

The Great Work

His kingdom shall know no end, and His glory shall know no bounds. Oh, what a day to look forward to. Hallelujah! And yet we are called today to taste of that kingdom and that glory that is to come. We thank the Lord Jesus that through His great love He has brought us into His kingdom, and He is going to bring us into His glory. What a Savior! What a One to be joined to!

Let's pray:

Lord, we are so grateful that You have included us, that You have considered us, and You did not cast us away. You redeemed us; You saved us. You brought us into Yourself into an inheritance incorruptible. Lord, You are us preparing for the day of Your kingdom and Your glory when it will fill all the earth, all the kingdoms of the world and the worlds to come. Lord Jesus, it is going to be a glorious time, and we want to taste of that glory today. We want to taste of what You are doing in this last hour. Lord, be with us. We always depend on Your Holy Spirit to clear the air of all resistance, to bring us under the power of Your blood that we might enter Your presence and hear Your word. Lord, lift us out of any lethargy or tiredness that might be upon us today. We stand in the good of Your resurrection and Your life today as we come to hear Your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I have two verses that I want to begin with out of the book of Nehemiah. We all know that this is the theme for the conference, and I just wanted to share a brief word this morning concerning being prepared as we come into this.

Nehemiah 6:3: "I am doing a great work. Why should the work cease?"

Nehemiah 6:9: "For they all made us afraid, saying, 'Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that the work not be done.'"

We see in Nehemiah a great work, and we also see the great resistance to that work, the great warfare against that work being accomplished. This account of Nehemiah is not about the nation of Israel in general. You may remember that the nation of Israel had gone into Babylonian captivity for seventy years, and the nation of Babylon was overthrown by the Persians. In the year of Cyrus the king, he gave the Jewish people, who were in slavery, the right to return to Jerusalem at the urging of Nehemiah. They were to rebuild the wall that we refer to as the wall of testimony.

Ninety-one years earlier 50,000 Jews had returned through the leadership of Zerubbabel. These were a remnant who came out of Babylon to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. They represented about four percent of the total number of Jews in captivity. Now it is ninety-one years later, and they had built the house, the temple, and they restored the priesthood, but the wall remained broken down; it had not been completed.

So this story is not about the nation of Israel in general. They were still in captivity under the Persians in Babylon which means 'confusion.' Remember the tower of Babel which they tried to build, but the Lord brought confusion to the languages. And spiritually they were in spiritual confusion. They could not go to Jerusalem, but they still wanted to honor the Lord and remember Him in some way. So They set up the system of synagogues. It was not the Lord's perfect plan by

any means; it was a substitute for the temple. However, there were two main flaws with the synagogues. It was not the place where the Lord had put His name, where He was going to stand behind His people, where He was going to dwell in the midst of His people. The temple was where He would dwell among His people. We know that all through the desert He was in the tabernacle of testimony where His presence was seen and known. So God's heart was in Jerusalem not the synagogue. They had become satisfied with that, but the Lord was not satisfied. They were content with that. Basically, they had become religious, and they were still in spiritual captivity.

The Remnant Who had Returned

This story of Nehemiah is about the remnant who had returned to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, the place where God had set His name, the place where God would be satisfied to dwell, the place where God's heart was pleased. They returned to worship Him in His way, under His ordinances and with the priesthood. They had rebuilt the temple by this time, and the Lord could now dwell among them in that temple. Praise the Lord! They also had the lamb sacrifice which they could not do in the synagogues.

Brothers and sisters, do you realize how important the Lamb's sacrifice is? The only sacrifice that satisfies God was the sacrifice of His only Son which the sacrifice of the lamb pointed to. They could not do that in the synagogue. God had told them that they could only offer the sacrifice in His temple in Jerusalem. And now they had returned to do just that.

