

NEHEMIAH LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER 5

Up until this point the primary antagonist in the narrative was coming from the outside. In chapter five we begin to see the issues that the Jews were having among themselves.

Funny isn't it, when there is something from the outside coming at you, you tend to band together and get over your differences pretty quickly. But, when there is little or no outside opposition, you start to see the small things right on the inside of your own home/family/community and even nit-pick.



In chapter 5 Nehemiah learns that the Jews were charging each other interest when lending to them, and this brought about a whole lot more findings. It turned out that not only were the “haves” lending with interest to the “have-nots”, but to the point that they were giving their sons and daughters as slaves when they were unable to repay debt. This was against the law of Moses, first of all, but beyond that, Nehemiah righteously challenged them to go above and beyond their duty to fellow Jews.

“Do not charge your brother interest on money, food, or any other type of loan. You may charge a foreigner interest, but not your brother, so that the LORD your God may bless you in everything to which you put your hand in the land that you are entering to possess.” - **Deuteronomy 22:19-20**

As the Governor, and spiritual leader, Nehemiah set the example and was also to enforce it. Again, just like he did with calling everyone together for a bold confrontation, he again demonstrates his courage to confront the problems. Then he gives a 2-Fold challenge. First, not only should you not “lend with interest” to your brethren, but you should not lend at all! If you have plenty, give to those who are in need! Give, not lend.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to the family of faith.”
- **Galatians 6:10**

“Do not withhold good from the deserving when it is within your power to act.” - **Proverbs 3:27**

A long time ago I learned this and put it into practice. It started just by giving to the stranger on the street and conditioning my heart to bless, not judge. Give, without a thought. If I have money, give it. This was about conditioning my heart to get to a point where I don't have to think in order to give. It actually has nothing to do with the stranger or with those watching nearby. It has to do with minimizing the contemplation in my own heart and mind so that there is no deliberation in obeying the Lord and being generous. It is important to note the true reason why Nehemiah behaved this way though.

“But I did not so because of my [reverent] fear of God.” - **Nehemiah 5:15b**

There are so many lessons here to chew on, but as for myself, I walk away meditating on his continual courage to confront the issues and set the example himself.