this evening at Nehemiah chapter 3 and 4. Nehemiah 3 and 4. At the end of chapter 2, Nehemiah says to God's people after he examines the broken down wall, he says, let us build the wall. And the people respond, let us rise up and build. They not only heard the word, but they heeded the word. They said, we will build this wall. We will do what you have asked. And now as we come to chapters three and four, we see them acting on their verbal assent that they would build the wall. So in the end of two, they claim they're going to do it. And then in chapters three and four, we see them actually doing what they said they heard and heeded the word of God.

With this in mind, setting the context, let us pray and ask God to bless the reading and preaching of his word. Our Heavenly Father, we pray that you would cause us to have that sort of response that the people of God had at the end of Nehemiah 2 and into our chapter this evening, that we would be among those who don't only hear the word and say with our lips, I will do it, but that by your grace we would hear your word, say, I will do it, I will obey, and we actually by your grace would begin to do the things which you ask of us. Oh God, this is not something which is able to be produced by self-motivation. It is spirit-wrought power for which we pray. And this evening, as your word is read and we hear it proclaimed, we pray that you would pour forth your spirit on our hearts, in the name of Christ, amen. Hear now the reading of God's holy word, beginning in Nehemiah chapter three.

Then Elishab, the high priest, rose up with his brothers, the priests, and they built the Sheep Gate, and consecrated it, and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel, and next to him the men of Jericho built.

And next to them, Zechur, the son of Imri built. The son of Hassanah built the fish gate. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And next to them, Merimoth, the son of Uriah, son of Hakaz, repaired. And next to them, Meshulam, the son of Barakiah, son of Meshezabel, repaired. And next to them, Zadok, the son of Banan, repaired. And next to them, the Tekhoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their lord. Joyada, the son of Passia, and Meshulam, the son of Bessodia, repaired the gate of Yeshanan. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts and its bars. And next to them repaired Melatiah, the Gibeonite, and Jadon. the Merianothite, the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, in the seat of the governor of the province beyond the river.

Next to them Uziel, the son of Harhiah, goldsmiths repaired. Next to him, Hananiah, one of the perfumers, repaired. And they restored Jerusalem as far as the broad wall. Next to them, Rephiah, the son of Hurr, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired. Next to them, Jedidiah, the son of Har-umath, repaired opposite his house. And next to him, Hatush, the son of Hashabaniah, repaired. Malkijah, the son of Huram, and Hashab, the son of Pahath-moab, repaired, another section in the tower of the ovens. Next to him, Shalom, the son of Halu-hesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired.

He and his daughters, Hanun, the inhabitants of Zenoa, repaired the valley gate. They rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and repaired 1,000 cubits of the wall as far as the Dung Gate. Malkijah, the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakarim, repaired the Dung Gate. He built it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And Shalom, the son of Kohoset, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the fountain gate. He rebuilt it and covered it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And he built the wall of the pool of Shelah, of the king's garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the city of David. After him, Nehemiah, the son of Azbuk, ruler of

half the district of Bethzer, repaired to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool, and as far as the house of the mighty men. After him, the Levites repaired.

Rahum, the son of Mani, next to him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Kelah, repaired for the district. After him, their brothers repaired. Bavai, the son of Hanadad, ruler of half the district of Kelah, Next to him, Ezra, the son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress. After him, Baruch, the son of Zabbi, repaired another section from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib, the high priest. After him, Merimoth, the son of Uriah, son of Hakaz, repaired another section from the door of the house of Eliashib the end of the house of Eliashib. After him, the priests, the men of the surrounding area, repaired. After them, Benjamin and Hashub repaired opposite their house. After them, Azariah, the son of Masiah, the son of Ananiah, repaired beside his own house. After him, Benue, the son of Hinnadad, repaired another section from the house of Azariah to the buttresses.

And to the corner, Pahlal, the son of Uzziah, repaired opposite the buttress and the tower projecting from the upper house to the king at the court of the guard. After him, Padiah, the son of Parush, and the temple servants living on Ophel repaired to a point opposite the water gate on the east and the projecting tower. After him, the Tekoyites repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel. Above the horse gate, the priests repaired, each one opposite his own house.

