

# Nehemiah 5-7 | 5/13/18

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- Injustice by the noblemen | Nehemiah 5:1-13
  - **Read Nehemiah 5:1-9**
  - While on one hand we have seen the unity of the Israelite people in their efforts to rebuild the temple, unfortunately not all of them were looking out for their fellow brethren.
    - These are likely the same nobles that we saw in chapter 3 who wouldn't even lift a finger to help.
  - There were noblemen who were taking advantage of those who were less fortunate.
    - The noblemen were making loans to their brethren and charging them interest or usury (u.su.ry – illegal action of lending money at unreasonably high rates of interest).
    - The people were facing financial hardships in that they were spending lots of time working on the walls and did not have as much time to gather food from the country.
    - The noblemen were not being very noble and were “helping” the less fortunate out by providing them high interest loans.
    - This interest they charged wasn't like 2-5% but it could have been as much as 50%, which would make it seemingly impossible to repay.
    - They were having to give up their lands and were even giving up their family into slavery.
  - This practice was strictly forbidden, in fact in the book of Deuteronomy they are forbidden to charge interest but instead they are to be interest free or if their brethren were very destitute that it should be a gift.
    - Deuteronomy 23:19
      - “You shall not charge interest on loans to your brother, interest on money, interest on food, interest on anything that is lent for interest.”
  - Nehemiah calls them out for their sins.
    - Nehemiah hearing what they have done is devastated. At a time when all of the Israelites needed to be united they were instead being torn apart from the inside.
    - Nehemiah calls them out and they are not able to respond or make excuses for their actions.
  - The noblemen agree to return what was taken and they promised never to do it again.
    - **Read Nehemiah 5:12-13**
    - They now having their eyes opened to what they were doing have agreed to return essentially the interest and whatever else that was taken when the borrower could not repay the loan.
- Nehemiah's character and selflessness, is seen in his position as governor. | Nehemiah 5:14-19
  - **Read Nehemiah 5:14-19**
  - We have seen Nehemiah's character and his devotion to God throughout Scripture.
  - He was a man who truly feared God and desired to always obey Him.
  - **The previous governors had taken advantage of their positions and were taxed the people for their own benefit.**
    - This taxing included not only money but also food and wine.
  - However Nehemiah chose not to burden the people, because he was well aware of their situation and taxes on the people so he could live in luxury was not going to be beneficial.
  - So instead he works just like everyone else including his subordinates.
    - Nehemiah was a good ruler who feared God and did not put himself above the people whom he governed.
    - **He could have sat and “managed” the work on the wall but instead he worked just like everyone else.**

- **He worked in unity with the people of God.**
  - Nehemiah's character is an example for all Christians.
    - This example of a character is one for all Christians.
    - **Nehemiah was being a godly leader by his example and actions, unlike the selfishness demonstrated by the nobles and those whom were taxing the people.**
      - While many of the people were being
    - Nehemiah is a Christian who has truly recognized God's calling on his life.
      - Nehemiah recognized God's calling on his life and he never faded from it.
      - He didn't run away or try to pass it on to someone else. Nehemiah accepted his responsibilities.
    - Nehemiah was faithful, even in the face of opposition.
      - Even though he was being obedient he still faced difficulties yet he relied on God to get him through it all.
    - Nehemiah did not allow himself to get distracted.
      - There were many times where he could have gone of course between those that opposed him, internal social squabbles and even his own selfish desires.
      - However Nehemiah put all of them aside and he did what God desired from him.
      - He kept his eyes focused on the prize.
    - Nehemiah cared for others and was selfless
      - Not only was he being obedient to God in his own actions but also he cared about everyone else's spiritual life.
      - He made sure that God was always given the glory (as an example to others) and that the people were also being obedient to God.
      - Nehemiah saw to help others have a better relationship with God.
    - Nehemiah prayed to God before he acted.
      - We can see very clearly that Nehemiah would not make any big decisions without first consulting God.
      - Nehemiah understood the importance of prayer and that by turning everything over to God that He would take care of it.
    - Nehemiah feared God
      - Nehemiah new who God was and he feared Him.
      - He did not want to disappoint God or disobey God and he knew that if he acted in a way that would displease God that there would be repercussions.
      - Because of Nehemiah's fear and reverence of God he was able to do all of these things.
  - **Nehemiah was a true godly leader who led by example. Why is this such an important trait for Christians to have? What is the impact on the world when we do so?**
  - **If you have a group of Christians who are acting as the nobles, what impact does this have on others or for the cause of Christ?**
- The opposition attempts deception to overcome Nehemiah | Nehemiah 6:1-13
  - ***Read Nehemiah 6:1-9***
  - The opposition seems relentless through the book of Nehemiah.
  - We have here in chapter 6 a couple of more shots that were taken against Nehemiah to either halt the building of the walls, to discredit or kill Nehemiah.
  - The attempt at deception to lure Nehemiah out to kill him.
    - Now they sent messengers attempting to lure Nehemiah out by making false statements hoping to lure him out.
    - The open letter was a sign of disrespect (normally sealed) and that they were making it contents public knowledge.

