

Foundations For Renewal

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to turn to our Bible reading now. And Paul is going to be preaching to! us again from the book of Nehemiah, a book that we've been seeing is utterly contemporary! for us. And so we're going to read Nehemiah chapter 7, now the whole chapter. If you don't have a Bible with you, we do have visitors' Bibles. You can grab one from the front, the sides, back, or if you aren't sure, if you wave your hand, I'm sure one of the welcome team would love to bring one to you. And in the visitors' Bibles, we'd be on page 402. But Nehemiah chapter 7, beginning then at verse 1.

Now, when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors and the gatekeepers, the singers and the Levites had been appointed, I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah, the governor of the castle, charge over Jerusalem. For he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many. And I said to them, let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their guard posts and some in front of their own homes. The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few and no houses had been rebuilt.

Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I find the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I find written in it, these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had carried into exile. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Ramiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Misbereth, Bigvi, Nahum, Banna. The number of the men of the people of Israel, the sons of Parosh, 2,172, the sons of Shephethiah, 372, the sons of Ara, 652, the sons of Pahath Moab, namely the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818, the sons of Elam, 1,254, the sons of Zatu, 854, the sons of Zakkai, 760, the sons of Binwi, 648, the sons of Bebi, 628, the sons of Asgad, 2,322, the sons of Adonakam, 667, the sons of Bigvi, 2,067, the sons of Aden, 655, the sons of Atar, namely of Hezekiah, 98, the sons of Hashem, 328, the sons of Bezi, 324, the sons of Harith, 112, the sons of Gibeon, 95, the men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188, the men of Anathoth, 128, the men of Beth Asmavath, 42, the men of Kiriath, Jiriam,

Chephara and Beiroth, 743, the men of Ramah and Geba, 621, the men of Michmus, 122, the men of Bethel and Ai, 123, the men of the other Nebo, 52, the sons of the other Elam, 1,254, the sons of Harim, 320, the sons of Jericho, 345, the sons of Lod, Hadid and Unu, 721, the sons of Sina, 3,930, the priests, the sons of Jediah, namely the house of Jeshua, 973, the sons of Imr, 1,052, the sons of Pashur, 1,247, the sons of Harim, 1,017, the Levites, the sons of Jeshua, namely of Cadmiel, the sons of Hodava, 74, the singers, the sons of Asaph, 148, the gatekeepers, the sons of Shalom, the sons of Atar, the sons of Talman, the sons of Aqib, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, 138, the temple servants, sons of Zihah, the sons of Hasufah, the sons of Tabuath, the sons of Keros, the sons of Sia, the sons of Padon, the sons of Labana, the sons of Hagabah, the sons of Shalmal, the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddle, sons of Gahar, the sons of Ra'ah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nakuda, the sons of Gazum, the sons of Uzzah, the sons of Passiah, the sons of Bezi, the sons of Mu'nim, the sons of Nefushisim, the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakufah, the sons of Harher, the sons of Bazeleth, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Timah, the sons of Nezhiah, the sons of Hatifa, the sons of Solomon's servants, sons of Sotai, the sons of Sofaroth, sons of Perida, sons of Jala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddle, the sons of Shephethiah, the sons of Hathal, the sons of Pocchereth, Hazabiam, the sons of Ammon. All the temple servants and the sons of

Solomon's servants were 392. The following were those who came up from Telmala, Telharsha, Cherub, Adon, and Immer. But they could not prove their father's houses nor their descent, whether they belonged to Israel. The sons of Deliah, sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nakuda, 642.

[6 : 07] Also of the priests, the sons of Hobiah, the sons of Hachoz, the sons of Barzillai, who had taken a wife of the daughters of Barzillai, the Gileadites, was called by their name. These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food until a priest with Urim and Thummim should arise. The whole assembly together was 42,360, besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337. And they had 245 singers, male and female.

Their horses were 736, their mules 245, their camels 435, and their donkeys 6,720. Now, some of the heads of father's houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury a thousand directs of gold, 50 basins, 30 priest's garments, and 500 miners of silver. And some of the heads of father's houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 directs of gold and 2,200 miners of silver.

And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 directs of gold, 2,000 miners of silver, and 67 priest's garments. So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel lived in their towns. And when the seventh month had come, the people of Israel were in their towns. Well, amen. This is God's word, and we will return to it shortly.

Well, good evening. Please have Nehemiah and chapter 7 open in front of you. Thank you to Josh for reading. I think that's a first, a round of applause.

You got one bit wrong, though. You read one of the numbers wrong. Anyway, we'll let you off for that.

