

A Mind to Work

Sometimes the word “work” seems like a “dirty word” to us. Although some of you won’t be old enough to remember it, there was an old TV show in which the character of Maynard B. Kreps considered “work” to be a bad thing; every time the word was mentioned, he went ballistic! Hopefully, none of us is that bad about work, but some of us do object to certain types and amounts of work.

A good biblical example of what good old *elbow grease* [figurative expression for hard work] can accomplish is found in the Book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a Jew and waited on the king of Persia as his cupbearer, which was a position of means. When Nehemiah heard of the distress of his people in Jerusalem, he couldn’t conceal his sadness but admitted that he “had never been sad in his presence before” (Nehemiah 2:1 NKJV). The king asked him what was wrong, and he answered, “Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?” (v. 3).

Not only did the king grant permission for Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem to repair the city, but he gave Nehemiah letters to neighboring peoples to give him safe passage on his way to Jerusalem. Nehemiah also asked for the king to give him a letter to the keeper of the king’s forest that he might be able to get timbers from the forest to help in rebuilding the city. It is quite obvious that the king felt that Nehemiah was a special person because he granted all of Nehemiah’s wishes. Nehemiah was able to go to Jerusalem to take charge of the city’s repair. When neighbors heard of his mission, they asked, “What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?” (v. 19). Little did they know that the king had granted all of Nehemiah’s wishes and, in doing so, wished him success in this endeavor. Nehemiah was thankful for the king’s blessings, but he knew who deserved the credit, for he answered, “The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build” (v. 20).

And build they did, “for the people had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6)! They could have thrown up their hands and said their enemies were too strong, there was too much to be done, the people were not strong enough for such a big undertaking or some were too feeble to work. No! Nehemiah was used to military tactics, and he put some into play and also reminded them, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord” (v. 14). Nehemiah appointed half of the people to build the walls and half of them to guard the builders. “Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon” (v. 17).

These people had God’s blessing in their work, and they worked to accomplish the goal. This biblical narrative should be a great encouragement to us. The job these folks had to do was beyond their own ability, but Nehemiah reminded them to keep their faith in God and let Him handle it. Yet, they had to do their part; they had to work! Many want to be recipients of the efforts of others, but they don’t want to do what is necessary to accomplish the task. We used to hear the old saying that “anything worth having is worth working for.” The apostle Paul believed that for he instructed Timothy to be “a worker who does not need to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15). In this particular instance, Paul was telling Timothy to know God’s Word and use it the way it was intended, but I believe that Paul would instruct Timothy to “put his hand to the plow” (Luke 9:62) in any work. **My prayer is that each of us will have “a mind to work” for God, putting our hands to the plow – never looking back but looking up!**

By: Royce Pendergrass