

Nehemiah (Quality: Good, incomplete)

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Preacher: Wood, Clement (1920-2010)

- [0 : 00] For your prayerful attention this afternoon to Nehemiah chapter 6, verse 16, last clause.
- Nehemiah chapter 6, verse 16, last clause.
- They perceived that this work was wrought of our God.
- But this work was the building of the walls of Jerusalem and the return from captivity of some of God's ancient people.
- They were built in troublous times.
- [1 : 51] We read later in this book, in the 11th chapter, I think it is in the 17th verse, a certain man that was appointed to begin the thanksgiving with prayer.
- It is in one of those chapters where there are many names. But hidden in those chapters are many precious words of spiritual blessing and instruction.
- We are brought to this day of thanksgiving. Have we begun the day, begun the thanksgiving with prayer?
- I trust it has been so with us to pray not just that we are going to gather and to give thanks and praise God that it will be a time of spiritual blessing, of true spiritual thanksgiving and praise.
- For it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, to sing praise unto thy name, O Most High, to show forth thy loving kindness every morning and thy faithfulness every night.
- [3 : 25] First of all, this work. You remember that Nehemiah was carried captive and was the king's cupbearer.
- Tidings are brought to him of the sad and solemn state of Jerusalem. The walls are broken down.
- The gates are burned without none to care. It's an impossible situation. Walls to the cities were vital.
- One fears today that those walls of divine protection of this land are broken down by the sin of the people.
- In the last great war, when from the king downward there was prayer unto God, and our great God, the omnipotent God, may bear his holy arm, and brought this nation through that there was no invading force.
- [4 : 51] The miracle of the miracle of the miracle of the miracle of the Lord, which some of us remember so well. But now, my friend, we are exposed, I fear, to the wrath of God.
- Now, let not that be a despondent note. It is a true note. It is a solemn note. But we who fear God must never lose courage or take our eyes off our God.
- Whatever God has appointed for us, I do not say this lightly, it may lead us into a path of suffering and trial and difficulties, maybe pain, much more.
- But don't lose sight of the all-sufficiency of your God, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Now, I must not linger too long on the history, but I want to bring it forth. Nehemiah did not say, well, I'm sorry to hear it, but there's nothing I can do at all.

[6 : 06] I'm the king's cupbearer. Very responsible position. On the other hand, he didn't say what some people would say. I'll soon go and put that right. In fleshly emotionalism and presumption, what did he do?

We read in this wonderful book of Nehemiah, and I just turned to them, I quoted accurately, he sat down, he mourned, and he wept, he fasted, and he prayed.

That's what we need in Zion today, personally and collectively, beloved friends. And how he poured out his heart before his God, confessing the sin of the people, and waiting upon God for direction, and came the day.

And there was no movement in the matter for about 30 days, until he stood before the king. And the king observed a sad countenance.

Now, there's a very dangerous position for the cupbearer to stand before the king with a sad countenance. The king would fear for his own life.

[7 : 27] The king answered, what's the matter? And we read, as that dear man stood before an earthly king of tremendous power, he prayed to the king in heaven, the king of kings, or the lord of lords.

Does that leave you out? Has there been times, friend, in your life, and my young friends, as you've got an exam before you?

An interview before you? Do you know something what Nehemiah did? You couldn't kneel down. But you asked God to help you.

Safe place to be in. And that has lingered with those of us that are old throughout our lives. Again, the way is made for Nehemiah to return with supply of their need.

Even the heart of the king is in the hand of God. He returns to Jerusalem. And at night, not making any outward show, quietly comes through to survey the scene of utter desolation.

[9 : 02] As we've just said, the walls, non-existent, broken down, gates, burned with fire. Few poor Jews.

What are they? How can they go forward? And yet, they go forward. And yet, they go forward. And yet, he speaks of the hand of God. Nehemiah speaks of the hand of God upon him.

And the dear people with him felt that to be with them. And in the faith of God, looking to God, trusting in God, acknowledging their helplessness, weakness, weariness, that they move forward to commence this great work.

Immediately, there are those that oppose it. Strong enemies that deride them. Would set the work at naught.

