

A Mind to Work

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Introduction.

- A. As the Bible tells the story of the people of God, it makes clear that those people have not always succeeded in serving God. Even though they had enough divine help to overcome any obstacle and conquer any foe, they were often defeated. Scripturally speaking, the reasons for these disasters are quite clear. God's people fail in accomplishing His will when and only when they do not desire to accomplish it.
- B. By contrast, we see an example from the other side of the coin in Nehemiah 4:6. Here, we see the people of God succeeding because they desired to succeed. The situation of the Jews of Nehemiah's time was hardly promising. They were surrounded by enemies who were more numerous and powerful than they, who were willing to do anything to keep the Jews from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem to protect themselves. Despite these obstacles, the Jews succeeded, because they had a mind to work.
- C. Clearly, this is a lesson we need to take and apply to our own work for the Lord. Today, we aren't doing anything as tangible as building a literal city wall, but we are working to serve the Lord in our group system. We're building up the church. Just like the devil had his pawns in the time of Nehemiah, so too he has people and events that he uses against us today that he hopes will cause us to fail in the work. However, just as was true in Nehemiah's time, those Satanic ploys cannot determine our success or failure as a church.
- D. Instead, what really matters, for our group program or anything else, is whether we have a mind to work, whether we are committed to serving God. If we are, nothing the devil can bring against us can defeat us. However, if we don't have that commitment, we are doomed to failure. As we consider our service outside the box, this morning, let's consider this essential attribute. Let's look at the causes and effects of a mind to work.

I. Its Causes.

- A. Obviously, a mind to work is something that this church as a whole needs to possess. Let's begin, then, by looking at what causes this particular mindset. In Nehemiah's time, it had several sources that are just as relevant today. The first is recognition of a group **NEED**. We see the need of the Jews described in Nehemiah 2:13. Their problem was that the walls of Jerusalem had been destroyed. This would have been a disaster for the people of any ancient city. If they had walls, only a full army with siege equipment could hope to successfully attack them. However, if they didn't have walls, any old gang of bandits could waltz into town some dark night and take whatever they wanted. The people worked because they knew they needed walls.
- B. Likewise, we should recognize the needs that exist in the church today and allow them to inspire us to work. In many ways, friends, our situation is just as difficult as the Jews' situation was. Just inside the church, we have young people who need to be taught, straying Christians who need to be sought, shut-ins who need to be looked after, and a host of other needs. Nor does that even consider the mammoth task of reaching the lost. There are probably 200,000 people within a half hour's drive from here, and I doubt that even 200 of them are faithful Christians. Brethren, we desperately need workers in God's kingdom. In fact, our need is so great that everyone here must take part if we are to succeed. Let's recognize the need and get to work.
- C. A second reason why the people of Nehemiah's day had a mind to work was because they had good **LEADERSHIP**. We see this in Nehemiah himself, as recorded in Nehemiah 2:17. Nehemiah had just toured the ruined walls of Jerusalem, and here we see him meeting with the officials of Judah, persuading them to do something about it. Those officials were just as able as he was to see the problem. However, everybody was waiting on everybody else. Nobody was willing to step forward and take charge until Nehemiah did. Through his initiative, and through his leadership during the entire rebuilding project, he led the people to work.
- D. Even though our circumstances are different, we need leaders today just as badly. I know that all of you aren't a bunch of dummies. I know that everything I described about our situation is common knowledge. That leaves us with two choices. Either we can stand around, shaking our heads sadly at the situation, and do nothing, or we can say, "I'm going to work to make this right. Who's with me?" Obviously, this is most important for our church leaders, our elders and deacons. Those are the men from whom we especially need initiative. However, leadership is not exclusively an elder-and-deacon thing. Any of our men, and even, in the right circumstances, any of our women, can take the lead in overcoming a challenge, and they can encourage others to follow them. Only as the people have leaders will they have a mind to work.
- E. Even beyond that, though, the people had a mind to work because of their **FAITH**. Notice what eventually persuades the officials of Judah to go along with Nehemiah in Nehemiah 2:18. Nehemiah explained to them how God had helped him even to come to Jerusalem in the first place. He told them that this was God's will, and that if they took on the work of the rebuilding, God would be with them. This would not have been an easy decision for the officials to make. They couldn't see God, but they could see the many enemies of Judah

all around them. Even in such a dire situation, though, they knew that no matter how great their enemies were, God was greater. Because they had faith in His ability to bless them, they put their hands to the work.

