

This work was wrought of our God. (Quality: very good)

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[0 : 00] I venture as enabled to speak first of this work, namely the building of the walls and gates of Jerusalem in very troublous times. Then to speak of the work wrought by our God in providence and in creation. Then, as we sung this afternoon, that one strange work excels them all, the finished work of the dear Redeemer at Calvary. This work was wrought of our God. Then, the work of grace by the power of the Holy Spirit in sinners' hearts, and that work begun, finished. And finally, this work was wrought of our God when all the redeemed, and they shall be gathered together in glory to be forever with the Lord. First, then, this work was wrought of our God, and what a work it was, and how impossible all seemed in the eyes of man that ever the walls of Jerusalem should be built. Tidings reach the ear of Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, concerning the great affliction and reproach. The wall of

Jerusalem is broken down, and that the gates thereof are burned with fire. Nehemiah was a man in a high position, a trusted position, a trusted position, the king's cupbearer. He did not do as some would say, well, I'm sorry, but I'm in an important position here. There's nothing that I can do. Again, he did not say, I will rise, and immediately we will go and rebuild these walls. He took the only right step, and that was he sat down, he wept, he mourned, he prayed. He took it to God, but with his tears, his mourning, his grief over the sad state of Jerusalem, he fasted and prayed to God.

God. We live not to see so much literal walls broken and gates burned with fire, but we see the breaking down of all that is good and right and upright, especially as revealed in the word of God.

may the Lord awaken us personally, individually, to this great need, that we may not be left to fatalism and say, well, what will be, shall be, the will of God be done, and fall asleep, at the same time to be preserved from fleshly inventions, excitement, emotionalism, but rather that the throne of grace may be, if I may so put it, watered with our tears, our grief, our sorrow for the sad state of Zion, and we have much, much to mourn over, apart from the, we might say, the nominal churches of the land. What about our own churches?

I must not tarry at length. But in time, the dear man stood before the king, a very powerful king, and his countenance was sad. Now, that was a very solemn thing for the cupbearer to stand like that.

[4 : 51] The king would sense that something was wrong and would perhaps fear for his own life. But as the king spoke, so Nehemiah spake and prayed silently. He stood before an earthly king. He prayed to the king of kings and asked for the Lord to appear.

We know what it is. I hope you are no stranger to this. You look back on your life. You look back to those interviews that you've had, decisions that you've had to make, perhaps very quickly. And you couldn't kneel down. You couldn't utter an audible prayer.

But you prayed and sought God to guide and direct. The Lord brought mountains down, made the way plain for Nehemiah to return, to return, and not only to return, not to return empty-handed, but all provision to be made.

And so we read of his return to Jerusalem. And how that without any show, he went round the city by night and saw the sad state of the walls broken down and the gates burned with fire.

But he gathered together those of his dear people and said, you see, the distress that we're in, and we are in deep distress today, beloved.

[6 : 24] The church and believers need awakening, need stirring up the alarm to be sounded. We are failing the coming generation.

We need grace to stand and to contend for the truth as it is in Jesus. But he did not go alone. Alone, yes, as far as he himself was concerned.

But he could tell them that the hand of the Lord was upon him. And they were thus encouraged and said, let us rise up and build.

So they strengthen their hands for this work. As soon as God works, his people work, his people pray, his ministers preach, the spirit works, then you have the work of the devil and you have the opposition, the enemies that came against Nehemiah.

these, the Sanvala, Tobiah, and Gershom, they laugh them to scorn, ridicule. That's just what the world does today.

[7 : 41] They laugh the word of God, the gospel, all to scorn. And the day of blasphemy in which we live is most awful and most solemn.

The walls are broken down. the work commenced. The third chapter of this book is full of names, trades, and gates.

Largely, passed over. Pray over it. Speak to God. Open my eyes to behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Briefly, I name one or two points as revealed. those and nobles that would not put their necks to the work of the Lord.

They were too proud. They would not bend. They would not labor. If the love of Christ fills our heart, the lowest task will be an honor for us to undertake in the fear of the Lord.

[8 : 54] God. We read then also later on that a certain man and his daughters, we know according to the word of God, the women are to remain silent as far as the ministry is concerned.

But does not Paul speak of those women that labored with me in the gospel? Do not we speak, does not the word of the Lord tell us of one who was a succorer of many?

These mothers in Israel all fulfilling that part of laboring and working together. another. Again, we read of another that earnestly repented, his whole heart was in it.

It wasn't a half-hearted attempt. And then later on as we read that some had finished their part and then they did another.

They didn't go home, they said, well we'll help someone else that perhaps have not made the progress. And we read that everyone according to his own house to the own part of the wall that was appointed.