What do these feeble Jews? Ah, that's what the world says. Fancy you old people. And young people too. Bless them.

[10 : 19] Going to a prayer meeting in the week. Feeble people. My friend, some of us know the power of prayer. In our feeble state, what God does for us.

And in us. And through us. The work started. And if you have time, and are mind willing, read through the third chapter of this book.

And you will find. It may be, almost, you might be, I was going to say, put off. Because it seems full of names, full of trades, full of gates.

But there's much instruction in it. We read of those that would not bend their necks to the work. They would not dirty their hands.

My friend, I say this. If you love the house of God and the people of God, the smallest task, however low it is, is a privilege and an honour to be asked to perform it by the help of our God.

[11 : 36] And it is done in love. We read of another who earnestly repaid.

His very heart was in it. Now I know we don't want to build up flesh earnestness. But what we do pray is for spirituality in our prayers.

What we do seek for is wrestling prayer. What we do pray is for the poor sinners, as it were, to take the kingdom of heaven by violence.

And not to give up, but to pray on. We read again of a man with his daughters. We are saying there's nothing about that spiritually.

Surely. Well, my mind has been led in this way. Indeed, the women are not to speak in the church and so forth, which is quite right.

[12 : 39] But does that mean, said, there's no room for them in Zion? My friend, I look back in my life. I thank God for those mothers in Israel.

I think of one and another in my old chapel at Tombridge Wells. Godly women. Oh, my friend, they labor.

They labor in prayer. And in practice, too. Encouraging the young. And guiding them. Praying for them. Supporting the dear pastor.

I just come to my mind. In fact, I've mentioned to my sister this afternoon in her memory. We heard a dear member of the church. She's a very humble soul. No gracious ability. Ah, but spiritual.

And dear pastor had been away preaching for about ten days. And when he got back on his desk in the vestry, it was, welcome home, pastor. Love, Bessie.

[13 : 38] Now, you said nothing in that at all. My friend, it meant much to the pastor. A cup of cold water. It didn't say a bag of gold.

A cup of cold water given. My dear friend, remember that. But we must hasten on. The work starts.

The enemy gets more derisive. Why? If a fox goes over that wall, it breaks the wall down. Look at these poor things, these people do.

What do we do? Nevertheless, we made our prayer against them and set a watch because of them. Watch and pray.

And if you look at the latter part of the, I think it's the 13th of Mark, toward the end of Mark, you'll find those three words come one after the other in the words of Jesus.

[14 : 44] Watch. Pray. Work. My friend, God deliver us from our sleepiness, indifference, and unconcerned.

At the same time, preserve us from presumption. We need constant prayer. And I feel I lack in it. Lord, stir me up.

Breathe prayer into my soul. And so, despite much opposition, and there you read that they had to have their sword in one hand and their tool in another, but my friend, gradually the work is done, and we read every man to his work.

Those that are Christians, believers, have a master. We serve our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

You may say, you've no ability. You're honest. You've no gift. Maybe. But my friend, what about prayer?

[16 : 05] What about asking God to help you? You see, oh friend, oh, I think of, okay, so I just think of one in a little chapel, oh, miles away from here, and the dear woman, the old lady there, no gift, no talent.

Her duty was to bring water for the minister for the pulpit. And at the end of the service, I had to be the last one in the chapel, and she was there, and I just said, oh, just remind you, the water in the pulpit left there.

She said, yes, I know, but there was something she said, the way she said it. I said, I believe you love this place. Her eyes were filled with tears.

That's reality, friend. You little ones in Zion, and I'm one of you, but I say this, don't despair.

Pray God help me. I think of one of my young members years ago, speaking to a bereaved person who was ever so down, and she quoted a scripture, and do you know, that was made such a blessing?

[17 : 24] Who could tell? Well, the opposition increases, and then they move to a different way, as we've read in your hearing.

From open opposition and violence, they seek while. Like the devil, he'll knock you down one way, and he'll, as it were, dangle the love bait of the flesh, and last of your flesh, the other way.

let us meet, in the plain. Let us talk this over, four times. Then they sent an open letter, that meant everybody could see what they'd written, accusing it near him, of that, which is, of course, false.

