

# **“The People Had a Mind...”**

## **Nehemiah 4:2, 6**

As we saw in our last message on this text, the people of Israel, under the direction of Nehemiah, were beginning to see opposition at the very early stages of the restoration of the walls and the gates of Jerusalem. Within the account of this opposition are some great truths that should encourage us to stay faithful in the battle that the Lord has given us to fight.

In verse two we find five questions that were asked by the enemies of Israel that shined a light on what the purpose of the opposition was, and what was needed by the Israelites in order to combat this opposition. These same questions can shine a light on the believer (and the church) today, as well. The answer that we give to these questions will show to us, to other believers, and to the world that we are serious about serving the Lord, and doing what is right, and that we will take a stand for the truth, no matter what opposition comes our way.

Verse six ends with this statement: “For the people had a mind to work.” The word for “mind” (לֵב) is a common word in Hebrew – used 595 times. Of those 595 times, 485 times it is translated “heart” in the KJV. The word is used both literally for the human heart, as well as figuratively “for the feelings, the will and even the intellect” (Zodhiates). The use of the word “mind” here is seen across many translations and is one that is widely accepted as pointing to the heart and mind being connected in Scripture. Our mind presents actions that originate in our “heart” – in the seat of our emotions. Here, in this text, the Israelites had given their heart to this rebuilding project and in so doing they set their mind

to accomplish what their heart desired.

The Geneva Bible translators put it this way: "And the heart of the people was to worke."

## **I. THEY HAD A MIND TO WORK – "WHAT DO THESE FEEBLE JEWS?"**

***A. Their job was to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. That's what the work was they were to do – that was the answer to the question. They had a mind to work at restoring God's city – Jerusalem.***

Nehemiah 2:17-18

<sup>17</sup> Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

<sup>18</sup> Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

***B. In the life of the believer today, as represented by Nehemiah in Jerusalem, we need that mind, that heart, given to working toward the goal of "building" the kingdom of God – bringing people to Christ. In a day of spiritual depression, spiritual ignorance, biblical illiteracy (even among true believers), spiritual "ruin," if you please, we must have "a mind to work" to rebuild those "walls" that are broken down in people's lives, and to build for Christ.***

Matthew 6:33

**33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**

It was early morning. On the beach was an elderly man. He walked with a cane, carefully surveying the beach that the receding tide had left exposed. Every now and then he bent to pick something up and toss it into the ocean. I watch with fascination as he carefully scanned the beach before him. It was then that I realized he was looking for starfish. Every time he saw one lying helpless in the sand, unable to get back to the ocean on his own, he would lovingly pick it up and toss it gently back into the sea. Curious as to why he was doing this, I approached him. He told me, "The starfish are left behind after the tide goes out. If they don't get back into the ocean they will dry up and die beneath the hot summer sun."

"But there are endless miles of beach and there must be millions of starfish," I said. "Surely you don't think you can save them all. What difference can your efforts possibly make?" Slowly the old man bent over and picked up another starfish. As he tossed it into ocean he looked at me and said, "It makes a difference to that one."

I was deeply touched by this story. How easy it is to become so discouraged by the sheer magnitude of the task that Christ has set before us that we fail to focus on the value to Him of each one. We are called to be faithful in scanning those "beaches" and in making a

difference to "that one" and "that one" and "that one"  
in the name of Christ.

## **II. THEY HAD A MIND TO WAR – “WILL THEY FORTIFY THEMSELVES?”**

***A. They had determined in their heart that they were going to do what needed done and put their mind to it. In that determination they realized they would need to defend themselves, to fight, if you would, for the right to live in peace. Verses 13-23 of this chapter show how they did this.***

1. It says in verse 20: "God shall fight for us." In a day when people do not want to fight for what's right, this passage is needed.
2. They had a mind, a heart, to rebuild the walls, and if that meant defending themselves physically against the enemy then they were certainly willing to do so.

***B. Today, we as believers (and as a church) are facing (as believers have faced all along) a battle against the forces of evil. We are in a "war" with an enemy we cannot see but is real, nonetheless.***

2 Corinthians 10:3

<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

1 Timothy 1:18

<sup>18</sup> This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

1. The armor and weapons for the war we face are found in Ephesians 6 and are essential to us defending ourselves against the enemy and doing the work that the Lord intends for us to do.
2. Our enemy, according to 1 Peter 2:11, is fighting against our very soul. If we have a mind to war, then we must use our weapons and defeat this adversary in order to accomplish the work set before us. If we expect revival in the church, or in our homes, or even in our own lives, then we are going to have to be willing to fight "the good fight of faith."

#### 1 Timothy 6:12

<sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

#### 2 Timothy 4:7

<sup>7</sup> I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

In his book, *A Thinking Man's Guide to Pro Football*, Paul Zimmerman quotes a physicist who made a rather startling discovery. When a 240-pound football lineman (capable of running 100 yards in 11 seconds) collides with a 240-pound running back (capable of covering the same distance in 10 seconds), the resultant kinetic energy is "enough to move 66,000 pounds -- or 33 tons-one inch." The scientist says further that in all likelihood, the collision would deliver to the player's helmet a blow nearly 1,000 times the force

of gravity. Obviously, modern football helmets have to withstand tremendous blows, or no player would survive long.

