

Fearing God - Loving People

Then I said, "What you are doing isn't right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God and not invite the reproach of our foreign enemies? Nehemiah 5:9

Text: Nehemiah 5	South Orlando Baptist Church
Topics: Compassion on the Poor, Sacrificial Leadership	November 23, 2014
Supplemental Texts: See below	Dr. David Crowe

What does it mean to fear The Lord?

The fear of God is the deep life-controlling sense of how dangerously holy, just, and righteous God is towards even the least of sinners. When you know God like this (dangerously holy) and when you know yourself like this (utterly sinful), this knowledge acts as a deterrent to sin since all sin is blatant rebellion against this God. When men no longer fear God, they transgress his laws without hesitation." A.W. Tozer

"The fear of God in which godliness consists is the fear which constrains [compels or powerfully produces] adoration and love. It is the fear which consists in awe, reverence, honor, and worship, and all of these on the highest level of exercise. It is the reflex in our consciousness of the transcendent majesty and holiness of God." John Murray

"That indefinable mixture of reverence, fear, pleasure, joy and awe which fills our hearts when we realize who God is and what He has done for us." Sinclair Ferguson

A proper fear of God will guide you to...

- 1) Care for the poor (vs. 1-8)
 - A. Nehemiah became concerned for the helpless poor who we being sold into slavery.
 - B. His fear of God compelled him to care for the poor.
- 2) Correct injustice (vs. 9-13)
 - A. Nehemiah called the ruthless leaders to also walk in the fear of God.
 - B. He made them swear an oath to fix what they had done.
- 3) Carry the burdens of others (vs. 14-19)
 - A. While the other governors had laid heavy burdens on the people, Nehemiah did not take advantage of his position.
 - B. Nehemiah's fear of God led him to a life of radical generosity.

Questions for Application

- 1) What do you think are some of the most pressing social problems today?
- 2) What is the conflict between some of the Jews at the beginning of this story? (5:1-5)
- 3) What caused the Israelites' problems? (5:3-5)
- 4) How did Nehemiah react to the Israelites' complaints? (5:6)
- 5) What did Nehemiah do before he took any action? (5:7)
- 6) What accusations did Nehemiah make against the officials? (5:7-11)
- 7) What action did Nehemiah take on behalf of the Israelites? (5:7-18)
- 8) How did Nehemiah insure that the officials would keep their promise? (5:12-13)
- 9) In what ways was Nehemiah different from other officials? (5:14-18)
- 10) What prevented Nehemiah from acting the same way the other officials did? (5:15)
- 11) What did Nehemiah want in return for his generosity to the Israelites? (5:19)
- 12) What does it mean to be devoted to the work God has given us, as was Nehemiah?
- 13) Why do you think Nehemiah sacrificed what he rightfully deserved as a governor?
- 14) In what circumstances might it be good for you to accept less than what you deserve?
- 15) What should motivate us to get involved in social issues?
- 16) What social injustice concerns you?
- 17) How would you like to contribute to solving a particular social problem that concerns you?

Where is Jesus in Nehemiah 5?

1. 5:7 God's law through Moses forbids exacting interest from a fellow Israelite (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:36). The help to the poor anticipates the church's helping the poor (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; 2 Cor. 9:6-15) on the basis of God's generosity in Christ (2 Cor. 8:9; 9:15). (ESVSB)
2. Like Nehemiah, Jesus did not take advantage of his position, but came to serve us and to lift our burdens. (Phil 2)