

## Nehemiah - Rebuild

### Chapter 5 “Danger from Within”

#### Nehemiah Review:

- God’s people, the Israelites, are starting to return to Jerusalem after being exiled for years. Ezra led a group of Jews back, rebuilt God’s Temple and through his persistent teaching, some of the people living in Jerusalem turned from their sinful lives back to God.
- Nehemiah is a cupbearer for King Artaxerxes in Persia. Nehemiah is called by God to return to Jerusalem and help rebuild the walls of the city. With the King’s permission, Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem and leads the Jewish people in the rebuilding.
- In Chapter 4, we saw opposition against the rebuilding occur from external forces but also saw a glimpse of internal opposition. We were reminded that everyone will face trials, tribulations, opposition, and persecution in this life. To stay on mission we must be realistic, be aware/watchful and be focused on God.

**Big Idea: Whenever God’s work is thriving, the Enemy tries his best to create trouble. When external force doesn’t work, he will use the tactic of internal conflict.**

**Vv. 1-5: Internal conflict. The sinful human heart is revealed.**

**Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

1. Up to this point Nehemiah’s challenges as a spiritual leader focused primarily on those outside of Jerusalem (Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem). He now faces a problem from within, his very own people.
2. First, the people faced a food shortage from a famine. Second, others had grain but to get it they had to mortgage their fields, vineyards, and homes. Third, others, not wanting to mortgage their property, had to borrow money from their Jewish brothers to pay property taxes to King Artaxerxes. This problem was compounded by the fact that they were charged unreasonable interest rates by their own Jewish brothers. This led to a fourth problem. To repay their creditors they had to sell their children into slavery.

**Matthew 12:35 (NIV)** <sup>35</sup> A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

**Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NLT)** <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.

3. As a Christian we are Christ’s ambassadors, and the world is watching us.

**John 13:35 (NIV)** <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

**Vv. 6-11: Nehemiah addressed the conflict with courage and God honoring actions.**

1. Nehemiah was angry as he confronts the nobles and rulers, but the motivation of his anger was to honor God and protect the vulnerable.
  - a) We need to check out hearts in our anger; is it “human anger”? (Eph. 4:26-27, James 1:19-20)

- **Fearing God: Nehemiah points out in verse 9 the nobles and rulers should be “walking in the fear of our God”.**

- For the unbeliever, the fear of God is the fear of the judgment of God and eternal death, which is eternal separation from God (Luke 12:5; Hebrews 10:31).
- For the believer, the fear of God is something much different. The believer’s fear is reverence of God, to stand in awe of Him: “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him!” (Psalm 33:8)
- Fear is one of the biggest challenges we face. *What fears are you facing that you are making bigger than God?*

**Vv. 12-13: Nobles & Rulers response.**

1. My part, their part, God's part
  - a. It's important to remember that we are designed by God for relationship. This means there are 3 parts always in play in our relationships with others.

**Micah 6:8 (NIV)** <sup>8</sup> He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

**Matthew 22:37-40 (NLT)** <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied, " 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

**Vv. 14-19: Importance of living a life of integrity**

1. Nehemiah's integrity is intact; he reveals how he lived by example.
2. As governor, he was entitled to compensation derived from collection of taxes for Persia.
3. Nehemiah indicates that while previous governors took more than their rightful compensation, he did not take his due. He was still able to provide food for 150 people or more, despite not taking his official allowance.

*"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." -Abraham Lincoln*

**Matthew 6:19-21 (NLT)** <sup>19</sup> "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**Galatians 5:13-15 (NLT)** <sup>13</sup> For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup> But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.

**Application**

- **Align your heart with the heart of God. The Word of God reveals the heart of God.**

- By reading the Bible, you can know the heart of God because Scripture was divinely breathed out by Him.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)** <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God <sup>P</sup> may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- When you read the Bible, ask some of these questions.
  - *God, what are you revealing about who you are? God, what truths and lessons do I need to apply in my own life?*

- **Daily living as a disciple of Jesus. It's not what you do, but who you are.**

- WITNESS: Are you living your life in such a way that others are drawn to Christ?
- UNITY: Are you acting in love towards fellow Christ-followers?
- MISSION: Are you doing your part in being a disciple-maker?

**Ephesians 4:1-6 (NLT)** Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. <sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup> For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. <sup>5</sup> There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.