[8 : 34] Good. Well, it's quite easy in church life for important and necessary things to become the main thing in the life of God's people. There is a huge temptation, a danger that things like building projects, building walls, they can become the all-consuming thing that takes center stage.

There's a danger. Those things are very necessary, but they can, unless the leadership are clear-sighted and focused, those things can distract from the most important work. If we're not careful, those things can become a distraction. And our focus up till now in the book of Nehemiah has been very much on the wall rebuilding, and rightly so. It's been important and necessary.

Look at the first half of verse 1 there in chapter 7. This is a major, major milestone. Now, when the wall had been built, and I'd set up the doors, that's a big moment. The wall's finished.

It had been a huge battle to get to that point, hadn't it? Think about what we've seen in the previous few weeks. Opposition from outside and from within. He'd suffered personal tax as the leader on his own character, his integrity. But Nehemiah hadn't allowed those distractions to stop the work.

By God's help, he'd not been deterred, and he'd got on with the work. He kept on with the gospel building project. But building the walls, setting the gates in place, that was only a prelude to the real work. The wall was not an end in itself. What was the end, do you think? What was the goal?

[10 : 45] What was Nehemiah doing? Why was he building the wall? What was the point? What had it all been for? Well, the goal, the end point, the whole purpose of building a wall was to establish a living community inside of it. A community where faith was alive and real. The wall was necessary for the purposes of protection, giving the people a sense of identity. But what really mattered was not the walls themselves, but the state of people's hearts. The building of the temple under the oversight of Zerubbabel in Ezra was for the purpose of establishing a center for godly worship. Worship had been the goal of the whole enterprise from the very beginning. The whole point of redemption is to bring sinners into a place where God has worshipped in a manner that he has prescribed. God's glory is the chief end of man, isn't it? God's glory and the right worship of him was the chief end of Nehemiah's wall building project. That's why he did it. The wall was only the beginning.

Nehemiah's chief concern was not the literal stones in the wall. His concern was the living stones contained within it. That's why he did it. In the same way that the building that we're meeting in here tonight, in the same way that actually that's not the main thing. The most important thing is not the church building, but it's the people within it. It's you. You're the main thing. You are the church.

You're the main thing. Now the actual building doesn't matter all that much. It is important. Like it doesn't matter that we've got a watertight building with heating and the way it's set up. That's all important, but it's it's not the main thing, is it? That's all here to serve another purpose, which is you, the living church. And so for Nehemiah, the goal was always for God's people to be gathered in God's city and worshipping God in the temple, the place where God himself dwelt. That's why he did it.

But there's a big issue. There's one major problem. Did you spot it? Verse four. Here's the problem. The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few and no houses have been rebuilt.

There's no one there. Well, there's a few, but not many. It's like having an amazing church building with nobody in it. What's the point? Nehemiah knew the task before him was not merely about repairing the walls, but reforming the people. That's the big goal. Spiritual reformation was required, not merely the building of walls. And what we see in the rest of Nehemiah is spiritual reformation.

[13 : 55] Chapter 8, which we'll see next time, we see the centrality of the proclamation of the word. Ezra is there proclaiming the God's word to the people. Chapter 9 follows on. Confession of sin by the people, repentance. And that's followed in chapter 10 by a renewal, a public renewal of commitment to the covenants. The people are committing themselves to serving the Lord once again.

Spiritual renewal, that's what's coming. But before we get there, we have chapter 7. Before the spiritual awakening that Nehemiah knows needs to take place, he addresses two things.

Now that the walls have been rebuilt, there are two preparatory things that need to happen before we get to the spiritual reformation. First, he needs people. And then, once those people are assembled, he needs to ensure that they are protected. So we look at this chapter and there's two sections.

First, the protection of God's people. And then second, the people themselves. So verses 1 to 3, we've seen the necessity of realistic protection. The necessity of realistic protection.

Now we've seen already throughout the book of Nehemiah that God's people, as they go about God's work, will from time to time face opposition. They will come under attack. And as we've seen already, behind the enemies that they can see, people like Sambalat, Tobiah, Geshem, and even, as we saw last time, some within the Jewish community, men like Shemaiah and Meshulam, behind those people they could see, stood the enemy they couldn't see.

[15 : 48] And that is a realistic understanding of how things happen for God's people. There is always going to be opposition. And the Apostle Peter writes to the New Testament church, he says, be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him. Firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Nehemiah is an utter realist. He knows that the opposition encountered thus far isn't suddenly going to evaporate. Yes, as we saw last time in chapter 6, verse 16, their enemies then are afraid.

Now the wall's been built, they perceive rightly that the work has been accomplished with the help of God. But soon enough, the devil's going to launch another attack.

