

Ministry & The Work of God: 9

Handling Problems and Dealing with Difficult Situations – Part 3

Nehemiah 4-6

FAMINE, FINANCIAL CRISIS & OPPRESSION – Nehemiah 5. 1-19

Severe rainfall had destroyed the crops (see Ezra 10.9) - famine in the land (vs3).

- God's people's neglect of God's House (Haggai 1.9-11)
- withholding their tithes (Malachi 3.9-10).

Certain Jews were profiteering off the needy families.

- Those who had run out of money for food were now having to go to extreme measures in order to meet their needs:
 - mortgaging property to buy food
 - borrowing money at a high rate of interest to pay their taxes
 - selling their sons and daughters as slaves
- Great outcry against these men – violated the Law of God regarding the needy (Deuteronomy 15. 7-11)

Nehemiah took up their cause to put this matter right

- He rebuked the nobles and rulers for charging interest - calls for an inquiry
- Nobles and rulers make an oath to stop this profiteering

Nehemiah did not take advantage of certain benefits that he could have had

- He refused to live at the taxpayers expense
- He refused to have anything that his fellow Jews didn't have

CONSPIRACY AGAINST NEHEMIAH – Nehemiah 6. 1-14

His enemies try another plan

- They send for Nehemiah – but it is a plot to do him harm.
- God's work is a great work which should not be neglected - Four times they send for him
- Sanballat accuses Nehemiah of organising a rebellion against the king.
- He writes these accusations in an open letter - reporting Nehemiah for treason

Nehemiah responds

- Sends Sanballat a message – invention of his mind
- **PRAYER**

Sanballat changes strategy:

- He hires Shemaiah the Priest to give a false prophecy
- God reveals to Nehemiah that this is another attempt to cause him to sin and so destroy the work of God
- Nehemiah responds by **PRAYING**

Opposition comes in all forms, even from those who we think should know better.

Nehemiah always responds and deals with these matters prayerfully. It is through prayer that God gives him wisdom to answer his opponents and deal rightly and justly in each situation.

Lessons:

1. We see through Nehemiah's life, that doing God's will was more important to him than life itself.
2. Like Nehemiah, Speak up against what is wrong and challenge it
3. The work of God is not to be used for profiteering, or making money for personal gain.
4. We do not take advantage of other people's situations or misfortunes to further our own lifestyles or ministries.
5. The work of God is to minister to (serve) people not take from them, or to build empires or our own reputation – it is God's work not ours!
6. The work of God is a great work and must not be neglected.
7. Don't be afraid to respond to false accusations.