**May 21, 2020**

**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

3750 Washington Street, Sanford, FL 32771; www.RefugeSanford.com

**Elder Joel Brooks, Pastor**

**Bishop M. Ruel McCoy, Sr., Diocesan**

**EXPLOITATION AND RESTITUTION**

**Nehemiah 5:1-19**

***Nehemiah 5:1 "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews."***

In the last chapter, we saw that The Ammonites, Samaritans, and some of the Arabians had threatened war, if they Jews did not stop the building of the wall. We, also, discovered they were on call 24 hours a day. They did not even take off their clothes to sleep. They had to stay prepared for war. From sunrise to sunset, half of the people worked on the wall with their swords strapped to their sides. The other half stood guard. That opposition was harsh but external. Now, we see internal social unrest and injustices caused primarily by Israelites taking advantage of their brethren and exploiting their social conditions. This has caused “a great cry” against these internal oppressors.

***Nehemiah 5:2 "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."***

***Nehemiah 5:3 "[Some] also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth."***

***Nehemiah 5:4 "There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, [and that upon] our lands and vineyards."***

***Nehemiah 5:5 "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."***

These events primarily happened during the 52 days of the building of the wall. Three reasons for the troublesome conditions are given: (1) The Landless were without food; (2) The Landowners were forced to mortgage their land; (3) Borrowing was necessary to pay Persian taxes. These factors created social hardships. The larger the family was, the more corn it would take to feed them. If the breadwinner had to work an extended length of time on the wall and could not provide for his family, it would cause great hardship. There had been a famine in the past, which had caused many of them to mortgage their homes and their land. It would be impossible to pay a mortgage off, if you had no funds coming in. They had been paying tribute to the king of Persia. Even though he released them to come to their homeland, he did not let them come without them paying tribute. Judaea was like all of the other countries that Persia had controlled. They all had to pay tribute. They must get back to making money, so they could pay their bills. This was a tragic situation, when the creditors put family members of those in debt in bondage. At the time this was written, people who could not pay their debts became the slaves of those they owed. Many times, a father would sell a daughter and try to keep the rest of the family together. They loved their children as much as the wealthy people loved their children, they just could not pay their debts and these were the results. The Law had instructions concerning these type of social conditions, but in violation of the Covenant, these Jews misused the Word of God for their personal financial gain and societal exploitation.

***Exodus 21:2-11***

***2If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.***

***3If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.***

***4If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.***

***5And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:***

***6Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.***

***7And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do.***

***8If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her.***

***9And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters.***

***10If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.***

***11And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.***

***Nehemiah 5:6 "And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words."***

The Hebrews were supposed to be considerate of their poorer brethren, and they were to be very lenient in such situations. It appears, the anger of Nehemiah was against those who were taking advantage of this situation.

***Galatians 6:9-10***

***9And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.***

***10As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.***

***Nehemiah 5:7 "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."***

"I consulted with myself" means that he thought about the situation. Self-examination and reflection is one of the greatest catalysts of change. After he thought it out, he rebuked the nobles and the rulers for taking usury which was against the law of Moses. The nobles and rulers seemed not to heed to Nehemiah's rebuke, and he went to the people.

***Deuteronomy 23:19-20***

***19Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury:***

***20Unto 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.***

***Nehemiah 5:8 "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 and his family, according to the Law, had been redeeming other Jews who had been enslaved. These rich nobles and rulers could do the same, if they would. They were all Hebrews and should act as brothers helping one another. They had no good answer to give Nehemiah.

***Nehemiah 5:9 "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 had tried to shame them into doing the right thing, and they would not. Now, he reminds them that God knows exactly what they were doing. He reminded them that their brother Hebrews were not their enemies, and they were treating them as strangers. God would not like this.

***Nehemiah 5:10 "I likewise, [and] my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury."***

It was against God's law for them to collect usury under these conditions. Collecting usury (interest) is not the problem. Jesus rebuked the slothful servant who hid his talent and didn’t at a minimum collect usury.