A Dwelling Place for the Lord

We are not here to meet our desires nor are we to here to satisfy our conscience. We certainly do not want to just be a religious people. We have come out to gather in this way in order to please our Lord, to have a place where He would choose to dwell in our midst, a place where He could put His name, a habitation for the Lord, for God where He can be present among us. That is one of the things I look so forward to on Sunday morning, and that is the sense of corporately gathering together in the presence of the Lord. Of course, we can experience His presence in our individual lives, but I have to say that I have never experienced it more than when we have gathered around the table, and we thank Him for it.

It is the place that is built upon the chief corner stone which is Christ. That is the house which we wanted to build built upon. It is built out of His life, that life which comes from the chief corner stone. It is built to be an expression of His life, to be a testimony to Him. It is a place where He is the Head of His people, the Head of His body. Therefore, we offer ourselves individually to Him to be Head of our lives, each one of us. We do not want a distant relationship with the Lord which many are satisfied with. We want Him to actually be Lord of our lives, to be Head of our lives, to be over our lives both individually and corporately to hold Him up as Head, to live together as one unit and one spirit in one love, maintaining the unity of the spirit that has been given to us. We are to be a city on a hill, a testimony under His government, a life to all around us and to the world.

They had restored the priesthood. They came back in order to worship Him. They set up the Levitical order, that priestly order so they could serve God in the way that satisfied Him and not just satisfy their conscience.

Brothers and sisters, we are called. That is why we came out. We wanted to be priests to our God because the Scripture says that everyone is a priest. I was recently at another little gathering, and I was going to share on the Lord's table. A brother came up to me and said, "Jerry, there is one in our midst that has real trouble unless an ordained person serves the table." And I said, "Okay."

I said, "Praise the Lord, we are raised up a spiritual house, a spiritual priesthood. We are all priests. When you look at that table, what do you see? Do you see a cup? Do you just see the bread? Is that what it is? Or when you look at it, do you see the Lord Jesus Christ? That is what faith lays hold of as the Lord Jesus Christ, the One whose body was broken and His blood was shed. We can enter into that meaning, that the essence of the table is in faith, and we are priests before God. There is no person in between us and the Lord. Thank the Lord for that. We worship Him. We come to worship Him. There are many reasons, but we want to please Him; we want Him to feel comfortable in our midst. We want Him to be satisfied. Of course, it satisfies us, but our motive is that He might be satisfied when we come together.

We meet together to pray. We pray as one man together with one mind in the unity of the spirit. We desire to pray not just for things that we need or want or desire which is okay, but when we come together, we are to stand for the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven. That is what we have been called to do, to stand with Him, to work with Him in bringing about His great eternal purpose.

Our brother shared on Isaiah 45:11 last Wednesday night: "Thus says the Lord, 'Ask of me things concerning my sons and the work of my hands; command ye me.'"

How can you issue a command unless you know the will of God? So when we know the will of God, we can stand for His will to be done. That is the work that we have been called to in prayer.

Matthew 18 speaks of binding and loosing which is authoritative prayer. That means that we are not just asking for things. This is what we have been called to. This is all a part of this great work that Nehemiah was involved in. The great work of Nehemiah is the great work of today. It is to finish and complete that testimony.

What is the Great Work?

You might ask: "Just what is this great work?" Ephesians tells us that God has an eternal purpose: "It is to gather up everything in Christ." What does that mean? That means a day is coming in which we will walk into eternity, and in that day it will only be Christ. Everything that is not Christ or of Christ has been eliminated. It has been put away, and only the things of Christ will remain. That has to be effective in our lives personally now and in our church life now. However, we are coming to that day when it will all be completed. It is the great work. It is the complete full manifestation of the glory of Christ. That is the great work, the full manifestation of all the worlds of the glory of Christ, of His greatness, of His Person, of His magnificence, of His beauty, of His nature, of His character, of His love, of His grace, of His holiness, of His purity. This is the great work that we have been called into.

The Lord gave the apostle John a glimpse of this future glory, and John tried his best with all the limits that he had of vocabulary and understanding to describe this glory which was to come. And when he saw the glory in Revelation 21-22, what did he see? This is at the end of time, and the kingdom age is now over. Satan and his followers have been thrown into the fire, and we are walking in eternity future.

