

July 23rd, 2022AM – Pastor Kevin Olivier
Nehemiah 5:14-19 - “A Godly Example”

- A. It is a very common phenomenon throughout the world that those who rule take financial advantage of their citizens.
- B. As today’s text indicates, Nehemiah’s position as the cupbearer to the king [emperor] Artaxerxes must have paid very well.

Imitate Nehemiah’s godly example.	I. NEHEMIAH’S UPRIGHT DILIGENCE II. NEHEMIAH’S GENEROSITY
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I. NEHEMIAH’S UPRIGHT DILIGENCE

A. Chapter 3 gave a long list of all those who Nehemiah recorded as working on the wall; **Neh 3:5** recorded a group that did not work: “...**the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.**”

- 1. **Neh 5:7** tells us who were guilty of usury & taking the properties & children of fellow Jews: Nehemiah “**contended with the nobles & the rulers & said to them, ‘You are exacting usury, each from his brother!’**”
- 2. The Tekoite nobles likely did not work on the wall because they were busy doing the dirty work of taking away from their brethren who became poor because of the famine (**5:3**).

B. Notice the contrast between these abusive rulers & the godly Nehemiah. → Look at **v16**

- 1. Nehemiah worked on the wall along with all his servants. He led the work by example. He was both upright & diligent.
 - a. Great kings of old went off to war to fight beside their men.
 - b. Nehemiah is a similar example here.
- 2. The fact that Nehemiah had servants indicates he was wealthy.
 - a. Rather than having them tend to the duties of his household, he put them on top of the wall to work.
 - b. As we will see soon, he surely left many servants at home to prepare food.

C. There is great significance to the brief statement, “**we did not buy any land.**” Nehemiah & his court did not take this time of financial hardship among the people as an opportunity to buy land dirt cheap.

- 1. Just because something is lawful, it does not mean that it is the right decision.
- 2. Even if you have it in your power to rightly obtain something, ask yourself if doing so would be merciful & kind to others.

II. NEHEMIAH'S GENEROSITY. → Look at **v14**. Later in **v18**, he repeated something similar **"I did not demand the governor's food allowance."**

A. Nehemiah was the governor of the land of Judah & was allowed to have a food allowance from those he ruled over.

1. His Jewish subjects in Judah would have given him this as a type of local taxation.
2. One pair of scholars paraphrased Nehemiah this way: we "'have not lived at the expense of our subjects, as Persian governors do ordinarily.' Nehemiah's **brethren** here are probably not his brothers only, but his entire court."¹
 - a. Some suspect that Nehemiah may have been given regular funds by the Persian empire, yet also be allowed some local income from those he ruled.
 - b. Others say that Nehemiah accumulated great wealth by his service as the king's cupbearer; however, we will soon find out that the amount of money he spent feeding his daily guests was enormous. It is much more likely he had an income from the king for his service in Jerusalem.
 - c. Nehemiah was very generous to serve with a much-reduced income.
3. The text mentions 2 things that motivated Nehemiah to sacrifice his allotted income:
 - a. He feared God. → Look at **v15**.
 - b. He had compassion. → Look at the end **v18**.
4. There are some who take a job without pay or reduced income because their motivation is not the money; it is because they want to serve others or fulfill a God-given calling.
 - a. Sometimes successful, wealthy business owners make better public officials.
 - b. Someone who goes into office already wealthy has less temptation to be bribed.
 - c. He or she is more devoted to serving rather than making money.

B. Notice Nehemiah's generous hospitality. Instead of taking his allotted food allowance from his fellow believers, he gave them daily food: → Look at **vv17-18**:

1. Hospitality is encouraged by both the OT & NT.
2. Among the 150 Jews he invited, I am sure many were rather poor. Many could never repay him for his generosity. Jesus tells us to do something similar. → Turn to **Lu 14:12-14**.
 - a. The makeup of our congregation has allowed & continues to allow you that opportunity. If not, are you willing to follow the command of Jesus here?
 - b. Because of love, God gave us His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. Love gives. If you love the body of Christ, you will give to your brothers & sisters. A key way is by being hospitable.

Review, further application, & conclusion:

¹ Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Nehemiah](#) (p. 57). Funk & Wagnalls Company.