

Nehemiah 4:1-23

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Date: 14 July 2013

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[0:00] One time there has been some movements back to Israel. About 90 years now they've been back in the land. And Nehemiah finds out from his brother that the wall has yet to be rebuilt around the city.

In fact, the king that he serves issued an edict 13 years prior to stop the building of said wall. As the inhabitants of the area, more than likely, Sambalat and Tobiah, that we're going to talk a bit about today, let him know what was happening in the land.

And he saw it as an affront to his kingship. And so he put a stop to the wall. But the fact that this wall had yet to be built really grieved Nehemiah. Because the glory of God was being belittled in this way.

The people of God's condition was the visible way in which God was praised in this day. And the fact that they were still living in a ruined city meant that Nehemiah's God didn't appear so great. And notice my careful wording. He didn't appear so great. And so Nehemiah was grieved by this and he prayed. We saw that in chapter 1. I introduced the Latin phrase to you sine qua non, without which nothing.

[1:10] He knew that if this work was going to get done, it had to be a movement of God. That he could not accomplish it on his own. And so he prayed. But even though he recognized that God's providence must come into play, God must be in control of what was going to happen, he planned.

So we saw that as well, that he set forth a plan that he could present to the king. And we saw then in the middle of verse 8 of chapter 2, And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

We see God bringing about this great work of bringing back together the people, using Nehemiah to go back to lead them. And so we talked last week about the actual work.

We looked at chapter 3, and I apologize to you for breaking a little bit from the flow of what's happening here. But we talked through chapter 3 of this great list of these men and women who worked hard to rebuild the wall.

And we talked about how it was that they did in fact work, and that they worked without regard to their positions, to their gender, their zip code. Some of them were from outlying cities.

[2:21] They did their fair share. You remember some of them did more than just a section of the wall. My favorite being a perfumer who built two sections of the wall. Or their skill sets.

These weren't masons. They carried out various tasks. Rulers and priests that worked on this wall. So we're going to look today at the very end of chapter 2, which we bounced over before, verse 19 and 20.

And then chapter 4. We're going to look at the way they worked in the face of opposition. It would be nice if we came to this point in the story.

They get to work. They get this mind for it. They see that the good hand of God is with Nehemiah and the work before them. And they strengthen their hands. And then the rest of the story we read, And they built a magnificent wall.

And it was wonderful. And that's the end of the story. It would be a nice way to read it. That would be an encouragement to me in my own life. I have a work that's been set before me. I'd kind of like the story to play out that way.

[3:24] Because that would mean that things are just going to go good. I've strengthened my hands. I'm ready to do the work God's putting for me. And it's just going to go really well. The story's going to go great in that way. But that's not what we see happening here.

They end up having to work in the face of great opposition. Remembering that they were motivated by providence. Chapter 2, verse 18.

Nehemiah reports the hand of my God that had been upon me for good. You remember that when God's people attempt to do God's work in His way, there will always be opposition.

This world hates the ways of God. So when God's people attempt to do God's work in His way, notice the careful wording there. Things can go real well for you sometimes if you're not doing things in God's way.

But when God's people attempt to do God's work in His way, there will always be opposition. My mind was drawn to 2 Timothy 3.12 where Paul wrote, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

[4 : 33] You remember as we're looking at this story, it's certainly a historical account. It's not an allegory. But we in some ways can take it allegorically for our own living.

We are now being built up into a temple, a holy habitation for God. And so the work before us is not to build a wall, to build buildings. The work before us is to build up the church.

To be holy and to bring about holiness in the lives of others. To be disciple-making disciples. And so 2 Timothy 3.12 comes together for us then.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Will face opposition. So let's read together.

I'm going to help us skip around just a little bit. Beginning in chapter 2, verse 19. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, What is this thing that you are doing?

[5 : 41] Are you rebelling against the king? Then I replied to them, The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build. But you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.

Now let's just pause there before we go to chapter 4. Firstly, I love the names of our antagonists in the story. Sanballat and Tobiah. I'm glad I get to say them over and over again this morning.

