

On 22 May our theme was 'Speaking up for the Poor', as we looked at Nehemiah chapter 5. The poor people of the land had to raise loans on the security of their lands because of famine, and when their lands were lost some had to resort to allowing their sons and daughters to be enslaved. The bitter recriminations this brought threatened to derail the whole building project. Nehemiah had to take immediate action. He confronted the creditors who were exploiting their own countrymen and commanded them to restore all the confiscated property and interest. He and others had ransomed Jewish captives from foreign slavery, only for some of the same people to be re-sold. That could not be right. As we considered the message for ourselves, we saw:-,

Firstly, that the only safe way for us to live as God's people is to fear God; then we will not be swayed by selfish interest or governed by other people's opinions. Only God's opinion ultimately matters.

Secondly, the call to generosity should be heeded within our churches. We should look out for those who are in material need and do what we can to relieve them.

Thirdly, we should recognise a duty, so far as we have the means, to help needy people within our society and across the world, for example by finding charities we can support and making sure that we review our giving. Generosity and practical concern for the poor was built into the laws for God's people in Old Testament times, and remains the expectation for us. All we have, we hold on trust as those who will have to give account for how we have used it.