. . . lose alignment.**

**-- When we allow unresolved conflict to tear at the very fabric of our relationships with our brothers and sisters.**

**-- Remember, this is about an outcry AGAINST THEIR JEWISH BROTHERS.**

**-- Isn't that where most of the really painful conflict exists in our lives . . . between members of our immediate families and those of our church family?**

**TR: We can imagine that losing alignment isn't that big of a deal, but that's not what a friend shared with me last week.**



**He was talking about the frustration of helping a friend put in a new clutch on a large tractor.**

**-- This isn't the actual clutch but it gives us an idea of what the ALIGNMENT TOOL that they needed could have looked like.**

**-- But, his friend had ordered the economy replacement package and it did not come with the tool.**

**-- And they wouldn't sell the tool by itself. Their suggestion: eye-ball it.**

**-- Hours of frustration later my friend stopped working on the clutch, stopped trying to eye-ball it . . .**

**-- . . . not just for his sanity's sake but in order to build his own alignment tool.**

**-- After he had the tool built, everything went into place as it was supposed to.**

**TR: How blessed are we when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity. But we often need some ALIGNMENT TOOLS to help us toward that unity.**

**Losing Alignment (5:1-5)**

- *Destroyed from within*

**Regaining Alignment (5:6-19)**

- *Decisions in the fear of God*

What we find in verses 6-19 are 5 decision points or alignment tools, made while walking in the fear of God, that can help us regain alignment.

-- We need to review these because “a house divided cannot stand.”

TR: Pick up Nehemiah’s response to the outcry of verses 1-5 by looking at verse 6

**Nehemiah 5:6-7a**

I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. <sup>7</sup>I took counsel with myself . . .

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: In these brief words we see the first two decision points, alignment tools, . . .**

*Regaining Alignment (5:6-19)*

- 1. *Righteous Anger (5:6)***
- 2. *Reflection (5:7a)***

**READ SLIDE**

- While we are told not to hold on to anger overnight, not letting the sun go down on it, . . .
- . . . some of us look at the disunity within Christian homes and churches **LIKE IT IS NO BIG DEAL.**
- But, we need to weep . . . to pound the table . . . to say it **OUGHT NOT** to be so.
  
- But, we must be careful not to miss the second example Nehemiah sets for us . . . he took counsel with myself.
- “When we make a speech while we are angry, we will make the best speech we’ll ever live to regret.”
- Are we living with anger just under the surface? Do we have a “resting anger rate” that is way too high?
- We must heed Paul’s words to the Ephesians: Be angry and

**do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.**

**-- Are we trying to re-align our families by eye-balling it?  
Has the frustration started to show up in more than  
perspiration?**

**TR: Nehemiah didn't let himself get numb, but he also  
didn't let himself act dumb . . . he took time to reflect and .  
..**

**Nehemiah 5:7b**

... and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, "You are exacting interest, each from his brother." And I held a great assembly against them.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: He addressed the wealthy and powerful first and then gathered everyone together to work toward some solution.**



**Nehemiah 5:8**

and said to them, "We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!" They were silent and could not find a word to say.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: The sinful inconsistency, the misalignment, of the nobles and officials was pointed out. Then in verse 9 . . .**

**Nehemiah 5:9**

So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies?"

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- The sinful inconsistency of their actions was a manifestation of their lack of the fear of God.
- They were not revering God in their handling of money and property.
- They did not respect God enough to be greatly pained when their actions brought dishonor to His name.
  