[10 : 09] You'll also read in this chapter of a man and it was his sixth son. I don't know why the other five weren't there. We see this in a family sometimes one called by grace.

But here we see united work, laboring together. And as this work started, then the enemy increased in power and in might and in further derision.

And they say, what do these feeble Jews, just what the world says, look at those people going to a prayer meeting in the middle of the week. What are they doing, these poor old things?

Friend, there's power in the prayer meeting, never desert it. much is done when the church is in prayer before God.

United prayer as united work. work. And so the dear Nehemiah says, so built we the wall.

[11 : 19] And the enemies conspired, all of them together, to hinder the work, to overthrow it, to even use violence to stop the work.

What does Nehemiah do? What should we do? Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God. Didn't stop there.

Did something else and set a watch because of them. This teaches us to pray and to take lawful steps, to watch and to pray.

I shall never forget that a Sunday school anniversary, I think it was at Hanover, Tunbridge, years ago, the subject was prayer, and in it came forgotten prayers.

Made me think. I pray and I forget all about it. I pray and am I watching? Am I waiting? Is my ear open to hear what God is saying?

[12 : 29] Is my eye open to watch his hand? They laboured on and I like this expression. Though they had to be armed, we return every man to his work and we read everyone unto his work.

Here I see the church of God. Here I see the pastors. Here I see the preachers. Here I see the deacons, the elders, if you wish. Then the members and all men and women and young people, if grace is in their heart, labouring together, working together for the honour and the glory of God.

Everyone putting, as it were, their shoulder to the task. To be faithful, you may only have one talent.

Pray to use it for the honour and the glory of almighty God. And they laboured on. And then coming nearer to our text, the enemy turned then from open opposition, from threats of violence, to subtle means.

This is the typical of the work of the devil. There's a black devil and a white devil. As I think our old ministers used to say, there is the lion that roars, there are the wiles of the devil.

[14 : 08] And here they sought, the enemies came and said, now come Nehemiah, let's meet in the village and let's talk this over. Nehemiah could see that they wanted to get him away from the work.

And what does he say? I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down. This is the rallying call for the church of God today.

We must not come down. Now let me be plain and clear. I'm not saying we should be lifted up in pride. I do not say that we should be openly antagonistic.

I do not say that we should be rude. I say that we should not lower the standard of the cross. I say that we should come down in the spirit of humility.

Yes, but may we be faithful to our God. The next step that the enemy took was now meet in the temple.

[15 : 15] Meet there and surely we can discuss this. I'm only touching the points very briefly. The purpose was to get him away and they got their own enemies there to slay him.

What does Nehemiah say? Should such a man as I flee? Should I run away? Friend, we're not a stranger. Some of our ministers and myself included have known what has been at times I feel I must run away.

I must give up. Can't go on any longer. The temptation is great. No, we must not. Jesus Christ, your father's son, bids you undismayed, go on, go on.

And so the work continued and we read here that the war was finished and it came to pass that when all our enemies heard thereof and all the heathens that were about to saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes.

For they perceived, mark that, they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. It was for that reason I read that little Psalm 126, that they said among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them.

[16 : 50] And the church says the Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad. I believe we may say for the dear people here the Lord hath done great things for them.

May this be an encouragement to continued prayer, waiting upon God, confession of sin, and praying now for the manifest blessings, spiritual blessings, seen in the conversion of sinners, in the encouragement of the seeker, in the confirming of the saint, and in the restoration of the backslider.

They perceived that this work was wrought of our God. They didn't say this was done by Nehemiah, it was our God united together, pulling together, as we may rightly say.

I come now and briefly to the next point. This work was wrought of our God creation.

Have you ever felt a poor little thing in the sight of the almighty God? Some of us have been over the oceans of the world in the war.

[18 : 43] I remember in the prairies standing there and looking up, the visibility is very, very clear, the stars. What is man that thou mindful of him, the son of man that thou visitest him?

That memorable morn when I drew the curtains, I'd travelled up to the Rockies on leave for three days following an illness. I'd gone in the night, I saw nothing from the prairie to the Rockies.

I drew the curtains and there before me were these snow-capped mountains, blue sky, oh the greatness of our God and then friend, his love to unworthy man.

Sacred spot. Never did I think I'd ever go back there again in my life, but I cannot tell you the detail, but on the first visit to America and the friends knowing nothing of it whatsoever, I was taken to the very place at Banff, not to the room, I admit that.

I felt like Jacob going back to Bethel. Wonderful, wonderful. And not any other ministers have done that. That was God's hand friend. And it's wonderful.

