

Rise and Build Part 4

Next Sunday is going to be a special day as we launch our Rise and Build campaign. As I explained last Sunday, we will be giving everyone an opportunity to pledge to the building fund. We will be receiving a special offering next Sunday for the building fund as well. Some may want to give a one time gift and make a pledge to give an additional amount over a period of one, two or three years. You know your finances and how you can best give to help with the project. Some I know will need to spread out their giving over time. I'm asking everyone to pray, to prepare your heart by asking the Lord what he would have you do in giving. Then we will ask everyone to plant a seed by giving to the building fund.

Back in September before we voted to remodel and build, I shared with you some reasons I felt we were to do this. I told you then that ultimately this is about getting more people to Jesus. It's about a new look and new technology that helps us reach a new generation and new harvest fields. I told you then about those believers that met a few blocks from this location. It was September of 1936, eighty years ago. They were coming out of the great depression but would soon enter into a second world war. Money was scarce for that group of saints. They had been meeting in an upstairs room above an old Drug store. They could have stayed where they were. I'm sure some thought they were risking too much or that spending money on a building was unwise, but they felt God was telling them it was time to rise and build. That's where we are today.

I look back at those people and marvel at their faith. They were willing to risk, giving when they didn't have much, in order to reach more people for Jesus. They put their names on the line to borrow money and bought the corner lot across from where they were meeting. They started digging a basement and a foundation and built what we call the old rock church. They risked it because they felt that new building would provide them with a better tool, a better means of reaching their community.

Eighty years later, I talk about those folks with respect and honor. Fifty years ago, in 1967, they risked again by building here on these ten acres, building the sanctuary we are sitting in. I speak of those folks with respect and honor because they too risked something. They too put their name on the line and gave sacrificially. The cost for construction was \$300,000 but the median income for a household in 67 was \$7200. They pledged and found ways to give and paid for this building. We speak of them with respect and honor for their vision and their sacrifice.

I'm thinking what the generations yet to come will say about us. Will they speak of us with respect and honor, that we too were willing to give, to risk, to rise and build because we knew it was time to reach new harvest fields, to find new ways to reach our community. I hope they will. I believe they will if we dare to believe, to pray, to trust, to give, to rise and build.

Seventeen years ago we had Bro. E. M. Clark with us to speak and assist us in receiving our pledges and a cash offering to rebuild. He challenged the leadership to give. He challenged all of us to give. Everyone can do something. Everyone can respond. Everyone can give.

He told Paula and I we needed to share what we intended to give toward the building fund. I had always heard people quote what Jesus said about not letting the right hand know what the left hand was doing. He pointed me to 1 Chronicles 29 where David shares with the people what he is personally giving to the building of the temple. "Then King David said to the whole assembly: "The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God. With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God – gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze... Besides, in my devotion... I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple." David then asked, "Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?" The leaders began to respond and they too gave and the "people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord." 1 Chronicles 29:1-9

I challenge you to pray, to give, to rise and build with us. I believe this is what the Lord is calling us to do. I share this only to let you know, as David did, that we are committed wholeheartedly to this project, to this church and its' future. One day, I don't know when, we will step away from pastoring. We want to know we've done everything we could to serve this church, everything we could to prepare the church for the next pastor, the next leadership, to reach the next generation. So, Paula and I intend to give \$50,000 to this project. This is about today and more importantly this is about the future. I believe the Lord will supply and help us. I pray you will believe God and rise and build with us. Let's pray.

Turn with me now to Nehemiah 4 and I want to show you something that happened as Nehemiah and the people began to rise and build. Repairs were being made, the walls were coming up and the gates were being rebuilt when an enemy of the Jewish people, a man named Sanballat began to plot against them and made plans to stop their work. Nehemiah writes, **"When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly**

incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, ‘What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble – burned as they are?’” Nehemiah 4:1-2

We talked last week about the walls and gates as a metaphor for rebuilding the walls of self-control in our lives, restoring the gates so Jesus would be seated at the place of authority in our lives. When we begin that work of establishing the Lord upon the throne of our life and we start exercising self-control and living to please the Lord, we can count on the enemy trying to stop us, to distract or defeat us. Look at what Sanballat tried to do and at what the enemy of our soul tries to do.

Cast doubt on our ability. The enemy says, “You can’t rebuild those walls. You’re too weak to live for God. You can’t be free from addiction. You’re too old, too young, too poor. You can’t raise the money for the building project. You can’t remodel the church.” You can’t!

Throughout the Scripture we find the enemy reminding people of their weakness, the impossibility of the task. Moses was a stutterer, Jeremiah was too young, Jacob had a reputation as a swindler and a cheat, Amos was just a farmer, David was just a shepherd. We are just a west side church. How will you raise \$3.6 million dollars? You’re just a _____. You don’t have what it takes to rebuild your life, to overcome addiction, to live free, to obey God. You can’t do this so there is no point in trying. You can’t do this, whatever it is you attempt for God.

Cast doubt on our destiny. “Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices and worship God again? Will they ever accomplish what they have set out to do?” Implied is: “You’ll never do it! You’ll never succeed. You’ll never get there.”

The devil wants to convince you that you simply cannot succeed. You can’t rebuild the walls of your personality, walls of self-control and godliness and faithfulness. You can’t please God and obey His word. You’ll never get to your destination of physical and emotional healing. You’ll never get out of debt. You’ll never be free from depression and anxiety and fear. The devil says, “That’s the way it is. You can’t change. You’re destined to live like this. You’ll never make heaven so stop thinking about it. Stop trying. You can’t change your destiny!”