- I see the same thing in Christians who imagine that the only or prime reason we pursue peace in our relationships within our homes and churches is so that we have better lives.
- Jesus prayed that we would be one, even as He and the

**Father are one . . . so that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son (see John 17).**

**-- When we allow misalignment to continue, our lack of respect for God's commands and for the honor due His name is evident.**

**-- We allow the nations to taunt believers and the God we believe in.**

**TR: Nehemiah then concludes his third decision point toward regaining alignment . . .**

**Nehemiah 5:10-11**

**“Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest. <sup>11</sup>Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them.”**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: When sinful disrespect for God has caused misalignment in our families and churches, we must issue forth a . . .**

*Regaining Alignment (5:6-19)*

- 1. *Righteous Anger (5:6)***
- 2. *Reflection (5:7a)***
- 3. *Call to Repentance (5:7b-12a)***

**. . . READ SLIDE**

- The implication in these verses is that Nehemiah started at a lower threat level and then had to escalate things by calling the public assembly.**
- It is not enough for us to address the misalignment in our homes, businesses, or church by just going once.**
- If we need to escalate, we must escalate . . . with the help of others.**

**TR: What we are talking about is a call to turn away from what is misaligning us AND back toward walking in the fear of God.**



**We are talking about living out the values that we say we believe.**

**-- About being faithful to the God-given culture He has made clear He wants us to have.**

**-- God wants us to be a peace with one another, to love one another.**

**-- We must be willing to care-front misalignment.**

**-- If our spouses who claim to be Christians won't repent, then we **MUST** get help per Matthew 18. The same for our kids, our parents, and those who sit on the other side of the room from us on Sundays.**

**TR: Nehemiah's example yielded a good result in verse 12 . . .**

**Nehemiah 5:12-13a**

Then they said, "We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say." And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised. <sup>13</sup>I also shook out the fold of my garment and said . . .

ESV

**READ SLIDE****TR: Verse 13 continues . . .**

**Nehemiah 5:13b**

. . . "So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said "Amen" and praised the Lord. **And the people did as they had promised.**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: A often missing step in regaining alignment is what is modeled here for us.**



*Regaining Alignment (5:6-19)*

- 1. *Righteous Anger (5:6)***
- 2. *Reflection (5:7a)***
- 3. *Call to Repentance (5:7b-12a)***
- 4. *Expect Accountability (5:12b-13)***

**We need to . . . READ SLIDE**

-- The officials and nobles said they would do the specific acts of repentance that Nehemiah said.

-- Then they were made to swear it before respected witnesses.

-- Then they were forced to hear of the consequences of not following through . . . they would be shaken out of the people.

-- They would lose their homes and jobs.

-- And, because they **EXPECTED ACCOUNTABILITY** there was follow through.

-- How often we become tolerant or maybe just give up and live with misalignment because we don't think anything will ever change.

-- We've been angry, taken time to reflect, and called them to

**repentance.**

**-- They said they were sorry and then just did it again.**

**-- Two summers ago we did an intensive study on forgiveness. We talked about choosing to forgive when the other person verbalized their repentance, that they had turned away from their sin against us and wanted to be restored into fellowship with us.**

**-- But . . . we also talked about throwing the rope down the hole . . . so that they have a chance to show the practical fruits of repentance as we root for them and pray for them. It is these fruits that will rebuild trust over the long haul.**

**TR: There's one last decision point that we need to take if we are to seek realignment in our relationships. Look at verse 14.**

**Nehemiah 5:14**

Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, **twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor.**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 15**

**Nehemiah 5:15**

The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. **But I did not do so, because of the fear of God.**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- Nehemiah had just called the nobles and officials to walk in the fear of God . . .

TR: Verse 16

Nehemiah 5:16

**I also persevered in the work** on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there **for the work.**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 17**

**Nehemiah 5:17-18a**

Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us. <sup>18</sup>Now what was **prepared at my expense** for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance.

ESV

**READ SLIDE****TR: Verse 18 continues . . .**

**Nehemiah 5:18b-19**

Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, **because the service was too heavy on this people.** <sup>19</sup>Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.

