Nehemiah

Part 7 – Chapter 5

Removing Burdens

* Review
* Background
  + There was a famine in the land (5:3)
  + With the people focused on rebuilding the wall, there was less time to harvest grain and make money
  + Many people were destitute (5:2)
  + Landowners were mortgaging their land in order to eat and to pay taxes (5:3-4)
  + Other families were forced to “debt slavery” (5:5, cf. Deut. 28:32)
  + Babylonian, Median, and Persian governments engaged in heavy \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_taxation which amounted to taking advantage of others
* Nehemiah’s response (5:6-13)
  + Righteous anger (5:6)
  + \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ before action (5:7)
  + Confronting wrong-doers (5:7) – “exacting usuary” = lending with interest (forbidden with other Jews Deut. 23:19) or lending against a pledge (regulated by Deut. 24:10)
  + Convincing appeal (5:8)
  + Why are these things wrong? (5:9)
  + A plea to stop these practices (5:10-11)
  + The people respond favorably (5:12)
  + Nehemiah’s illustration and the people’s worship and obedience (5:13) – What’s interesting about their response?
* Nehemiah’s example (5:14-19)
  + Nehemiah practiced what he preached
    - He didn’t take advantage of the governor’s food allowance in light of the economic realities of his people (5:14, 18)
    - He did not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the people with taxes as previous governs had done (5:15)
    - He, his servants, and his other officials all joined the people in working on the wall (5:16-17)
  + Why did Nehemiah live this way? (5:15, 19)
* Leadership insights
  + Leaders can’t be so focused on the work or progress that they ignore interpersonal challenges or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ issues between people (especially different types or classes of people)
  + Nehemiah’s anger, as with his other expressions of strong emotion in this story, demonstrate that a leader’s strongest affections ought to be tied to moral issues of faith and obedience to the Lord (perhaps as opposed to pragmatic issues)
  + Leaders remind people that fearing the Lord and walking in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ought to be of first importance and that taking advantage of others, even when times are hard, is a serious violation of the Lord’s will and gives occasion to enemies of God (5:9)
  + Leaders practice what they preach out of a fear of the Lord and a desire to be an example to the people