A Season of Rebuilding
Building a Future with Perseverance

- Church we are officially in week five 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!

- The last four weeks we have gone over three building blocks necessary for a church seeking vision, committed to the future. Because here we will be a church absolutely committed to the future! We must be! And those three building blocks were: ***prayer, unity, focus, and commitment.*** Today's building block is…

Building Block 5: Perseverance

- Today ties together I believe the topics of focus and commitment right together in a bow, even at the end of last weeks sermon on commitment I read the verse I'm about to read to you, and this virtue is so important for building the future we believe God has for us.

- Because yes, it is so easy to become distracted in the vision, and yes it is so easy to become uncommitted to the vision, but it is equally as easy to fall discouraged with the vision. Discouragement comes so easily to us, especially when we are excited about vision. We need to persevere in our vision. Remember we ended last week with this verse but I want to read it again.

Galatians 6:9-10: "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." ESV

- We cannot allow ourselves to grow weary, to get tired, especially if for some reason we don't see the results we expect on our own timetable. God is moving, and God is in this vision. Just as verse 10 says, it's wrapped in our vision we are to do good, do ministry, reach out to absolutely everyone! And especially those in our very household, our very faith brothers and sisters.

- We cannot allow ourselves to fall into weariness, or discouragement, for in the due season, in God's season, in God's timing He is going to do the supernatural! Whenever you speak of vision and cast vision you have to be

prepared to talk about how do you persevere in that vision. Especially with this strategy and mission, because remember I said this was our future vision forever! This is going to be engrained in us!

- And by nature we are people who in doing something for a long time we naturally get tired of it or weary, or discouraged, so we need to learn how to supernaturally walk in perseverance! Plus we need to remember and we know this from Nehemiah and many other examples throughout scripture. When we step up as people of God to achieve for God, the devil is going to do all he can to step in.

- Every week we have read from Isaiah 61 and I want to read it again church:

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

- Let me tell you something, the devil wants to convince us as a church and is trying to do this to so many churches who have faced any type of trauma or adversity that the ruins, the devastation the rubble, that is our permanent residence and we will live there forever. That's what the devil tries to tell us. That we have to live in our past, in our hurt, in our ruins. But we know God is the great rebuilder!

- We are rebuilding a supernatural future through supernatural vision and mission and because we are saying yes to rebuilding, to moving forward, to progress, to God's Word and Plan, since we have committed to future we should expect the devil to fight us. To try to discourage us. To try to break our focus, our perseverance. We must persist, we must persevere!

- I'm going to say something radical to you as fellow believers, ***the devil doesn't care if he can't make you an atheist if he can make you a quitter.*** If the devil can make you quit the vision, the commitment to the future than he did his job. Because then we settle for living in the ruins and pains of the past and never walk into the supernatural future God has for us!

- Nehemiah knew that very feeling, the struggle of putting another brick on top of another, despite opposition, despite discouragement, he persevered. And we know because we have gotten far enough in Nehemiah that the wall was completed, the physical mission was fulfilled and then he got to work on the spiritual.

- But today I want to go a little backwards in Nehemiah, we are going to go back to Nehemiah's testimony of opposition and his testimony of perseverance in the midst of that opposition and we are going to, I believe, be encouraged by this mighty testimony of perseverance so we can grow our own. Because we need it! We need perseverance in the face of trials church.

- In fact we also must shift our perspective on trials and attacks, because we know the Bible's stance on it. Look at Romans 5…

Romans 5:3-5: "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." NIV

- But it's not just there look at the book of James chapter 1…

James 1:2-4: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." NIV

- My prayer for today is we find the joy in perseverance, that we allow God to mold us into people who aren't afraid of the opportunity to persevere through trials and attacks of the enemy on our mission but that we allow ourselves to find the spiritual maturity to allow it to grow our faith and joy in God. I know that's radical and may not sound fun but that is spiritual maturity.