ESV

**READ SLIDE****TR: What is the fifth decision point? It is the need to . . .**

*Regaining Alignment (5:6-19)*

- 1. *Righteous Anger (5:6)***
- 2. *Reflection (5:7a)***
- 3. *Call to Repentance (5:7b-12a)***
- 4. *Expect Accountability (5:12b-13)***
- 5. *Model Alignment (5:14-19)***

**... READ SLIDE**

**-- As Jesus said, we must take the log out of our own eye before we try to get the speck out of our brother's eye.**

**-- We must be willing to care-front misalignment, or we are at least partly responsible for its existence.**

**-- We must do so while making sure that we ourselves are aligned.**

**-- EX: Fund-raising . . . is the entire board participating in this project? This is a donor's attempt to see if there is internal alignment.**

**-- It is even better if all the people working there so believe in the project that they too are donors.**

**TR: All five of these decision points are about making . . .**



Regaining Alignment (5:6-19)

1. *Righteous Anger (5:6)*
2. *Reflection*
3. *Cal* **DECISIONS IN THE FEAR OF GOD** *b-12a)*
4. *Exp* *accountability (5:12b-13)*
5. *Model Alignment (5:14-19)*

... READ SLIDE

-- As verse 9 said, "Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God"

-- Verse 15 told us that Nehemiah's choices we made "because of the fear of God."

-- I wish we could say that if we followed through on these five decision points, this five-fold alignment tool. that there would always be alignment.

-- But, we will be walking in the fear of God, with an awe that manifests itself in obedience and deference.

-- And, many times, the frustration of getting the new clutch put in will suddenly be "easy."

TR: So, we've seen . . .

**Losing Alignment (5:1-5)**

- *Destroyed from within*

**Regaining Alignment (5:6-19)**

- *Decisions in the fear of God*

**Sustaining Alignment (6:1-14)**

- *Declarations that sustain*

... REVIEW SLIDE (points 1-2) and now we must add READ SLIDE (point 3)

-- Life is not so black and white that the hindrances to alignment only come from the outside, or inside, or in order, or only once.

TR: Regaining and maintaining alignment takes courage. It takes declarations that come from the heart of our souls.

**Nehemiah 6:1-2a**

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 in the gates), <sup>2</sup>Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying . . .

ESV

**Chapter 6 begins . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 2 continues . . .**

**Nehemiah 6:2b-3**

. . . "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm. <sup>3</sup>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?"

ESV

**READ SLIDE****TR: The first declaration . . .**

*Sustaining Alignment (6:1-14)*

DECLARATIONS  
THAT SUSTAIN

1. *"I am doing a great work and I cannot come down."* (6:1-9)

**READ SLIDE**

-- What will it take for us to not be bunny-trailed into pucca-brush of triviality?

-- What will it take to not be politically pressured into doing the wrong thing . . . or at least leaving the right thing undone?

TR: It will take the conviction of having assurance that God has called us to more. And the resolve He has given us to move from **COULD BE** to **SHOULD BE** to **WILL BE** . . . expresses itself by saying . . .



... READ SLIDE

-- What keeps us from giving in to the temptations of an affair?  
 -- The confidence that God has called us to build a great marriage that reflects Jesus and His Church . . . we are doing a great work.

-- What keeps us from becoming workaholics or allowing our hobbies and outside engagements from leaving us no time to be a great parent?

-- The confidence that God has called us to raise our children in the training and instruction of the Lord . . .

-- . . . remember, fathers, this commandment in Ephesians 6 is spoken directly to you! We are doing the great work of raising children to the glory of God.

-- How sad when so many have not waited on God for the clarity of the great works He has called us to do?

-- If we don't know what we've said YES to, how will we be able to resist the flattering "come hither" invitations to which we should say NO?

**TR:** These attacks, internal and external, will keep coming in our lives. Look at verse 4.

## Nehemiah 6:4-5

And they sent to me **four times** in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. <sup>5</sup>In the same way Sanballat for **the fifth time** sent his servant to me with **an open letter** in his hand.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- This is when they involve the social media of the day.

TR: Verse 6.



**Nehemiah 6:6**

In it was written, “It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king.”

ESV**READ SLIDE**

-- It sounds a lot like, “People are saying . . .”

