

Nehemiah 5:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

Analysis

But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

This verse within Nehemiah 5 addresses themes of justice, integrity, selfless leadership, economic reform. Internal crisis threatens to destroy what external opposition could not—economic exploitation requiring bold reforming leadership. This passage demonstrates biblical principles applicable across both testaments—God's sovereignty combined with human responsibility, faith expressed through obedient action, and the necessity of both individual and corporate commitment to covenant faithfulness. Nehemiah models leadership that combines vision, prayer, courage, integrity, and perseverance amid sustained opposition.

Historical Context

Nehemiah's account occurs during Persian imperial dominance (539-331 BC), specifically 445-433 BC under Artaxerxes I. The 52-day wall completion represents remarkable achievement given opposition and limited resources. Excavations have

confirmed portions of Nehemiah's wall and various gates mentioned in the text. The Persian period was crucial transitional time when Jewish identity shifted from monarchical nationalism to Torah-centered covenantal community. Without political independence, the people's cohesion depended on shared scripture, temple worship, and covenant obedience. This established patterns persisting through the Second Temple period into New Testament times. Understanding this context illuminates Jesus's ministry among a people shaped by these reforms and challenges.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Nehemiah 5:15 deepen your understanding of God's character and His work in human history?
2. What specific action or attitude change does this verse call you to make in your walk with God?
3. How can the principles demonstrated in this passage inform your response to current challenges in your life or church?

Interlinear Text

עַל	הַכְּבִּידָה	מִפְנִים	אֲשֶׁר	בְּרָאשֵׁן	יְמִים	וּבְפִחוֹת	גּוֹבְּרִים	אֲבָנִים	בְּעֵד	מִבְּעֵד	בְּעֵד	אַחֲרֵי	
עַל	הַכְּבִּידָה	מִפְנִים	אֲשֶׁר	בְּרָאשֵׁן	יְמִים	וּבְפִחוֹת	גּוֹבְּרִים	אֲבָנִים	בְּעֵד	מִבְּעֵד	בְּעֵד	אַחֲרֵי	
governors	But the former	H834	not I because	me were	chargeable	H5921							
H6346	H7223		H6440		H3513								
over the people	and had taken	H1992	of them bread	and wine	beside								
H5971	H3947		H3899	H3196	H310								
עַל	שְׁלֹטָה	וְ	תְּעִירִים	מִ	בָּרְאָבָה	יְמִים	שְׁקָלִים	כֹּסֶף	שְׁקָלִים	אֶרְבָּעָה	יְמִים	כֹּסֶף	
of silver	shekels		their servants	bare rule	H5921								
H3701	H8255		H5288	H7980									
over the people	H589	H3808	but so did	H3651	not I because	of the fear							
H5971			H6213		H6440	H3374							
אֱלֹהִים:													
of God													
H430													

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 5:9 (References God): Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?

Isaiah 50:10 (References God): Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

Proverbs 16:6 (Parallel theme): By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

Job 31:23 (References God): For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

Matthew 5:47 (Parallel theme): And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

2 Corinthians 11:9 (Parallel theme): And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

Psalms 112:1 (Parallel theme): Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.

Psalms 147:11 (Parallel theme): The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Proverbs 29:12 (Parallel theme): If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

2 Corinthians 12:13 (Parallel theme): For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

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