And another one. Especially if Nehemiah is able to repopulate the city, to see the right worship of God re-established, the enemy hates that more than anything else.

He hates that the work's been accomplished with the help of God. He will seek to destroy the living people of God. And so Nehemiah knows that he needs to properly protect the people within the city.

[17 : 19] And so he appoints men to that task. Note that he appoints others. Nehemiah is well aware of his own limitations. He's clearly a very able man, isn't he?

Look what he's done so far. In 52 days, he's managed to motivate everyone to get together, build the walls. He's very able. But he's only a man. He knows that he needs help.

He needs to delegate responsibility away, so that proper attention can be given to serving God's people properly. He needs help. And so he appoints men.

And who Nehemiah appoints is key, isn't it? It's all very well having the gates and the walls in place. But unless you've got the right people appointed to the right roles, then the walls and gates are worthless.

May not as well be there. So the right people need to be appointed. So what are the qualities that Nehemiah identifies as key for those he delegates responsibility to?

[18 : 22] Look at verse 2. I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah, the governor of the castle, charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.

Here is what Nehemiah values above all. Men who are faithful and God-fearing. Faithful to the task and fearful of the right person.

Now Hanani, Nehemiah's own brother. Now that could be construed as a dangerous appointment, couldn't it? His own brother?

Smells of nepotism, doesn't it? Accusations of favoritism can be leveled against Nehemiah, but as one preacher put it, there are times when the safeguarding of the work is so important that one has to risk the possibility of misunderstanding and being misunderstood for the high good.

So regardless of Hanani being his brother, he knew he was the right man for the job. We've already encountered Hanani in the book, chapter 1.

[19 : 37] It says this back in chapter 1, verse 1. Now it happened in the months of Chislev in the 20th year, as I was in Susa, the capital, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah.

Hanani is something of a go-getter, isn't he? He's a man of action. He made that journey all the way from Judah, all the way to Susa, in order to recruit Nehemiah for the task at hand in Jerusalem.

Hanani saw the need in Jerusalem. He saw the walls broken, the gates burned with fire, and he knew exactly who was the right man for the job. Hanani was a man with vision.

He was also a man who knew his own limitations. He'd seen the need, but his conclusion was not for himself to do the job, but to go and get Nehemiah. He had the humility to recognize that he wasn't the man fitted for the task.

He needed somebody else. And that's a great quality in a church leader. And that serves the church so well in every age, to know your limits, to know who can do the job that you can't, having the humility to recognize what you cannot do, possessing the initiative to bring others alongside you, to bring them in, those who can do what you can't for the good of the kingdom.

[21 : 03] Hanani was a guy like that. And that's a great gift to the church, being satisfied with your lot. And that can be hard to come to terms with for some of us, can't it?

We are by nature prideful. But admitting you can't do something and getting somebody else who can, that takes humility. Hanani was that sort of man. He was a faithful man.

So faithful and also God-fearing. There have been up to this point, plenty for the leaders of God's people to fear. And there'll be more to come.

But who these men needed to fear above all, was not some ballots and his pals, but God. Were they God-fearing men? Having the Lord's opinion as the chief concern in one's mind, enables the leader to navigate the challenges and difficulties of ministry with poise and clarity.

If you fear God, then you'll approach those things, not with confusion or panic, but poise and clarity. Knowing that in the end, you are answerable to God alone, not anybody else.

[22 : 17] Well, that enables a leader to make hard decisions that sometimes need to be made. A God-fearing man, not a man-fearing man. That's what Nehemiah needed.

It's what the church in every age needs. Men who fear God, men who are faithful. It's character, over-competence, isn't it?

And that's why we, here at the Tron, train men the way we do. Five years we have training. First, as a ministry apprentice, and then a minister in training.

Five years. They give us a pretty good estimation of someone's character over those five years. Yes, we see their competency in terms of handling the Bible and teaching and preaching, but alongside that, we see how they react under pressure, how they deal with life, how they treat people, how they speak to people.

And we're much better able, after five years, to discern, is this someone who fears God? Is this a man who's faithful? And it's been a costly privilege, hasn't it, for us to train others for ministry.

[23 : 32] We've sent men out recently who are God-fearing and faithful. Stephen Ballingall to Edinburgh North, and shortly, Andrew Whitmarsh to Maxwell. Identifying future leaders in the church, men who can protect the church, safeguard it, that's a key task.

Nehemiah knew his job to identify other leaders, and we have the same task for ourselves here. So getting the right men, that's the first thing for Nehemiah, as he seeks to protect the city and the people.