TR: It gets even worse . . .

**Nehemiah 6:7**

**“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.”**

*ESV*

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 8**

**Nehemiah 6:8-9**

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." <sup>9</sup>For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." **But now, O God, strengthen my hands.**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: The attacks will keep coming, the accusations, the attempts to make us afraid. So, our declaration must ring out**

• • •

*Sustaining Alignment (6:1-14)*

DECLARATIONS  
THAT SUSTAIN

1. *"I am doing a great work and I cannot come down."* (6:1-9)

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Are you confident that you are doing a great work?**



Perhaps you remember the old story of three stone cutters:  
-- What are you doing? Cutting stone. Earning a living. Building a great cathedral.

-- We can never live the life God intends for us, when we only plod through work or merely make a living.

-- "Life on earth will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

-- And Jesus Christ wants us to give Him all of our days, all of our strength, all of our mind, all that we do.

-- "Whatever you do in word or deed, do it all for the glory of God."

-- Are you building a great cathedral?

TR: The efforts to derail, to get Nehemiah misaligned continue

**in verse 10.**

**Nehemiah 6:10**

Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night."

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: This is an invitation to hide from a potential threat. It seems to come from an insider who pretends to care about Nehemiah's well-being.**

Nehemiah 6:11-12

But I said, "**Should such a man as I run away?** And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in." <sup>12</sup>And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

ESV

**Nehemiah's declarative response: READ SLIDE**

**TR: If we are to sustain alignment we must not only declare, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down."**



*Sustaining Alignment (6:1-14)*

**DECLARATIONS  
THAT SUSTAIN**

1. *“I am doing a great work and I cannot come down.” (6:1-9)*
2. *“Should such a man as I run away?” (6:10-14)*

**We must also declare, READ SLIDE**

**TR: Understand, attempts to get us misaligned can come in spiritualized packages, as verses 13-14 make clear.**

**Nehemiah 6:13-14**

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. <sup>14</sup>Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

ESV

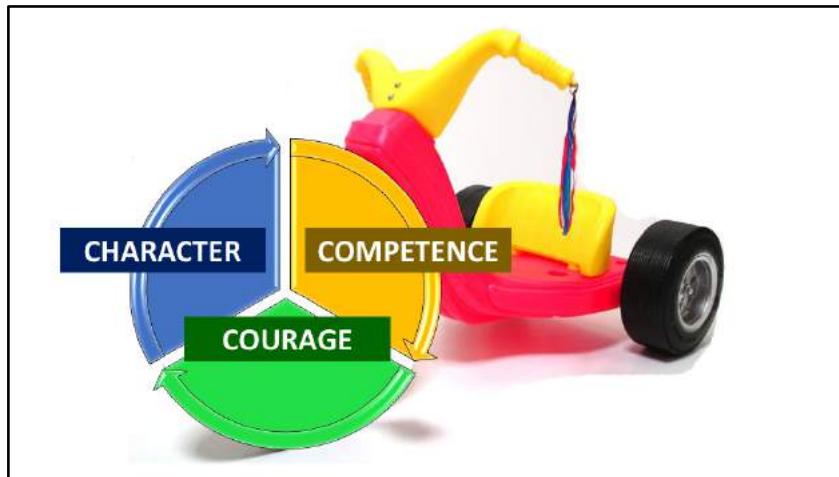
**READ SLIDE**

**TR: At the heart of it all is the attempt to make Nehemiah afraid. And to make us too afraid to sustain the vision from  
COULD BE TO SHOULD BE TO WILL BE.**



**I think back to my childhood and the great fun with the Big Wheel.**

**TR: As an adult there is also a Big Wheel that helps us slalom through the hindrances that could keep us from completing the great works God has called us to.**



**This Big Wheel is made up of 3-Cs . . . READ SLIDE**

**-- But, for many of us, if we were honest, the drainers in our lives, internal and external, have worn off part of the Big Wheel.**

