

Distractions

“And I sent messengers to them, saying, ‘I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?’” Nehemiah 5:3.

Distraction is the process of drawing away the mind. It is not necessarily curbing energy but redirecting it. Distraction implies that the mind is meant to be focused on one thing but is pulled toward something else like trains switching tracks.

Life is filled with many distractions. Our 21st century world in particular is designed to distract. In fact, many of us pay money in order to be distracted, whether through cable or satellite television, through internet, through cell phones, through books. Distraction even happens to us when we neither pay for it nor want it, such as advertising. Distraction is big business today because people want to be distracted. The question is: *From what* do we want to be distracted?

When Nehemiah set the people to work on rebuilding the wall, they were greatly opposed. Enemies from outside the Israelites fought against their work to the point that there were appointed armed workers to stand guard. Enemies from within the Israelites, such as Shemaiah, emerged and conspired against the rebuilding of the wall. The goal of both enemies was to distract the rebuilding of the wall, even if the distraction took place through violence. And yet men like Nehemiah and Ezra remained focused on the task.

The state of Christians today is not too different. There is work to be done. We have our own wall to rebuild. We have work which has been appointed by God and this work is opposed through distractions. This isn't to say that all distractions are evil. There is a time to rest and recuperate. This is to say that Christians live in a Kingdom with Christ as our King and Christ has given each of us our tasks. The distraction scheme is not to take away Christian energy toward God's work but to redirect it. In our society it doesn't often happen through violence. If anything it happens through a kind of wooing – through subtle redirection of our minds – toward pleasure and Kingdom inactivity. The next time we're faced with distractions, let us remember the words of Nehemiah and ask: *Why should the work stop? For I am doing a great work.*

[DJR]