

Think Upon Me My God +++

Nehemiah 5:1 – 19

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~ Contemporary politics, business, science — and even education, are almost completely corrupt today. Some aspects of global society are wholly untrustworthy beyond repair. Well, what are we to do when corruption creeps into the church? How does God expect the true and genuine Christian to respond to hypocrisy and dishonesty among those who claim to be honest citizens and those who claim to be His children? Corruption doesn't just happen in societal institutions and in the church, though; it also happens in our personal lives. So, if you're not sure what the Biblical response should be to this problem, Nehemiah will be happy to help you understand it all in this report from our Spiritual Safari.

All chapters constituting Holy Writ are wonderful; however, there are a few that are just a little bit more wonderful than others — and this is one of them. In previous reports, we have met the opposition to the work of the Lord; and that opposition has taken many forms. The devil can be stark — but Satan can also be extremely subtle. Today, those who actually believe God and stand for the cause of Christ are having an extremely difficult time in their lives. Nehemiah has seen the enemy laugh at him, gossip and lie to the king about him — and threaten him and the Jews with violence. In our last report, we saw the children of Israel take a trowel in one hand to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem — but held a sword in the other to defend themselves. That's how they built.

In this report, we're going to see opposition from within — not from outside forces as we have previously seen — and this is where the devil inflicts his most effective damage. When Satan couldn't destroy the early church by persecution, he joined them! Today, the devil has moved inside, and he is causing great discouragement, division, discord, dissatisfaction, and discontentment among children of God who desire to honestly serve Him. We have conflict, corruption, and utter confusion in the modern church in this day in which we live....

¹ And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.

² For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live.

³ Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth.

⁴ There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards.

~ Human nature never changes, friends! We may live in an electronic age of mechanics and “*technology*,” – but our problems are exactly the same as they ever were. Frankly, our modern gadgets, devices and electronics only compound our problems by making them thornier and more difficult to manage. Anyone who disagrees that each new scientific “*advancement*” only compounds the myriad problems we are already facing simply has no credibility whatsoever. At the time in which we are studying, these people had been so busy rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem that they have neglected their own personal business. In our last report, we saw them become extremely dirty and filthy; but they only stopped working to wash their clothes. It would have been very unpleasant to be standing or working near some of those people.

Modern society is so utterly consumed with the business of doing nothing — and all while calling it the Lord’s work, I might add — that most so-called Christians are, likewise, spiritually filthy and disgusting; and most of them are abhorrent to even be near. Well, these people in Nehemiah’s day were just like us as they became so busy they neglected their own business and had to mortgage their property just to buy some food and pay their taxes. To compound the problem, they were borrowing money from their own brethren and causing a system of usury to flourish....

⁵ Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be

servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

~ Ever since the rebuilding of the walls began, this problem had been festering; but it seems Nehemiah didn't fully comprehend what was happening until now. These people who wanted to do the work of the Lord quietly mortgaged their property to their brethren; which diminished the love and harmony within. We see the same thing in the early church from the very beginning as Ananias and Sapphira lied about the money; and, friends, the problems we face *ALWAYS* has to do with money and lies. I'm not exactly sure why it has to be that way but that's the way it is. You can just write it down that I am speaking from experience now, too, by the way.

People tell me all the time figures don't lie – and that is true – but – liars will figure. Any half-witted certified accountant can present a financial statement that declares a bankrupt company solvent and profitable. There is simply no truth to our reality today. I know this is not a popular message; because when the truth is told, it is never popular! Well, the same thing happens all the time in the church today. That's precisely how the devil takes an office in the church. This is the one- and only-way Satan can gain access, so, he *always* uses this method. Well, Nehemiah deals with the problem directly; and he is going to do so in an extremely frank manner!

Philippians 1: ²⁷ *Only let your way of life be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;* ²⁸ *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.* ²⁹ *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake ~*

When honesty is valued and placed first, *then* harmony will reside in a church. Turning in cooked books and false convert reports that belittle the brethren in an attempt to make yourself appear good and others bad can only possibly sow discord. This is a very practical matter; and the Bible deals with it that way. The problem is that most so-called Christians are totally

and completely ignorant of the Word of God. James had something to say about all of this, also.

James 3: ¹⁶ *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.* ¹⁷ *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.* ¹⁸ *And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace ~*

In this particular case, at the time in which we are studying, these brethren had borrowed money from their own people. The problem was so bad that some of them were forced to sell their sons and daughters into slavery to pay their debt. It was temporary, but long enough to wreck their lives. To make matters worse, they were being charged exorbitant interest – usury – and usury may be legitimate in business today, but it was never legitimate for the nation Israel. God made it more than clear they were never to charge their brethren usury in business. So, up to this time, Nehemiah has remained cool, calm and collected. He has just gone along with what was happening as he bore with them patiently thus far; but that’s going to change now....

⁶ And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.

⁷ Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them.

⁸ And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.

~ Nehemiah exposes them right before the group; and that’s the way it should be done when this type of problem is discovered. A church should be warned publicly and openly about those who are not being honest. We have a world operating in profoundly underhanded and unethical — and sometimes illegal — ways today; and the church just seems to look the

other way. Of course, it's much easier to look the other way and ignore the problem than it is to address it. The excuse is usually given by church leaders that they want to act by addressing these issues in a "Christian" way – but they *AREN'T* acting in a Christian way – they're acting like cowards. *That's* what made Nehemiah angry!

