

THE SECRET OF ACCOMPLISHMENT— A MIND TO WORK.

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Text: "So built we the wall and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work."—Neh. 4:6.

No great accomplishment for the good of man has ever come by chance. Everything worth while represents labor. We are liable to forget that many of the inventions and conveniences in daily use have only come to us as a result of years of labor and study. Among these we may mention the locomotive, the electrical appliances so familiar, the telegraph, telephone, the phonograph and others to numerous and common to mention. Many a book that we can read in a few hours cost days and days of study and application to produce. Many a poem that we read in a few minutes consumed years in their production. For instance, Grey's Elegy, a poem familiar to all, may be read in a few minutes, but it is said that it took the author seven years to produce it. Let us look into and study how this great task mentioned in our text, the re-building of the wall of Jerusalem, was accomplished. We may be able to discover some secrets and principles that govern the success of any undertaking. Let us first notice the circumstances. The walls of Jerusalem had been totally demolished by Nebuchadnezzar in 5 and 6 B. C. The chief part of the inhabitants had been led away captive to Babylon, leaving only the poor and lower class of citizens and peasantry in the land. Later, after the overthrow of Babylon by the Persians, some of these exiles had returned and rebuilt the temple, but the walls were left in disrepair. The people were surrounded by bitter enemies who had done all in their power to hinder the work of rebuilding and were only awaiting a pretext to fall upon them and destroy them. At this juncture we read that Nehemiah, a Hebrew captive but an officer at the Persian court, heard, through some of his brethren who had returned from Jerusalem, concerning the Jews, which were left of the captivity then in the province, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to him, "The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." When Nehemiah had heard these things his heart was greatly grieved and he sat down and wept and mourned certain days and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven. On a certain occasion soon after this when acting in his capacity as cup-bearer, he went into the presence of the king, Artaxerxes; the king noticed his sad countenance and inquired and was told the reason. Thereupon he was commissioned to go to Jerusalem with authority to rebuild the walls, and restore the city. Accordingly Nehemiah went to Jerusalem with faith in God and a prayer and purpose in his heart. Alone in the night he went and examined the broken wall. Then he made known his purpose to the people and said, "Come let us build up the wall of Jerusalem that we may be no longer a reproach and they said, let us rise up and build." "So they strengthened their hands

for this good work." They organized themselves and systematically apportioned the work and went at it with a will. While they worked away their enemies stood around and jeered and made fun of them and their work. One smart fellow even observed: "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." How wonderfully modern this sounds! Besides this their enemies made a plot to secretly attack them while at work and off their guard. But Nehemiah heard of the plot and just simply took measures to be prepared for any emergency and went on with the work. He had a watch placed day and night and a man with a trumpet standing by him ready to sound the alarm at the first sign of the enemy. For extra precautions each man girded on his sword and away they worked with one hand on the trowel and the other on the sword. Nehemiah stood his ground as overseer or leader and encouraged the men as they worked. Amidst these most discouraging circumstances and in spite of all the obstacles the wall was completed in the surprisingly short time of fifty-two days, and the inspired record attributes the success of the whole undertaking to this simple fact, "The people had a mind to work." What cannot be done when the mind is made up and a few agree that a thing shall be accomplished and go at it. If these people had stood back and looked at discouragements which, we will freely admit were many, the wall never would have been built. Had they listened when someone laughed and made fun and prophesied failure they would have been defeated and we would not have had this inspiring tale of accomplishment in the face of difficulty to encourage us on to victory.

The lesson for us to learn from this sketch of illuminating and interesting history may be pretty well summed up under five heads, and the factors in accomplishing any given task are essentially the same. The points are:

1. Strong desire.
2. Prayer to God.
3. Leadership.
4. System and co-operation.
5. A mind to work.

Before this combination what can stand? These five factors are exactly what are needed by the church to do her work. If we would see things accomplished we would do well to follow Nehemiah. Nothing will come to us by sitting idly by and complaining about the hardness of the times and waiting for something to happen. We want to get out and make it happen. Of course if we have no desire to see something done we are defeated before we begin. But if professed Christians have no desire to see God's work prosper they should be alarmed and bestir themselves, for perhaps God has forsaken them entirely. The strength of the desire will determine the willingness of the mind to work and measures the amount we are willing to sacrifice for the cause of God. Oh, that the church had the desire to see souls saved that Nehemiah had to see Jerusalem restored! We need some mourning and fasting and praying.

Prayer: Everything in a sense depends on prayer. We need to pray to find out God's will in every matter. It is no good to start unless we have his approval. Nehe-

miah prayed to God before that a way was opened up to see the desire of his heart fulfilled.

Leadership: Every great movement has had its leader. The worth of able leadership is incalculable. An army without a general or a captain would be of little use. Every God called pastor is a leader; the word "bishop" in the New Testament means simply an overseer.

In the great majority of cases it is safe for the church to follow the leadership of the pastor, especially when he has the general interest of the work at heart. If a pastor is not a leader of men he has either not been chosen of God or he has failed somewhere to obey God. Nehemiah was a wise leader.

System and Co-operation: This point may be also called organization. No church can be at its best unless it has a good system, and the best pastor God ever called could not accomplish anything in a church where there is no co-operation amongst the members and between pastor and church. Disharmony and lack of system accounts for a large percentage of failure in the churches. The business world has left the church a thousand years behind in system and co-operation. The churches are just beginning to wake up to this fact. *E pluribus unam* (one composed of many) should be the motto of every church. The most insignificant member has just as much responsibility according to capacity as the strongest. Each should find his place and work away without waiting to see what the other fellow is doing. Nehemiah assigned each division of men their work and they did it.

A mind to work: **SO BUILT WE THE WALL, BECAUSE THE PEOPLE HAD A MIND TO WORK.** What could be more to the point and plainer than this? Here then is the key of the whole situation. Though the four points already emphasized seem to be indispensable yet as important as they are, they are completely abortive and useless without this all important principle. It would answer every question of the success of the Lord's work. A mind to work would simplify or solve every problem facing the church today. The work of evangelizing the world in this generation would be carried a long way toward success. Churches would be built, old ones repaired, parsonages provided, preachers better paid, missions carried on and souls converted and sanctified, if the people had a mind. In closing let me just consider the importance of this scripture. Not what I have said alone, but think, the inspired word of God, written by the Holy Spirit for our instruction attributes the whole success of this great undertaking to the one fact, "The people had a mind to work." Don't pass it by lightly, it is God's word. We may desire, we may pray, we may have leadership and organization, but unless we are willing to put our shoulder to the wheel and lift we will fail. Those who would pray must be willing to work to bring about answers to their own prayers. Let us all fall in line and work in harmony with principles clearly laid down in God's Word. Accomplishment will result. Amen!

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