What did John see? He said, "I see a holy city coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her Husband. It will be a glorious time. You know, weddings are glorious. Life afterwards might not be so glorious, but it is a glorious time. We will enter into that glory which will never fade. That glory will never go away; it will be forever and ever. We will be a part of it, we will be in it, and we can experience it.

John sees this holy city, and it is described as a city full of light and like jasper, clear as crystal. Jasper stands for life, and this city is full of life. There is the river of life running through it and the tree of life on both sides of the river. It speaks of the fulness of the life of Christ in this city. That is glory. It is all of gold, and gold is the nature of God. This is what he sees. He said that it is clear gold; it is pure gold, so pure that you can see through it. It is amazing how pure this gold is. It is all Christ. And it is a walled city. Now I looked into it a little bit and apparently this city is a 1500 mile cube—1500 miles square and 1500 miles high. That is the magnitude of this glory, and even that does not express the fulness, but it gives you a sense of the largeness. So we have a 1500 square mile wall around this city that is 220 feet high. The wall is a testimony; everything inside this wall is Christ. Everything outside of the wall cannot come in. That is why the wall of testimony is so important.

Remember the pearly gates that we always talk about. They have the names of the tribes of Israel on those twelve gates in the wall. That is the Old Testament saints, the ones who believe in the Lord. Not the ones who just follow the law but the ones who really believed in the Lord, believed in the sacrifices. Let me say it another way. Abraham was before the law; he was in the age of promise, and when he offered up Isaac, it says that he believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. These are the saints that will enter in, even those under the law, those who also laid hold of the promise.

The Wall of Testimony

Then we see that the wall has twelve foundations with the names of the apostles. This represents the church age. All who come out of this age who have been saved in Jesus Christ are part of this great wall of testimony. And I love this; the city is holy, all light, no spots, no wrinkles. That is for us individually as well. Can you imagine that! In that day, in your life personally, there will be no spot, no wrinkle, for the Lord will have taken care of all of that through His death on Calvary's cross and His ascension. There will be no sin, no death, and it says there will be joy unspeakable. Now it is one thing to have a moment of unspeakable joy; we may have had a few of those in our lives, but this speaks of continuous joy unspeakable because of the presence of the Lord. We have all been transformed at that point into His glory. When we see Him, we will be like Him.

The other thing is there will be no more self; isn't that wonderful?! No more flesh, no more sin nature; it is gone. I think that is so marvelous. We wrestle with that old sin nature all the time. How often it defeats us, but there will be none. This is the great work that we have been called into. This was God's intention when He created man, but we know that Adam fell. And it says in Romans that we all have fallen short of the glory of God. But praise the Lord through His salvation in Jesus Christ we can be put back into the place where we can be brought into His glory, transformed into His glory. Thank God! God was delayed, but He was not defeated in this great work.

There will be many sons to glory; so let's you and I be a part of that great city, that wall of testimony. And that brings me back to the remnant that I talked about before. Oh, what glory lies ahead. I wish the Lord could touch my own heart with that grasp of the glory in some small way that John had. He saw it, and it so affected him that he did his best to describe it to us.

The Broken Down Wall Around Jerusalem

As I said the temple and the priesthood at this time had been restored, but ninety-one years later the wall was still broken down. The wall had not been restored; it had not been built up. The gates were burned and open. In other words, what that means is that they were in a condition spiritually where the world could come in, where other things could come in, where things not of the Lord could come in, where the things of man could come in. We know there was one person in their midst who was really against this work, and he was living in the temple. Thank the Lord, Nehemiah had him kicked out, which was the thing to do. In other words, the purity had to come back.

What had happened to these people? Brothers and sisters, this is the remnant. These were the ones who wanted the Lord to be satisfied, but things had gone on for a long time now. The enemy was still pressing them; he was still discouraging them, he was still opposing them, and they had become a bit content, maybe passive, and some may have returned back to Babylon. It was just too much for them, and they did not hold out. They forgot what they had been called to. They forgot this great work.

