

Nehemiah 4:7-14

“But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and the gaps were beginning to be closed, they were very angry, and all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. So we prayed to our God, and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. But Judah said, “The strength of the burden bearers is failing, and there is too much rubbish so that we are unable to work on the wall.” And our enemies said, “They will not know or see anything before we come upon them and kill them and stop the work.” When the Jews who lived near them came, they said to us ten times, “From all the places where they live they will come up against us.” So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. After I looked these things over, I stood up and said to the nobles and the officials and the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.”

It has been said that regardless of what you are doing playing game or a sport that the best offense is a good defense. But think about this for a moment, these two are opposites. They go against each other; the best offense is a good defense. One is for advancing forward while the other is for protecting what you have. But maybe there is a different way to view this. Maybe what this is saying is as the offense moves forward, just maybe the defense is there clearing the way for the offense to move forward.

As we conclude our series on Directions we are asking ourselves “Can We Do This?” But what is “**THIS?**” What is it we are doing? What is it God is leading us to do? What is “**THIS?**” Are we doing as John Wesley said “*Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.*” — **John Wesley**

Are we doing all the good we can, by all the means we can? Is there more that we can do? Is there something different I can do which in turn might just open a way for someone else to serve? Is what we are doing accomplished only by our energy and power or do we need God to accomplish what we are doing? Do we make sure what we do is only

something we can handle on our own. We have been talking, since last Annual Conference, about having a God size vision. The question for us to ask ourselves is do we? Do we, do you have a God size vision? Or are there those amongst us who's desire is to remain small and controlled. If we can accomplish what we do without God then it's not that big a thing after all. Only something which is beyond our capabilities is God sized. Another quote from John Wesley "*Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O be not weary of well doing!*" – **John Wesley**

Has God called us to do what something? Is He calling us to something else? Is His calling us to just sit back and continue or is there more that can be done? If it is small and under our total control like Wesley said "*we will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils.*" Are we doing all we can in all the places we can? Are we? Are we reaching out beyond these walls the best we can or are we reaching *just far enough* but all the while maintaining our control? Are we reaching out as far as we can or are we asking it all to come to us?

Our passage this morning has Nehemiah with this bold vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and he has placed it all before God. But there were those who did not want the walls rebuilt. They wanted things to remain as they had been. So there attacked with words and in some cases actions to prevent the construction from going forward. They did not want the walls to go up and as such they would do everything in their power to undermine what was being done. It said in **verse 8** about those against “*all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.*”

Ever had someone come to you and speak or worse tear down something being done here? Not being open about their dislike of something but speaking in the background grumbling against the change? That is what Nehemiah was speaking of here. These people were trying to cause confusion and maybe even dissent among those following. Notice what Nehemiah said they did in **verse 9** “*So we prayed to our God, and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.*” Have we prayed to God for protection against this or do we lend an ear? Are we so afraid to step back and not listen that we listen.

Have you ever asked why they feel the way the way they do and why they are doing what they do? I can almost guarantee you it was and will be for personal and selfish reasons. It will be to keep and maintain the status quo and no more.

Out of fear of the unknown or maybe refusal to grow in new directions, people often times refuse to risk vulnerability by not fully open up to a new leading or direction from the Holy Spirit which is required if we are to be truly open to God and His leading. We tend to step out only on ground we know, we know for a fact is solid ground; ground we can see, ground we have walked before, ground we might have even walked to the point it could be seen as a well wore path, so worn that in some cases maybe even viewed as a rut. Instead of stepping out in faith and into the unknown with and for God some prefer to stay in the shadows and cast doubt and confusion about what is being done.

I wonder how many blessings we miss out on because we stubbornly refuse to hear the messages God sends our way because we don't see a need. Instead of seeking to determine God's will for our lives, many do what they want done, and how they want it done and **THEN** after they are finished they

seek God's approval for what they have done. Doing first then tell God now bless this! We limit God's purpose for us with our lack of vision and our lack of expectancy about what God can do in and through us. So often we sell God short, because we can't see what He is doing so we stop or worse we hinder those who are.

Peter said in **Galatians 5:25-26**, *"If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another."* We could ask the question of ourselves.

Who are we to stand in God's way by tearing down or speaking against in the shadows? Who are we to stand in God's way by competing against each other? When we are truly open to God's leadership, the Christian way of life becomes exciting and unpredictable. As we learn to trust in God's direction for our lives, we will discover blessings never dreamed of and new meaning for our lives which far surpass our greatest expectations. Can We Do This? Can We?

Let the words of Paul to the **Ephesians 4:4-6** be our guide: *"There is one body and one Spirit ... one hope ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all."* As we bring our Ministry Opportunities Forms to

the altar take a moment, if you haven't already and ask God for guidance, for direction, ask Him for a God size vision. Can We Do This? I say yes we can if we are willing to seek God's will in everything we do. And I believe we cannot go wrong if we follow John Wesley's words "*Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.*" — **John Wesley**

As long as we are seeking God's will for our lives and His church we cannot fail. We may learn how not to do some things but we cannot fail. I believe we can do this, together.