

City of God Part 19 - “**Fear of the Lord**” (9-6-26)

Introduction: Nehemiah 5:1-13 Theme: Injustice among God’s people exposed, confronted, & stopped
They have faced the enemy opposition, and pressed ahead together in the work. But now . . .

1) A Great Outcry

Nehemiah 5:1 (ESV)

Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives **against their Jewish brothers**.

Note: 3 primary issues that are stacking one on top of the other, and are bringing harm to the people . . .

Nehemiah 5:2 (ESV)

For there were those who said, “With our sons and our daughters, we are many. So let us get grain, that we may eat and keep alive.”

Issue 1: We are running out of food to feed our family. They are building a wall, not working the fields.

Nehemiah 5:3 (ESV)

There were also those who said, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain because of the famine.”

Issue 2: Dealing with the repercussions of a famine, they have had to leverage their assets for debt to survive.

Nehemiah 5:4-5 (ESV)

[4] And there were those who said, “We have borrowed money for the king’s tax on our fields and our vineyards. [5] Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children are as their children. Yet we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards.”

Issue 3: The same people who have come out of slavery, are now being enslaved by their own people, and they can’t see a way out because of the lack of work, lack assets, and the famine.

Note: Jewish debt and “slavery” (working off your debt) - resets at 7th year (sabbatical) or 50th year (jubilee)

The desperate conditions of the times are causing everyone to shift into survival mode. They are even taking advantage of one another just to try and survive, much less get ahead.

2) A Holy Confrontation

Nehemiah 5:6-8 (ESV)

[6] I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. [7] I took counsel with myself, and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, “You are exacting interest, each from his brother.” And I held a great assembly against them [8] and said to them, “We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!” They were silent and could not find a word to say.

Note: Very angry, took counsel with himself, then brought charges - Jesus flipping tables (Mark 11:11, 15-18)

This whole journey has been about coming out of slavery, and being established as a new kind of people, different from them out there! Now we are living just like them. Brothers enslaving brothers. Relationships based on a transactional approach with a focus on meeting our own individual needs.

Nehemiah 5:9 (ESV)

So I said, “The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies?”

Note: Walking in the Fear of the Lord (humble reverence & submission), differentiates us from the nations.

Fear of the Lord . . .

Proverbs 1:7-8 (ESV)

[7] The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. [8] Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching

Note: Walking in the Fear of the Lord, requires being instructed and corrected by our Father . . .

Hebrews 12:5-6 (ESV)

[5] And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. [6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

Fear of the Lord - Is looking to Him, what is He like, how should I live in light of being a fellow son and daughter before Him. When I do this, He will lovingly expose what is broken, so it may be corrected.

Therefore, God's Character is the basis for His correction, that we be transformed into His Image as sons . . .

God's transaction with us is one-way. He does for us what we can't. He cancelled our debt at the ultimate cost to Himself. He did it not to initiate a new transactional-based relationship with us, but to cancel even the need to live that way. The gospel instead welcomes us into a New Kingdom, where Self-Giving, Inter-Dependent, Love-Relationship is The Way . . .

Philippians 2:1-4 (ESV)

[1] So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, [2] complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. [3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Note: This is the Kingdom of relationship that we are now a part of in Christ. God's correction is rooted in love that re-aligns us when necessary to living in this Kingdom of Love. We have a new home, we are apart of a new city, with new rules and governance!

Hebrews 12:22-24 (ESV)

[22] But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, [23] and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, [24] and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Note: The ultimate end of living transactionally is that brother kills brother. But instead Jesus has willingly laid down his life that we can be apart of a Kingdom that is completely different.

Application: The world we are in will continue to operate this way. That will have a strong pull on us, & could draw us in. Unless, we stay anchored and remember the Kingdom we are now a part of. We are set apart!

3) A Costly Realignment

Nehemiah 5:10-11 (ESV)

[10] Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest. [11] Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them.”

Note: Nehemiah addresses his own mis-alignment, and calls other to do the same.

Nehemiah 5:12 (ESV)

Then they said, “We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say.” And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised.

Note: The people respond, and Nehemiah makes sure they intended to do what they promise.

Notice the result of this costly re-alignment . . .

Nehemiah 5:13a (ESV)

I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, “So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied.”

Note: Back to Hebrews 12 . . .

Hebrews 12:26-27 (ESV)

[26] At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” [27] This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

Note: There is a shaking out that God is doing, removing that which needs to be removed.

Hebrews 12:28-29 (ESV)

[28] Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, [29] for our God is a consuming fire.

Note: We have been brought into an unshakeable Kingdom, and the proper response is worship. Offering true worship is so much more than singing. It is walking in the fear of the Lord, and allowing our God who is a consuming fire to deal with what needs to go. This is true worship.

Nehemiah 5:13b (ESV)

And all the assembly said “Amen” and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

Note: That’s worship. As in the day of Nehemiah, so with us Lord.

Conclusion: Where have I participated in self-focused, transactional relating with the people around me? Where does Jesus want to come in to flip the tables in my own heart and life?

May I yield to His Lordship, so that I can live among His people in the Way of Love He calls us to.