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Neh 5:8 and said to them, "We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!" They were silent and could not find a word to say.

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Neh 5:10 Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest.

Neh 5:11 Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them."

Neh 5:12 Then they said, "We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say." And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised.

Neh 5:13 I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said "Amen" and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

Neh 5:14 Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor.

Neh 5:15 The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God.

Neh 5:16 I also persevered in the work on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work.

Neh 5:17 Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us.

Neh 5:18 Now what was prepared at my expense for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people.

Neh 5:19 Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.

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Exodus 22:25 “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and **you shall not exact interest from him.**

The matter of lending and exacting interest is prevalent in the world (mortgages, loans etc.). However, in the church life, there should be no such thing. Nehemiah “lent” his brothers money and grain (v.10), but he did not exact interest. Actually, Nehemiah gave his brothers money and grain. This is a very healthy practice in the church life.

Anytime we “lend” money to a brother or sister, it is a healthy exercise to regard that money as “given” and not “lent.” If the brother or sister does not pay it back, we are not bothered because we look at that as something “given.” This exercise will prevent any ill-feelings or offenses from coming in to hinder the fellowship and the pursuing of Christ. The love of money is one of the biggest traps and can ensnare us, even unconsciously, and kill our burden for the gospel and the shepherding of people and the pursuing of Christ.

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1Co 9:12 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, **we have not made use of this right**, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

Nehemiah and his service team refused to eat the portion of food allowance allocated by the governor (v.14). He refused to use his “legal” right at the expense of the saints. He was willing to sacrifice himself, like Paul, and sacrifice his so-called rights rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel.

What about us? The financial grace offering is a grace for us to partake. However, often, we are reluctant to participate in this grace. We like to care for our own needs or our family needs (all legitimate and legal). Are we willing to sacrifice ourselves for the church, even to support the brothers or sisters, the coworkers? If we are working brothers and sisters, this is our joy and our grace. It is not by way of compulsion or duty or responsibility, but a joy to care for others.

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Nehemiah did not let his care for the human needs of the people hinder his burden for the work on rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. He had a plan to build the wall, and even though he addressed the specific needs of the people, and met their needs, he continued with his burden. He did not acquire any land for himself. But he continued to work on the wall according to his plan. Without a plan, we may address many needs and even shepherd this person or that person, but without a goal and without a purpose. Such a serving may not be that effective.

However, Nehemiah was not alone. He had companions, a service team. It is sometimes easy or tempting to labor alone, but the priority should be to have a team of saints with whom to pray and labor together. Again, without a team, our service will be limited.

Nehemiah also was burdened to raise up pillars. He had 150 men who ate at his table. He met their human needs and also had a plan to raise them up. At the same time, Nehemiah preached the gospel. Not only were the Jewish brothers with him, but even those from the surrounding nations ate with him. This means that Nehemiah was burdened, not only for Jerusalem, but also for the nations around him. He was enlarged in his ministry and did not limit himself to his particular field of labor. Indeed, he had a field of labor, but he was willing to be enlarged for the sake of God's testimony in the world, not just in Israel.

Why do the people and their wives and children blame their brothers? Their brothers represent the church in a sense, and the church has not taken care of the actual needs of the saints: study, job hunting, immigration application, marriage and other needs. They even use the saints for their profit. So Nehemiah was angry with the nobles and rulers, because in the church life, someone needs to take care of the families and individuals who have difficulties in life (such as the elderly, the sick, the disabled, those who are pregnant, etc.), and even shepherd those who use the saints. Someone needs to stand up to prohibit the making of a profit (direct selling, selling insurance, doing business in partnership, lending, etc.), and teach in a healthy way. Otherwise, the testimony of the church will be weakened. It is necessary to maintain the holiness of the church, but also to care for the humanity of the saints.

- 5:14 Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor.
- 5:15 But the former governors that were before me had been chargeable to the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver: even their servants bore rule over the people. But I did not so, because of the fear of God.
- 5:16 Yea, also I applied myself to this work of the wall, and we bought no fields; and all my servants were gathered thither for the work.
- 5:17 And there were at my table a hundred and fifty of the Jews and the rulers, besides those that came to us from among the nations that were about us.
- 5:18 And that which was prepared daily was one ox [and] six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days all sorts of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I demanded not the bread of the governor; for the service was heavy upon this people.
- 5:19 Remember for me, my God, for good, all that I have done for this people.

