

BETHANY BIBLE STUDY & DISCUSSION



NEHEMIAH PART-5 CHAPTER 5

KJV

8.13.2025

OPPRESSION FROM INSIDERS

GREED & SELFISHNESS OF THE RICH (1-5): Why was there an outcry against the rich? In what ways were the rich oppressing and exploiting the poor? Were the rich helping the poor by lending? What Jewish laws were being broken by the rich?

NEHEMIAH'S RIGHTEOUS ANGER (6-13): How did Nehemiah confront and challenge the rich? What example did he give them? What corrective solution did he offer the rich, and how did they respond?

NEHEMIAH'S SELFLESS EXAMPLE (14-19): How does Nehemiah exemplify godly, selfless, and servant leadership? What motivated him to be different from other leaders? What was his prayer?

REFLECTION

THE DIVINE CALL OF NEHEMIAH: *REPAIR & REBUILD & RESTORE*



REVIEW FROM LAST WEEK, CH.4/POWER OF PRAYER

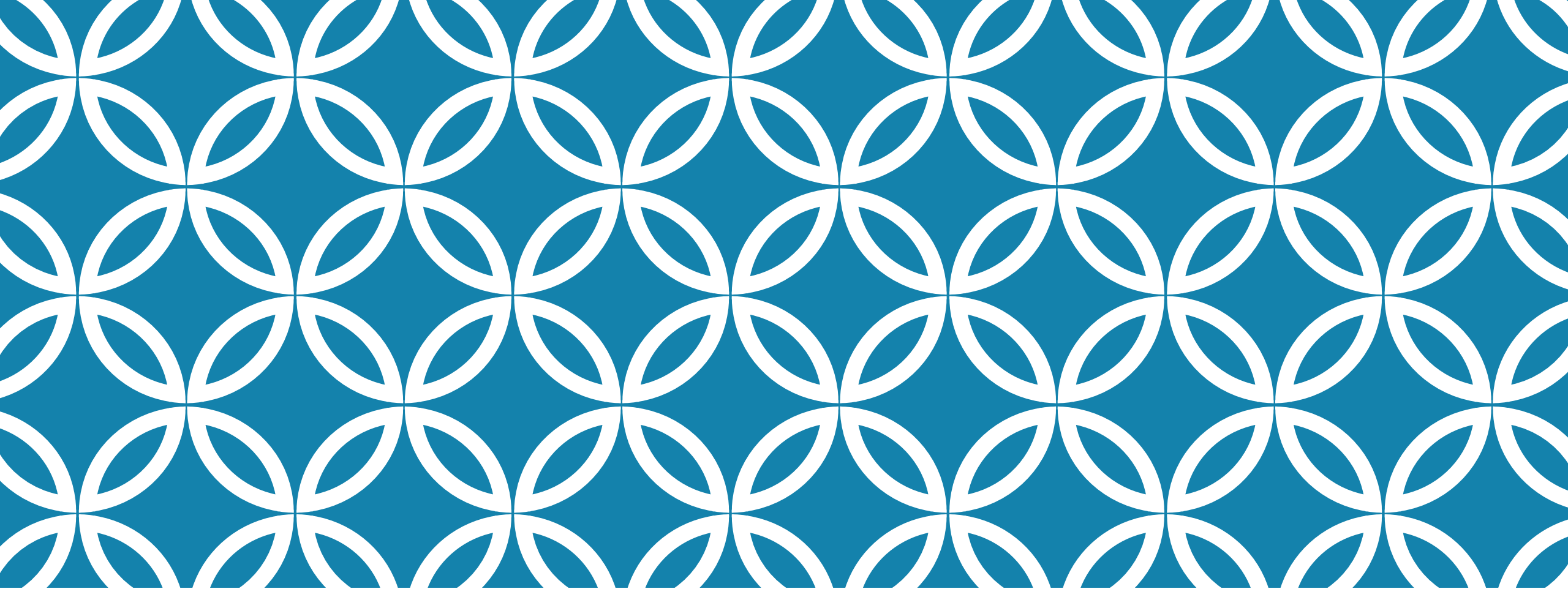
1. Progress on rebuilding efforts triggers opposition from outsiders:

- Sanballat & Tobiah (mockery)
- + Arabs and Ashdodites (conspiracy to launch surprise attack on jews)

2. Physical exhaustion threatens progress

3. All oppositions “overcome” through the **power of prayer + action**

Workers encouraged and enemies withdraw! Work continues.



NEHEMIAH

OPPOSITION FROM INSIDERS

Chapter 5, Part-5

August 13, 2025

GREED AND SELFISHNESS OF THE RICH

⁵ And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.

² For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live.

³ Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth.

⁴ There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards.