But he said, no. He could see, that there was a trap. And, shall, he, he said, let me just turn to it, that I might, name it accurately, when, as they came there, and he said, I cannot come down.

That's what he did. He said, I am doing a great work, therefore, I cannot come down. What does that mean?

[18 : 52] What it does not mean. Full of pride, self-sufficiency, the big I. No. No.

What does it mean? It means, by God's help, that work I'm doing, I'm not giving that up. Those blessed truths, that are dear to my soul, I'm not parting with them.

I'm not coming down. I come down in my spirit, I would be humble, but I would be firm, and stand fast.

I do not want any intrusion, in serving God, of secular means, to attract the people, the ministry, as far as the ministers, can it, preach the word, the instant, in season, and out of season.

And you that hear, you will say, pastor, preacher, preach, preach, preach. and you want the truth.

[20 : 03] You don't want to be amused. Oh, my friend, the days are so, think of a soul, think of a soul, on the borders of hell. Now you say, but God will save that soul, if it's his purpose.

I know it. Does that mean to say, that we don't have any exercise, or concern about that soul? Well, it has pleased God, through the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.

And God is pleased to use this means, under his blessing, under the power of the Spirit, in the conversion of sinners.

And that conversion may come, in a way, unexpected, it may come suddenly, maybe in a word. A young man, that was a young lad, left home, and got white out of far away, and yet one night, there is on a Sunday night, going with his friends, to enter the path of evil, and one of them just said, where are we going?

Just like that. Like you might say, well, as you were on holiday, you might say, where are we going today? Where are we going? God's arrow, laid hold on, I'm going to hell.

[21 : 16] There's his confession. Wonderful. So, my friends, I say here, they say, I'm not coming down.

Then they say, come into the temple, again, with a desire to say, but there, the work goes on. And we have just read, in your hearing, in this chapter, chapter, that in, the, the, the, the, 50 and 2 days, the impossible, was wrong, because God was with us.

If God be for us, who can be against us? My friends, so, the work, was done. They perceived, this work, doesn't say, wrought by Nehemiah, man of God, constantly praying, Lord, remember me, gather you in, my dear friend.

You say, I know what that prayer is, I need it, I pray constantly. What do we mean by it? What we don't mean, is that God forgets, never forgets, but what we do know, is that the eye of the Lord, is upon them, that fear him, remember me, and grant me, Lord, a token, that thine eye, is upon me, thy help, is given me, thy, everlasting arms, are underneath me.

They perceived, that this work, was wrought, of our, God. I want now, and I don't want to take this, out of setting, but, I want to look at this, from one or two angles, on this Thanksgiving day.

[23 : 11] Most of all, just briefly, creation. Man denies it. Speaks of evolution, speaks of thousands of years, big bangs, and all the rest of it.

I believe, God's word, this work, was wrought, of our God, and who, but those, that are spiritually, blind, cannot see it.

As we behold, the wonders of creation, as we, look up, into the stars, and see, the, power of God, and, that wonderful word, in Genesis, chapter one, he, he, he, made, the stars, also.

Just that. That which, no man can number, the power, of our God, upholdeth all things, by the word of his power.

And as we see, the seasons come and go, as we see, the sun rise, and the sun set, as we see, the phases of the moon, that man, can enter, into your diary, as I've just got, my next year's diary, and it tells me, when the next, full moon will be, in say, in the month of May.

[24 : 41] Why can they say that? Because it's God. Man can't touch it. God never fails.

God never fails. I read, in one of my diaries, years ago, not only just said, for example, the full moon would be, at 20 past 8, it'd be, at 8 o'clock, it'd be 20 past 8, for the minute.

So I suppose, like that is just for, actually, fully, I'm no expert on it, I don't know, but there it is. It's the hand, of God.

We could go on much, on the word, of creation, is, the work, of his hands, upholding, and yet, wonderful, as this creation is, one day, heaven and earth, shall pass away, but my word, shall not, pass, away.

This work, was wrought, of, our, God. Whether we stand, by the sea, or whether we, are in the prairies, or whether we, stand by the, walking mountains, as I think of my own journeys, or whether I go, over the sea, to Singapore, where I was in the war years, at one time, my friend, all speakers have got, and I should never forget, on those great oceans, those words, of the psalmist, even there, shall thy hand, lead me, and thy right hand, shall hold me.

