A Season of Rebuilding
Building a Future with Commitment

- Church we are officially in week four of this incredibly important series that I believe if we actually catch will take us into a mighty God focused future. There is massive spiritual significance to what we are casting. We are casting vision, we are developing strategy to see this vision come to fruition. Because God has fruit for us here!

- I firmly believe God is going to do something miraculous here! God has big plans for this body of believers for this church! I'm committed and I firmly believe God is committed to supernaturally building a future of ministry and effectiveness that is abundantly more than we could ever imagine.

- But remember in casting strategy it all flows from the very essence of who we are! Because we are Purpose Church: we exist to help people from every generation and situation of life…

Vision: Find Jesus & Find Purpose

- Absolutely everything filters through this and the strategy God has given us is simply a vehicle of achieving exactly this. This strategy is a method to rebuild because remember we are in a season of rebuilding and through a dedication to rebuilding we are in fact building a future, the future God has for us!

- We will become a church willing to lovingly come beside people in this darkest, messiest situations, that we as a body love people enough to trudge into the muck and mire of where people have found themselves by chasing their flesh and the world. And we do so for people from every ethnicity, every culture, every age, every stage of life. And we aim to do all of this simply to advance the kingdom for generations to come, to radically change Zeeland/ Holland and all of Ottawa County, to be a place of spiritual refuge and spiritual rehabilitation, restoration, deliverance, and discipleship.

Isaiah 61:4: "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations." NIV

- This season isn't at all about physical buildings, not about rebuilding our property or anything superficial like that, this is profound and spiritual, God is rebuilding our church through the mission and strategy God has given us. I believe we are entering a season, and not a short season but a long season of

God's Favor through this rebuilding, through this commitment to focusing on the future!

- The last three weeks we have gone over three building blocks necessary for a church seeking vision, committed to the future. Because here at Purpose Church we will be a church absolutely committed to the future! We must be! And those three building blocks were: ***Prayer, Unity, Focus.*** And today's building block is…

Building Block 4: Commitment

- This building block much like the ones we have broken down before this are absolutely imperative and foundational! We must be absolutely and completely committed to the vision God has given us for this season and utterly committed to God for building the future here at this Church.

2 Chronicles 16:9: "The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him…" NLT

- Much like focus, we will lose the vision, it will leak and leave our hearts over time if we aren't committed. Commitment is so important, and it's a daily effort! And of course like we have been doing for the past three weeks leading up to today we are in the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah has shown some amazing commitment and will teach us some great lessons.

- So jumping in, remember we are and have been looking in Nehemiah at the rebuilding project of the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah as we know had a burden for Jerusalem and the state of it's people. He was passionate for his vision of rebuilding. And last week we saw that was met with opposition, just as we will eventually face at some point in chasing the future.

- But we finished chapter 6 last week and we find ourselves in an interesting place in Nehemiah. Because as of now in chapter 7, the wall is finished, the wall is built! In the end of chapter 6 the wall gets finished despite the opposition Nehemiah faced. But the vision was for more than a wall, it was for the people of Jerusalem to be closer to God and build themselves around God. So the mission and vision continues. Just as our vision and mission will always continue. We will always chase after the future and God's will of reaching every soul of our county.

- But here you will see a shift in the book of Nehemiah because despite the wall being done, the work of building a God honoring future is still being done, and

commitment was so necessary. So let's read at chapter 7 and see what Nehemiah does first after the rebuilding of the wall is complete, because as we know there is still plenty to do! Let's read…

Nehemiah 7:1-3: "After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites were appointed. 2 I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most people do. 3 I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them. Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses."" NIV

- The first thing Nehemiah did is he put Godly leaders in place, those who feared and respected God, and made public worship possible again with the musicians and Levites. Nehemiahs priority was putting in place the key people that would seek God and help foster others to come closer to God.

Because of course the real key to building a future is building a true love for God in people!

- Nehemiah's real mission wasn't to just to build a wall and in turn build a city of people who were devoted to a wall. His true mission and purpose was to fortify God's city and fortify God's people with a heart for God and a true commitment to God! Nehemiah knew people had to be committed to God! Just as we must be! We must be committed to God and His vision for us!

- Think about it, misplaced commitment is what got the Israelites in this position in the first place. It wasn't because they didn't have a wall. When we go back and remember we talked a little bit about this history our first week but what lead to the captivity of the Southern Kingdom into Babylon and the conquering of the Northern Kingdom to the Assyrians was because they were more committed to idolatry than God.

- You want some spoilers into this message, I'll give you some, if you take away anything this whole sermon this is the big takeaway right here:

The Future You Build Depends on Where or Who You Place Your Commitment In

- Your destiny, your future, your direction, and not just your individual one but your families, this congregation it all hinges on what is your number one priority, what you are devoted to, or committed too. Your allegiance or commitment decides your future, no matter if it's in God or something or someone else.