**-- That was always the danger . . . skidding back and forth was a blast until some point the plastic wheel started to wear.**

**-- And when it started, it got worse quickly. The flat spot would eventually catch and make steering impossible.**

**-- I give testimony to that with a torn up knee that meant no swimming for most of a summer.**

**TR: My heart breaks for those whose Big Wheel is worn down in . . .**



**. . . courage.**

**-- Knowing what God wants us to do is critical.**

**-- Seeking to do it in a manner that aligns with the character He wants us to have is essential.**

**-- But, without courage, we're not going anywhere.**

**TR: God is calling us to allow the Holy Spirit to rouse us and help us declare . . .**

*Sustaining Alignment (6:1-14)*

**DECLARATIONS  
THAT SUSTAIN**

1. *"I am doing a great work and I cannot come down."* (6:1-9)
2. *"Should such a man as I run away?"* (6:10-14)

**... READ SLIDE**

- Should a blood bought, redeemed, child of the King . . .
- Should the salt of the earth, who has been raised to new life through the resurrection of Jesus . .
- Should one indwelt by God the Holy Spirit Himself, baptized and sealed with Him . . .
  
- Should such a one **RUN AWAY?**

**TR: How is God speaking to you today?**

Are we in danger of  
**losing** alignment?

- *Within our marriages?*
- *In our families?*
- *In our small groups?*
- *In our church?*
- *In our businesses?*

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Or . . .**

**Are we being called  
to **regain** alignment?**

- *First, within ourselves?*
- *Care-front those within the “family?”*
- *Follow through because we expect accountability?*

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Or . . .**

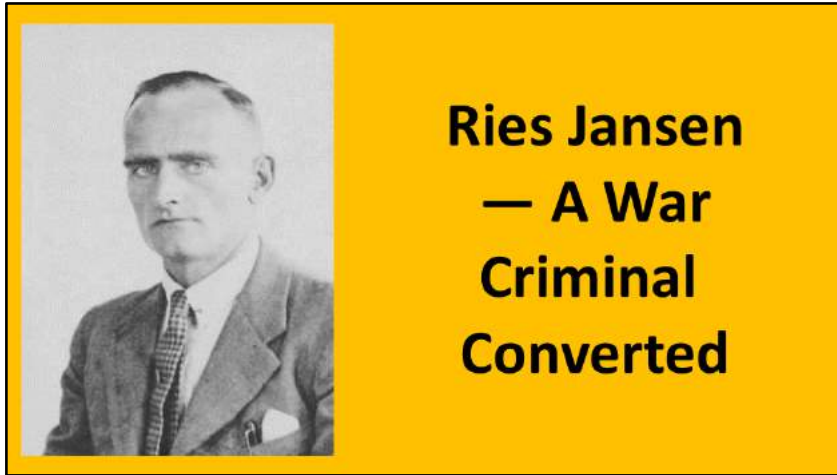


**Are we being encouraged  
to sustain alignment?**

- *Can we declare that we are doing "a great work?"*
- *Can we declare we will not be cowardly because of who we are in Christ?*

**READ SLIDE**

**-- Even this week there will be temptations.**



**Story of a man who brought to Jesus what he could  
-- It is not too late for us to do a great work . . . to be men and  
women of courage who will not act like cowards.**

**[https://trinityinfo-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/gerhard\\_debock\\_trinityinfo\\_org/Documents/2-STUDY/TEXTUAL/OT/Nehemiah/2018%20Series/Reis%20Janse n%20story.docx?d=wa7175768d47949d1aaf16cd41940b7c6&csf=1&e=Q3OuUI](https://trinityinfo-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/gerhard_debock_trinityinfo_org/Documents/2-STUDY/TEXTUAL/OT/Nehemiah/2018%20Series/Reis%20Janse n%20story.docx?d=wa7175768d47949d1aaf16cd41940b7c6&csf=1&e=Q3OuUI)**