We see some other antagonists. They're the primary ones, but we also see Geshem here. Later in chapter 4, we see the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites all rise up against the work that's happening in Israel.

But pay a close attention before we move on to chapter 4 at the response, which I just love. Then I replied to them, The God of heaven will make us prosper.

By his providential hand, he will make us proper. And we his servants will arise and build. Flying in the face of their objection to the building.

[6 : 44] The God of heaven will make us prosper. We will arise and build. And he says to them, But you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.

Now it's likely that there were rulers in Jerusalem that were bowing to Sanballat and Tobiah. More than likely, the Techoites that we saw in chapter 3 that would not stoop to serve their Lord had a pact, had an agreement with Sanballat, and therefore they wouldn't serve the work of God.

Nehemiah is very careful to say to them, But you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem. Get out of the way. God and his people are rebuilding the wall.

Chapter 4. Bear with me. Now, when Sanballat heard that they were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews.

And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day?

[7 : 54] Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish and burned ones at that? Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, Yes, what are they building? If a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.

Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

So we built the wall, and all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. But when Sambalat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, the gaps were being closed, they were very angry.

And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. In Judah it was said, The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing.

There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall. And our enemies said, They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.

[9 : 11] At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, You must return to us. So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall in open places, I stationed the people by their clans with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.

When our enemies heard that it was known to us that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall. Each to his work. From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail.

And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.

And each of the builders had a sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, The work is great and widely spread and we are separated on the wall far from one another.

[10 : 21] In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us. So we labored at the work and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out.

I also said to the people at that time, that every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day. So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes.

Each kept his weapon at his right hand. Now in chapter 5, we see a little interjection and Kyle actually will be telling you a bit more about the work that's happening even as the work on the wall is taking place.

But then in chapter 6, we see some oppression that's brought against Nehemiah himself. Originally, I planned to go this far, but I chopped it this morning because it was just way too much.

But turn your attention to chapter 6, verses 15 and 16. So the wall was finished on the 25th day of the month.

[11 : 25] It lullid in 52 days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem. For they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

Join me in prayer. Father God, we thank you for your inspired word. This is a record of an event that happened many thousands of years ago.

But it was written for our encouragement today. I believe that you have brought all of us together today. And that you intend to speak to all of our hearts. And so I just ask that you will.

That you will show us how it is that the work before us, even in the face of opposition, can and will be completed. We praise you for your words to us.

That we have a glimpse, a window in to the mind of the Almighty. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So there are two types of opposition that took place here.

[12 : 27] And I want to kind of bring those to you. Firstly, physical opposition. We see chapter 4, verse 7 and 8. We see Sambalat and Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites. They hear that the progression is still happening.

Even though there's been some jeering, some making fun of, they are still beginning to build the wall. In fact, they're starting to close in the gaps of the wall. It's been completed to half of its height. And they become angry. And they plot together to come and fight against Jerusalem. There's this physical opposition that's presented before them.

What is their response to this? What is their response? They enter into, this is what we read through chapter 4, into a state of perpetual readiness.

They got prepared. They got ready for the fight that may come. In fact, in case you didn't catch it, we turn from the end of verse 14 to 15, they actually stood in the low gaps behind the wall, all of them ready to fight.

[13:27] They hear rumor that a fight is coming and they armed themselves and they got ready. They ceased building on the wall to stop and to fight. But in verse 15, when they heard that their enemies had heard that the plan had been confounded, that they had stood guard, that they knew they were coming, they go back to the work.

And they go back to the work in some very interesting ways. Nehemiah comes up with some brilliant plans for how they're going to work. Half of his servants stand guard while the other half are working.

Those that are working carry loads in such a way that they can carry a weapon in one hand and a load, and remember a load in this case is probably heavy stones and mortar and things to fill in, the gaps on the wall.

In the other hand, he has people standing by with all of the armaments they would need, the coat of mail, the things they wouldn't wear while they were working. They stood by holding on to those things so that if they needed them, they could drop what they were doing, put on the armor, and fight for the sake of the city.

