



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Nehemiah Session 7

Justice Integrity, and Compassion in Leadership. Nehemiah 5:1-19

Introduction

Nehemiah 5 takes place during a critical period in Israel's history. The Jews had returned from Babylonian exile and were rebuilding Jerusalem's walls under Nehemiah's leadership.

However, internal strife threatened their progress. Economic oppression among the people led to suffering, and Nehemiah had to address this crisis with wisdom and justice.

At this time, Jerusalem was vulnerable—its walls were broken, and its people were struggling to reestablish their lives.

External enemies like Sanballat and Tobiah opposed the rebuilding efforts, while internally, wealthy Jews exploited their poorer brethren.

Nehemiah's response provides a model for godly leadership, social justice, and personal integrity.

1. The Crisis: Economic Oppression.

Nehemiah 5:1-5, *And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. ²For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live." ³There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine." ⁴There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. ⁵Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards."*

- The poor Jews complained that they lacked food and were forced to mortgage their lands and homes.
- Some even had to sell their children into servitude just to survive.

Historical Context: The Jews had returned from exile, but many were financially unstable. The Persian Empire allowed

them to rebuild, but resources were scarce, and famine worsened their struggles.

A Great Outcry: The poor Jews protested against their wealthy brethren, who were exploiting them financially.

Lack of Food: Many families struggled to get enough grain to survive.

Mortgaging Property: Some had to mortgage their lands, vineyards, and homes just to buy food due to famine.

Heavy Tax Burdens: Others borrowed money to pay the king's tax on their land.

Forced Slavery: Some families were so desperate that they had to sell their children into servitude, unable to redeem them.

Leviticus 25:35-37, *'If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. ³⁶Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. ³⁷You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit.*

God commands His people to support the poor without charging interest, showing His heart for justice.

- **Life Application:** Economic injustice still exists today—whether in unfair wages, predatory lending, or unethical business practices. Believers must advocate for fairness and extend compassion to those in need.
- **Leadership in Crisis:** Nehemiah’s response in the following verses shows how godly leaders must address injustice.
- **Faith in Hardship:** Even in difficult times, believers must trust God and seek righteous solutions.

2. Nehemiah’s Righteous Anger and Bold Action.

Nehemiah 5:6-13, *And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. ⁷After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, “Each of you is exacting usury from his brother.” So I called a great assembly against them. ⁸And I said to them, “According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?” Then they were silenced and found nothing to say. ⁹Then I said, “What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? ¹⁰I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury! ¹¹Restore now to them, even this*

day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them.”¹² So they said, “We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say.” Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise.¹³ Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, “So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said, “Amen!” and praised the Lord. Then the people did according to this promise.

At this time, the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem’s walls, but famine and taxation had left many in financial distress. Wealthy Jews took advantage of the situation, leading to widespread suffering. Nehemiah’s leadership ensured justice was restored.

Nehemiah was deeply angered by the exploitation and boldly confronted the nobles and officials. He called them to stop charging interest and to return the land they had taken. His leadership led to repentance—the wealthy agreed to restore what they had taken.

Spiritual Lessons

Righteous Leadership: Nehemiah's boldness shows that leaders must stand against injustice.

Obedience to God's Law: Charging interest to fellow Israelites was forbidden, emphasizing fairness and mercy.

Public Accountability: Making commitments before witnesses strengthen integrity.

- **Nehemiah's Righteous Anger:** He was outraged that wealthy Jews were exploiting their poorer brethren.
- **Confronting the Nobles and Officials:** He accused them of charging interest, which was against God's law.

Exodus 22:25, *"If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest."*

Leviticus 25:36, *Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you.*

- **Calling a Public Assembly:** Nehemiah gathered the people to address the issue openly. Nehemiah did not hesitate to confront the problem or the people.
- **Appealing to Their Conscience:** He reminded them that they had redeemed fellow Jews from slavery in foreign lands, yet they were now enslaving their own people.

- **Demanding Immediate Action:** He ordered them to stop charging interest and return the lands, vineyards, and homes they had taken.
- **Public Commitment:** The wealthy agreed to restore what they had taken, and Nehemiah made them swear an oath before the priests.
- **Symbolic Warning:** Nehemiah shook out his robe, declaring that anyone who broke the promise would be cast out by God.