After them, Zadok, the son of Emer, repaired opposite his own house. After him, Shemaiah, the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate, repaired. After him, Hananiah, the son of Sholemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zelaph, repaired another section. After him, Meshulam, the son of Berekiah, repaired opposite his chamber.

After him, Mokijah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants opposite the muster gate and to the upper chamber of the corner. And between the upper chamber of the corner and the sheep gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants repaired. Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, what are these feeble Jews doing?

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

Here, oh God, oh our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

So we built the wall, and all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashtodites heard that the repairing of

the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

In Judah it was said, the strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves, we will not be able to rebuild the wall. And our enemies said, they will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.

At that time, the Jews who lived near came from all directions and said to us 10 times, you must return to us. So in the lowest parts of the space between the wall, In open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked into rows and said to the nobles, and to the officials, and to the rest of the people, do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes. When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work.

From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built.

The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, the work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. And the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet rallied to us there, our God will fight for us. So we labored at the work and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out. I also said to the people at that time, let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day. So neither I, nor my brothers, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes. Each kept his weapon at his right hand.

Well, that ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless the reading and now the proclamation of it to our lives. Today, I want us to consider three lessons from the rebuilding of the wall, three lessons from rebuilding the wall. And we see these three things.

The rebuilding of the wall took teamwork, took prayer, and took watching. Took teamwork, prayer, and watching. But first, it took teamwork. You see this obviously throughout chapter three. In chapter three, you see there were goldsmiths, perfumers, officials, priests. There was a man with his daughters, merchants, temple servants, all sorts of different people working together to build this wall.

It took teamwork. And as the church, we need one another. Man was not created to be alone, and man was not saved to be alone. You are saved into a community, the community of the church. And within the community of

God's church, even a local church such as our own, you are going to have a diversity of gifts and skills and talents and ways that God has particularly equipped you.

And you see that same reality, of course, on display in chapter three with the various types of people who were participating in building the wall. And God will use all sorts of different people in his church today just as he did then in the rebuilding of the wall.

It's interesting when you consider this reality that among the many different skills and gifts of people listed in chapter three, none of them had the title of general contractor. None of them had the title of carpenter. Now surely there would have been some people among them who were more skilled in that way, But one thing to notice is that it wasn't a bunch of professionals per se. It was a bunch of various people gathering together, using their gifts and their calling to build this wall.

And so today in the church, God will use the mother at home with her children, and he will use the elderly person who's retired, and he'll use the widow, And he'll use Olydia, cellar of purple. He'll use the Dorcas who sewed coats. He'll use Zacchaeus, the wee little man. He'll use the children of the church. He'll use the oldest, the youngest. He'll use all sorts of different people to work in his church, to serve in his church, to be a blessing to one another, just as they were there in the building of that wall.

But you also notice in this teamwork in chapter three that they had specific portions of the wall that were allotted to them. And it appears in chapter three that they all did a very good job at staying in their lane. So each person had a particular portion of the wall that they were to build. And if every person tried to build every portion of the wall, the wall would not have been effectively built. No one could build the whole wall, But everyone, by God's grace, could build a little bit of the wall. And similarly, we can say that we all need to learn to stay in our lanes.

There's always a temptation in the church and just in human society to say, I wish I had that guy's gift, because then I could really be effective to serve in the church. Well, that's not staying in your lane. God didn't give you that guy's gift, and that's Okay, he gave you your gifts, use your gifts. Additionally, we can do the opposite sort of thing and not say, I wish I had that guy's gifts. We can say, I've got all the gifts. If everybody just had the gifts like me, we could get stuff done around here. But that's also a bad posture. It's not staying in your lane. You don't have every gift. God didn't give you every gift. And that's also okay, but he did give you your gifts.

I envisioned as I prepared this sermon, That temptation could have arisen in some of their hearts. You could imagine someone saying, do you see how slowly Hananiah, the perfumer, is working? I mean, if that guy doesn't pick up the pace, he's never going to get his portion of the wall done. But no, they shouldn't have that attitude.

They should say, this is the portion God gave me. Or the other temptation, I just wish that I were like Zechariah, the son of Emory. That guy can really wield a hammer. I wish I was like him. But no, that's not the attitude that we hope they had, and it's not the attitude that we see on the whole, they did have.

