

**Introduction:** God IS perfect LOVE. God IS perfect RIGHTEOUSNESS. God IS perfect JUSTICE. In fact, for any positive character quality, God IS perfect that! For this morning's passage from God's Word, the three key character qualities of God, and people created in His image, are: love, righteousness and justice. \*\*\* God's LOVE is sacrificial. This was perfectly demonstrated when His Son, The Savior, died on a cross, an innocent man, taking the failures and shortcomings of all who will ever walk on earth on Himself, so they may be forgiven. All who surrender themselves fully to God are forgiven and adopted into His worldwide family. All who do this are experiencing God's amazing love, joy and peace. \*\*\* The problem is human nature. It is hard for all people to let go of their desire to have full control of their lives. All people want to be self-sufficient! Almost every toddler goes through a phase when she or he keeps saying, 'All by myself!'. This is a way of saying to parents, 'I am grown-up enough to do this without you'. But, this is not how anyone should relate to The Father in heaven. \*\*\* In today's passage, some Jews with more power than the average person were exploiting and oppressing fellow Jews just because they could. They were breaking the second half of God's guidelines for living given through Moses that they were to love their neighbors as themselves. Nehemiah was angry with these selfish men, confronted them, and got them to live God's way by making restitution, so they could all finish rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem. \*\*\* In our Gospel portion, Jesus empowers the twelve disciples to bring both spiritual and physical healing to needy people. Let's go deeper.

**I. While rebuilding the wall, some Jews were exploiting their brothers, Nehemiah became very angry, accused them of not walking in fear of God, and requested they make restoration to the poor. (Nehemiah 5:1-13)**

- A. During a famine the poor Jews cry out against their brother Jews who were enslaving them. (Verses 1-5)
1. Then it happened, outcry of the people and their wives, great, against the Jewish brothers. (Verse 1)  
**Cry of distress:** They cried from extreme distress which God always hears. It was the same distress of Yahweh's people described to Moses (Exodus 3:7-9).  
**Division:** The seventh thing Yahweh hates is 'dissension among brothers' (Proverbs 6:16, 19, NJB).
  2. Who were saying, 'Our sons and daughters (and) we (are) many, let us take grain and let us eat, and we will live'. (Verse 2)  
**Food shortage:** Many people facing a food shortage exhorted each other to take food.
  3. Who were saying, 'Our fields and our vineyards and our houses we are pledging as surety (for loans), let us get grain in the famine'. (Verse 3)  
**Borrow:** Many people had no resources to get grain, so they put up their inheritance in God's land as collateral to borrow in order to acquire grain. Risky business.  
**Famine:** We are then told outright, there was famine in Jerusalem and the surrounding villages.
  4. Who were saying, 'We have borrowed silver to (pay) the king's tribute on our fields and vineyards'. (Verse 4)  
**King's tax:** It seems some who put up their land as surety with their fellow Jews, after covering household expenses could not cover their taxes owed to the king, so they borrowed silver with no collateral.
  5. 'And now, the flesh of us and our brothers, as their children ours, behold, we are subjecting our sons and daughters to servanthood; our daughters being subdued, and not in our power to act; our fields and our vineyards (are) to others'. (Verse 5)  
**Trafficking:** 'Subdued' is also 'violated'. Some were so poor they put up their children for collateral, as happens in many countries today. The vile practice of sex trafficking is ancient.  
**Loss of property:** And these people have even lost their inherited God-given property!
- B. Nehemiah becomes very angry at the exploiters, says they are not walking in fear of God, and asks them to fully restore what they took from the poor. (Verses 6-13)
1. Then, exceeding anger to me, when I heard their outcry and words; then, I considered in my heart, and contended with nobles and rulers, and said, 'Usury from his brother, you all (are) exacting'; I called a great assembly. (Verses 6-7)  
**Nehemiah's anger:** When Nehemiah heard the people's cry of distress because powerful Jews exploited their brothers, his anger was greatly kindled so he strongly moved against the evil.  
**Usury:** Yahweh forbade usury among His people (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-39; Deuteronomy 23:19-20).
  2. Then I said to them, 'We bought back our Jewish brothers sold to nations; and you all will sell your brothers as to us they were sold?'; they were silenced and did not find word. (Verse 8)  
**Buy and sell:** They are inconsistent, previously paying to free their brothers from nations, but now they enslave their brothers to themselves. This is inexcusable disobedience to God!  
**Silent:** People who know they are wrong are always silent before God. The Pharisees were silenced when Jesus healed in synagogues on Sabbaths (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-4; Luke 14:1-6).
  3. And I said, 'Not good the thing you all are doing; how not in the fear of God you all are walking so no reproach from our enemies?' (Verse 9)  
**Not good:** He again reminds them what they are doing is not good.  
**Fear God:** He questions their lack of walking in worship to God in faithful obedience by helping the poor and needy. Even enemy nations knew better!
  4. 'Also, I, my brothers and my servants, are lending to them; let us please forsake usury! We must today restore fields, vineyards, olive yards and houses (and the hundred silver), and the grain, wine and oil you all are exacting from them'. (Verses 10-11)  
**Return fields:** Nehemiah commands a full restitution of all they took from their brothers, as in the Jubilee year (Leviticus 25).  
**One hundred:** The Persians charged one hundred percent interest per month! Nehemiah would not have explosive anger over one percent interest. The word was translated 'one hundred' ninety-eight percent of the time by King James' translators). Nehemiah makes these commands because **God's people help the needy among them.**
  5. Then they said, 'We will restore. And from them we will seek nothing. Thus we will do as thou are saying'; then I called the priests, then I charged them to do according to this word. (Verse 12)  
**Will free slaves:** Before God's priests, the exploiters pledge they will correct every wrong they committed. One hundred fifty years earlier, the Jews made the same pledge in the days of king Zedekiah (Jeremiah 34:8-22).