Historical Context: Nehemiah was appointed governor by King Artaxerxes of Persia. He had authority to enforce justice, but he relied on moral persuasion rather than force.

Biblical Example: Jesus expressed righteous anger when He drove out money changers exploiting people in the temple.

Matthew 21:12-13, *Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.¹³ And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "*

Life Application:

Leadership requires courage to confront injustice.

Whether in workplaces, communities, or personal relationships, standing for righteousness can lead to transformation.

3. Personal Integrity & Sacrificial Leadership.

Nehemiah 5:14-19, *Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor's provisions. ¹⁵But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God. ¹⁶Indeed, I also continued the work on this wall, and ¹⁹we did not buy any land. All my servants were gathered there for the work. ¹⁷And at my table were one hundred and fifty Jews and rulers, besides those who came to us from the nations around us. ¹⁸Now that which was prepared daily was one ox and six choice sheep. Also fowl were prepared for me, and once every ten days an abundance of all kinds of wine. Yet in spite of this I did not demand the governor's provisions, because the bondage was heavy on this people. ¹⁹Remember me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.*

Previous governors had imposed heavy taxes and taken food allowances, but Nehemiah chose a different path, **leading by example**.

As governor, Nehemiah refused personal luxuries, choosing to serve rather than exploit. He fed many at his own expense, avoiding the burdens that past leaders had placed on the people.

Nehemiah's Twelve-Year Governorship: He served from the twentieth to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes.

Refusal to Take the Governor's Allowance: Unlike past leaders, Nehemiah did not demand food or taxes from the people.

Contrast with Previous Governors: Others had placed heavy burdens on the people, but Nehemiah led with compassion.

Personal Sacrifice: He personally provided food for officials and guests, showing generosity.

Commitment to the Work: Despite his position, he remained focused on rebuilding the wall.

Prayer for God's Favor: Nehemiah asked God to remember his sacrifices, showing his dependence on divine approval rather than human recognition.

Biblical Example: Paul refused financial support for his ministry to avoid hindering the gospel, showing sacrificial leadership.

1 Corinthians 9:9-15, *For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? ¹⁰Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who ploughs should plough in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? ¹²If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? ¹⁴Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. ¹⁵But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.*

- **Servant Leadership:** True leadership is about serving others, not seeking personal gain.
- **Integrity in Authority:** Nehemiah's example teaches that leaders should prioritize justice and compassion.
- **Trust in God's Reward:** Instead of seeking human praise, Nehemiah relied on God's recognition.

Life Application:

Integrity is crucial in leadership—whether in ministry, business, or family.

People follow those who lead by example, prioritizing service over personal gain.

Conclusion

Nehemiah 5 teaches that leadership is not about power but about service, justice, and integrity.

Lincoln's Leadership in Crisis

During the **American Civil War (1861-1865)**, Lincoln faced immense pressure from political opponents, military leaders, and the divided nation. Despite the challenges, he remained committed to **justice, unity, and moral leadership**.

- **Integrity in Decision-Making:** Lincoln refused to compromise on his belief that slavery was wrong, even when it could have ended the war sooner.

- **Courage to Stand Alone:** Many advised him to delay the Emancipation Proclamation, but he boldly issued it in 1863, changing the course of history.
- **Compassion for the People:** He frequently visited wounded soldiers, listened to citizens, and made decisions based on what was best for the nation rather than personal gain.
- **Resilience in Adversity:** Despite personal losses and political opposition, Lincoln remained steadfast, leading the country through its darkest hour.

Connection to Nehemiah 5

- Like Nehemiah, Lincoln **stood against injustice**, refusing to allow oppression to continue.
- Both leaders **prioritized the well-being of their people** over personal comfort or political advantage.
- Their **faith and perseverance** helped them overcome opposition and bring lasting change.

This story reminds us that **true leadership requires integrity, courage, and a commitment to justice**, even when facing adversity.

But all this happened in the life of Nehemiah because his reverence/ fear of God.

V 9 and 15 talks about the **fear of God**.

When we remove the fear of God in any leader's life then you will not have any character.

Just as Nehemiah stood for righteousness amid injustice, believers today must stand against exploitation, defend the vulnerable, and lead with faith.

God calls His people to reflect His justice, and when we do, restoration and blessings follow.