- It's time we don't walk as spiritual children who at the sight of attack and trials blame God, and give up on God but rather allow God to grow us and make us even more focused, committed, and faith filled through it. So again we are going to turn back in Nehemiah. When we studied before we more or less breezed past chapter 4. We jumped from 3 to 5, so today we are going to go back up to focus on chapter 4.

- Let's look at Nehemiah's testimony of perseverance throughout trials and attacks on the vision. Now remember at this point, Nehemiah assessed honestly the city and what it needed, He prayed and sought God and casted vision, and the construction has begun so let's read at verse 6 of chapter 4 and we are going to read a large chunk so follow along with me…

Nehemiah 4:6-20: "So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. 7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. 8 They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. 9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. 10 Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." 11 Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." 12 Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." 13 Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. 14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."
15 When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work. 16 From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah 17 who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, 18 and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.
19 Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. 20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!"" NIV

- Now we need this lesson today and I've briefly touched on this here and there but this is the focus for today because here is the fact of human people following a God vision. We are human and sometimes we allow ourselves to let the vision leak out of us. In fact it's extremely easy to allow vision to leak. It can be the boldest, the most audacious, the most exciting vision ever, it still will suffer from leaks.

- My parents taught me constantly growing up that you never finish what you don't start and I know my parents aren't the only ones to use that phrase and lesson, it's so true but let me tell you another truth, it is so much easier to start

than to finish. I can say with 100 percent certainty that the first day of every diet I ever started was always the easiest day! It's so easy to start a diet but once the donuts start to tempt you it's also really easy to fall prey to their tempting and fall right off the diet wagon. But gosh it is super hard to get back on that wagon once you've fallen off thanks to some delicious but terrible for you desserts.

- Remember that exercise plan you started? The first week is always the easiest then somehow it falls away. Remember that plan to read the Bible in a year? The first month is always the easiest. You may not finish what you don't start but goodness it is so much easier to start, than to finish. Let me word it in terms of the vision, because right now we are in the launching stages, this is the easiest season of vision.

Vision is easier to Launch than to Achieve

- Vision is so much easier to launch than to achieve, I told you part of this vision is in 2026 to see at least 100 people saved under our ministry, that's amazing to say and cast, but it actually takes work to do! It's always after the launch that the enemy steps in or discouragement hits. It's easy to cast the vision, get excited about actually asking for every situation and generation of Zeeland, Holland and Ottawa County. It is much more difficult to actually reach out to people and walk the vision out, and achieve the vision, we set out to do.

- Because in the midst of doing, the eagerness for some reason slows down, and the weariness kicks in. The discouragement kicks in, especially when we see opposition in any way. We see it right here in the passage of scripture we read. Nehemiah had no trouble getting people excited to see the walls built again! That's the easy part! But then the wall got halfway up and some fierce opposition came, and the people they got tired.

- ***The people in their weariness, their exhaustion and discouragement began to focus more on the rubble that remained from the past than the wall they were building for the future.*** Without perseverance we will allow ourselves to dwell and focus on the rubble, the pains and destruction of the past over the future God is calling us to actively build. The work He has for us.

- Here in Nehemiah, attacks, threats, opposition, it came, the rubble became a focus for the people, exhaustion set in and the vision they were so excited for that vision began to leak. I want to give you a few reasons why vision leaks out of us in our human nature.

"New" Wears off

- Goodness no matter what we do the sparkle and wonder of "newness" wears off. That first brick of building feels so light, so exciting. But halfway up the wall those same bricks that felt light as a feather before suddenly are so very heavy. And this isn't something specific to vision either. Remember that amazing new car you bought?

- Well now that new car is 10 years old, the seats are worn, the motor has issues, your rear passenger window doesn't work right, and suddenly that amazing new car you loved and prayed for isn't what you want anymore and all you are believing for is a new one. I remember when Autumn and I first got our first Buick encore, it was the newest car either of us had owned. Granted it was still used but man a 2019 in 2022 was basically brand new to me. And I was so picky about keeping it clean. A few years past and we basically used as a mini pick up truck and I don't even remember the last time I vacuumed it out. The "New" wore off. And unfortunately the second Buick Encore we got is even newer and the "new" is beginning to wear off it to!

