

The Fear of God Part 6

Ought ye not to Walk in the Fear of our God

“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 KJV)

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 his 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 debt and usury. They took loans from others, and with interests because of their financial needs, but were put under the bondage of usury that they needed to pay for the interest and not only the capital.

Evidently the clear reason for this is the lack of fear of God, that is why Nehemiah told those who caused this problem in verse 9, ***“ought ye not to walk in the fear of our 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 needs but instead they used their money in a greedy and selfish way that cause others to suffer more under the pressure of financial needs. When they were exacting usury from them, those people were not able to pay, and they were forced to mortgage their lands just to get the food to eat, so they were turned to be 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. Therefore because they were not able to pay some of them were forced to sell their daughters and sons as servant and were taken by

the non-believers as slave Also some had sell their daughters who they will be taken for marriage because they were in debt; that is their daughters were forced even to marry non believers.

Nehemiah, his brethren and his men were working as a team; they were lending the people money to help them to cope with the financial pressure that they were 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 and even force them to sell their children. So Nehemiah with his men was helping those people to live and sustain their families and they were helping them to pay their debts 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 set the people free, and help the people and deliver them out from the bondage of poverty, out from the bondage of debt, out from the bondage of slavery, out from the bondage of being yoked with non believers and out from the bondage of marrying non believers. Nehemiah 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 was the watchman, the overseer over the people of God, therefore he fulfilled his duties and responsibilities toward them:

1. The watchman sees and meet his brother needs: “35 And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. 36 Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. 37 Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. 38 I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.” (Leviticus 25:35-38 KJV) Nehemiah helped the brethren who were in need and lend them without interest. Nehemiah treated kindly the brethren who were in need; he did not treat them 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. In verse 35 when God says, ***“that he may live with thee”***, **what he means here is that if you will not be going to help the brother in need he may be forced to go to the non believers and to ask help and borrow from them, and with such he will be forced to sell himself and his family and his children to them and in such he will not only be slave but also he will not be able to continue to live among the people of God; that is why the purpose of lending money to the brethren without interest so they will not be forced to loss their faith or change their faith if they are in need and are not helped by the brethren.**

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 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: 48 After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: 49 Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself. 50 And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubile: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. 51 If there be

yet many years behind, according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for. 52 And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubile, then he shall count with him, and according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption. 53 And as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him: and the other shall not rule with rigour over him in thy sight.” (Leviticus 25:47-53 KJV) Nehemiah did his part to help and to set free his brethren who were under other people power who sold themselves to the heathen, the non believers, and Nehemiah bought them back from them. Nehemiah paid for them to set them free. But the other believers who lend them with usury they were selling them again to Nehemiah and put more burden on him, *“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.” (Nehemiah 5:8).* Those brethren who did not fear God they made the work double on Nehemiah and those with him.

Even we today suffer from such brethren and churches who do not fear God, not only in the matter of lending in usury but in other matters also. We teach children do not watch TV and mobile and parents they give mobile, and allow them to watch TV, and they make the work double on us. I say no mixing boys and girls and teach about the dangers of that, but they allow such and make the troubles out of that double on us. I say no makeup by they allow their growing daughters to put makeup and they boast of them. I say good stewardship and no wasting of money, but they go for parties and waste money resources with other activities, programs and projects. *Fear God and do not make the work double on the church and those who fear God and faithfully serving the Lord.*

Nehemiah and those with him were diligently moving to free the brethren from debts. ** We need to do the same, and those in bondage they need to do their best to free themselves, and we need to work out as team to free certain people who are in bondage and in debt when they are willing to repent and come out from sin and be willing to be taught and disciplined and follow God. * When you are in debt and not able to do that alone then you can seek help in this matter and we can work as a team to do that, like those four who carried a crippled man to Jesus and when He saw their faith accompanied by action Jesus healed that man. * Also when you are in debt then be willing to pay your debt because the Bible says those who borrow and are not willing to return are wicked, “21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.” (Psalm 37:21 KJV)*

We need to do our part to help the people and to free them. Let us learn more about that from the following Scriptures: *“8 Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. 9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8-9 KJV)* We need to help and speak for those who are under injustice and cannot help themselves. *“17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17 KJV)* We are called to help the oppressed, to defend the cause of the fatherless and the widow. *“16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.” (Jeremiah 22:16 KJV)* In the same way it will go well with us when we defend the cause of the poor and the needy and those in distress and troubles and that is the way to know God.