[26 : 26] My dear young people, and older ones too, you just think that out. Many of you will have heard me say this, many times, but some will not have heard it.

It was years ago, when my, uh, youngest daughter was quite little, about three years old, four years old, and the others were on the sun, and I want to join them, and the rocks, slippery rocks, not very high, but slippery.

You say, well, nothing to worry about at all, father's there, wait a minute. If I said to her, now look, that's the path, you can go that. That's not enough.

I'll leave it to you, to think it out. Why? If I said to her, now look, I will go in front of you, and you just follow me. That is not enough.

Why? she might fall. She needed me, she needed me with her, needed holding her hand.

[27 : 33] Now, I'm a father, I'm, might fall, but my God is God. for the Lord, thy God, hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, fear not, I will help thee.

We perceive, this world, and as in creation, I think of providence, now mingling with this, divine care, and protection, God's people, should speak to the generation, following of those answers, the prayer, at those times, when you were in dire danger, when you didn't know, what you were going to do, how you were going to come through, how you were filled with fear, and the Lord appeared for you, and it was the hand of God, God.

Oh, speak it, tell it to the generation, following. Tell them of those times, when you were in poverty, telling you, when they didn't know, when the father was out of work, maybe, when you didn't know, how you were going to meet, your accounts, and so forth, and who, the Lord sent that money, through the post, as a dear soul, once told me, they had nothing to eat, and then the dear father, went down, and a large, pheasant, I think it was, flew right into his arms.

God sends them, you know. God takes care. The brook may dry up, but God won't. You perceive this work, it wrought of our God.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. My dear old pastor, you say, well, if they don't, nobody will. My friend, it's time to speak more of God.

[29 : 21] God. Then again, come now, as we look at this world, the work was wrought, of our God.

We come, to consider this, as the hymn, speaks of, that one strange work, exceeds them all.

God, we behold a cross. We can see three, on that, on crosses, together, but we look at the center cross.

Who is this one, that is marked out, by wicked men, as the worst of all, that are hanging there, the center cross?

God, my friend, it is God. You say, God. Yes. Jesus, the Son of God.

[30 : 23] But, Jesus, in that body, prepared for him, as I've often spoken, and named it, it's so dear to my soul.

God, because, deity cannot die, and deity cannot bleed, deity cannot suffer, but that, united with a body, and yet, not a body of sin, because, that would make an atonement, for my sin.

It had to be pure, it had to be holy, untainted, by the Adam fall, it had to be, spotless, a life, of spotless purity, every word uttered, holy and pure, every thought, every deed, and here, my friends, is the one, who came to do this work, what is that work?

wish ye not, that I must be, about my father's business, to come, to die for poor sinners, to lay down my life, why did Jesus, have to do this?

I say that, very reverently, no other way, of salvation, no provision, could be made, on earth, with the wonders, of that creation, that I very feebly, and briefly, noted with you, this afternoon, could provide, a sacrifice, all those, beasts, on the Jewish altars, could never, wash away sin, it meant, ceremonial acceptance, but never, washed away sin, if you want, a proof of that, I don't think, you want it, but I give it to you, the first born, in Egypt, where, their life, was preserved, because blood, of the lamb, was sprinkled, on the doorpost, and when God says, when the angel, passes over, I will pass, over you, but look, at that number, that was saved, then, in their body, that perished, in sin, in the wilderness, journey, there were those, that openly, rebelled, against God, there were those, where the earth, opened up, and swallowed them up, there were even, the two sons, of Aaron, that had been, on the mount, with Moses, and seen, a little, of the glory, of God, that filled, with drink, and offered, strange fire, and the fire, came down from heaven, and slew them there, and those, that murmured, against the,

