Nehemiah 5:1-7

RESPONSE TO DIVISION WITHIN THE CAMP

I. The problem. All was not sweetness as might be implied from chapter 3, but a “great cry” arises, including many of the wives.

   A. The women (1, the food preparers) did not have sufficient grain to feed their families in light of a recent famine (3b).

   B. Another problem was the charging of interest (usury) (7b,10b), which was illegal with brothers (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:36,37).

   C. Disunity is most serious in a community so devoted to the idea of brotherhood.

II. Nehemiah’s response.

   A. First, Nehemiah “was very angry” (6) and “consulted with myself” (7).

   B. Nehemiah called a meeting of the wealthy creditors (7) in a public gathering (13b).

      1. First, he appeals to the unity the Spirit of Christ made.

      2. Second, he appeals to the lenders to apply Jubilee (releasing debt slaves) in light of the present emergency.

      3. Third, he appeals to the testimony their conduct leaves on God and on God’s name (9c).

      4. Further, he calls them to conduct themselves in “the fear of our God” (9b).

   C. And Nehemiah exemplified the way to conduct oneself toward the poor (10,11).

III. Conclusion to this matter.

   A. Note well the manner with which Nehemiah deals with this problem: appeals to the fear of God, not by making rules.

   B. God worked repentance and the creditors “found nothing to answer” (8b) and agreed to these concessions (12a).

   C. Nehemiah concludes with the recording of his prayer to God to “remember.”