***Matthew 25:27***

***27Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.***

It’s how and who they were collecting it from. Nehemiah was insisting that they stop taking their brethren's living as a pledge. The law of God did permit a person to take someone's coat that he was wearing for pledge. This was worse.

***Exodus 22:25-26***

***25If 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.***

***26If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down:***

***Leviticus 25:35-38***

***35And 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.***

***36Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.***

***37Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.***

***38I 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.***

***Deuteronomy 15:7-11***

***7If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:***

***8But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.***

***9Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee.***

***10Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.***

***11For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.***

***Proverbs 19:17***

***17He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.***

***Nehemiah 5:11 "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 told them to restore all of the land and houses they had confiscated. He commanded them to even give them 1/10 of their money back. They were even to give them food back that they had taken. Restoration is a biblical concept, and there are passages in both Old and New Testaments that reveal the mind of God on this subject.

***Deuteronomy 22:1-3***

***22 Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother.***

***2And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again.***

***3In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost thing of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself.***

***Luke 19:7-9***

***7And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.***

***8And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.***

***9And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.***

***Nehemiah 5:12 "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."***

They agreed to do exactly as Nehemiah commanded them. Nehemiah wanted to make sure they would keep their word, and he had them to take an oath in front of the priests. They would be afraid to break an oath they made to God.

***Nehemiah 5:13 "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 gave them a vivid example that God would banish them, if they did not keep their word. The entire congregation agreed to the punishment, if they did not keep their word. "Amen" means so be it. The praise was to God for the problem being solved. The people kept this serious oath they had made.

***Nehemiah 5:14 "Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, [that is], twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor."***

Nehemiah had taken a leave of absence from being the cupbearer of Artaxerxes. Nehemiah returned to the Persian king at the end of the 12 years. Nehemiah had not eaten of the people, as most of the governors did. He had supported himself.

***Nehemiah 5:15 "But the former governors that [had been] before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God."***

This was explaining that Nehemiah served as their governor without taking tribute for himself from the people. Nehemiah was serving the LORD the way he felt the LORD would have him serve. He was not governor to make money. He was governor to build the wall of Jerusalem. God had given him this task as his service to the LORD.

***Nehemiah 5:16 "Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants [were] gathered thither unto the work."***

Nehemiah had set the example for all the others, when he and his servants worked on the wall without pay. He did not try to take advantage of his poor brothers and buy up their land cheap. He was there for one purpose, and that was to build the wall.

***Nehemiah 5:17 "Moreover [there were] at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that [are] about us."***

Nehemiah was explaining the vast number of people he had to feed each day. These were daily, but they could, probably, be compared to business meetings today. A large number of these people were the rulers and Jews. Perhaps, they discussed the building of the wall at these times.

***Nehemiah 5:18 "Now [that] which was prepared [for me] daily [was] one ox [and] six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people."***

We are not told exactly where the funds came from for Nehemiah to acquire these things. We do know, it did not come from the people he ruled over as governor.

***Nehemiah 5:19 "Think upon me, my God, for good, [according] to all that I have done for this people."***

Some of the preceding Scriptures were spoken to God, as well as the people. Nehemiah was just explaining to God that he did his very best. Nehemiah was not wanting fame, or fortune. His greatest desire was that he would do the task that God placed before him to the best of his ability.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Who cried out against the Jews?
2. What were the three troublesome conditions that cause this outcry?
3. In verse 3, what drastic measures had they taken to keep going?
4. They had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ money to pay the king's tribute.
5. Which king had they been paying tribute to?
6. They had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ their daughters to pay their debts?
7. When Nehemiah heard their cries, how did it affect him?
8. Nehemiah's anger was against whom?
9. What was meant by "I consulted with myself"?
10. Who did Nehemiah rebuke?
11. What had Nehemiah been doing, that would have been an example for the others to do?
12. When they did not change when Nehemiah tried to shame them, what did he tell them?
13. What was their answer?
14. What threat did he tell them of, if they did not keep their word?
15. How long was Nehemiah governor?
16. How had Nehemiah lived?
17. What did the other governors before him charge the people?
18. Who did he supply to work on the wall?
19. Who ate at his table?