[19 : 58] And oh, as you, are your eyes blind? Do you not learn? Do you not see anything in creation? As you look at the birds, just to give an example, one day there was such a noise in the garden, sadly to say I hardly see a bird now in our garden, but the sparrows are sitting on another sparrow.

And I got near them before they flew off, and off they went, and I went indoors and went upstairs and looked down on the gutter next door to me, and there was this poor little sparrow that was alone.

And do you know what came to my mind? And sweetly, a sparrow alone. Oh, you may say, you are a simple-minded man. Friend, it touched my poor heart, it needs a lot to break my hard heart.

It came like this, yes, I'm just like that little sparrow, alone, hurt by Satan, wounded sometimes by the world. God. And then it came like this, are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your father's knowledge.

Fear not you have more value than many sparrows. Look at it. Oh, the wonders of creation. Oh, the glories. And just think of creation. I remember one of my deacons suddenly said to me, he said, do you ever thought in the creation, he just says, he made the stars.

[21 : 17] That's all it says. stars that no man with all his inventions can speak of. Distances, magnitude, might, power, he calleth them all by their names.

This God, this God is our God, forever and ever he will be our guide, even unto death. And yet, the stars are not pure in his sight.

What about filthy man? Providence. The open hand of our God. Oh, friend, have you not seen it?

We look back on our lives, we see the angel of God that does wondrously, the brook starts to dry up, we wonder what's going to happen now, how's our need going to be supplied?

We think of that little home that we started with in married life, and some of us in the war years where everything was on docket, no carpets, no wallpaper, and yet it was home, and the Lord's opening hand, providing our need, and now what do we have to pray for?

[22 : 28] While our need is supplied, now we have to pray, Lord, don't let me make an idol of it. Help me to be thankful for it, but may my home be thy dwelling place. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

God. And then countless examples can be given of the wonder working of our God in the supply of need in times of trouble and in times of distress.

I shall not take time further to enlarge on it. You may look back on your life, and it's good to look back and remember all the way that the Lord your God has led you and supplied that very, very need.

They perceived that this work was wrought of our God, and to see our steps ordered by God, to see great events move on a very small matter of life.

I might be permitted here to give an example. In, I think, about 1945, 46, my wife's family, her father and mother were desiring to move from Bedford to Tunbridge Wells.

[24 : 00] They too went to the town and spent the day in no success. Got to Southpur and the car broke down to stop the night. Wouldn't be ready to the next afternoon, so they thought, well, there's just one property we haven't looked at.

They might do that. Well, there was a mistake on the details, and it's the very thing they were looking for. Now, you may say, well, what about that? Well, this poor man was coming back from Singapore in the war years, and that was the way that I met my dear wife, eventually.

The day the car broke down, this work was wrought of our God.

And again, let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Dear Mr. Brooker, my old pastor, that was the son of your former pastor at Ebenezer, used to say, if they don't, who will?

Surely the redeemed should speak of these things, the answer to prayer. What hath God wrought? That time in hospital, when you went with dread, and yet that bed was a place of blessing and help, a sense of the presence of God, thy God that cares for thee, casting all your care upon him, that moment of bereavement.

[25 : 31] Oh, friend, we know a little of what we're talking about, but we perceive this work was wrought of our God. In the comfort that we felt, the presence of our God, the support of his grace, his everlasting love.

But now I want to come to this work was wrought of our God. What is this work? This great work that excels them all. It is the work of redemption. Creation was brought in by the word of his mouth.

He commanded, he spake, and it was done. Redemption of sinners could not be done. I say it with reverence by a word. justice had to be satisfied.

Payment had to be made. Sinless blood had to be shed. Where, oh, where is that blood to be found?

Earth cannot furnish it. All is stained with sin. Only heard today of a person that says, oh, well with me, look at all the good works that I do.

[26 : 48] Friend, it's a rotten plank. Don't misunderstand me. Good works are right, and the believer's faith without works is dead, but that's not our plank to glory.

Those works will follow us to heaven, won't take us there. Not the labour of my hands can fulfil thy law's demands.

Could my tears forever flow? Could my zeal, no respite, no, just stop to think of it, could my tears forever flow?

No, even that can't wash away sin. Thou must save, and thou alone. here we see the gift of heaven.

Here we see the covenant ordered in all things and sure. Here we behold the unfolding of the plan in eternity past.

[27 : 50] Here we see the coming of the dear saviour, the eternal son of God. Never, never, never lose sight of his deity. Never lose sight of that.

Ever remember even that babe at Bethlehem, the son of God. Yes, that holy thing, that sinless humanity.