6. Also I had shaken out from my lap; then I said, 'So God will shake out every man who will not perform this word from his house and labor, so he will be shaken out and empty; then all the congregation said, 'So be it', and they praised Yahweh. (*Verses 13a-c*)  
**Deuteronomy curse:** This echoes what happened when Moses instructed the Levites that after Israel crossed the Jordan, to pronounce curses for disobedience, to which they were to respond 'So be it' (Deuteronomy 27:15-26).
7. And the people did as they said. (*Verse 13d*)  
**Kept word:** They all kept their word to act favorably to the poor and needy among them according to the Word of Yahweh through Moses and the prophets.

**God's people help the needy among them**

**II. Nehemiah returned his focus to the work on the wall, took no benefits of his office and prayed God would remember him;**

**Jesus gave His twelve disciples power to heal spiritually and physically.** (*Nehemiah 5:14-19; Mark 6:7-13*)

- A. Nehemiah stayed focused on the work of the wall and did not take any 'perks of office' while praying God would remember his work for 'the people'. (*Nehemiah 5:14-19*)
  1. From the day I was commanded to be governor in Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, I and my brothers, the bread of the governor, did not eat. (*Verse 14*)  
**Food:** Nehemiah ate food, but he did forsake the food allowance that would have been taken from his fellow Jews.
  2. The former governors, who were before me, were unresponsive to the people, and took from them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; even their servants lorded over people. (*Verses 15a-b*)  
**Former governors:** These governors may not have been Jewish as the Persian king appointed them. Still the poor and needy were exploited.
  3. And I, not I did so because of the fear of God; also, I held fast to the work on the wall, and I bought no land, and all my servants were gathered for the work. (*Verses 15c-16*)  
**Fear of God:** Because of his fear of God, the continual faith to obey God's Word, Nehemiah did not buy land from his needy Jewish brothers.  
**Work on wall:** He steadfastly worked to rebuild the wall of God's city with his servants. He looked after the poor and needy as did Solomon and Josiah (Psalm 72:12-14; Jeremiah 22:15-16).

**God's people help the needy among them**

4. Jews and officials, one-hundred-fifty men, and coming to us from the nations which were around us, at my table, and which was prepared for one day: one ox, six choice sheep, and birds; and every ten days all wine in abundance. (*Verses 17-18b*)  
**Fed his officials:** Nehemiah also took care of the 'middle class'.
5. This bread of the governor, I did not demand because servitude was heavy on this people. Remember me God for good; all I have done on behalf of this people. (*Verses 18c-19*)  
**Gave up 'perks':** In giving up the benefits of office, Nehemiah demonstrated love in action (John 15:12; 1 Corinthians 9:8-15). Let us follow Nehemiah's example of sacrifice so the poor and needy may keep the fruits of their labor  
**Remember me:** As a humble servant, Nehemiah prayed to be remembered by God.

**Bottom line:** One hundred fifty years after Ezekiel, Nehemiah 'stood in the gap' for God's people (Ezekiel 22:29-30).

Let us also show God's LOVE to those the world considers worthless and ripe for exploitation.

**God's people help the needy among them**

- B. Jesus sends out the twelve, giving them power, and they were casting out demons and healing many sick people. (*Mark 6:7-13*)
  1. [Jesus] is calling the twelve, and He began to send them forth, two (by) two, and He was giving them power to unclean spirits. (*Verse 7*)  
**Give power:** Jesus gave power over demons to every pair He sent out from Him.
  2. He commanded nothing they way be taking: only staff, no bread, bag, copper money belt. (*Verse 8*)  
**Sacrifice:** They had to sacrifice things most people would consider essential: food and coins!
  3. But (be) shod (in) sandals, and not you may put on two tunics. (*Verse 9*)  
**Essentials:** They were clothed only in a simple one piece undergarment and sandals.
  4. Where you all may enter into a house, there you all must stay until you all may depart. (*Verse 10*)  
**Stay:** They were not to be moving house-to-house, but they should serve Jesus in a town.
  5. And if a place may not receive nor hear you all, going out you all must shake off the dust under your feet to testify to them. (*Verse 11*)  
**If rejected:** Not everyone will receive or hear with obedience what Jesus' disciples say and do for Him. When they are rejected, they should depart with a dramatic rebuking act.
  6. Having gone out, they proclaimed that people may be repenting. (*Verse 12*)  
**Proclaim repentance:** Jesus' would repeat this first phrase in His last commandment to make disciples of all (Matthew 28:19). Let us continually turn from ourselves to God so He will equip us to do His will in everything.
  7. Many demons they were casting out, and they were anointing many sick with oil and they were healing. (*Verse 13*)  
**Casting out demons:** Over the entire time they were sent from town to town, they cast out demons.  
**Healing sick:** Likewise, they continually healed many people.  
Let us seek to be equipped by Jesus, to bring healing to people who need healing of body and spirit.

**Jesus' disciples heal people spiritually and physically**

**Conclusion:** When some Jews exploited their needy brothers Nehemiah intervened, chastising them for not fearing God and requesting them to fully restore what they had taken. Then, he returned to supervising the rebuilding of the wall, and continued to refuse that to which he was entitled by his position. Five centuries later, Jesus sent out His twelve disciples after giving them power to help people both spiritually and physically. God's people are to love people as He loves people.

**God's people help the needy among them**