[33 : 28] Lord, over manna, and the servants, bit, and much people, of Israel, die, my dear friends, it makes us tremble, oh, I say, what, does the blood, of Christ, mean to you, is it, nothing to you, or ye, who pass by, this, was, wrought, of, our God, the dear, Savior, has done it, and, when, he had, suffered, those, hours, of darkness, drunk, the cup, of wrath, the sword, smiting, the shepherd, we read, he cried, triumphantly, not a whisper, as a dying man, but triumphantly, it is, finished, the work, is done, and, that work, was the full, salvation, redemption, of all,

God's, dear, people, that will be, found, in glory, at last, and, as such a redemption, that they are, redeemed, the price is paid, ransom price is paid, the blood, is shed, the fountain, is open, the way, of pardon, because, you may say, how do I know, that, the Holy Father, is satisfied, with that, finished work, it is, because, beloved, that, Christ, rose again, from the dead, and, thereby, revealing, to us, the full, satisfaction, of the, blood of Christ, and, that, death, itself, is, the sting, is removed, the grave, is robbed, of its victory, you see, if Christ, be not risen, we are yet, in our sin, death, death, would claim us, the grave, would hold us, but, because,

Christ, has died, and risen again, and ascended, to glory, he's the head, of the church, he's the, uh, uh, first fruit, entered glory, and so, his people, who, for whom he, thus died, shall be with him, forever, and ever, perceived, this work, was wrought, of our God, even the centurion, said, surely, this is, certainly, this is, the son of God, but now, what does this mean, to us, does it, give you, an exercise, does it, give you, a great concern, beloved, as to, where, you stand, can you, think of, dying, outside, that blood, can you, think of, standing, before that, great, white throne, in all your sin, without, a shelter, are you, building on the sand, are you, saying, because you, come to chapel, and God bless you, and doing that, don't you, stop doing that, but you know, that won't save your soul, there's a work, to be performed, personally, in your heart, if you're, to reach heaven,

I don't know, if I'm sounding severe, I don't want to sound severe, these things, are so solemn, we mustn't, water them down, we have souls, before us, eternity, the great judgment day, we've got to warn, and my friend, may God, it's sound of warning, today, but I say, what a mercy, you see, a work is performed, what is that, who works it, the Holy Spirit, and because, there's a time appointed, when those, whose names, are in that book, that in, their heart, a great work, will be begun, a miracle, will be performed, spiritual life, where death reigned, light, where darkness, has been, liberty, where there's been bondage, Christ, now made precious, where, it's only been known, by name, may be admired, as an example, but never saw, or never loved, and this, breath of life, will be manifest, in the cry, for mercy, in a drawing, power, though, at first, you may feel,

I dare not go, how can I go, to the Holy God, a sinner like me, and yet, that same, conviction power, draws you, and attracts you, and you say, ah, if ever a sinner, needs saving, it's me Lord, I love to think, of that prayer, we often, use it, God be merciful, to me a sinner, if ever, there's a sinner, on this earth, that needs mercy, Lord, it's me, me, me, unworthy, me, let thy mercies, come also unto me, oh Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word, a fling, to the cross, a turning, from the ways, of the world, a cry, for mercy, a looking, to the Savior, and hanging, on what he said, and he's the blessing, and the, of the gift, of precious faith, that looks, to the Savior, runs, to the Savior, loves, the Savior, clings, to the dear,

[39 : 27] Redeemer, and perceive, that this work, was wrought, of our God, is it well, with your soul, the work, be gone, blessed be God, it will be performed, it will be, finished work, it will indeed, but then, I want to come, to another point here, they perceive, that this work, was wrought, of our God, I don't know, your exercise, I don't know, when, the last time, you witnessed, a baptizing service, and is it, not time, that there, there should be, those, should be, coming, to speak, of Jesus, to make, an open, profession, of what, is so dear, to their soul, and they, dare not, deny it, Lord, it is done, as thou hast, commanded, and yet, there is room, you say,

I'd come, with fear, and trembling, there's, the right way, to come, and no barrier, at all, I don't say that, unfeelingly, so mark, in your favor, but my friend, if anybody says, I'll go, and I'll soon put things, right in the church, you wait, stop, pray, for humility, but, why do I have to tell, the church, why can't I be baptized, without that, are you so ashamed, of Jesus, do you do well, to be silent, if somebody, saw your house, on fire, and plucked you, from that burning, house, saved your life, somebody, saw you in the sea, floundering there, about to drown, drew you out, of that water, would you be silent, you would, you would never, stop thanking, that person, my dear friend, you may then, come back, to this point, what are the church, doing then, you say, well they're listening, they're going to, test me, well, in one way, it is right, and you will, acknowledge it's right, they want to feel, and rightly so, that there's a work, of grace, they're not, they'll pull you, to pieces,