He set up a plan for how they would rally together. They're spread out amongst this wall, this great parameter of the city Jerusalem. So he comes up with a plan to blow a trumpet and everybody to gather at that place.

[14:43] You even see record of the fact that he had everybody stay inside the city, not return to their homes outside of the city, but rest and stay inside in case they needed to fight at night. And that he even records in verse 23 that they didn't take off their clothes, which was not for the sake of grossness, but just to let us know that they were always ready.

They never disrobed to sleep. They always kept ready to fight and to work. For 52 days, they did this type of thing. So they got ready in the state of perpetual readiness.

But before that, before they ever did that, what do we see them stopping to do? They prayed.

Right? Sine qua non.

Without which nothing. Chapter 4, verse 9. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection. And set that word there, the little phrase that sits in between there, means nevertheless. We prayed to our God knowing full well that God's good hand was upon this work. His providence was draped over the work that was happening here.

[15:53] But nevertheless, we set a guard. We did our part. We did the planning. The things that needed to be done. It's a bit of a tension.

And I think that most of us here feel this tension. We've seen the sovereignty of God in scriptures and we've seen the responsibility of man. I feel like I've talked about it at length.

But recognize that this tension is everywhere in the scriptures. It doesn't just exist here. Seeing the people of God praying, kneeling, asking God to work, knowing that without him doing the work, it's not going to get accomplished at all.

You see even here that we see in verse 20 as Nehemiah's encouraging the people, talking about the rallying of the people. He's basically saying to them, in the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, come fight.

And his sixth sentence is, our God will fight for us. This full recognition that God was going to have to accomplish it. And yet, we also see that they knew that they were the means by which God would accomplish it.

[16:57] They were the means to the end. This tension is found all throughout the scriptures. Begin to read the Bible with this in mind and notice all of the places that happens, particularly in Paul's language.

He always wants to be so careful as he presents the mightiness of our God that he doesn't leave out the fact that we're responsible. And as he presents to us the fact that we're responsible and we have a part to play, he never ever leaves it hanging without wrapping it up with the sovereignty of God.

One example, 1 Corinthians 15, verse 10. He says, By the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

It talks about the grace of God, the sovereignty of God and him being who he is. But then he presents that he worked very hard at being who he is. But just so that we're not unclear, he wraps it back up to say, but it was not I, it was the grace of God that is with me.

This tension, if it feels that way for you, it does for me, it makes my mind want to split open sometimes, exists all throughout the scriptures. God uses his people to accomplish his will, but it is indeed God who works.

[18:18] So in face of this physical opposition, the possibility that the wall would be stopped by an attack, they pray, they make a plan, they prepare, they stand at the ready perpetually so that they can complete the wall.

But there's a greater danger, a greater opposition that face them here, and that is a spiritual opposition. Presented to you before that the problems we have as people are going to be one of two types of problems.

They're either going to be physical or they're going to be spiritual. Ultimately, the way we think is affected by our spirit. You see here, there's some things happening with them.

You see discouragement taking place. And you see fear. Discouragement, chapter 4, verse 10. In Judah it was said, the strength of those who bear the burdens!

The burdens is failing! There is too much rubble! By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall! See that discouragement beginning to set in on them. They're being taunted by the outsiders.

[19:28] My mind goes to Noah building his boat and all his friends coming and making fun of him for building a boat in the middle of the desert. Yet he built on all the same. Here you see them being taunted, verses 1-3, by Sambalat.

He jeers at the Jews. And he said in the presence of his brothers in the army of Samaria, what are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? These are rhetorical questions. Will they sacrifice?

Meaning, will they get it set up in a way in which they can then turn to temple service? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish and burned ones at that? Mox the work that they're about to be doing. And then his buddy Tobiah pipes in and says, yes, what are they building? If a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall, meaning it doesn't have structure.

It's a horribly built wall. And even if a fox were to run up on it, it would just collapse. They're being taunted in this way, and discouragement has begun to set in.

[20:33] How is it that they bear up under that type of discouragement? You may have experienced this in your work for the Lord. Remember the way that Nehemiah's prayer begins in chapter 1, verse 5.