Further, most church leaders say we shouldn't get angry; but Paul says, "... *be angry and sin not.*" If we are angry for our own personal welfare, then it is always wrong. However, if we're angry because God's glory, God's program, God's cause, and God's Name are being damaged, my friends, it's time to be angry and sin not. Nehemiah isn't passive and he isn't about to acquiesce. There are times that we are to be stirred up to a righteous indignation when we see things that are blatantly wrong. If you take the position that you don't want to disturb matters, then things are *ALREADY* disturbed – because the devil has moved in and made himself at home. That's when division is inevitable, too, by the way. If there is one thing that is desperately needed in the church today it is conviction and courage towards that which is right and against that which is wrong.

To the outside world, the church doesn't have a good reputation; that's why the world passes the church by. When the lost man reaches his end, he doesn't look to the church anymore, that's a fact. The spiritual movement we are experiencing is almost completely outside of the church. And that's because the church does nothing except emulate the world; and they do a poor job of it. There are a few little groups having a real good time doing so, too; but they aren't reaching the lost world. They aren't helping anyone. The lost world can spot the church's hypocrisy and dishonesty a thousand light years away. The pious platitudes that are rehearsed and quoted in modern religion are simply nauseating, friends. The world outside knows this and, as a result, they aren't about to darken the doors of a church.

On the other hand, very few people respond anymore when the truth is told – but that's another story for another time. The things we need to say today might stir up some of the brethren; and I'm all for being the stirrer. Too many "Christians" want to be sweet and nice all the time – which is absurd. When Nehemiah exposed all of this cowardice and hypocrisy *NO ONE* was able to answer him! They kept quiet while he was around; but the

minute he leaves and returns to Shushan the palace, they're going to start being troublemakers again. Either way, Nehemiah served the Lord properly, correctly and completely in his day. Human nature never changes, my beloved readers....

⁹ Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?

~ The Lord Jesus Christ is a reproach today; both *in* the word and *to* the world. We must ask ourselves: is Christ a reproach because of the conduct of the church? Is He a reproach because of the conduct of believers? Is Christ a reproach because of *YOU* and *ME*? The things that were happening at the time in which we are studying was causing the enemy to blaspheme from within. That's just about the worst possible condition we can ever find ourselves in. There were some real tests for Nehemiah, and we have some real tests today, too – tests that we just happen to be failing as miserably as we possibly can at. Nehemiah could have *EASILY* profited financially from those problems; and we have people placing the dollar ahead of God today. They don't seem to realize that one thin dime placed over the eye will literally block out *ALL* light. We have a lot of people looking at the world with dime-covered eyes in this hour in which we live....

¹⁰ I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.

¹¹ Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.

¹² Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise.

¹³ Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.

~ I do love Nehemiah as he says in verse twelve, “.... *I don’t believe you!*” He is going to make them sign their names to the oath because he knew they were mostly liars and hypocrites. I hate to tell you this, but we’re talking about God’s chosen people right now. One of the biggest mistakes we can ever make is to believe carnal Christians. That’s a sad statement to make; but I just happen to have more experience with this than you care to know about. You’ll fare better dealing with a lost man than you will a carnal Christian.

This world needs some frank talk right now and, trust me: I have *NO PROBLEM* doing the candid talking. If you think you can believe everything another Christian says, you are in for a *HUGE* disappointment. Personally, I have come to the place where I don’t even want to do business with Christians. I would rather work with and for the secular world because I already know I have to watch them! I used to have a bad habit of assuming the Christian would be honest – but I found out the hard way that was just a naïve dream I had! We *SHOULD* be able to trust our brothers and sisters but – we can’t.

Verse thirteen is as harsh and condemning as Nehemiah could have stated the problem. If we had some men with a backbone in the pulpit who weren’t afraid to put it all on the line as Nehemiah did, I think the contemporary congregation would also say, “*A-Men!*” Just one skunk in a field full of cute little kitty cats will louse up the whole outfit and give them *ALL* a bad name. We would do well to mark them out and get the bad apple out of the barrel – and the skunk out of the field.

Nehemiah is actually pronouncing a curse upon what is going on. It must have been a tremendously dramatic and picturesque scene when Nehemiah took off his official government uniform and “.... *shook it out!*” Well, that’s still the way God will shake us out right now if we’re not very careful to make good in our Christian lives. Again, I’m sure most of you don’t like this talk from me; but the only reason one rejects what I am saying is because *THEY DO NOT LOVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST*. Paul told the Galatians he wished he could just cut off those who troubled them. The reason this doesn’t sound good to people is because what they are doing

isn't good. See how that works? Well, those who reject the Lord stopped reading a *LONG* time ago. So, let's move along....

14 Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor.

15 But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

16 Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work.

17 Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us.

18 Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

19 Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

~ Nehemiah had a perfectly legitimate right to draw a salary and invest in real estate – but he didn't. Further, he wasn't taking kick-backs on the side. All Nehemiah took were his expenses and what was needed to sustain those who were loyal to him. It's never good when preachers go into business, either. The congregation will always suffer when a pastor walks with one foot in the world. Oh, I *KNOW* I am not making any friends now – but I'm not teaching the Word of God to make friends. Honestly, I really don't care who reads my reports and who doesn't – because these reports are only to be turned into God.

Well, these people are soon going to forget Nehemiah. Many famous people will learn the hard way the world will, sooner or later, forget them too; irrespective of how popular they have become in their lives. Nehemiah asks God to remember him; because that's all that mattered to Nehemiah. That's all that matters to me, too, my friends. God isn't going to remember our sins – but – He sure is going to remember our good works; *IF* we have any, that is! See, God doesn't forget; because He writes them down. Isn't that wonderful? ~

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