

The Fear of God
Part 7

“1 And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. 2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. 3 Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards. 6 And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. 7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. 8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. 9 Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? 10 I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. 11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. 12 Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. 13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.” (Nehemiah 5:1-13)

Nehemiah in his leadership over the people of Jerusalem while he was heading in the task of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem and setting up the government, he was faced with a new problem, which was a new challenge for him, the problem of the people who were put in troubles due to the practices of usury.

Evidently the clear reason for this is the lack of fear of God. The people who were lending to others money with interest they were believers and were blessed by the Lord, but they did not use their money to help those who are in troubles and need but instead they use their money in a greedy and selfish way that cause others to summer more under the pressure of financial needs. When they were exacting usury from them, they were not able to pay, and they were forced to mortgage their lands just to get the food to eat, so they were just hired workers over the work in their own lands. In addition those people had borrowed money to pay for the king's tribute but they were still not able to pay because of the practices of usury of those believers who lend them, so because they were not able to pay some of their daughters were taken by the non-believers as slave.

Nehemiah, his brethren and his men they were lending the people money to help them to coop with the financial pressure that they are exposed to but they were not taking any interest from them or pressurized them. But the interest that those believers were forcing their brothers to

pay was taking away their income and had pressurized them to put their lands and fields under mortgage. So Nehemiah with his men were helping these people to live and sustain their families and they were helping them to pay their dept slowly step by step.

Nehemiah was doing that because he feared the Lord and trained his brethren and the people with him to do that. His ministry was to help the people and deliver them out from the bondage of poverty and he was doing that according to the word of God. The word of God admonishes us to be kind hearted to the people around us and especially more toward our own brothers and sisters in faith. Nehemiah was the leader and he as watchman over the people of God, therefore he fulfilled his duties and responsibilities toward them:

1- The watchman sees and meet his brother needs: “35 If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. 36 Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. 37 You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit. 38 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.” (Leviticus 25:35-38) Nehemiah helped the brethren who were in need and lend them without interest. Nehemiah treated kindly the brother who is in need; he did not treat as slaves, he did not take advantage of those brethren and he did not take their lands and fields as mortgages when he was helping them.

2- The watchman work it out and see that his brother is to be set free and not to be enslaved under other people: “47 If an alien or a temporary resident among you becomes rich and one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to the alien living among you or to a member of the alien's clan, 48 he retains the right of redemption after he has sold himself. One of his relatives may redeem him: 49 An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in his clan may redeem him. Or if he prospers, he may redeem himself. 50 He and his buyer are to count the time from the year he sold himself up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for his release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired man for that number of years. 51 If many years remain, he must pay for his redemption a larger share of the price paid for him. 52 If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, he is to compute that and pay for his redemption accordingly. 53 He is to be treated as a man hired from year to year; you must see to it that his owner does not rule over him ruthlessly.” (Leviticus 25:47-53) Nehemiah did his part to help and to set free his brethren who were under other people power. You need to do your part to help the people and to free them. Learn more about that from the following Scriptures: ***“8 Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. 9 Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”*** (Proverbs 31:8-9) ***“Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.”*** (Isaiah 1:17) ***“He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?” declares the LORD.”*** (Jeremiah 22:16) When you are not able to do that alone then you can seek others to help in this matter.

Nehemiah was a person who feared God, therefore when that matter came to him he pursue to solve the issue as in the following steps that you can adopt in your life and ministry:

1- Recognized the wrong doing that is going on: “1 And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.” When the people cried against their brethren, Nehemiah heard from them and recognized the sin immediately. You need to see where the sin is and that will be an initiative to you to deal with it.

2- Heard the people complain in full and understand well what they are saying: “2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. 3 Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.”

3- Act properly: “6 And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. 7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them.” When Nehemiah absorbed all what was going on, he got angry because they were sinning against their brethren. But Nehemiah acted wisely. He resolved to face those who sin and he spoke to them face to face and reprimand them of their sins, and for this purpose he gathered them in an assembly. The same is what you need to do. When you are grieved with people's sin, you should not keep quiet and hurt yourself, but go and face them and discuss with them the sin that they did.

4- Explained properly to them their sins and how they don't fear God: “8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. 9 Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?” Nehemiah explained to those brethren who are practicing usury that they are pushing their brethren to be under more financial pressure and ultimately pushing them to be under the bondage of the non-believers. Nehemiah and his team by fearing the Lord they were helping by freeing their brethren from the bondage of the non-believers. But those who were lending them with usury are in effect opposite to what Nehemiah was doing. They were practicing opposite of the teaching of Nehemiah. Those who are practicing opposite to the teaching of the word of God and what you learn, then you need to go and face them and explain to them that they are harming the people and harming you and your effort in helping the people.

5- Put forward the outlines of what they need to follow: “10 I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. 11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.” Nehemiah put in front of those culprit what they need to do and in clear way. *First*, to stop the wrong practice, and *Second*, by restoring back the losses, and giving compensation to the affected party. You need to give solutions to those who are sinning of how to correct the wrong doing that they were doing.


6- Have faith and expect that the people will follow the instructions: “12 Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise.” When Nehemiah put the correct reason and the proposal, the people repented and were willing to abide. Be of good faith and courage and expect fruit and repentance in people's life that you are ministering.

7- Put measure to implement discipline of the word of God for now and for the future: “13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.” Nehemiah put the disciplinary rule that till this time standing, that those who will not stop practicing usury they will not be considered as part of the people of God. In the same way use the word of God wisely to implement God's will and to protect the church and the ministry in the future from another trespass.

My dear and beloved: Live, serve God and move with the fear of God to make an end of sin, to make an end of people's suffering from abuse, and to protect your ministry and implement true guidelines that will help the next generation to serve God and live His will as you agree to pray.

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus, who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the death to give me eternal life. Lord thank you for your word that teaches me your ways and how to apply wisely useful measure to deal with sin, to help people and ends their suffering, and to prevent further trespass. Lord I ask you to guide me this time in dealing with this issue _____. Give me the wisdom needed and the practical measures to help those people _____. I thank you and praise you, this is my prayer in Jesus name, Amen.

Jesus christ



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