The same is true for those of us engaged in spiritual warfare. Paul knew what he was doing when he commanded us to "take the helmet of salvation." The word take actually means "to accept," and speaks of our receiving from God's hand something which He has prepared for us. What a great picture, for all we can do in salvation is accept what God has given us. (<http://russellbrownworth.blogspot.com/2020/08/b-e-strong-in-lord-part-6-helmet-of.html>)

### **III. THEY HAD A MIND TO WORSHIP – "WILL THEY SACRIFICE?"**

***A. A note about worship – although the worship I speak of here was corporate worship, the worship that we need the most today is not just corporate worship (in a church setting) but the personal, private, real worship we can have with the Lord.***

***B. They had a firm mind to worship – this was the reason for which they were doing what they were doing in rebuilding the walls and setting the gates. This desire, as we've seen already, was a costly one. In this desire to worship, they had to work and fight, if necessary.***

**Nehemiah 8:1-8**

<sup>1</sup> And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was

before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

<sup>2</sup> And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

<sup>3</sup> And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

<sup>4</sup> And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

<sup>5</sup> And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

<sup>6</sup> And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

<sup>7</sup> Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

<sup>8</sup> So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

***C. Another group that had a mind to***

**worship is found in the book of Acts. They wanted to worship but they had no preacher, so they prayed, and God sent one. The results were tremendous.**

**Acts 10:30–33**

**30** And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

**31** And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

**32** Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

**33** Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

**Acts 10:44–48**

**44** While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

**45** And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

**46** For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

**47** Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

**48** And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

***D. Worship then, as worship now, is not without a cost – an opposition. It’s how we face that cost, that opposition, that will demonstrate our faith and standing with the Lord. When we have a mind to worship, God will bless – we will have to work and fight first, many times, and then we will see the harvest, as Cornelius did.***

G. Campbell Morgan tells of a friend of his who had a little daughter that he dearly loved. They were great friends, the father and daughter, and were always together. But there seemed to come an estrangement on the child's part. The father could not get her company as formerly. She seemed to shun him. If he wanted her to walk with him, she always had something else to do. The father was grieved and could not understand what the trouble was.

His birthday came and in the morning his daughter came to his room, her face radiant with love, and handed him a present. Opening the parcel, he found a pair of exquisitely made slippers.

The father said, "My child, it was very good of you to buy me such lovely slippers."

"O father," she said, "I did not buy them – I made them for you!"

Looking at her he said, "I think I understand now, what long has been a mystery to me. Is this what you have

been doing for the last three months?"

"Yes," she said, "but how did you know how long I have been at work on them?"

He said, "Because for three months I have missed your company and your love. I have wanted you with me — but you have been too busy. These are beautiful slippers — but next time buy your present, and let me have you all the days. I would rather have my child herself, than anything she could make for me."

(as found at the following website:  
<https://www.gracegems.org/2013/05/wants.html>)

#### **IV. THEY HAD A MIND TO WITHSTAND – "WILL THEY MAKE AN END IN A DAY?"**

***A. They withstood the opposition and finished. The opposers asked, "Will they make and end in a day?", or "Will they finish?" Well, here's the answer – they finished. They had made it possible for a revival in Jerusalem, through work, war, and worship.***

**Nehemiah 6:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup>** So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.

**<sup>16</sup>** And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

***B. We find Paul had a mind to withstand.***

He said he had finished, he had fought a good fight, he had won, and he was going home. His work is found in Rom. 10:1 and 1 Tim. 1:16 – that souls might be saved. He said, "I am free from the blood of all men." Paul did everything he could to win souls, and God honored him. He withstood so we could have his example to use to rebuild our spirituality.

Romans 10:1

<sup>1</sup> Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

1 Timothy 1:16

<sup>16</sup> Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

## **V. THEY HAD A MIND TO WIN – “WILL THEY REVIVE THE STONES OUT OF THE HEAP OF THE RUBBISH WHICH ARE BURNED?”**

***A. The question was, "Will they?" – the answer was they will.***

They had a mind to win: the question, "Will They" or "Will ye" was asked 5 times by the opposers. The answer was "We Will." These people had a mind to win. They did revive the stones out of the heap of rubbish to make a wall again. They used the old broken-down pieces to rebuild the wall. THEY WILL!

***B. The word for "revive" – הָיָה, הַיָּיִת - is one that means, in its base form, "to live." In this case, it means to bring back to life – to make alive again.***

### ***C. Do we, today, have a mind to win?***

If we were asked by the world "Will They?", could we say, "We Will!", or would we say, "We'll try"? They didn't have a mind to try then, they had a mind to win. We need a mind to win, to build a work here out of broken hearts for sin. We need to revive our country out of its "heap" of sin. "Will Ye?"

**WE WILL!**

Conclusion: Nehemiah saw the need to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem so Israel would have a place to worship. He knew it would take work and that they may need to fight for it, but he saw the need for worship was great for a revival, so they withstood opposition and they finished by will power and with God's help.

Will we today do the same with our lives? Will we work for God; fight the devil if need be; worship God no matter what; withstand, like Paul, to the end; do we have will power to carry on, and win?