But what about the task that he gives them? Nehemiah gives them very specific instructions there in verse 3. Have a look. He says, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot, and while they are not still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors.

Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their guard posts, and some in front of their own homes. The task is all about protection.

God's people need protection. Now, we don't need to rehearse all the reasons why, but we've seen over and over again through Nehemiah that God's people, when they are fruitfully at work, they're a big target for the enemy.

[24 : 54] Again and again, the attacks come. And so, part of the role of any leader of God's people is to put safeguards in place. For Nehemiah, he's wise to considering the possible threats.

Now the wall's been built, they had to be careful about who was allowed in to the city, who was allowed access. And very specifically, he says, Let not the gates be opened too early.

Wait till the sun's hot. Nehemiah knew that the strength of the city's defences was not measured by the quality of the walls, actually, but the quality of the men who guarded them.

Don't open the gates at first light. Wait a bit, he says. And they were to take no chances when it came to closing up the city either at the end of the day. The gates are to be shut whilst the guards are still on duty.

There's been no clocking off early, no lax attitudes, no. They were to be alert and diligent the whole day because the enemy was real.

[26 : 00] And the need for proper protection is a key concern for leaders in every age of the church. Sometimes, physical protection is needed like it is here.

There are places where the threat of physical violence is real. There's a real danger. We were visiting my sister-in-law and her husband in the States just before Easter.

My brother-in-law there is a pastor of a church and they have a full security detail on every service. I think there's a team of eight or ten. Two guys outside, two at the doors, two right here at the front, earpieces in.

It's like proper secret service stuff. But the threat, the threat's probably quite low but it's pretty severe. People can carry guns. The threat's real.

people. Sometimes, we've got to be wise as to physical protection. But perhaps more significantly, protection against spiritual harm is a key concern for any leader in God's people.

[27 : 10] Anyone involved in teaching God's word who's got responsibility for others in the church has to be alert to the need to protect. from our senior pastor down to the junior church leaders to those leading growth groups, those leading release the word groups to the father of every family here.

We have a responsibility, don't we, to protect those who the Lord has given us to lead and to serve. Leaders have to keep an eye out for things that might bring spiritual harm to those under their care.

And there are two directions we want to pay attention to and it's the same two directions we've seen in Nehemiah. One is external and the other is internal. The threat of external harm and the threat of internal.

And the New Testament is full of instructions, isn't it, for the under-shepherds of God's people to be on alert, to be prepared to protect God's precious flock. The Apostle Paul addressing the Ephesian elders in Acts 20.

He says this, Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood.

[28 : 29] I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock and from among your own cells will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore be alert. Paul again speaking to Titus about the sort of men he needs to appoint as fellow leaders. He says this, He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction and sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

One more example, Paul speaking again to Timothy. He says, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty for people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of Godly, but denying its power.

Avoid such people for among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women burdened with sins and led astray by various passions always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth i could go on the church you are so very precious in the sight of god that is why we have so many warnings like this to those who are leaders look after the flock protect them just consider what he did in order to bring together his eternal family he sent his own son to die on a cross jesus shed his blood so that you and i can be made right with god to have our sins atoned for the church is so so precious and the lord has set his under shepherds to oversee the flock partly to protect the church of jesus must be protected if the church is not protected if the people are not protected then its witness will dim and die out if the church is not protected and there's no hope for this planet ultimately is there for this world because the true church with the true gospel of jesus christ is the only hope for our world the church is so precious it must be protected and that means that in every aspect of church life leaders will need to act sometimes shrewdly not softly but dealing with opposition as paul's described for us in the new testament men who will have those passages i've just read firmly fixed in their minds will be willing to recognize that sin is real that the dangers of the church are real there will be people there will be men willing to at times say no we're not doing that we're not going to allow that into the life of the church because my duty is to protect we're not going to promote that book and here's why we're not going to sing that song and here's why leaders need discernment to recognize the dangers so they can protect the church to say no to things so wise protection is absolutely necessary nahemiah knew that was a key need for the church here in nahemiah well let's look on to the second section we've seen the need to protect the people let's look on to the second section of this chapter more briefly it's a long section as josh has kindly read for us and i don't propose to say too much about it because we've seen the same list already there's an identical list in ezra chapter 2 but i want to ask the question what is the significance of this list being repeated why do we need another one why is it necessary well this second section shows us the need to regather the people the need to regather the people the key issue identified there by nahemiah in verse 4 is that the city is almost empty there are no people there the goal is to re-establish the vital worship of god in his city and by his people it's always been god's goal to build for himself and everlasting people that's the whole point of people gathered to worship and so the first thing that nahemiah does

