

Restoration – Awareness of the needs of others

Brokenness has the tendency to cause to be very introspective i.e. to focus on our own needs and our own restoration. However, as we submit to God's process of restoration in our own lives we will find that our healing produces a compassion for others. We start looking around us and start realizing that life isn't just about "me". We have a purpose that involves other people.

Nehemiah 5: 1 – 19

1) Restoration makes us aware of the needs of others (vs. 1 – 5)

- Hearing the cry of injustice (v.1)
 - We start listening to what others are saying
 - We hear their unspoken words
 - We become sensitive to their needs and the issues that they are dealing with.
- The problems at hand:
 - There wasn't enough food
 - Some were mortgaging their fields, vineyards and homes for food.
 - Some had to borrow money to pay the king's tax
 - People had lost their land and vineyards and had to sell their children into slavery to pay their debts.
- The problem was that it was the Jewish nobles who were oppressing the Jews.
- We need to ask ourselves whether there is any form of oppression in our church that we need to deal with.
 - Do some feel that they are being dominated by others – that they aren't heard?
 - Are there practical needs in our midst that are ignored?
 - Are unrealistic demands put on us that make us feel that we don't meet the standard?
 - A feeling of being judged.
- With a breaking down of our lives often comes a moral degeneration. Thus morality on all levels needs to be restored during the restoration process.
 - Moral degeneration often includes a mistreatment of others and a promotion of ourselves.
 - Pride

2) Dealing with injustice in our midst (vs. 6 – 13)

- Seeing injustice should make us angry
 - Righteous anger is not wrong.
 - Righteous anger is seeing wrong that is committed and being angry about it. It is not losing your temper or being angry because you didn't get what you wanted.
 - Jesus had a righteous anger when He cleared the Temple.
 - At times Jesus looked at the Pharisees with anger and was distressed at their stubborn hearts (Mark 3: 5)

- Nehemiah confronted the people who were oppressing others:
 - We have spoken about dealing with issues between us. If someone has wronged you or you have wronged someone else.
 - Here we see that sometimes intervention is necessary to deal with an issue as a third party, especially in cases of domination or oppression.
 - He called a meeting. He dealt with it at a specific time and place. He didn't deal with the issues at hand "in passing".
 - He dealt with specific issues. He didn't speak generally and vaguely hoping that those concerned would understand what he was talking about.
 - Issues in the community between certain parties taints the whole community.
 - A call to walk in the fear of God
 - A call for restitution
 - Giving back what you have taken from others.
- 3) Giving up what is ours for the sake of others (vs. 14 – 19)
- Although Nehemiah was the governor of Judah he did not eat the food allotted to the governor.
 - The food came from the people. As they were already starving and in debt Nehemiah considered their needs above his own rights.
 - Previous governors placed burdens on the people.
 - Godly leadership helps carry his people's burdens.
 - Instead of thinking of our rights we ought to think of finishing the work of restoration that has been started – think of what will benefit everyone.

Ephesians 2: 8 – 10 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”