He says, O Lord, God of heaven. And I presented to you that this Hebrew phrase, was a Hebrew phrase that had become especially important to the Israelites as they were in Babylonian captivity, as they had spent all of this time abroad.

And it meant simply that their God was a God that ruled over everything. Remember chapter 2, verse 20, Nehemiah's response to Sambalot, Tobiah, and Geshem, the God of heaven, same language, will make us prosper.

They got through this discouragement by trusting in the sovereign goodness of God. They would have been familiar with Psalm 135, 5 and 6, For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.

Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas, and all the deeps. They knew that the good hand of God had been upon Nehemiah for the good work.

[21:54] This is the language we're seeing up until this point. They knew that God intended to complete the wall with them, and therefore, they knew it would get done.

Let me read to you a little bit from Spurgeon on the topic of God's sovereignty. That's what we're talking about here. There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's sovereignty.

Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that sovereignty overrules them, and that sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their master over all creation. The kingship of God over all the works of His own hands, the throne of God and His right to sit upon that throne.

On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldings, no truth of which they have made such a football as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah.

[23 : 07] Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almanry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties.

They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean. But when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth.

But we proclaim and enthrone God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter, then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us.

For God on His throne is not the God they love, but it is the God upon the throne that we love. It is God upon His throne whom we trust.

That is the great encouragement judgment, when we are feeling discouraged, that our God reigns over the work. We talked about how Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1 was saturated in the Word of God.

[24 : 22] He knew what God attempted to accomplish with His people, and therefore he could confidently lay hold of those promises. Beloved, we must study God's Word and know His promises.

If we know them, we can know that they are sure. The second condition I see here in chapter 4 is fear.

Spiritual opposition to them is this fear, right? There's a great force, a mighty force. The armies of Samaria are going to come against them and stop the building of the wall.

Chapter 4, 11, and 12 says, And our enemy said they will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work. Then you see in verse 12, at that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, you must return to us.

What's happening is the people who are living in the perimeter who aren't coming and building the wall are coming to the city and they're saying, listen, we are hearing news that they are going to come and kill you. They're forming armies to come and kill you and stop the building of the wall.

[25 : 26] Please come back to the suburbs. Come on back out to the houses and live. Let's tend our sheep. Let's look after our gardens and stop the building of the ten times.

There's an urgency here to get them to return. So how do they stand up? How do they work in light of that type of opposition?

You see in verse 6 of chapter 4 this record that the people had a mind to work. The Hebrew word there means so much more than just mind. It means that they had hearts to work.

It means that their very being was set to the work. In chapter 2 we saw that they strengthened their hands and had that same feeling to it. That they made themselves resolute for the work that was ahead of them.

And then you see Nehemiah's response in verse 14. Do not be afraid of them. Remember what? The Lord. Who is great and awesome.

[26 : 32] We saw that same language in his prayer in chapter 1. Who is great and awesome. Who rules over everything his greatness. Who stands above, who has power over everything and is awesome.

Strikes fear in the hearts of his enemies. This is what we are to remember when we're afraid. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome.

Psalms 28, 7 and 8 says, The Lord is my strength and my shield. In him my heart trusts and I am helped. My heart exults and with song I give thanks to him.

The Lord is the strength of his people. He is the saving refuge of his anointed. Jeremiah 32, verse 40, I will make with them an everlasting covenant that I will not turn away from doing good to them. You notice so far as our study in Nehemiah keep drawing us back to scripture that they would have had. I want you to see that these people knew scriptures of God.

[27 : 42] They had been given to them. They had proper motivation by which to do this work because they trusted in their sovereign Lord. So we saw that the wall was completed.

That's why I jumped to chapter 6. So in spite of this opposition, both the physical and the spiritual opposition, the work continued. And the wall was finished in 52 days.

And when all the enemies heard of it, verse 16, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem. They said, we are not rulers of this world. We ought not think so highly of

ourselves for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. So how is it then that we should work in the face of opposition? We take this narrative and we apply it to our very own living. Firstly, we should trust in the sovereign goodness of God.