Oh, friend, ever the son of God, but here is the God-man. Here is the Lamb of God. Here is he that should live this earth.

Here is he that should walk this earth. Was tempted in all points like as we are. Was ever one so poor? The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have necks.

The son of man hath not where to lay his head. His purpose, he came to do the work that his father gave him to do.

[28 : 49] This work, what was it? To go forth, to live that life of holiness and purity and that life to be laid down as the sacrifice, blood to be shed for the pardon of sin.

And so we must hasten in our thoughts we view the dear saviour, the dear redeemer going forth saying father the hour is come.

I do not know how many hours there have been since the world was created but it was the hour that hour when the Lord should cry from Calvary's cross, it is finished.

But look, before he said it is finished, behold, oh my soul, see the awfulness of sin, see the justice of God, behold the sufferings of thy saviour, see what he endured at the hand of man, my hand, my sin, all we may accuse the Jew of saying away with him, away with my heart by nature would say away with him, oh but grace has made that change, subdued by sovereign grace, my spirit longs for his embrace, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there's none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

So we behold the sufferings of Christ, the ignominy and shame of the death of the cross, numbered with the transgressors, and yet still the bitterest ingredient, still the sword to smite the shepherd, still the hidings of the father's face, still he is to be made sin, still the father is to deal with the son of his love, he the God of grace and love hath laid on the son of his love, the iniquity of us all, imputed to Christ, so that in Christ the believer is there on the cross with all his sins, and there dealt with in Christ, Jesus the Lord, and sealed and cleansed and pardoned and washed through that sin atoning blood, shed as John says, and forthwith there came blood and water, this great well, it is finished, it is done, just as it satisfied, the law is honoured, the gates of heaven are flung open wide, the door of mercy is open, the gate to the throne of grace is for poor sinners thus to come, oh how sweet it is, this great word, it was wrought of our

[31 : 43] God, it was indeed, none other could do it, none other could do it, precious Jesus, finish work, there is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains, there have I, though vile as he washed all my sins away, says the dear hymn writer, speaking of the dying thing, roar to that God, but then, I say it with reverence, what is the finished work of God, unless that work is wrought in a sinner's heart, is man going to turn to Christ, are you going to go to Christ and let him save you, I want a far greater, stronger, powerful redeemer than that, I want a mighty saviour, able to save and does all the saving, and so we see another great work, this work was wrought of our

God, what is it? Regeneration, spiritual life, conviction of sin, the depth is in the hand of the sovereignty of God, if it is light in its beginning it will be increased in its walking it out later, you may be troubled about conviction of sin, you may be alarmed, you say, Lord, there are those that have said, I've sinned but they're in hell, am I one of them?

Those that said that never turn to God, Pharaoh, Achan, Saul, King, Saul, and Judas Iscariot, at least they said that, but true conviction as wrought by the Spirit will eventually lead that sinner to turn to God, where did the prodigal turn, when he came to himself, he didn't turn back to the world, he turned his back on the world, he left what he chose, he turned back to what he refused, or what he ran away from, his conversion, his turning to God, his fleeing from the wrath to come, his cry for mercy, and oh friend, that spiritual life in the soul, that groan, that cry, that sigh, that longing for Christ, that running to Christ, that pleading for Christ, that pleading for mercy, they perceived that this work was wrought of our God, and then as the Lord leads on and teaches, leads you, a poor sinner, and directs you to the cross, and brings a little more, here a little and there a little, of the blessings of the gospel, of the tokens of his love, the kisses of his mouth, oh friend, how precious

Christ is, and then as sin is a deeper reality, I'll put it to you, that as you know more of the pardon, or the blessing of salvation, sin will be an increased reality, it will be a dreadful sight, I'm sure of it, it balances up, you won't think of little sin, you won't be a little sinner, and so friend, it's this work of grace, it makes you cling to Christ, and this work of God's grace will be seen in your life, the world will see it, a young friend that came before the church at Tamworth Road some years ago, and she was telling us at the beginning, she said the first people that spotted the difference in her life were those in the office, what's gone wrong with you?