A brother shared a word a couple of prayer meetings ago that was really on his heart, and it was simple. It was out of Psalm 106: "They soon forgot." When you read Psalm 106, you will see that the Lord brings them out, but then they begin to forget about the Lord. The enemy comes in then the Lord delivers them, and they go through this about five or six times. The Lord would restore them, and they would come back, but then they would forget the great things that God had done.

It is now ninety-one years later, and some had forgotten, but God had not forgotten. God wanted that wall to be completed. He needed it to be completed, and He was not just going to wave His hand and the wall would appear. He was going to do it through His people. He is going to have His testimony that He needed through His people. He was not just going to finish it with the wave of His hand which He could have done.

We are in the day when the wall needs to be completed. We left our religious captivity to return to serve Him and His purpose, to build His house, to restore the priesthood and to build

that wall of testimony. That is the great work. That is what needs to be completed. How important it is that He has included us in this work. He could do it without us, but He does not want to; He loves us too much. I believe the enemy used this pandemic to slow this work down, to keep us apart and to keep us at a distance. And then hopefully that we might begin to forget why we were coming together in the first place, to just be satisfied with zooming in or with staying home. He wants to cause us to forget. This morning I want us to remember what we are called to.

The purpose of the conference in the very beginning was raised up to make known this eternal purpose to God's people. It was to know that in this great work Christ was to be fully manifested in glory, and He was going to use the church as the vessel to do that. We were raised up that we might be matured into the bride of Christ. That was the purpose of the conference.

Today we have the privilege of being a part of this great work. We also have the privilege of serving at this upcoming conference. And let me say this again: our purpose for the conference is that this great work might be made known among His people. Many people know they are saved. Thank the Lord for that. Many people love the Lord and want to follow the Lord, but some still do not know what that great work is. They probably think that their salvation is the great work. It is a part of the great work, but it is not all of it. This great work of having the testimony finally completed lies ahead of us. We want to use the conference to encourage our brothers and sisters, encourage all to stand fast and to rise up and complete this great work. That is what we are hoping for this year.

The Great Resistance

I have spoken of the great work, and now I want to talk a few minutes about the great resistance. Some might call it the great warfare because this warfare has been going on ever since God created this earth, and then Satan came in after Adam and Eve were put in the garden, and Adam fell. So there is a great resistance to this great work.

When I was in my late twenties, I first discovered that God had an eternal purpose. That tremendously affected me. It really captured my heart. I was thrilled to know that the church was not just an organization, but it was as our brother Stephen said, "The church is an organism, a living thing with Christ as the Head, and fellowship with Him in a living way." That was thrilling to me. That initial thrill over the years may have faded some, but one thing has not faded, and that is the passion for what I have seen, a passion that the Lord be satisfied, that He have His testimony that He desires. Maybe the thrill of the early days are gone, but is the passion still there? Remember the prophet said, "I tried to hold up, I tried to keep this down. I was through with it, but there was a fire in my bones and I could not let it go." That is the way it is. There are times in this battle that we want to let it go. I confess that. But there is a fire there; there is a passion down there. May the passion never fade. May the passion really grip our hearts once again.

There are attacks on us by the enemy from without which could be a lot of things. It can be sickness, diseases, obstacles that he puts in our way, but there is also the enemy within, our own

self, a desire for our pleasure, our desire to rule our own lives. This self-life is a great enemy to us as well as Satan. It makes us weary and forgetful.

In Daniel 7:25 it says, "One of the tactics of the enemy in the last days is to wear out the saints of the most High." Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever been worn out? That is his great resistance in us. We should be aware of it. Now if you are working twenty-four hours a day and not stopping, you are going to wear out anyway, but there is a wearing out that the enemy puts on us and I think it comes not so much from physical labor but from mental anguish, from mental issues, from dealing with problems, family, work, and all of these things bringing constant pressure.