“42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.” (Matthew 5:42 KJV) Here Jesus was speaking to lend to those in need, to the Jewish people who in the Law of God were asked to lend their brothers without usury and without interest. *“25 If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.” (Exodus 22:25 KJV)* *“19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury.” (Deuteronomy 23:19 KJV)* Therefore, we cannot lend our brothers who are in need with interest or a usury. *“8 But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.” (Deuteronomy 15:8 KJV)*

But the Law of God was allowing the Jewish to lend the strangers with interest and usury, *“20 Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.” (Deuteronomy 23:20 KJV)*

“30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.” (Luke 6:30 KJV) Here about lending Jesus said, *“and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again”*; what He meant here is that when you lend and the person who took from you is not able to pay back or to give you back what he borrowed from you because of some reasonable condition that made him cannot pay or his situation is poor or has no income and he cannot pay then in such situation you don’t need to ask him as Jesus said, *“ask them not again”*, but to forgive the person for such reason and God shall reward you.

Also at the end of seven years after you lend and the person is not able to pay you back, then you may release him according to this command, *“1 At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. 2 And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD's release.” (Deuteronomy 15:1-2 KJV)* If the person is poor and cannot pay you then forgive him, ask them not again, as Jesus instruct us, and God will reward you and give it back to you.

But if the person is able to pay and you can see that he has income and resources that he can pay but he is not paying to you, then you need to ask him and remind him to pay, and that yperson need to ask again. But no need for you to press on him or threaten him, but wait for him to come and give it to you. Grace and mercy needed to be practiced whenever is required as the Scripture is teaching us. *“10 When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. 11 Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee.” (Deuteronomy 24:10-11 KJV)*

“35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” (Luke 6:35 KJV) What Jesus means with *“hoping for nothing again”*, must not be understood of not hoping for the money that you lend to be paid back, for then it would be giving, and not lending; but of not hoping for any usury or interest for lending it. With this Word of Jesus, *“hoping for nothing again”*, we also understand that we cannot lend our money for the non believers with usury or interest.

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 we can adopt in our life and ministry to solve such and certain issues:

A. 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.” (Nehemiah 5:1 KJV)* When the people cried against their brethren, Nehemiah heard from them and immediately recognized the sin of usury, greed, the love of money, selfishness, no fear of God and no regard to others, and the practice of borrowing for no real reason and putting themselves in debt, for many borrow with wrong reasons, or borrowing and getting loans without the intention to pay is also sin. We need to see where the sins are and what are they and that will be an initiative for us to deal with them.

B. Hear the people complains in full and understand well what they are saying: You need to understand the whole story as we noticed from what Nehemiah did as we read here *“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.” (Nehemiah 5:2-5 KJV)*

C. Act properly, act and do not react: *“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.” (Nehemiah 5:6-7 KJV)* 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 sinned and he spoke to them face to face and reprimand them of their sins, rebuked them and for this purpose he gathered them in an assembly. **The same is what you or we need to do. When you or we are grieved with people's sin, you or we should not keep quiet and hurt yourself or ourselves, but go and face them and discuss with them the sin that they did. Nehemiah consulted himself and thought what he needed to do. In the same way, do not react, but think and act appropriately how to handle the sin and the sinners.**

D. Explain properly to them their sins and the effects of it 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 5:8-9 KJV)* Nehemiah explained to those brethren who were practicing usury that they were pushing their brethren to be under more financial pressure and ultimately pushing them to be under the bondage of the non-believers and even losing their faith. Nehemiah and his team by fearing the Lord they were helping by freeing their brethren from much bondage as we explained previously. But those who were lending them with usury are in effect doing opposite to what Nehemiah was doing. They were practicing opposite of the teaching of the Word of God. **Those who are practicing opposite to the teaching of the Word of**

God and what we learned, then you or we need to go and face them and explain to them that they are harming the people and harming you and our effort in helping the people.