- Your commitment to God be it an abundance of commitment or a lack of commitment will determine the future you build and have. Just the same holds true for us as a congregation. If we as a church want to see this vision come to pass and see the supernatural future I believe God has for us, if we want that Ephesians 3:20 future…

Ephesians 3:20-21: "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." ESV

- If we want the future of us through the power of The Holy Spirit reaching souls from every situation of life and every generation of life for generations and generations to come, that God future we must be fully committed and have allegiance to God and His vision for us above all else!

- Our commitment to God matters, our allegiance to God matters. Where God is in our priorities matter. If we are to supernaturally build a God focused future it matters. And Nehemiah knew it mattered too. ***Nehemiah knew the wall could be sturdy, it could be tall, it could be wide, it could be strong but none of that mattered unless the nation within the walls was devoted and committed to God.***

- Our walls don't matter unless we are making God our top priority, our biggest commitment. How well we weed the yard, mow the yard, how we paint, how fun and cool we make it in here, none of it matters without a core commitment and priority to God, the God vision and the things of God!

- So Nehemiah has a plan, and it's a wonderful plan, we read this plan and see this plan throughout chapters 7-10 of Nehemiah we see Nehemiah doing his best to get the people to renew their commitment and allegiances to God. So what we see throughout these chapters is a revival breaks out in the city lead by Nehemiah. And in the midst of this amazing citywide revival Nehemiah does something pretty radical, he figures we need to get this commitment in writing!

- We need people to literally pledge their allegiances to God, sign this contract that they will be absolutely committed to God and make God their number one priority. It's an interesting tactic to be sure. Now keep in mind through fasting and praying and confessing sins this pledge is written. So let's read it in the last verse of chapter 9…

Nehemiah 9:38: " "In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it."" NIV

- They literally put their commitment in writing, they pledged their allegiance to God in writing, they wrote in this binding agreement that they would follow God's Law, the Mosaic Law and they would be committed to a Godly life. I mean imagine if I did that today. I have a notary here ready to notarize some agreements that we will all live Holy, tithe, talk to people about Jesus, spread the gospel. I'm sure y'all wouldn't enjoy that or take to it. It's an interesting thing but also so amazing.

- But all joking aside I may not have you sign a binding agreement and have it sealed and notarized but we as a church need to pledge and have a new level of commitment to God and the vision God gave us along with The things of God! Today I want us to look at some of the things Nehemiah had the people pledge to do and I believe we need to pledge to do the same things! This is for our day to day lives as believers and we need this as a body to get to the future God has for us!

- I think the first thing we need to pledge commitment to do that Nehemiah had the people pledge. While I'm not going to be challenging you to follow the Law the way Nehemiah does as we are under the New Covenant, there are some amazing principles we can draw from Nehemiah we ourselves can pledge or commit to do and the first is this:

1.) We Must Commit to Be Loyal To The Word of God

- Nehemiah knew a restored wall couldn't protect people who ignored scripture, and let me tell you I believe the vision I got is from God and for us is from God but this vision won't happen without us as a people, as a body being committed to The Word of God! The Word must be a priority in our life! Just as it was a priority to Nehemiah.

- Going back a few chapters to chapter 8 one of the first things that happened after the wall was a Word Marathon! It was a regular marathon of the Law being read and worship being brought up to God, look at this:

Nehemiah 8:1-9: "all the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel. 2 So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. 3 He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. 4 Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam.
5 Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. 6 Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. 7 The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. 8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read. 9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law." NIV

- That last verse is so amazing to me, they were all weeping when they heard the word of the Law. These people were just weeping when hearing scripture read to them. What a level of reverence and love for the word. You can really tell how much someone cherishes the word by their reactions to the Word. I can tell you I don't always weep but I am a crier and I often tear up when reading, especially the gospels.

- Knowing God's word is true for me, despite my mistakes, my shortcomings, Jesus died for me! Did this for me! God's words are true for me! It's so humbling and amazing to know and tears come sometimes when I just dwell in the word of The Lord. They even stood for hours listening to The Word being

read. There was a complete respect and love for The Word of God. But not just that.

- They got down on their faces and worshipped The Lord in reverence, they got low and humbled themselves and submit to the authority of The Word of The Lord. Just imagine it for a moment if we had this level of awe for The Scripture, for The Word. Why has scripture become mundane and normal to us? This is the written word of The Creator of The Universe. God inspired words breathed and written down for us.