- It's the same reason marriages take work. The new wears off. The first month after saying the vows and it's new and perfect and your spouse can do no wrong. But now years later, you are fighting over something silly that truly doesn't matter but yet the "new" has gone away. But let's take this a step further even. Remember when you became a new Christian?

- God was so real in your life. Worship was so profound, every sermon you heard was life changing, the people at church were so amazing. The Pastor was so special to you. You couldn't help but share the Gospel every single place you went. You were amped up for God! It was so easy. But then somewhere down the line, you found out people at church can hurt you. The Pastor is human just like you. Sometimes in the midst of struggles God doesn't feel close because we aren't drawing close like we should. ***Let me say it again "New" wears off.***

- The longer you do anything the harder it is to stay excited about that thing. The same holds true for vision. It is amazing to launch this vision, it is amazing to be excited about where God is going to take us. It's all awesome and amazing at first. That's why we need supernatural perseverance. And any Kingdom work that actually lasts and has impact is going to take time. Vision leaks. But we have to work to recapture it daily! Let me tell you another thing.

Critics Wear You Out

- For some reason church critics can be so persistent, sometimes the critics have more perseverance in their criticisms than we as vision chasers have in our ability to run after vision. And we see it right here in Nehemiah. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab, they sound familiar right? We've talked about these three stooges quite a bit throughout this series. They are here in chapter 4, they were in chapter 6, two weeks ago and even in chapter two they first came on the scene. Look at what it says about them in chapter 2:

Nehemiah 2:10: "When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites." NIV

- These guys are just disturbed because someone had come along to promote the welfare of God's chosen people. Sometimes critics arise not even because you did something against them but simply because you are trying to advocate for God's Will and Vision. We must be prepared for critics. For some reason critics are amazingly persistent.

- These men mocked and ridiculed Nehemiah's vision for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, they claimed he was in rebellion against King Artaxerxes. They mocked the structural integrity of the wall, they said if even a fox walked on the wall it would crumble. They came against the character of Nehemiah and slandered him. They even tried to wage physical attacks and threats against the building effort. The fact is sometimes the critics won't quit until you do. King David knew critics well look at his lament in Psalm 35…

Psalm 35:11-12: "Malicious witnesses testify against me. They accuse me of crimes I know nothing about. 12 They repay me evil for good. I am sick with despair." NLT

- Now don't get me wrong David did some terrible things he was by no means perfect but he knew and felt the exhaustion that can come from constant criticism coming at you. And as we chase the vision of God for this community we will face criticism. It will certainly come and if we let it, it can and will wear us out. The enemy doesn't bother those he doesn't think is a threat.

- So as we threaten strongholds of the enemy, as we take ground for the Kingdom of God following the vision of God for us as a congregation we will become more and more of a threat to the devil. So we must be prepared the more we do for God and seek after the will of God the more we will probably

experience criticisms. ***We simply cannot allow criticism to get us off mission! Criticism should never surprise us but we cannot let it derail us!***

- Thirdly one last reason vision leaks is this…

Good People Wear Down

- No matter how exciting the vision is, the casting is, how committed we are no matter what we are human and humans we may get tired. We may go through seasons where we are just exhausted. True ministry is messy, there is always rubble and pain. Especially if we are going to pray and believe to reach people struggling with situations. Situations come with baggage, with need. It's going to be messy and it's going to be tiring sometimes but it's the call.

- We often set ourselves up for disappointment when we confuse God's will with comfort and believe anything worthy is easy. God's future for us is going to be difficult, it's going to be hard and take time. If we launch and move forward in the vision thinking it will be quick and easy we are going in with the wrong expectations. Sometimes we have amazing intentions and just wear down.