They had an attitude of, God told me to build this portion, I'm gonna do this thing, and I'm gonna do it to the best of my God-given abilities. And for parents raising children in the room, one thing that is good to remember, and my father would always pray for us at family worship, was this. He would say, God, I pray that, and he would pray for each of us by name, that they would develop the gifts you have given them. Okay, develop the gifts you have given them.

Not the gifts you wish God had given them. Not the gifts you might have wanted God to have given them. The gifts that God actually has given them. So, for some of you, you might wish you had that football player, or that academic, or whatever it might be, and God didn't give you that. That's okay. Raise the children God has given you.

Encourage them in the gifts they actually have, not the gifts you might wish that they had. Well in the church again everyone has their gifts and sometimes it's hard to know what those are. A lot of times if you want to know what your gifts are you should try to ask someone else because they are a lot of times better at telling you what your gifts are than you are. Let me give you a very brief tip for discerning your gifts. Here's a helpful tip.

That thing that you just do because it's just easy for you to do, that you're sure everyone else in the world's actually just as capable of doing as you are, that's probably your gift. That thing that you just do, you just love to go serve. And everybody can do that. Well, actually, they can't, or not as well as you can. You just assume that. So that is a way, a tip, to know what your gift is. What is that thing that you just do? Maybe you write notes to people. Maybe you love to, the theology and to help teach others, whatever that thing is, that's very possibly your gift. But you can ask others around you if it's hard for you to see ways God has gifted you because I am sure you are gifted.

Now, we can also say that you need teamwork in the church because we need one another to bear one another's burdens. We need one another to pray for us. We need to be praying for each other. We need to be confessing our sins, not necessarily to every individual, but confessing our sins, helping one another in the faith.

Along this point, this call to be helping one another in the faith, the story came to my mind of Moses when he has to have her and Aaron hold up his arms so that Joshua and the people of God can fight against the Amalekites. It seems like a relatively simple thing that Moses was tasked to do to hold up his arms and as long as he held his arms up they were winning against the Amalekites and when he put his arms down they would begin to lose. But he couldn't do that simple task. His arms got weak. He needed Aaron and Hur to hold up his arms so that they could fight the battles of the Lord successfully. And in our lives, we need brothers and sisters in Christ to hold up our arms metaphorically. We need them to come alongside of us and help us.

To be reminded, dear ones, that you're not alone. You have felt alone in your walk with the Lord. I know that you have. You have felt alone at some point, I am sure. And when you have these brothers and sisters alongside of you, it is a helpful reminder you are not alone. There was a time, a handful of years ago, when I frankly did feel extremely alone in the ministry. I felt completely alone.

And my pastor from home sent me a brief email and he finished it with these words, you are not alone. And that literally, he had no idea. It was like the balm to my soul. This man, thousand plus miles away, reminding me that I was not alone in my ministry. convictions and so you are not alone. You have brothers and sisters in Christ around you to help you in your walk with Christ.

So first you see rebuilding the wall took teamwork but second rebuilding the wall took prayer. You see this in chapter 4 verses 1 through 9 and just due to the sheer length of all of this we won't reread all of it but chapter 4 verses 1 through 9 you see that rebuilding the wall took prayer. As chapter 4 begins, Sanballat and company begin to oppose the rebuilding of the wall. Well, actually, they technically started doing that in chapter 2, but you see them doing it again here in chapter 4.

And as they come and start opposing the rebuilding of the wall, you should know that these people are representatives of the seed of the serpent, that you should read this in light of Genesis 3.15. that there are people who are against the people of God, and they are part of the seed of the serpent spiritually. They don't want the wall rebuilt because they don't love God. They hate him and his people. So they taunt him, but how does Nehemiah and his group respond? Verse four, here, O our God, for we are despised.

He turns in verses four and five to prayer. And this is the first thing he does when he starts to face them. And he does this again as his first response in verse nine. Sanballat and company continue to get frustrated with Nehemiah and his group as they're rebuilding the wall. And so they come at them harder and more angrily. And then in verse nine, we see Nehemiah and his people respond again. Verse 9, and we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. You might expect that Nehemiah would try to argue with Sambolet and his people.