- They attempted to make it look like it was common belief that the Israelites were rebelling against King Artaxerxes.
      - Of course if this were true then the king would have sent his armies.
      - But we know from previous passages that Artaxerxes was very much OK with the rebuilding of the walls and that he trusted Nehemiah. (**After all he was the cupbearer!**)
    - Nehemiah responds by calling their bluff
      - This deception didn't fool Nehemiah he was very much aware of what they were trying to do.
      - Again Nehemiah calls out to God for His strength. He always knows where his strength comes from.
  - The attempt to discredit Nehemiah from the inside with a traitor. | Nehemiah 6:10-13
    - **Read Nehemiah 6:10-13**
    - With the previous attempts having failed they tried to discredit Nehemiah by getting him to lock himself up in the temple.
    - **They people use an insider this time, one whom on the surface would seem like a trustworthy source to Nehemiah, but who was actually a traitor.**
      - This of course would have been wrong on many levels, he would have desecrated the temple by going in as he was not a priest.
      - It would have shown weakness and fear.
      - It would have shown his lack of trust in God.
    - However, this attempt also failed.
  - **In what ways does Satan try to frighten Christians (v9, 13) into giving up doing God's work?**
  - **In what ways does Satan try to discredit Christians (V13) today?**
- The building of the wall is completed | Nehemiah 6:15-16
  - **Read Nehemiah 6:15-16**
  - The rebuilding of the walls only took 52 days to complete.
    - This was of course made possible only because of the hand of God who was clearly at work.
    - But it also **took obedience** on the behalf of Nehemiah and the rest of the Israelites.
    - It took **that Christian unity so that** God's work could be completed.
    - **Such is the results of Christians who obey God and are united.**
      - We too can and will accomplish the work that God has called us to if we obey and fear God. If we work together with our fellow Christians to bring up the body in glory instead of tearing it down
  - The completion of the wall discouraged the opposition.
    - Those that apposed the wall were now completely disheartened now that it was completed.
    - And for good reason as they failed to stop it during the building how were they going to tear it down now that it was built?
    - **The opposition realized that it was completed because of God.**
      - This is interesting that now once the work was completed those on the outside even realized what had been accomplished was not possible by man alone.
      - That God had to have been involved.
      - They now believed what Nehemiah had told them in the beginning.
        - Nehemiah 2:20a
          - "I gave them this reply, "The God of heaven is the One who will grant us success...."

- **Even Satan can become discouraged when God's people obey and follow God's will because Satan knows that he ultimately cannot overcome God's great purpose.**
  - The world will see God when Christians work together and fulfill God's purposes.
    - **When Christians obey God and do as we are called the result is that the world will also see God.**
    - Everything that God calls us to do and that we do for Him is always to further His kingdom.
      - **This may require us to persevere during times of opposition and turmoil, and we may be persuaded or tempted to abandon it.**
    - The end result is always for God's great and Holy purpose. It will always bring glory to Him and it will show the world whom God is.
  - **Have you seen or experienced a time when Christians came together in unity to fulfill the will of God and by doing so the reality and existence of God was made know to others?**
- The repopulation of Jerusalem | Nehemiah 7:1-5
  - **Read Nehemiah 7:1-5**
  - God desired for Jerusalem to be repopulated with the Israelite people.
    - We now have the completed walls and gates that are around the city and we have within it the temple. However there are still a lack of people living in the city and no new houses have been built within the city walls.
    - So God has put it into the mind of Nehemiah to register everyone by genealogy. This served a purpose later in the book of Nehemiah to see who would stay in the city and live there.
      - Nehemiah 11:1
        - "Now the leaders of the people stayed in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots for one out of ten to come and live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the other nine-tenths remained in their towns.
    - This was all part of God's plan for His people.
      - We see that it was important that the proper line was maintained for the priesthood.
      - They made sure that those who were priests actually came from the line of Aaron.
  - What the listing of the genealogy in Scripture tells us
    - We tend to want to overlook and skim the list of names and the genealogy that is listed here and also in chapter 2. However we cannot overlook the importance of having this recording in Scripture.
    - This detailed recording in Scripture shows us that God truly knows each and every one of us.
      - Scripture is not a book that is simply man's account of God written from man's understanding alone. But instead God divinely inspired the Scripture in the hearts of man. The Holy Spirit worked in man to inspire ALL Scripture not just some portions.
        - So even the boring list of genealogy was inspired by God.
      - This shows us that God was intimately aware of all of His people and God cared for every single one of them.
        - **In fact, every Christian has their name recorded in book called the Lambs Book of Life.**
  - **This also shows us that God has a purpose and a plan for all Christians.**

- God didn't simply just use the "heroes' of faith" or Nehemiah and the other spiritual leaders like the prophets.
- God used ordinary people (or ordinary Christians) to fulfill His holy will.
- The general people are the ones who actually did most of the work to rebuild the walls of the city.
- We can never think that we are insignificant to God, He is intimately aware of each and every single one of us.