- Look at Elijah in The Old Testament, one of the greatest prophets, literally calls down fire from heaven and sees mighty moves of God against the prophets of Baal. And do you remember the next day? Jezebel finds out what happened and she vows to kill Elijah, so he was afraid. Look at what he says:

1 Kings 19:3-4: "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."" NIV

- Elijah saw God do the miraculous and then prayed for death, he was scared and weary. Let me tell you the reality of our human condition, no one is immune to weariness, no matter how God honoring the mission. I know God has some amazing things in store for our church. But also we are going to get tired. We will hit a point where we are tired.

- And this leads us to I believe something extremely significant and interesting thing about the book of Nehemiah, there aren't any divine miracles in it. Reading through it I noticed there isn't one supernatural healing, a time where an angel appeared and built part of the wall. There are people honoring God, building a wall, and chasing the vision of God.

- Read it for yourself, and maybe I'm missing one if there is. But Nehemiah believed in the miraculous, spoke of God's power to do the miraculous. Let me tell you church I believe in miracles, I know God can, and still does the divine and miraculous, no doubt in my mind. God still does supernatural things! ***But we see here Nehemiah didn't build a future on the miraculous, it was built on the monotonous. He and the people just kept putting one brick on top of the other.***

- So I think a major lesson we can learn about vision here in Nehemiah, and again I am not diminishing God's supernatural power and His will to do the supernatural, I'm believing for supernatural miracles. Every single day I pray and expect miracles in this body. But when it comes to vision we need to understand…

Vision Takes The Path of Most Persistence

- That may not sound glamorous to you, it may not stir you to shout amen but the fact is if we are going to build a supernatural God honoring future chasing after the vision God gave us. We must remain persistent! We must persevere! Because it is the persistent people that accomplish the things that last and build futures!

- God doesn't give visions to just be launched but to be reached, the goal isn't fast, the goal is to last. We are chasing some mighty things as a church. We are asking God to allow us to reach people in our community that others have forgotten, that are in dire situations that everyone else seems to ignore. We are asking God to allow us to reach and minister to every age. From the smallest child to oldest great grandparent.

- We want to be a ministry that brings the gospel of Christ to those who need a true God move in their lives, that others may dismiss as ages that can't understand or are set in their ways. We are asking God for difficult but big things! In order to see this vision come to pass we must persevere! So the question then becomes how do we build perseverance?

1.) We Continually Seek After and Glorify God

<u>1 Chronicles 16:11: "Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!" ESV</u>

- As we seek vision above that we must remember even before vision we seek the presence of God, the face of God continually. Nehemiah constantly

reminded the people they weren't just building a great wall, they were building a wall for a great God. It was all about bringing glory to God! The future, the vision it isn't to grow our church and make the COG look good, it is to bring glory to God!

- We can't be doing this for ourselves, for our memories of the past, the people who poured into this church the building of a future is solely to make God look good, to bring our God glory! Look at Nehemiah's words here in chapter 4 to the people:

Nehemiah 4:14: "…Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome…" NIV

- He is reminding the people how powerful and amazing God is, that we build on behalf of our awesome God. In verse 20 he reminds the people **"God fights for them."** We must always remember the motivation isn't to bring glory to ourselves but to glorify our awesome, mighty, amazing God! He is worthy! And if we want to stay persistent, have perseverance than we must remember why we do it and always seek to be closer to God and more deeper in His presence!

- If we are being honest: discouragement and weariness are the result of a temporary loss of perspective. You get tired, you get weary, and discouraged and in that you gave the attribute of awesomeness to something other than God. Suddenly in our weariness the problems we face can become awesome your enemy became awesome.

- You can have a huge awesome problem or you can have a huge awesome God, you can't have both. When you are tired and worn out you can decide who you are going to glorify. Are you going to magnify and glorify your problem and call it huge and awesome or are you going to bring glory to God and know He is bigger.

- People who persevere are people who are constantly seeking after the face and presence of God and always remember to give God glory! Glory in the struggles, and remember giving God glory is the motive. Plus people who persevere remember God is the ultimate teammate and is for us!