[33 : 56] is go digging around the archives and he finds this list which is now 90 years old it was 90 years previous that that first group returned from babylon to jerusalem and that list was a list of the returning exiles who came back with zerubbabel it's the exact same list there are one or two copying errors with the numbers notoriously hebrew numbers are very difficult to copy and to translate all the names are the same but some of the numbers are a little bit different but that's largely a copying error there were no photocopiers back in those days so they had to do it by hand and they made the odd mistake but it's the same list same as ezra 2 and it's not just the list that's the same just notice can you just flick back to ezra for a minute flick back to ezra chapter 2 and have a look at the end of the list and we get a repeated pattern in ezra and again in nahemiah so look at verse 70 of chapter 2 of ezra so you just have a long list and it says verse 70 now the priests the levites some of the people the singers the gatekeepers and the temple servants lived in their towns and all the rest of israel in their towns and chapter 3 begins with this when the seventh month came and the children of israel were in the towns the people gathered as one man to jerusalem okay now flick back to nahemiah and we'll go to the very end and we get the same pattern so verse 73 of nahemiah 7 it says so the priests the levites the gatekeepers the singers some of the people the temple servants and all israel lived in their towns and when the seventh month had come the people of israel were in their towns and look at verse 1 of chapter 8 and all the people gathered as one man into the square before the water gates same pattern same thing happens in ezra the list precedes a big gathering of the people in nahemiah the list precedes a big gathering of the people in ezra what follows is the first stage in re-establishing the worship of god with the rebuilding of the temple what follows in nahemiah is the final stage in the re-establishing of the worship of god now that the temple and the walls have been rebuilt the renewal of god's people can at last take place and that's what we see happening in chapters 8 9 and 10 the re-establishing of the true community of god's people shaped by god's word we'll see that in the next chapters god's purpose is to gather all israel to restore them to his blessing and his purpose forever and so these verses this list of names it's a clear reminder of that great promise of god to regather his people the people there to worship him it's a reminder that there's still hope for israel in nahemiah's day despite all their sins despite the recent calamity of exile god's promise still certain god hasn't abandoned his people he hasn't abandoned his promise to abraham even though the exile seemed to say they must surely at last have been scattered away but god hadn't forgotten his promise to restore his people he hadn't forgotten in the great assembly of ezra too just prior to the rebuilding of the temple he hadn't forgotten his promises 90 years on here in ezra 7

nahemiah 7 sorry and that ought to give us great confidence you see our god is a promise keeping god when he makes a promise he'll do it and we have such great assurance don't we of god keeping his promises we have the privilege of being able to look back on the key moments of christ's death resurrection ascension he reigns at this very moment he is going to come back and when he does when christ does return what's going to happen he's going to gather his people he's going to regather his people for all eternity he's going to gather all those whose names are on a list in the lamb's book of life and that gathering will be a gathering that never ends we see the vision in revelation 7 after this i looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice salvation belongs to our god who sits on the throne and to the lamb and all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped god saying amen blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our god forever and ever amen that's the gathering that we'll be part of one day and we need always to be reminded of what god is doing where history is going what is his great purpose what is god doing well god is gathering his people just like they gathered here before renewing their worship of him before they heard the word being read and that massive confession of repentance of sin and recommitting themselves to serving god gather them together he is building his church that's the big thing that's why nehemiah did it and that's what god will do in the end that's the big thing we cannot be distracted from that central task that central task of making disciples first by calling men and women to repent and follow the lord and then secondly maturing as christians helping them to grow that is what we're about that's the big thing and the thing is everything around us will pull us in the opposite direction everything around us will pull us in a direction other than that everything we see on our phones or on our screens is pulling our vision away from the eternal and onto the temporary it's pulling us away from the essential to the frivolous all the time and so we need always to be reminded about the big thing and what is the big thing god is gathering his people for all eternity nehemiah was laser focused on that yes the walls been built but that's not the big thing that's not the end goal the goal is the gathering of god's people that's what nehemiah is about and we get to be part of that gathering that building so friends don't be distracted by anything else we focus on

the main thing well let me pray and then we'll sing together father how glad we are that your word always brings us back to reality your word always points us to the essential to the most important and so father please help us not to be distracted discouraged or disheartened as we go about our work together serving you the lord remind us of where history is going that one day we will reign with you for all eternity gathered around your throne praising you what a joy that will be so help us as we go about our lives to give of ourselves to that great work that task you've called us to and so help us together not to be distracted but focused and how we need your help for that task we are so needful we are so frail so encourage us and help us we ask for the sake of the glory of the lord jesus christ amen