THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

"Disastrous Strife"
Nehemiah 5:1-19

Introduction

1. Building in the face of opposition is the crisp word of the previous chapter. Now comes the trouble! It is similar to the experience of the disciples coming from the mount (Matt. 17:1-13 cf. vv. 14-23).

2. It is not surprising that difficulties of this nature developed within the nation. No group is immunized from internal or external interferance with the will of God for them. The same obtains in the N.T. (cf.Acts. 6:1-5; Gal. 5:15; James 3:16). One could wish that such did not happen, but the facts are there.

3. What did Nehemiah, the leader in Israel, do with this matter? What does the record say? Give your attention to the testimony of the Holy Spirit! Here are the facts:-

1. The problem HEARD. vv. 1-5.
   a. As internal. v. 1.
   The noun "cry" points to an outburst of pain. The evidence of difficulty came from the people and the women. It was against their own :brethren." The clear point is made that Israel had internal combustion! The noun "Jews" enforces this truth.
   b. As personal. vv. 2-4
   Three major problems are listed: 1) insufficient food (v. 2). 2) mortgaged properties (v. 3). 3) overburdened taxation (v. 4). The real problems which were the base for the outburst of pain could not be endured any longer. The elastic had stretched beyond!
   c. As critical. v. 5
   Many of the economically poor had sold their children into slavery in order to make ends meet. Both boys and girls had been caught in the trap. Parents could do nothing because their lands and products were all mortgaged to the rich. It was a deplorable mess!

2. The problem DECRIED. vv. 6-9.
   a. Privately v. 6,7.
   The Hebrew notes that Nehemiah consulted within his own heart with himself. It is an expression of personal

involvement (v. 7). It hit Nehemiah so strongly that he was enraged (v. 6). He fumed! Disturbances of this sort were totally unacceptable to God's servant.

b. Publicly. vv. 7-9.

Nehemiah took a public stand. The verb "rebuke" means that he contended with the nation as a judge. He pleaded a cause! He argued that it was wrong to bring their own brethren, who had already been redeemed from foreign controls, into bondage (vv. 7,8). This was done in a huge assembly (v. 7). The culprits could not give a reasonable reply (v. 8)! Nehemiah categorically argued that what they were doing was not good (v. 9). How we need prophets of God who will inveigh against sin without fear of men!

3. The problem RESOLVED. vv. 10-13.

a. Cease! v. 10.

The verb here means to leave off doing a practice. There is no question about Nehemiah's intent. The idea of enslaving brethren must stop!

b. Restore! v. 11.

What had been taken was to be turned back to the original owner. The call for the "hundredth part" shows that the interest was to be returned also.

c. Promise! vv. 12, 13

Nehemiah exacted a promise from the people to do what he outlined. The priests were called to record this promise. Hence, God was called to witness the event! The people agreed and praised the Lord for the decision.

Conclusion 1. The events here accented Nehemiah's conduct He could have done what others did (v.10). His position would have allowed him privileges (vv. 14,15), but he did not take them. He shared what he had (vv. 17, 18). He worked just like the rest of the people (v. 16). 2. The appeal made is that the nations would not be given a poor representation of the Lord's people (v. 9). 3. The fear of God is important to one's responses in interpersonal relations (vv. 9, 13, 15). No matter what others may do, the point is important that the fear of God controls the true believer. On this account, Nehemiah called upon God to remember him (v. 19). It is trust in the Lord which controls conduct (Eph. 2:8-10). May our witness be true to HIM. Amen.