Romans 8:31-34: "What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 32 Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else 33 Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—

for God himself has given us right standing with himself. 34 Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us." NLT

- Talk about some powerful encouragement! This morning you need to remember God is for you! The Almighty, Sovereign Lord ***IS FOR YOU***! Right in this very moment God is for you! God is for us church! So when we ask for every situation and generation all to give God glory, we need to remember who we are asking.

This is God's vision for us! We can be strong and persevere because we know God won't quit on us! He is for us! And it happens as we seek His face above all and give Him the glory for all!

2.) We Make The Future About Others

- We must always remember the why of this vision. Nehemiah did the exact same thing in the verse we just read a moment ago verse 14. Nehemiah reminded the people how awesome and mighty God is but then He reminded them the why of the vision. Who they were building for, not just to give God glory but to reach their families. It was about others.

Nehemiah 4:14: "After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." NIV

- We glorify God in all we do and we align with His will which is reach souls for the Kingdom. We do this out of love for the souls of our Zeeland and Holland community family! For the lost in our own very families, our lost children, brothers, parents, and the community. This vision is for reaching others. Resilient people who preserve for Christ have a bigger agenda than themselves, they have the agenda of Kingdom growth, which is reaching souls!

- We must make the future we build about the souls of others. We cannot allow ourselves to become inward focused. It isn't about our preferences, it isn't about what we get out of it. It's not about ourselves its about the world we are reaching, the souls we are reaching, the community, we are reaching, it's about the mission of growing The Kingdom of God!

- You read in the book of Acts about the early church and how the gospel was spread all over. And every single chapter you can find examples of Christ followers prioritizing the souls of others, of reaching people for Christ above their own comfort, their own safety, their own situation. This vision, God's vision is not for our comfort but for spreading the gospel and reaching the hurting of our mission field. Our vision must be for others. Look at the words of Paul in Acts 20…

Acts 20:24: "But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God." NLT

- Imagine taking on that perspective. The perspective of: above my comfort, my feelings, my wants, above myself and my desires is the desire to tell other's the Good News of the Grace of God! That should be our desire. And we will persevere in the vision when we realize that is truly the purpose of the vision. The third way to grow in perseverance is…

3.) We Sustain The Builders With Encouragement

- The facts are we will get tired, but we will build perseverance and persistence when we constantly encourage one another as vision builders. Nehemiah knew loneliness drastically increases the feeling of weariness. So Nehemiah was intentional to let everyone know and feel encouraged with the fact they were a team, they were in this together.

Nehemiah 4:19-20: "Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. 20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!"" NIV

- Nehemiah knew the workers were spread out, so he appointed this guy who played the trumpet whenever there was an attack and everyone ran to the aid of those who needed help. Nehemiah was determined that no one was going to get attacked and have to deal with that attack alone. The same holds true in our church body. We shouldn't have to fight battles alone. We are a family! And we must be there for one another as we face battles.

- Fellowship and encouragement from our faith family is a wonderful remedy for weariness and discouragement. The book of Hebrews says it perfects in chapter 10…

Hebrews 10:24-25: “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” NLT

- We are here for one another, and the author says here isn’t to encourage people to attend church, he says attend church to encourage people. We come together to encourage each other. So here is a challenge before you leave today you need to encourage someone. Every time we are together I want you to encourage a fellow vision builder! We need encouragement from one another!

- It is so much easier to stay the course and build the future when you aren’t doing it alone. We need each other, and we are a gift for one another! One of the greatest things we need for this vision to reach and not just launch but thrive is to be a relentless army of encouragers. We need to encourage our fellow future builders!

If we are going to operate in perseverance and stay on course for this vision we must stay connected and encouraged by one another. We must!

- We must remember as we get tired and weary even discouraged we must keep reaching for the next brick, we must persevere. But this morning I want to pray for those who are spiritually exhausted, I want to be your encourager this morning. I want to ask God for supernatural perseverance in you today.