You might expect that he decides to take a sword and chop off his head. But such is not the case. Nehemiah had a habit of making his first response in life to pray. And we've already seen that, but you see it again here. It's his first response to opposition. It's his first response to difficulty in life, is to go to the Lord in prayer. And he doesn't give up. He keeps going. Now there is a saying, when all else fails, pray. And I think Nehemiah would say this, before you do anything else, pray. You see, that's entirely different. We say, when all else fails, pray. That's not even a Christian attitude. Now, I'm not saying God couldn't use that, but that is not a distinctly Christian attitude. That is a non-Christian attitude. It's like, well, nothing else I could do work.

Let's see if there's a God up there who might help me. Now, again, if you get to a place in your life where you hadn't been praying for a while and then you decide to pray, praise the Lord, but that shouldn't be our attitude. Our attitude should be, before I do anything else, let me pray.

Now, someone might hear that and feel an incredible burden just smashed them, but it doesn't have to be a long prayer. You don't have to be eloquent. Not everything in your life has to be this elaborate. It can be, Lord, help me. Lord, I don't know what I'm doing. Lord, give me clarity. And then you go do whatever the thing is that you need to do.

I'm not suggesting to you that you need to spend 20 minutes in prayer before you go cook breakfast and then 20 minutes in prayer after breakfast before you go to work. No. We would never get anything done if we operated that way, but we do need to take the principle to heart to be praying. Pray, pray, pray, pray, pray. Jesus prayed before he selected the 12 apostles. Jesus prayed when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane. We need to pray. That's what Nehemiah is doing, and it is a great example for us.

Now, Jamie told me a story this past week. and I forgot to ask him for permission to use names, so I'm going to tell the story to the best of my ability without using any names. But he told me this story this past week about a former professor at RTS.

And this professor was sitting in his office one day, and this student came in to the professor's office, and he said to the professor, hey, I was just in X person's class, and he was teaching this. And the professor responded and said, that's heresy. So what do you think is the next thing the professor's gonna do? He just informed a student that he had been taught heresy by another professor on the faculty. He said, let's pray. And he prayed, and he prayed, and he prayed.

And then two weeks later, that professor left the faith and left the seminary and went away. Not the praying professor, the heretical professor. Now we're not saying we're glad he ran away, but we are saying God answered that prayer. We're glad that he ran away from the seminary, We're not glad he ran away from the Lord, but the point is that should be our attitude.

This thing comes up, what in the world am I gonna do? Well, how about we start by praying? And that's what Nehemiah is doing here. We see it twice in our text, verse four and in verse nine. Now, as you see them praying here, you could imagine they could have gotten discouraged because they already prayed one time in verse four and it didn't seem to work. They came back in verse seven and eight and kept trying to pester them, but they turned again to prayer. They didn't give up.

So what I want to encourage is a habit of prayer in our hearts, in our lives, in your life, a habit of prayer. Now, how can you start a habit of prayer? Well, you can start by praying for a habit of prayer. Now, what do you do when tomorrow, if it happens to be tomorrow, you have a very poor praying day, you don't really pray at all, or you pray very little and you realize, I prayed last night before I went to bed that I would start to have a habit of prayer. I got to the end of Monday and I already failed to have a habit of prayer.

Well, you know, here's the trick, ready? You pray that you would have a habit of prayer on Tuesday. Then you do that again on Tuesday, even if you messed up on Tuesday. Then you do that on Wednesday. And here's the

thing, if you keep praying for a habit of prayer, keep praying for a habit of prayer, you know what you're gonna end up accidentally doing?

Praying, a lot. Because you realize, I haven't been praying. And you say, God, help me pray. And then you get five hours later, and you realize you haven't prayed about a single thing in five hours, and you go, God, please help give me a habit of prayer. And you know what you're gonna start doing? You're gonna start praying. And this is an area in which You can pray for me. I feel this as much as you do. Let me just say that. It's hard because we are prideful. We rely far too much on ourselves. We think far too highly of ourselves. And so we don't make these a priority, but we ought to.

And this is a call from Nehemiah to make a habit of praying. Well, then our third point here is rebuilding the wall took watching. It took watching. You remember how Jesus exhorted, and that's verses 10 through 23, remember how Jesus exhorted them to watch and pray? Well, as I contemplated chapter four, I thought, this is the inverse, but the same idea. What we see in our text is praying and watching. They prayed in the first nine verses, and they start watching very closely in the latter set of verses in chapter four, verses 10 through 23. And it's like what Jesus had said. He said, watch and pray, and here you see them praying and watching. But it's the same idea of this combination of the two.

