

The Enemy that Lies Within - Nehemiah 5

The opposition from the outside had so far been successfully resisted. But now **Nehemiah is faced with an even greater opposition – SIN!**

Sin is any action, attitude or thought that goes against God & His divine Law. And no wall, no matter how high, can keep this form of opposition out!

Sin is the enemy from within! And this is a battle that must be fought!

In Neh. 5, it is this kind of opposition that nearly jeopardizes this good work! All that had been accomplished was now at risk of being undone b/c of sin!

Remember, this work of rebuilding the wall represented so much more than just a wall, it represented the rebuilding of the people of God & the reestablishment of God's presence in this world through His people!

What good is a wall if the people of God are in pieces, broken down by sin! Never underestimate the devastation that sin can cause if left unaddressed!

What was the sin that the people of Jerusalem were guilty of? Usury! The rich were exploiting the poor. The "have's" were taking advantage of the "have not's" through excessive interest, slavery & confiscation of lands!

The Mosaic Law/God's Law forbids such behavior amongst God's people – **Ex. 22:25, Deut. 23:19-20, Lev. 25:35-41.** But God's Word had taken a back seat to the people's own desire to advance themselves @ the expense of others

Does this ever happen in our day? Does God's Word ever get set aside due to sinners putting themselves before God and His commands?

Maybe it's not charging high interest rates on personal loans, confiscating someone else's land, or enslaving someone's children. But maybe it's the sin of gossip, sexual immorality, drunkenness, lying, coveting, greed, etc.

What is the sin that goes unchecked among us today? This unrepentant sin also runs the risk of crumbling the church & our witness, just as in Nehemiah's day?

Leading God's people, as a governor like Nehemiah, or as a pastor or elder, is a difficult task, b/c one of our responsibilities is to call sin what it is!

Nehemiah did just that in vs. 6-9. He pulled the people aside & called them out privately & then he brought charges against them publically.

Was this really necessary? The same question gets asked today, if the leaders God has put in place in the church call people out on their sin!

Do you want to know why this is necessary? Vs. 12-13 –*Then they said, "We will restore these people & require nothing from them. We will do as you say" & all the assembly said 'Amen' & praised the Lord. & the people did as they promised.*

The people repented of their sin & vowed to live differently going forward!
Rebuking sin in a person's life should always be about repentance!

What's on the line? Unrepentant sin destroys the sinner, it harms others, it tarnishes the reputation of Christ, & it undercuts the mission of the Church!

If this is true, why then is calling out sin so neglected in the church today?

The answer is we excuse it away! We rationalize! We shift the blame!

It could have been said that the people of God in Neh. 5 didn't have a choice, that their circumstances dictated their actions, that survival demanded it!

- Yes, there was a severe famine in the land!
- Yes, people owed them a debt!
- Yes, they had to make a living!
- Yes, they had to make up for their losses from working on this wall!

But circumstances should never determine obedience to God & His Word! Nehemiah reminds the people in vs. 9 to "*walk in the fear of our God...*"

Ch. 5 concludes with Nehemiah showing how his life was an example of how to walk in such a way – to walk in the fear of the Lord.

- He didn't feel entitled! – Vs. 14
- He didn't use his title/status/money/power to advance himself! Vs. 15
- He worked hard and was numbered among those who labored! Vs. 16
- **He practiced generosity!** Vs. 17
- He did nothing that would be burdensome upon the people! Vs. 18

How might following Nehemiah's example help us today to avoid falling into the trap of sin and "*prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies?*" – Vs 9

When we live mindful of the enemy that lies within, when we live repentant lives, **when we put the purity of the Church above the temptations of this world,** then we too can pray the prayer Nehemiah prays in **vs. 19!**

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