

## ACPC Bible Studies 2016: Nehemiah 5:1-19

### *Introduction*

Some Christians say that the Church should not be involved in politics and economics. In this chapter however, Nehemiah directly challenges the economic situation of the country at that time. There were several problems. Firstly, (v1) people were being exploited - by *their own countrymen*. It is bad enough when they were exploited by the Egyptians and Babylonians. However, now they are being exploited by God's own people. (v.2) People could not feed their families. This is fundamentally unacceptable. (v.3 and 4) To get food, people are selling their land and possessions and borrowing to pay tax and getting into debt. This should never happen. (v.5) God's people are selling their daughters, not to foreigners but to *people who also claim to be God's people!* Nehemiah has come to Jerusalem to rebuild the city as a place of worship and truly godly community- and then finds this. He was naturally angry. What does he do? (v6) he considers carefully. Then he talks to the nobles and officials and accuses them directly. He doesn't do anything behind anyone's back. He is open and clear. He speaks only the truth. He reminds them that they must worship and obey God. Then an amazing thing happens. The nobles agree and stop exploiting the people.

### *Nehemiah's reaction*

Firstly, he summons the leaders and made them take an oath to do what they say. Nehemiah knows that talk is cheap. People must publicly accountable. In verse 14, Nehemiah then shows that he himself is living out what he promises. As Governor, he was legally entitled to land, wealth and food. But he does not take these things, because he would be taking them from his people. He demonstrates that he is one of his people. He eats the same food and shares the same work. That does not mean that Nehemiah ate poorly. (v.18) he ate well as the body requires. He ate good meat and every 10 days had good wine. However, we should note that this was not excessive. Also, he shared it with 150 Jews and officials and visitors. At his table, he brought former enemies, ordinary people and the Jewish leaders, and people from other nations together. Nehemiah was reconciling people. He is a superb model for us. (v.19) he humbly asks God to look favourably on his efforts.

### *Notes*

1. V. 13. A symbolic warning. Words are not adequate sometimes. People must see.
2. V.5.6, Nehemiah got angry, but wise enough to consider carefully what he would say.

### *Questions*

1. Look at Matthew 10: 11-14. What is Jesus saying here? How does this relate to Nehemiah?
2. Today, we see the gap between rich and poor growing. What are the issues here?
3. Do you think that taxes and mortgages enslave people today?
4. What do you think Nehemiah would say to "lazy" people?
5. Should Christians be involved in politics? If so, how?

### *Conclusion*

Nehemiah is a wonderful political leader as well as a spiritual leader. He is open and clear. He sticks to the truth. He confronts people and does not talk behind their back. He does not criticise the Jewish leaders but tells the truth and gives them a chance to change. He reconciles all people to each other. He does not live a life of luxury but does his share of the work. He does not think that he is entitled to anything other than that which God has given him. He thinks and prays before he acts. He acts in love for all. He is an example for any Christian leader.