- Especially as we look to the future we need to foster this level of love and respect and commitment to The Scripture, to God's Word. We must never devalue the Word, and commitment to The Word. Our God future depends on our commitment to The Words of The Lord, The Scripture! The Bible! I think we need to realize again the treasure of The Bible. My goodness we are so blessed we can get it right on our phone and have one literally always with us. What a treasure!

- The Bible is sufficient, it's eternal, it's enough, it's The Words of God written down and we find our faith through these words, our edification through these words. ***We must cherish these words again! And let's be clear on our stance here at Purpose Church, we don't believe these are man's words about God. These are God's words divinely given through the Holy Spirit to men and for us! It's divinely inspired!***

- Listen, I want us to do exactly what Jesus did. When He was tempted He quoted scripture, when Jesus challenged tradition He quoted scripture, when Jesus rebuked opposition He used and quoted scripture! When Jesus explained the mission He quoted scripture. Jesus used scripture to bring people to faith in Him as The Word made flesh, God in flesh. He used scripture!

- Wherever the future takes us, wherever God leads us in our coming seasons and the things God does through us we are going to be committed to scripture, loyal to the word of God! We must not make it mundane anymore, it must be precious, it must be priority, we need passion for The Scripture! Commitment to The Scripture!

- Another pledge Nehemiah had the people commit to, that I believe we must remember and commit to as we move forward is this:

2.) We Must Commit to Honesty About Our Need For Grace

- The interesting thing is as the people in chapter 8 read the word, they had their Bible Marathons and they read and read and read they were made fully aware of their sin and mistakes. So what follows in chapter 9 which lead to this written commitment to God is prayer. And actually this is one of the longest recorded prayers in the Bible and this prayer is almost entirely a prayer of confession and an acknowledgment of their need for grace and mercy.

- This prayer spoke of God's abundant faithfulness and the people's abundant faithlessness and mistakes. Let's read some of this prayer in chapter 9 together…

Nehemiah 9:1-3: "On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads. 2 Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors. 3 They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the Lord their God." NIV

- How interesting because not only did they ask for the forgiveness of their own sin but they prayed for the sins of their ancestors. They pray so much about this cycle that had been so frequent in the Israelites. They knew God's faithfulness they turned to God for a time then turned away and the cycle went on and on. And much of their prayer was about the generational mistakes of their people. Now let's jump down to verse 30:

Nehemiah 9:30-34: "For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you warned them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you gave them into the hands of the neighboring peoples. 31 But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God. 32 "Now therefore, our God, the great God, mighty and awesome, who keeps his covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in your eyes—the hardship that has come on us, on our kings and leaders, on our priests and prophets, on our ancestors and all your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today. 33 In all that has happened to us, you have remained righteous; you have acted faithfully, while we acted wickedly. 34 Our kings, our leaders, our priests and our ancestors did not follow your law; they did not pay attention to your commands or the statutes you warned them to keep. NIV

- I find it interesting that this prayer was prayed after the wall was finished and built. Wouldn't it had made more sense for it to have been prayed before the wall was built? They are acknowledging that their problems weren't physical they were spiritual. Their prayers acknowledged they kept turning their backs on God and His Word. So they confessed. They even confessed their ancestors sins. They knew they needed to confess on their behalf to break the cycle. ***Because listen to me here, you cannot build a better future, a God future if you keep denying the bondages of the past that still have you shackled there.***

- Just like we talked about last week with focus if our eyes are still in the past we can't look forward. Well if you aren't willing to confess to God your bondage and unforgiveness or bitterness or whatever it is from the past or actions of the past you will never move forward. We need to be honest about where are hearts are and our abundant need for God's grace. And that is our pledge and commitment that God through your grace I confess my need to forgive, my need to move on, and my need to say God's it's yours I give it up.

- And we need to know wherever God takes us it's all by His grace anyway, it's not because of our goodness but by His! It's all by His amazing grace! So as we move into the supernatural future God has for us the future we know God is gracefully building we can be honest and say it's all by God's good grace that boy we need every single day! We are all in desperate need of God's grace because not only did we make mistakes and get caught in the past sometimes but we also will make mistakes in the future. We always are so in need of God's good grace!

But our hope for the future is the constant faithfulness, goodness, and grace of our amazing wonderful God! We only build the future, we are only rebuilding because of God's miraculous grace!