- F. Similarly, if we are going to have a mind to work for the Lord, we must first have faith in Him. God's word asks an awful lot of us, there aren't very many of us, and we're just ordinary people. Why, then, should we bother even trying to work for Him? Simple. We should work anyway because our ultimate success does not depend on ourselves, but on God. God has promised us that He will always be with us. God has promised that as the days before us, so shall our strength be. God has promised us that it is His word, not our wisdom, that is His power to salvation. If we believe, we will work in reliance on those promises.

II. Its Results.

- A. Just as having this righteous mind to work has several obvious causes in Nehemiah, so too it produces several important results. The first of these is closely tied to faith. As we actually do work, the work itself will teach us to **TRUST** in God. Look at how this worked out for the people in Nehemiah 4:7-9. This was a situation that spelled big trouble for the Jews. As long as they didn't have a wall, their best hope for safety was to lie low and hope their enemies didn't notice. Now, though, the nations around them are provoked against them, and they still don't have a wall. So what do they do? According to the text, the first response they make is to pray. The desperate nature of their situation drives them to God, because He's the only One who can help.
- B. Once we start working for the Lord, just like the Jews did, we will find ourselves driven to trust. Brethren, I'm here to tell you: all the problems in front of us that I just recounted aren't some kind of spiritual illusion. They're really there, and if we try to tackle them by ourselves, we'll get squished. Remember, though: our eventual success isn't about us. It's about God. There is no obstacle He cannot overcome, no foe He cannot defeat. If we pray to Him and place our trust in His reply, our success in His work is inevitable.
- C. However, if we truly have a mind to work, we won't just sit back, fold our hands, and wait for God to do something. Instead, the genuine mind to work also produces **PERSEVERANCE**. We see this from the Jews of Nehemiah's day in Nehemiah 4:15. The enemies of God's people had conspired to attack the Jews secretly, while they were still unprepared. However, the Jews got wind of the upcoming attack and armed themselves for battle. That led their enemies to back off. Once the threat of attack passed, though, the Jews went right back to building the wall, even when that meant carrying mortar in one hand and holding a sword in the other.
- D. If we have a mind to work, we will persevere in just this same way. Satan, of course, isn't going to let us go about our work unmolested, any more than he let the Jews alone. Once we put our might to building up God's kingdom, he's going to surround us with all kinds of enemies, crises, and distractions. No matter what, we can't let those things scare us off from the work—that much is obvious. Less obvious, though, is that spending all our time in crisis mode is just as bad. Some Christians get so concerned about defending themselves, their families, and the church from the devil's attacks that they never do anything but defend. They hold their swords with both hands rather than leaving one hand to do the work. Folks, once the devil's got us to that point, even if we don't fall away, that's still a victory for him. He's neutralized us. We can't let that happen. We can't let the devil's tricks distract us from the job we have to do. We have to keep our minds to the work.
- E. Third, having a mind to work for the Lord leads to **SUCCESS**. We see the success that the Jews had described in Nehemiah 6:15. Despite numerous attempts on the part of Judah's enemies to discredit Nehemiah and halt the work, all of those attempts came to nothing. The wall was rebuilt and, for the first time in nearly 150 years, the people of Judah had safety from their enemies. Throughout the story of the wall, Nehemiah emphasizes one thing: the people enjoyed success in their work because it had the blessing of God.
- F. If we have a mind to work today, we also can be certain that we will enjoy God's blessing and the success that accompanies it. Obviously, certainty in the realm of human endeavor is impossible to find. Our marriages, our livelihoods, or our health may all fail despite our best efforts to preserve them. However, when we dedicate ourselves to the Lord and do His bidding, the only possible failure is within us. Without exception, God is with His people when they work for Him to serve Him, and nothing can interfere with His will. It's true; we may not see the good results as quickly as we want to see them, and in our efforts to reach the lost, not everybody is going to react the way we want them to. However, if we keep up our work and our resolve, we will succeed.
- G. Finally, if we have a mind to work, it will result in **GLORY TO GOD**. Nehemiah explains how this worked out in his case in Nehemiah 6:16. As Nehemiah presents it here, success in rebuilding the wall was not something that should have happened. As feeble as the Jews were, and as numerous and powerful as their enemies were, in the normal course of events, the Jews should have gotten splattered. Of course, exactly the opposite happened. Their enemies were the ones who couldn't get it together, and the Jews achieved their goal. To everybody involved, that clearly showed the hand of God, and even God's enemies were led to glorify Him.
- H. Likewise, if we have a mind to work, our labors will glorify God too. To most people in the world, this is not an appealing thought. If they have success in what they do, they don't want to give God or anybody else the credit. Of course, for the true child of God, we AREN'T interested in glorifying ourselves. We want God to get the glory He deserves, and when we overcome despite overwhelming odds, that's exactly what happens.

Conclusion. If you want to glorify God in your life, join in His service this morning.