Nehemiah became a role model for everyone. He was sympathetic to the suffering of the people, did not value money, and was willing to give alms. He became an absolutely dedicated person in this way, not just for a short time, but his whole life. This was his life, because he took God's rights into consideration. Every church needs to have such saints. They are the role models for the saints in the church. The greater the number of such brothers in the church, the stronger the church's testimony, and the more the church will receive the Lord's blessing.

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It is very challenging to build up the church (in Nehemiah's time, people returned from the land of captivity and joined the repairing of the wall). We might think that because they loved the Lord and the testimony of the Lord, the Lord would provide them at least “a reasonably good living,” but no. **Why not?**

Instead, the Lord continued to use the environment to train and perfect them, **in particular, the serving ones.**

The reason for the poverty of these people is the large number of many children and women, not because of famine or the building of the walls. Some families lacked food because of the many mouths that had to be fed. For this reason, they pawned their land and borrowed money to pay taxes. They built the city wall under the heavy burden of making a living. So complaints broke out during the construction process, and there arose a great outcry of the people and their wives.

"Be fruitful and multiply " is God's teaching and protection of the exiled people, and also His blessing to the people returning , but now it has become the cause of the people's poverty. God's blessing has not diminished, **but some people have not used their surplus to make up for the deficiencies of the others. They have lost the testimony of the one accord and of loving the brothers.** The breach on the wall might be reduced, but the breach on humanity and love appeared.

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We might think that those who returned from the land of captivity must have loved the Lord and the saints like so called "pillars." Instead, some aspects of their living and behavior resemble that of the Gentiles in the world.

In the church life, when the Lord blesses the church and adds to the number of saints and friends, it also means that church services must increase. There may be some complaints and lack of proper services. Some saints may complain about the lack of humanity or spiritual care. **Why?** Because we do not (or it is very difficult for the saints who have been constituted with Christ's life) to follow the blessed principle of **2 Cor 8:15: As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."** .

In one respect, God blesses some people with a rich supply, but in another respect, these people need to learn to share their blessings given by God. Therefore **Deut 23:19: "You shall not charge interest on loans to your brother, interest on money, interest on food, interest on anything that is lent for interest.** Because God asks the people to lend to their brothers, the purpose is the following: **"You shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be."** (Deut 15:8), but not for profit.

Neh 3:5 And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but **their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord.**

Exo 12:38 **A mixed multitude** also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds.

Num 11:4 And **the mixed multitude** that was among them lusted; and the children of Israel also wept again and said, Who will give us flesh to eat?

Neh 13:3 And it came to pass, **when they heard the law, that they separated** from Israel **all the mixed multitude.**

One group of saints are just like Lot.

We need to learn from the life story of Abraham to be with them..

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**Another group of saints may be able to be built up.
We need to grow and serve like the servant Nehemiah
and his service team in one accord.**

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Praise our Lord that the Israelites (the church) were served by a team with a service plan, in one accord and led by Nehemiah. These team members were patterns and a testimony in the Lord, and gained the trust of the saints. Nehemiah also monitored the saints to know their life and faith level (whether they kept their promise).

Deut 15:7 "If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that Jehovah your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother." However, some saints only cared for themselves, not for the brothers and sisters as members of the body of Christ, and refused to help the poor ones. They damaged the one-accord and lacked a proper testimony of God. Therefore, the poverty of God's people is not due to the shortage of God's grace and provision, rather to our disobedience to the Lord and His words.

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The church needs such a service team led by Nehemiah in one accord: loving and serving the Lord, raising up more pillars, and the saints using all opportunities, participating in great financial offering grace.

Although Nehemiah was the governor of the province, he did not rely on the power of the governor. Instead, **he “feared God” and “prayed to God” in Neh 5:19**, and let God's authority first be manifested in himself. In the church life, the servants of the Lord do not have a position of worldly power and spiritual authority, and their authority is not based on position or qualifications, nor does it rely on ability or knowledge, but entirely depends on how much they obey God. A truly spiritual person must not only put aside the fame and fortune in the world, but also the reputation and fame in the church, in order to exercise and experience the reality of “denying ourselves; losing our soul life and carrying our own cross to follow the Lord”.