- And this brings us to our third commitment and pledge:

3.) We Must Commit To Be Obedient Even When it's Radical and Costly

- So this last pledge to commitment to God got very specific with the laws they would keep. And each one was extremely difficult because each commitment they were going to keep was going to make them drastically different in their lives. It drastically was going to change their day to day lives. Look in chapter 10…

Nehemiah 10:28-29: ""The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand— 29 all these now join their fellow Israelites the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our Lord." NIV

- You look at who made this decree, this promise to God? It was made by the people who separated themselves from the neighboring people. They knew if they were going to keep their promises to God they couldn't be like those around them. Now they made some very specific promises based on the Mosaic Law and those promises were this:

1. ***They promised God they would no longer let their children marry the children of their false god worshipping neighbors***
2. ***They promised God they would stop doing business on the Sabbath***
3. ***They promised God they would start tithing, and not neglect the temple***

- Now all of those promises are so important and they were all radical and costly to the people. Each promise they made was declaring and saying "God we are fully dependent on You for the future." You look at the first promise about inner-marriages that one was tough because that was a form of defense against wars. You would protect yourself by letting your children marry and form alliances and avoid skirmishes and battles.

- So through that promise they are essentially saying: "God we aren't depending on political alliances with nations who don't love and fear you anymore! We are trusting You God for our protection!" And of course with doing business on the Sabbath everyone around them did that, major commerce was common on the sabbath there.

- You made more money by being open 7 days a week, I mean that's why stores are that way now. But they decided we are going to trust our business to You God and we will close shop and convene with you on this day that you commanded to be a day of closeness with God. And of course we know tithing, thats an issue many folks still struggle with today.

- God asks for the first tenth of our increase, not the last, but the first. And boy is it hard to give God complete control over my wallet. But then it was even harder because it was so much more than just money! The tithe then was the

first animal born, the first crop yielded. But for us it's easy, only the first tenth of our salary, of our increase. They said God we are going to follow you and obey you regardless of the cost!

- And I have to tell you church, the vision we are pursuing as a Church as a body it's costly. Obedience to God always is but if we are going to minister to the broken and hurting families of our county, our region, our city, it's going to cost something. We know from the teachings and words of Jesus where we put our money that shows us where are heart is.

Matthew 6:19-21: "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal.
20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." NLT

- As a church we are believing God for supernatural provision to do this ministry, but we also as givers are called to give and support the vision. I pray your heart is with the vision, is with ministry, with outreach, and the heart of our church has to be! We will follow this vision! Our heart will be the mission, the vision! Reaching souls! And just like our vision will cost, obedience to God costs us! ***I pray our money shows our obedience to The Will and Heart of God!***

- I really believe it church, our best possible, Holy Spirit, Supernatural future will come when we as a church, as individuals, are fully committed to the vision, fully committed to obedience and will say ***"YES"*** to whatever God asks or calls of us. No matter how costly, how radical, or how difficult.

And Church I'm telling you, your future, our church's future, it's determined by your commitment level to God! Our commitment level to God's Vision and Mission for us. It depends on if we are willing to say: "YES" God I commit fully to You!

- Church I'm going to get a little personal here but just permit me a few moments. Where has your commitment? Have you found more commitment in political parties, sports teams, your career, your hobbies? Where exactly is your commitment? What is in your number one priority spot? Is it God? Sharing the gospel? Or is your priority and commitment to your comfort?

- It's so easy to find ourselves committed and prioritizing things other than Christ and living like Christ and when we do that we render ourselves handicapped in our Kingdom mission. Today, we need to recommit ourselves

to the commitment of Jesus! Of living and walking out a life that looks like Jesus. Of reaching souls of every situation and generation! Of reaching our world and chasing after vision, mission, and Kingdom! So my advice is this:

You Must Remember Your Commitment to Jesus

- Do you remember when you first got saved? When you first asked Christ into your heart and committed your life to Him? Don't forget that pledge that commitment. Make that the priority. Then everything else will come into place. Remember our Kingdom mission which is just our vision reworded…

Matthew 28:18-20: "Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."" NLT

- That is our ultimate commitment and must be! If we are to walk in the future God has for us, the vision God has for us, build the future, rebuild the spiritual walls and fortify the Kingdom of God in Zeeland and Holland and Ottawa County this is it! And we do it with a renewed commitment to:

1.) Loyalty To The Word of God
2.) Honesty About Our Need For Grace
3.) Commit To Be Obedient Even When it's Radical and Costly

- I want to end with a verse of encouragement along with a call to Commitment because the only way we will see this vision come, the future build is in commitment to God and His ways along with commitment to the vision and mission He gave us.

Galatians 6:9: "Let us not grow weary or become discouraged in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap, if we do not give in." AMP

- Remember commitment is so vital, and we can't grow weary because we know in God's perfect timing the harvest will come as we stay committed to the vision, committed to living and walking in a life reflecting Christ and committed to the vision! We can't become discouraged and we can't give in! We must commit! And today I commit to vision, I commit to God's Word and loving His Word! I commit to honesty about my need for God and His grace and I commit to costly and radical obedience! I pray you do too!