Then we have the enemy who is constantly accusing us. Now I know that at different times we have experienced his accusations. He wants to weight us down with accusations. He says, "Who are you? You are talking about being a testimony to the Lord. Who are you? Who do you think you really are? You are worthless. You are not able; you have already tried, but you cannot do it." These are accusations of the enemy.

In Revelation 12 we find a group of people who have overcome the accuser of the brethren. And I want us to be aware as we go into this conference, as we go through the remaining days that we have, the accuser of the brethren is not going to let up on you or me or this fellowship. He is going to accuse us. Sometimes we give him grounds to accuse us, don't we? It might be sin or we do not follow what he wants us to do, we do not obey Him. We often give the enemy great ground to keep us under oppression. Then there are times when you sense this great weight of accusation, and you just feel so useless, so unworthy. It is the enemy's accusation.

How do We Overcome?

What do we do? What did those overcomers do? It says, "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." It was faith. They really believed in the power of the blood not only in the matter of salvation but as a weapon against our enemy. He cannot come in where the blood is. They believed in the power of the blood, and they needed the blood every day. They depended on it. None of us are perfect; we need the blood, but we need to believe it. Once we say, "Lord, I come under Your blood, I feel the accusation. I know I am being turned away, but I plead Your blood over me, at least that is what I do. And thank the Lord, the oppression lifts and I am so thankful.

"Who are you to restore the testimony? What right do you have to be involved in this great work? You are not really much." I have heard them all, and I have come under many of them, I have to confess. But there is only one way through, and that is faith and the blood of the Lamb.

It says, "They gave the word of their testimony. In other words, not only did they plead the blood, but they said, "Look, Jesus is Lord. This work is going to get accomplished. The Lord will use me. I testify of His Lordship in my life."

Then it says, "They loved their lives not unto death." That basically means they are willing to submit their self-life under the cross, and instead of satisfying themselves, they wanted to satisfy the Lord.

Lazarus' Condition

As I was thinking of the attacks of the enemy I could not help but think of Lazarus. What was Lazarus' condition? He was dead. Have you ever felt dead? I do not mean physically but spiritually dead? They had wrapped him in grave clothes. He was dead and bound in grave clothes.

You know, I listen to the news, as most of us do. And every time I listen here lately I feel the grave clothes beginning to wrap around me. It is heavy. The enemy uses the condition of this world, the things that we know that are contrary to Christ, and it disturbs me. But I am sure it disturbs God much more, and He is going to deal with it all. Thank the Lord, for those who do not respond to His grace, His judgment will take care of it. But there is that sense of death, and the enemy wants to keep us in that as much as possible. So he brings things into our lives, situations to bring in this sense of death, the pressures of life. He oppresses us. Have you ever felt like somebody was just sitting on your spirit, holding you down. It is the enemy. The whole atmosphere that we live in is an atmosphere of death. I do not want to be all doom and gloom, but we are to be a testimony in the midst of this atmosphere that Jesus is Lord. Our spirits can be dulled, and we feel dead. We even come to feel that spiritually we are just irrelevant. I have been in similar situations.

What was the answer? What did the Lord say to Lazarus? He spoke this to Lazarus: "Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus was in grave clothes, but thank the Lord, Lazarus responded.

You cannot get out of that condition by hoping that one day it will go away. You cannot be passive. You have to stand your ground, stand up and fight, and you have to mean business about being delivered from this condition.

Romans 13:11: "It is time that we should be aroused out of sleep, aroused out of that sleepy condition."

Verse 12: "Let us cast away the works of darkness, those grave clothes, and put on the armor of light." Often we find ourselves yielding to this condition, to this atmosphere, and bound with grave clothes. I want to challenge those who may be struggling with this. Do you hear the words of the Lord today to come forth? Come forth out of that condition, and maybe your heart will be stirred if the Holy Spirit speaks to you. Do you hear His voice? Do you hear His challenge? You need to hear His voice, "Come forth." And you may begin to have your heart stirred, and say, "Okay, Lord." But you find yourself still bound with those grave clothes. What are you going to do? You stand in faith; you stand on the ground of the victory of Jesus Christ. That is what you do.

