

Nehemiah 5:1-19 Opposition from the Inside.

Introduction: During the rebuilding of the wall, Nehemiah faces an economic crisis with many of the builders. Some of the leaders are taking advantage of their fellow Jews, economically, when they should be helping their brothers. Some were short of food (vs. 2), others were mortgaging their property (vs. 3), still others were forced to borrow money or sell their children into slavery (vs. 4-5). Some of the Jewish leaders were taking advantage of this situation to personally get rich. Nehemiah must deal with this internal problem. The workers were making tremendous sacrifices to spend the time building the wall, they should be helped - not hindered - in this work.

I. Helping those beyond self-help (vs. 1-5).

It is the fear of the Lord which must find expression in how the leaders treat their fellow Jews. Trust in God must be lived out in how we treat our brothers and sisters.. Specifically, the Jews were not to charge interest (usury) toward their fellow Jews. The materialism of the leaders had gotten in the way of their service for the Lord. "Leadership requires fairness and justice - especially toward those who are beyond helping themselves." WCK Here, Nehemiah takes the lead to correct and injustice and thus restore the people who have sacrificed to work on the wall.

II. Being Angry and Sinning Not (vs. 6-8).

Nehemiah is "very angry". That is appropriate when an injustice is observed. But then note, "I pondered in my mind and then . . ." Before Nehemiah goes to the nobles to confront them, he ponders (and prays) before speaking or acting. To ponder = literally, "my heart took council). So Nehemiah was thoughtful before he approached those who were the guilty party. Then Nehemiah does confront. He doesn't sit on the information or become bitter, but he deals with the problem forthrightly. He accuses and gives the reasons why the actions of the nobles and officials is wrong. The fact that the nobles make no defense reflects the truthfulness of the charge Nehemiah brought against them.

III. Setting an Example (vs. 7-19)

The appeal to positive action in the form of a clear charge and then a question, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the **fear of our God** to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?" (vs. 9)

Nehemiah is then able to point to his own example to show the nobles and officials how they should act (vs. 11).

Nehemiah won the nobles and officials. He worked toward restoration. His thoughtful yet forthright action corrected the injustice and kept the nobles and officials from being put off. (vs.12)

A solemn oath confirms the commitment the nobles and officials have just made (vs. 12b-13).

Vs. 14-18 continue the example of Nehemiah who would not "profit" from his position.

WCK. What is blocking the joy and effectiveness of service - usually it is SIN. As leaders we must be willing to confront it head on. But not in anger. We need to work toward restoration and justice. Our personal example (of not personally profiting from the ministry), puts us in a position to deal with this opposition from the INSIDE. Invariably as we work with people, sin issues will have to be confronted. When it comes up, let God be the ONE to guide you as He did Nehemiah.