E. 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 5:10-11 KJV)* Nehemiah put in front of those culprits what they needed to do and in clear way. *First*, to stop the wrong practice; to stop lending with usury, stop also borrowing without a real reason; and *Second*, by restoring back the losses, and giving compensation to the affected party. **You or we need to give solutions to those who are sinning of how to repent by correcting the wrong doing that they were doing.**

F. Have faith in God 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.” (Nehemiah 5:12 KJV)* 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 or we are ministering.**

G. 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 5:13 KJV)* 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; they will be shaken out, and they shall not be saved if they will not repent. **In the same way we 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.**

H. Use of multidisciplinary approach to deal with the problems and help the people: **We can help the people not only by giving them material things, but by praying for them, sharing with them the message of salvation, teaching them the Word of God, giving them counsel and advises in order to come out and recover from their problems.**

I. Come to the church to ask advises and to open up issues not only to report them but to seek advices and direction: **We are always ready to listen to you and to support you in the troubles that you are passing through. But you need to be transparent, willing to listen to instruction and implement in your life so there will be a progress.**

My dear and beloved: *Go through the message and review what we learned today and ponder on it and apply in your life.*

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 oppression, and to protect your ministry and implement true guidelines that will help others, your children, your family, your disciples and the next generation to serve God and to live in His will.

Let us 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 open up to me the way to deal with the sin of usury and other sins that enslave others and how to help those who are abused and oppressed to be set free and relieved from the power of sin and darkness. Lord thank you for all the teaching that we received from your Word and the good example of Nehemiah being the leader and watchman who help people to be set free.*

Confess and renounce all your sins. Renounce the sin of greed, the love of money, the sin of usury, the sin of carelessness and selfishness, the sin of putting yourself in debt, the sin of borrowing and getting loans with non willingness to return, the sin of abuse, the oppression, taking advantage of the poor and the lack of the fear of God. Lord I confess and renounce the following sins

Lord I commit myself to live in your ways and to apply what I learned today in this message, and to put forward wisely useful measures to deal with sin, to help people and ends their suffering, and to prevent further trespasses. 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.*

Lord thank you for my brethren and Sisters who repented and committed their lives to live for you. Lord we pray that you will protect them and deliver them from the evil one and provide their needs so they will continue to serve you. We come against all the power of darkness and the work of devil against your work, your people and against the church in the name of Jesus.

Lord we pray for us as a church to bless us that we will continue to teach and to preach your Word and to implement your will in our lives and in the lives of our families and the people that we are reaching out. Lord refill us with the Holy Spirit and give us the Spiritual gifts that we need to go and serve you and do the work of yours. Lord provides us with resources to help and to free those who are under the power of darkness that had enslaved them. Lord go before us and lead us to evangelize and make new disciples, and to train new workers and to plant new Bible studies and congregations for the church. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us, and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus name, Amen.

The Fear of God Part 6. Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God. Nehemiah 5:1-13. Leviticus 25:35-38. Leviticus 25:47-53. Psalm 37:21. Proverbs 31:8-9. Isaiah 1:17. Jeremiah 22:16. Matthew 5:42. Exodus 22:25. Deuteronomy 23:19. Deuteronomy 15:8. Deuteronomy 23:20. Luke 6:30. Deuteronomy 15:1-2. Deuteronomy 24:10-11. Luke 6:35.

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