Now, the reason this is so important is because prayer without watching is presumption. Prayer without watching is presumption. But watching without prayer is self-reliance. Prayer without watching is presumptuous. but watching without prayer is self-reliance.

And so you can't just say, I prayed, so I don't need to watch out for X sin in my life. You can't just say, I prayed, therefore I don't need to watch out anymore for that sin. You also can't say, I'm watching out for that sin, so I don't need to pray.

The two should be together. The praying and the watching should be part coming together in our lives. And you see that again in our text, the way they were praying in the first portion, now they're watching very vigilantly in the latter section. But here is the key. In all of your praying and in all of your watching, you can't rely on your praying and you can't rely on your watching. Isn't that interesting? Why do I say that? Well, because that's what we see even in our text. Look at verse 14 and look at verse 19. Verse 14. And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, do not be afraid of them.

Remember the Lord who is great and awesome. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome. And then in verse 19, the last words of verse, oh, actually verse 20, the last words of verse 20, our God will fight for us. Our God will fight for us. So while they did watch vigilantly and while they did pray, diligently. Their ultimate reliance was not on their praying, nor on their watching, but on their God. They relied upon their God.

That great verse in the Proverbs, the horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord. That's the idea here. Yes, they get the horse ready for battle, but the victory is ultimately in the Lord's hands, so they rely upon him."

Now this week I don't suspect you're going to face any physical enemies where you're going to need to hold a spear in one hand as you do your work with the other hand, nor do I expect that you're going to be building any big walls. But the principles that you can take from this are simply this, in all of your watching and in all of your praying, which are both commands to be heeded, rely on the Lord, not the eloquence or length of your prayers. Every one of you who's a real Christian in this room, you've had this experience.

You've prayed a great prayer, starting off very well. Then you're even watching really well. And then about 18 minutes later, you do something you really wish you hadn't done. And you said, what happened to all that stuff I had done earlier? Well, you were watching and you were praying, and praise the Lord you were watching and you were praying. The reality is you've got to rely on the Lord. You do all those things and you must, you should, to fight your sin. But your hope, your strength is ultimately in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

So tonight we've seen the rebuilding of the wall, took teamwork, prayer, and watching. But I want to close with this. Why is this even in the Bible at all? this rebuilding of a wall 2,500 years ago. Is Nehemiah really just about the rebuilding of a wall? And I stressed this last time, so you might know where we're going, but I'm gonna keep stressing it. Is it really just about the rebuilding of a wall? I mean, lots of walls have been built, and their stories aren't in the Bible.

So why is this wall in the Bible? Well, this story is in the Bible because this wall provided protection for God's people. But then you have to go deeper than that. Why did God care to provide protection for his people? Why was he so invested in their protection?

And it is because he made a covenant promise in Genesis 3.15. I will provide a seed to crush the head of the serpent. If there's no wall, there's no protection. If there's no protection for the people, there's no line bring about the promised seed of the serpent, of the woman rather, to crush the head of the serpent. God is being committed to his covenant promises here in the text.

And so I thought to myself, what would we name this wall? And then this came to mind from Chad's sermon last week, he who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it. If you could give a name to this wall, that would be a great name. Because this wall is proclaiming to them, he who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it. He will protect you. He will provide a redeemer for you. He will save you.

This wall and the protection which it provides really points to the saving work of God to redeem his people and crush the head of the serpent and save us from our sins. He is committed. All of their vigilance, all of their diligence, all of their prayers, all of their everything could have never built this wall if God was not faithful to

His covenant promises. And I want to ask you, do you know this covenant faithful God? He is so good. He is faithful. He will surely do it. He will keep His people all the way to the end. Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we do praise you and thank you for this opportunity to hear about not just the building of a wall, but great principles that apply to the church today about unity and teamwork, principles, oh God, about praying and principles about watching, but above all, this truth that you are faithful. You will surely hold your people to the end You love your children. You save them. You do it all. That wall calls us to worship you, the God who saves sinners. To you be the glory forever and ever. Amen.