We should trust in the sovereign goodness of God as His people. As He is redeeming the church for Himself, we should trust in the sovereign goodness of our God.

[28 : 54] Turn with me to the book of Ephesians, chapter 2. You can leave Nehemiah behind. You don't have to mark it with your hand. The very greatest expression to us of God's sovereign goodness is the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

Christ crucified and resurrected on our behalf. Ephesians, chapter 2, beginning in verse 17. He, being Christ, came and preached peace to you who are far off and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Catch all that language. Again, I've been drawing you to 1 Peter, but here we see in Ephesians Paul using the same type of language about us being built up into a structure, calls it here a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling place for God by the Spirit with Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone. Cornerstone was significant. It set all things right. It was the measure by which everything else was taken. It's how the building came together properly. You can't miss that.

[30 : 37] The language of cornerstone doesn't make a lot of sense to us. Probably not even to modern day builders, but for most of us we don't build buildings. We don't know what that would even look like. This was incredibly significant language to them.

It means that without Christ, and Christ crucified and resurrected, none of this holds together. All of our great efforts at church and being religious and trying to build something for God is totally failed apart from Christ.

Remember that it's through Him we have access in one Spirit to the Father. We're no longer strangers and aliens. We are now part of the household of God, and this is God's sovereign goodness to us.

we'll look beyond and go further into some of that reality of God's sovereign goodness here momentarily. Look on down in the book of Ephesians, or over, depending on your media that you're using, to chapter 6.

Paul begins to conclude his letter in this way, verse 10, looking at the work that's ahead of us, finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

[31 : 51] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

There's our challenge, there's our opposition to us. Verse 13, therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand firm, stand therefore having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication, or petitioning in that way.

can you kind of you can't can you kind of get the picture I do of the workers of the wall in Nehemiah's day with a load on one arm and the sword in the other hand or the spear in the other hand, they got themselves ready for this work that was ahead of us, and here we see that we're to be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might, and how do we do that?

Right? We put on these things here called the armor of God, and notice what they are, they're truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer.

[33 : 14] Now I wish we had time to expound this in its entirety. Someday we will go through the book of Ephesians and we will do that very thing. There's so much that all of this means, but simply we can simply boil these things down, probably in an over simple way, to say that we need to know the truth of God, who we are in Christ, the gospel, right?

And we need to pray. The word of God being the bread of life, the prayer being the breath of life. Remember those two things. The word of God is the bread of life.

It's our sustenance. And prayer is the breath of life. I'll give you an example from my week. I was feeling rather discouraged this week and it wasn't something I really realized was happening until later.

It worked its way kind of up out of my heart and to my head until I kind of stopped and assessed what was going on with me. But I had allowed the father of lies to tell me a lie and I began to believe it.

I just began to be discouraged. Totally unwarranted. Completely unwarranted. But discouraged about the work that's happening here at Christ Family Church. Saying that we're never going to accomplish some of the goals that are set out before us.

[34 : 30] That I feel so alone in the work I'm doing. I'm inadequate for the work I'm doing. And these lies began to work around in me. And again, not up here but down in here. And I just found myself feeling really unmotivated at the beginning of this week.

Just kind of open up to read and reading Nehemiah and reading just the narrative on the surface. I'm just going, okay, they built the wall. They set a guard. What are we going to talk about this Sunday?

How does this apply to our lives? I just don't know. So I'd close it and I'd move on to something else. And just lacking this real motivation. It finally bubbled up enough that I realized I was acting in this way.

Why am I feeling so unmotivated this week? Why can I not sit down and focus and get the work done that's in front of me? And I realized that I was being discouraged. I was believing all of these lies that were being told to me.

And this is when God really began to minister to me with the lives of these people. I had really forgotten the gospel. Forgotten who I was in Christ.

[35 : 29] And that's a complete work of Him. He has accomplished it. He's done all of that. Certainly God works through faithful people, but it is God who works.