Cast doubt on our timing. “Will they finish in a day?” Sanballat asked. He is saying, “Do you have any idea how long this is going to take? You’ll never get this finished!” The size of the task and the timing involved makes us want to give up some times. It’s too much! I can’t

get this finished. I won't ever get my marriage problems worked out. It's too late to try to fix the problems in my life. It's too late to repair the damage with my kids. The timing is horrible. It's crazy to try to raise all this money and remodel the church now. It's the wrong time."

Cast doubt on our resources. "Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble – burned as they are?" "Look at your resources! Do you think you can rebuild your life with what you have to work with? Forget it! Do you think you can raise a couple million dollars to build from this crowd? Forget it. It's hopeless. All you got is rubble, burned up stones and dreams. All you've got is ashes. There is nothing to build upon, nothing to build with. It's hopeless."

Do you know the feeling? That's the message Sanballat delivered to Nehemiah and to the people rebuilding the walls and gates. That's the message the devil delivers to us when we start trying to serve God and rebuild the walls and gates of our own spiritual life. It's the message the devil delivers to me when I think about the finances and what we are endeavoring to do. It looks overwhelming doesn't it? So what do we do? Look what Nehemiah did. His first response was to pray!

Pray! In the face of all the doubts and the accusations of the enemy, the first thing Nehemiah did was pray. "**Hear us O our God...**" **Nehemiah 4:4** This is what he did when he first heard about the need in Jerusalem. This is what brought him back to Jerusalem. Nehemiah prayed about everything, in the face of everything, and that's what we must do. Pray and trust God. Pray and ask for his insight, his wisdom, his direction, his guidance. Pray and believe and obey! Pray and then in God's mercy and by his strength, we can address the doubts and accusations of the enemy. Look at them again.

Doubt on our ability. **Pray and realize our ability is not the issue!** Don't let the enemy defeat you by casting doubt on your ability. The question of ability doesn't rest upon us to begin with. It's not about us, it's about him and his resources. The bible says, "**Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the Everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth...He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.**" **Isaiah 40:28-29** The Lord is the Everlasting God. He gives strength. He increases the power of the weak. **The issue is not our ability, it's our obedience!** We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us! Obey God! Remember what the prophet Zechariah told Zerubbabel when they first returned to Jerusalem and started rebuilding the temple 150 years before. "**This is the word**

of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.” Zechariah 4:6 Nehemiah’s story is proof. Their ability was not the issue. God used their willingness, their obedience to build those walls. Rise and build and trust in the Lord!

Doubt on our destiny. The enemy tells us we can’t make it, we can’t do it, we’ll never succeed. “You can’t ever be a child of God. He isn’t going to accept you and take you to heaven. You can’t be good enough.” Let me remind you of what the bible says about your destiny. **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are. Dear friends, now we are children of God!” 1 John 3:1-2.** Now we are children of God, now, by his mercy and grace; now because we repented of our sins and trusted in his grace; now because we walk by faith and serve him. We are his children. **Our destiny is tied to what Jesus did for us on Calvary!**

Well, I may make it to heaven, but I can’t be victorious over sin and things now. No? What does the bible say? **“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:37-39**

Don’t let the devil tell you what you can’t do and that you can’t succeed and that you can’t live for Jesus. You can. You are more than a conqueror if you’ll mean business and truly live for Jesus and surrender your life to him! You’ve got a destiny wrapped up in Jesus if you will live for him.

Doubt on our timing. The enemy says we can’t complete what we’ve started. We’ve started at the wrong time. It just can’t get done. You know what the bible says? Paul writes, **“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it (carry it on to completion) until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6** God is at work in us and in what we are doing for him. His timing is always right and good and he will carry it to completion, regardless of what may be going on around us. God is faithful. Paul wrote, **“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Galatians 6:9** Trust God’s timing. Rise and build and keep on building. Don’t give up! God is at work in you and in your life and he will bring that good work to completion!

Doubt on our resources. The devil tells us we can't rebuild with those broken and burned up stones. **Trust in the God who restores and redeems!** Sanballat was telling the Jews there was no way they could rebuild with those burned and broken stones. What he didn't realize was, the Jews standing there in Jerusalem were figuratively broken and burned stones. Their lives had been reduced to rubble, carried off in exile, but now they've returned and God was rebuilding their lives and their families, their city and their nation and their identity as God's people. Rebuilding the walls with burned stones from the rubble of the city was nothing compared to what God was doing with the people as he rebuilt the nation from a group of exiles!

The enemy tells you it can't be done, that you can't rebuild your life. Listen to me. God is the great redeemer and restorer. He is the one who takes the broken pieces of our lives and rebuilds and restores. Jesus said he had come to mend and bind up those who were broken. That's us. Broken. And that's what he is doing, putting the pieces of our lives back together.

The enemy tells you it can't be done, that you are hopeless, but over and over the Scripture proclaims that God will restore! The Lord declared through the prophet Joel, **"I will restore to you the years that the locust have eaten."** Joel 2:25 It was a promise to his people that even though brokenness and loss had come, God would rebuild, repair and restore. God will give back what the enemy has stolen.

The prophet Isaiah declared, **"Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings."** Isaiah 58:12

I believe we have a destiny. It is to repair the broken walls of our lives, our families, to rebuild a life and relationship with God and with others. I believe we have a destiny to rise and build, to do what God is calling us to do in this place, in this hour. He wants to build something beautiful out of your life, out of the rubble and the ruins. Don't let the devil fill you with doubt. Trust God. Rise and Build!