I've never, known it, in my life, but, the purpose is this, to give glory, to God, and that, as a dear friend, is speaking, of this work, this great work, in their heart, that, one says, well, I know a little, of that, now, I does not mean, that every testimony, will be, just, like yours, but there'll be, something there, that will, warm your heart, warm your heart, that the church, of God, puts forth, the arms, I'm not speaking, literally, but in love, to gather, that person in, it's fellowship, it's union, we're walking, the same path, come in, thou blessed, of the Lord, wherefore standest thou, without, because, we perceive, that this work, was wrought, of our God, further, in life's journey, when, there is, we look for it, don't we, wonder, where we stand in it, growth in grace, but how good it is, to see, sanctification, of trial, when you see, gold come out, of the fire,

I know a case, I shall not say, where, or hint it, where the amount, of being through, deep, physical affliction, and, sickness, and trials, used to be, rather, hot headed, I see, such a change, good for me, that I've been afflicted, the work of God, my friend, and that work of God, sometimes, is pruning the branch, sometimes, causing you to pass, through the trial, of your faith, into a furnace, into the valley, of the shadow, of death, but has there not, been a blessing, in it, I prove, in my own little experience, some of the darkest paths, I prove, the nearness, of my God, now I might be speaking, to somebody, that's in a dark path, and as yet, they have not proved it, wait, don't despair, the novel, come in his own time, remember, and I nearly, went to preach for me, but it seemed to be, taken from me, about Paul, in that great,

Euroclan tempest, when for many, days, and nights, neither sun, nor moon, appeared, it went on, and on, and on, and yet, God had said, Paul, you're to preach for me, it wrote, and Paul, obviously, was filled with fear, because there appeared, that angel from heaven, saying, fear not, Paul, then what a change, I believe God, it will be surely, as God has spoken to me, and so it was, and yet, there wasn't light, when the Lord was in the boat, there wasn't a sudden, stilling of the water, that the storm, was still there, still the wind, was blowing, still, dangers, of grace, but God, has spoken, so, beloved, we perceive, this work, was brought about God, perceive it too, that when we see, the proud, nature brought down, to a spirit, of humility, when we see, a glimpse, of Christ, oh, put thy gracious, hands on me, and make me, all,

[46 : 22] I ought to be, they are, live witness, of the power, of his grace, and so on, right through, to death, and oh, death, where is thy sting, oh, grave, where is thy victory, so, we read, and I must come, to a close, of this meditation, as we read, and I perhaps, return to that, of the thanksgiving, all, all in their appointed place, all blessing, and praising God, nothing to themselves, and may, our spirit, this day, be filled, with praise, all flowing, out in love, humility, of spirit, and worship, before our God, of praise, unto him, that have loved us, and washed us, from our sins, in his own, blood, and my friend, these people, these saved sinners,

I'm going to just mention, something, it's come to my mind, perhaps there's some, so here, says you mentioned, about the book of life, and you're troubled, with that, my dear friend, God, has set, in his word, the mark, of those, whose names, are in that book, for example, the Lord, hath appeared of old, and saying unto me, yea, I have loved thee, with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness, have I drawn thee, now that everlasting love, is the assurance, your name is in that book, and the proof of it, he'd drawn you, to the Savior, all that the Father, giveth me, shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise, cast out, all that the Father, giveth in that book, shall come, God's work, and they will never, be cast out, this man receiveth sinners, shall not God, avenge his own elect, that cry unto him, day and night, the mark, of those whose names, are in that book of life, these are they, that have come out, and shall come out, of great tribulation, washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb, and surely, when heaven, and it will be reached, the righteous, shall hold on its way,

Lord, and this is the great which, and all that Venus, do we seem like, when heaven to the Father, we'll be here ,