

SERMON

DATE: Sunday, February 23-24, 2019

SERIES TITLE: STEADFAST: *Joining God in the Work of Building His Kingdom*

SERMON TITLE: Living in God's Light

SCRIPTURE: Nehemiah 5:1-9

[1] Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews.

[2] Some were saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain."

[3] Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine."

[4] Still others were saying, "We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards.

[5] Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others."

[6] When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry.

[7] I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are charging your own people interest!" So I called together a large meeting to deal with them

[8] and said: "As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!" They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

[9] So I continued, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?"

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Nehemiah expected two things of the Jews in Jerusalem:

1. To Follow Scripture
2. To be Obedient to God

What Does God Expect of Us?

1. Make your decisions in the light of Christ.

- Prayer should be at the root of everything we do.
- Do everything in the Name of Jesus Christ.
- *Colossians 3:17* And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- Seek to know and follow Scripture.

2. Treat everyone as you want to be treated.

- See people for who they are
- Love people as you love yourself
- *Isaiah 1:16-17* Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

3. Live as an example.

4. Serve God with all your heart.

Lagniappe

I write "Lagniappe" to give you a little something extra every week. Sometimes I write about what's happening soon or how the church is doing. Today I want to write about opportunities you and I can take to be a blessing to others.

Here are my four opportunities.

First, be intentional about looking for opportunities to share Christ with other people. The Apostle Peter gave us this exhortation, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). Peter's words indicate that many of these people may be challenging our faith and hope. The Apostle saw this as an opportunity. We should respond not as to a challenge, but as to a tremendous open door. Make your response with gentleness and respect.

Second, deliberately pray for close friends and acquaintances to know Christ. Make it a habit to call their name before God. Pray that God would bless them in every way.

Third, invite someone to something. We have many ministries where people would have an interest. Encourage them to come, or even better, ask them to attend with you. Life is so difficult and challenging and many people know they need help. For this reason, many people will participate if they are invited and encouraged. Studies are very clear that most people who don't know Christ would attend church if someone they knew and respected asked them.

Fourth, be intentional in your spiritual growth. I've noticed in my life that when I am closest to God, I am also most concerned about others. My daily experiences with Christ equip me to help others know Christ.

It is very clear to me that God has opened a door for us. Let's be intentional about walking through that door (Revelation 3:7-8).