I take great hope and encouragement in my time of discouragement in knowing that God has a plan. And it will, in fact, come to fruition. salvation. No doubt about that.

We believe highly in the sovereignty of God here, not because it's our particular thing, it's our flavor, we want to pick it up, but because the scriptures tell us that God is sovereign. It's all over in here.

We believe in the doctrines of grace, as they're commonly called. Some of you may wrestle with some of these. I still do. The famous tulip, right?

Total depravity, who we are. Before Christ. No good at all. Sin has totally spoiled us. My righteousness prior to Christ was as filthy rags.

[36 : 29] Nothing I can do that's good on my own. It ends in the beautiful doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. The last one, the end cap on this, is that once we are gods, we are gods forever.

There's no undoing that. Once we're in his hand, nothing can take us out of his hand, even ourselves. Right? Can't remove myself from God's hand. And you see the work of the Trinity in those middle three, which are unconditional election.

God has made a plan before the foundation of the world. Limited atonement, which many people like to call particular redemption, but I don't think TUIP is a very good acronym here in this case. Limited atonement, right? The work of Christ for us on the cross. God made the plan. Christ accomplished the work. It is finished. Right?

And then irresistible grace. Some people say the effectual calling of the Spirit. So God made the plan. Christ accomplished the work. And the Spirit is bringing that work into fruition.

[37 : 33] Right? He has called us, and now He is working in us to make us perfect. Right? Beloved, these doctrines are meant to be a pillow for us to lay our heads on.

They're not meant to be a rock for us to crash headlong into. And they're certainly not meant to be a rock into which to beat somebody else over the head with. Every time we see this taught throughout the Scriptures, it is meant to be a comfort to the people of God.

God is sovereign, and He is good to His people. That's what we're meant to grab hold of and take. As Spurgeon was arguing that the sovereignty of God, that doctrine should be fought for more than any other doctrine for the people of God.

Because that is where our surety comes from. Right? That's what gives us the encouragement to continue to work. If all of this depended on me, I'd be done already.

Because I'm a failure at leading a church. I would just quit. I'd say, there's not a chance I'm getting this done. It would be fruitless effort if it all depended on me. But because it depends on God, the call, whatever that particular vision for our church is, I don't really even know.

[38 : 45] It will be completed. Right? God will do exactly what He intends to do with us. Right? Remember that. These doctrines are meant to be a pillow for us to rest our heads on.

The light yoke that we take upon us. John 16.33, Jesus says, I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart. I have overcome the world. Christ crucified. He has overcome the world.

Paul had confidence in this as he was talking to others about others and their progression in faith. Philippians 1.6, he says, And I'm sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Christ, it is in God's sovereign control. It doesn't negate our part in it. But God is in control. As we are given the great commission by Christ to go and make disciples of all the world, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching Him to walk in His ways.

[39 : 55] As we're given that commission, we're given an even greater promise. Matthew 28.20, And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. If we're going to set about the work in the face of opposition, we must believe these things.

The sovereign goodness of our God. Secondly, simply know that opposition is part of the work. It is part of the work.

It doesn't just stand in the way of the work, but it is in fact part of the work of us being built into a holy temple, a dwelling place for God, as the people of God.

It's part of the work. James 1.2-4 says, Counter all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. What did I say to you? That the work that's before us is to be holy and to bring about holiness in the lives of others.

[41 : 03] This is a major way in which that happens. As we work in the face of opposition, that is in fact part of the work. Right? Relying on God.

The testing of our faith. God does this to me constantly. He says to me, do you really trust me? Do you really think you can do nothing apart from me? And so often I go, yeah, but I forgot.

You're right. I can do nothing apart from you. Everything good that happens in me and through me is a work of God. It's this testing of my faith and it produces steadfastness.

In what? Steadfastness in faith. In our dependence on God. And that is the process by which we're made perfect. That our faith will be made complete. So let me conclude this morning by just asking you two questions.

I just want you to ponder these. Has opposition caused you to cease working? And are there any endeavors that you need to renew your commitment to?

[42 : 10] Let's pray together.