There was a change, she wasn't aware of it, she didn't, as it were, she didn't know that she'd changed, but they soon spotted it, what did the Philistines say to us, that we saw certainly that the Lord was with thee, what a testimony, wonderful, and here the heathen had to acknowledge this was the hand of God, and friend, this is the witness we want, they talk about outreach, well, that I must leave, there's a right prayerful concern about that, but the sermon to be preached to the world is the open letter of your life, does it speak of Christ, does it tell of the fear of the Lord, does it speak of the separation from evil, does it speak of the love of Christ, does it show forth in your life, again, when you may see, or think of yourself perhaps, somebody's hurt you, unkindly, wounded you, and why, naturally, you say,

[36 : 32] I'll get my own back, I'll deal with them, and then you stop, you have a glimpse of Christ, and Father forgive them, and you have to go and say, I forgive them, but even greater still, you're the one that's done the wrong, I'm the one that's done the wrong, said the wrong thing, what am I going to do, forget it, brush it away, and think, oh no, it doesn't matter, friend, make full breast of it, go and say, I'm sorry, please forgive me, a great man, great woman, great child, that has the courage to do that, and we perceive that this work was wrought of our God, again, in the path of trial, may I name a case of a dear age member of our church, she was a widow, and then her dear daughter, that she was just longing for the day of her retirement, they'd lived together, they were well provided for, and her daughter was cut down with cancer and died, then this dear soul fell and fractured her pelvis, and was in hospital, this poor pastor went to see her, and I thought,

I must pray for a word of comfort, well, I didn't need it, I didn't need it to give to her, she gave it to me, I see her now sitting up in the bed, her face beaming, said, go and tell the people, the Lord is good, a stronghold, in the day of trouble, blessed is he that trusteth in him, we perceive that this work was wrought of our God, now when I say that, that dear soul wasn't always on the trial, I don't mean to say that, but there she saw and proved the grace of God as her sufficiency, now just two more thoughts and I must close not to hold you long, one is this, maybe the privileged lot here and among our churches, to hear the testimony of those who are made willing in the day of his power to come and declare what the Lord has done for their soul, so that when you hear, you can say, we perceive that this work was wrought of our God, come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without, is a wonderful favour, is a uniting favour, now let me be clear, why should we give it, why shouldn't we give it, surely if you were plucked out of a blazing house, if somebody went to the sea and plucked you from drowning, you'd be ready to speak of the one that had done this for you, so we should speak of him and declare what he's done, let the redeemed of the

Lord say so, and not that we look for an exact replica of our own experience, but I tell you this, and those of you who've heard testimonies will bear with this, you hear the testimony and then you say, that person will say something, and you say, well I know just what that is, and the arms of your love spiritually go out of that person, this is fellowship, this is union, this is the bond of peace, and normally when we have a testimony, I wish we had more, seems as a withholding in the churches at the moment, but we had, normally we had the meeting, but this particular night we had some most urgent business matter that had to be attended to by the church, so we did not hold the friend waiting, but instead of her tarrying, because though she was accepted unanimously, she couldn't stop because she wasn't a church member, so she quite willingly agreed to leave, but I hadn't premeditated this, but as she was about to go out of the door,

I said to the dear friend, I'm sorry we have to say goodbye at the moment, but I said I want to do something, I want just to stand there a moment, I'm going to ask, now every member of this church, do you love this friend?

Well I've asked often for those I've never seen hands go up so quickly, friend, it was a proof of love, I know that's simple, but it was real, that wasn't sentimental, it was real, it was real, real.

[41 : 02] Lastly, this work was wrought of our God, it was my privilege, sacred privilege, to be with my dear pastor the last two days of his life in hospital, and I saw a pastor that I'd sat under for twenty-five years, die in the Lord.

I saw his faith unshaken, for a while he did not know he was dying, but it was revealed to him, and he said, I die on the strength of the truth that God has helped me to preach.

I perceive that this work was wrought of our God. My late dear father, if I may just say this, some of you remember him, have spoken to me about him.

He discussed with me his funeral just as though he and I were going to take it together. Utter peace. Now lastly, we look up to the glory land, Emmanuel's land.

We see through the glass darkly the redeemed spirits. We see the heavenly host. We mark by faith what is yet to be when the redeemed dust shall rise at the coming of the Lord at his summons, at his cry, at his call, at the sound of the trumpet, the voice of God.

[42 : 26] And in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed and fashioned like unto his glorious body, to be ever present with the Lord, together with him, together with them.

And what can we say? We shall perceive that this work was wrought of our God. Oh, friend, what a prospect, if such the sweetness of the streams, what must the fountain be, where saints and angels draw their bliss immediately from thee?

Oh, friend, to be free forever from all the infirmities, temptations, darkness, sorrows, and tears of the world, to be with our dear Jesus, to see him as he is, and to praise him as we long to, to love him with an unsinning heart.

And then loud as of the crowd I'll sing while heaven's resounding mansions ring with shouts of sovereign grace. Worthy the Lamb, they cry, to be exalted to us, and worthy of the Lamb, our lips reply, for he was slain for us.

This work was wrought of our God. Amen.