We were encouraged this morning to meditate on Psalm 42. In Psalm 42:9 it says, "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

V. 11 says, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the help of my countenance and my God."

That is faith. He is saying, "Yes, I am in this condition. The enemy is oppressing me, but my hope is in God; my faith is in Him. I will praise Him. He is the help of my countenance."

When we are down and out, our countenance drops, but once we see the Lord, when we look off unto Jesus, our countenance changes because the life within us is stirred. You have to mean business, brothers and sisters. You just cannot lay back and take it.

Christ Overcame the Enemy

Colossians 2:15: "He (Christ) having spoiled principalities and powers made an open show of them triumphing over them." At the cross the Lord Jesus overcame the enemy. You think about that. When He was on the cross and went into those three hours when the presence of God lifted from Him, and He cried out, "My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken me?"

That was the hour of His greatest temptation, the hour of His own great faith when He stood in the face of the enemy and hordes of demonic angels were constantly saying, "Where is Your God now? Who are You to stand against the power of death? God has forsaken You." But the faith of the Lord Jesus overcame, and He was able to say, "It is finished! Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." He had come out of that power of death that had gripped Him for three hours; He overcame it. But it says, "In baptism we have been baptized into His death, into His burial, and into His resurrection." What does that mean? It means spiritually you have been joined with the Lord Jesus, and His work on the cross is that He defeated death; He overcame death. He did not succumb. His faith held up. And the faith that you and I live by today is not our faith; it is the faith of the Son of God who is in you. It is His faith. Your faith will never stand up to the accusation and power of death and the enemy. But His faith will, and we depend on His faith in us. Remember the man who said, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." It is the Lord's faith.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20). He did not say, "I live by my faith, but by the faith of the Son of God. This is so important. Do you believe you have that faith in you? That is the faith that we believe in and exercise.

His Victory is our Victory

His victory is our victory. His triumph is our triumph. It is not that we are victorious; it is that He was victorious, therefore we are victorious. Faith has to always lay hold of the truth in Jesus Christ because that is what delivers us. And one more time, I want to say that it is not our faith. His faith rises up and takes the victory, and the grave clothes fall off. The air becomes clear, and you are back on victory ground.

But the Lord said one other thing to Lazarus and those around him. "I am the resurrection and the life." Not only do the grave clothes have to come off, but you have to possess the life of Christ, and it is not just life like our life; it is resurrection life. It is life that has gone through death, and it is the life that can face anything. It is the life that will make it through. He is the resurrection and the life. Mary and her sister said, "Lord, we know you are going to raise Lazarus in the last day." And it says that the Lord groaned. I think He was groaning over the fact that they did not see that He was there now, and where He is there is resurrection life. When He comes on the scene, there is resurrection life. We need that resurrection life to make it through. Praise the Lord.

So as we face the conference and our life that lies ahead of us until He returns. May the reality of this great work that we are involved in touch our hearts with a new passion. It is the testimony of Christ Himself, and there is a great resistance, a great warfare, but we can be victors in that.

Let us pray:

Lord, we come to You today. It is on my heart of how I needed reminding of this great work to renew the passion in my own heart for this great work. Lord Jesus, that You could be pleased, that You could be satisfied, that You could have that house of habitation, You could have that priestly worship that You desire. You could have that intercessor vessel that You need in prayer, that You would have the testimony of Christ that will bring about His glory. Your full glory lies ahead of us. Lord, I thank You that You have shown us something of what You are doing. I also want to thank You for Your Word that shows us how to resist this adversary of ours. Your Word says to resist him and he will flee. We want to stand on Your Word today as we go into this time that lies ahead of us. We resist our adversary in the name of Jesus Christ. He will flee. Lord Jesus, we look to You this morning. I really pray that You will encourage all of our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.