⁵ Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

OPPOSITION

In chapter 4, overcame
opposition from within
(physical exhaustion) and
opposition from outsiders

But now (in chapter 5), face
opposition from insiders

A GREAT CRY

AND THERE WAS A GREAT CRY OF
THE PEOPLE AND OF THEIR WIVES
AGAINST THEIR BRETHREN THE
JEWS.

CRY OF SORROW & ANGER & FRUSTRATION

CRY FOR HELP & JUSTICE

A GREAT CRY ... DUE TO OPPRESSION OF POOR BY THE RICH

Famine meant food was limited and expensive

People had to mortgage their fields to afford food (3)

Money borrowed to pay taxes to Persian government (4) but rich charged excessive interest

Children sold as slaves

Inability to pay interest on loans or default on loans would have meant giving up their children as slaves.

LAWS ON INTEREST AND SLAVERY VIOLATED

Deuteronomy 23: 19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury (*excessive interest*) to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: ²⁰ Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Leviticus 25:39-46 Unlawful to enslave fellow Jews ³⁹ And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: ⁴⁰ But as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee.

Excessive interest and slavery also goes against the spirit of love and compassion

COVETOUSNESS
& GREED
CONDEMNED
(APPLIES TO
POOR & RICH)

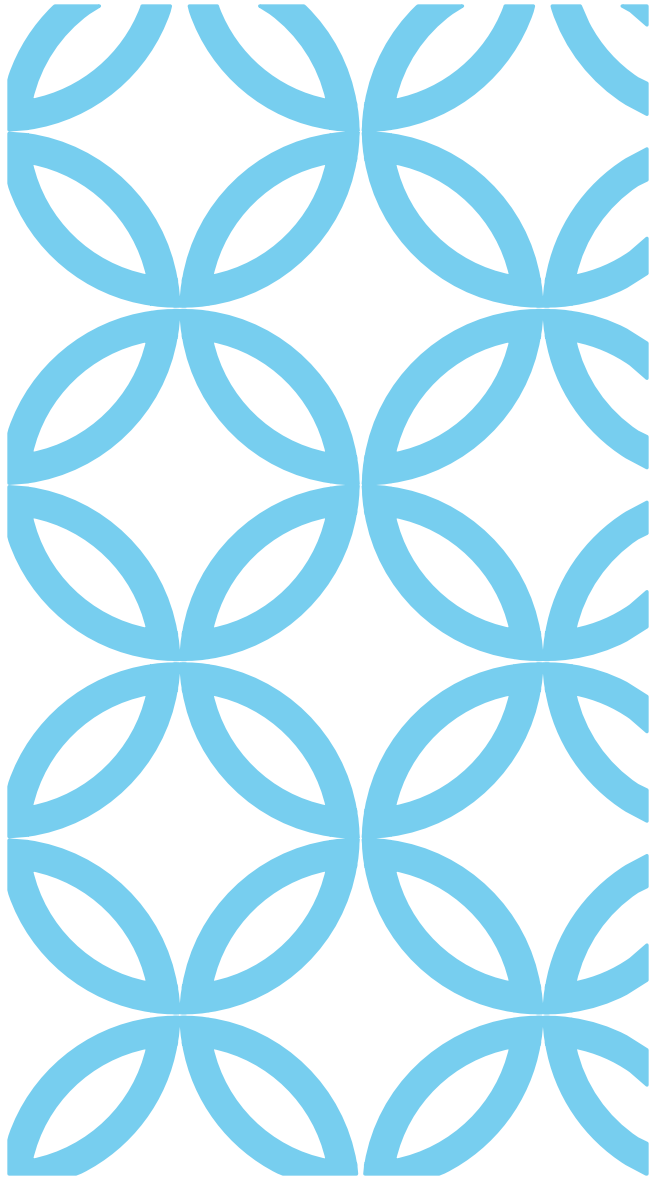
Exodus 20:17 Thou shalt not covet

Proverbs 21:26 He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Luke 12:15 Beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, ... and covetousness, which is idolatry

Ephesians 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.



NEHEMIAH'S RIGHTEOUS ANGER (6-13)

5:6-13

⁶ And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. ⁷ Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them.

⁸ And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.

⁹ 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? ¹⁰ I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.

¹¹ Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.

¹² Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. ¹³ Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise.

NEHEMIAH'S RIGHTEOUS ANGER

Righteous anger – anger without sin

Very angry (6) ... angered by lack of love & unity among Jews. Angered by God's laws being disobeyed.

But refrained from acting hastily on emotion (7) ... rash reaction often leads to sinful behavior.

NEHEMIAH CONFRONTS THE GREEDY AND SELFISH RICH

Nehemiah stands up for the poor and for social justice.
Standing for the truth & **confronting the powerful**
requires courage.

Nehemiah calls a public meeting of wealthy nobles and officials to confront them

1. How can you charge interest from your brethren? (7)
2. How can you bring your brethren back to slavery? (8)
3. Why tarnish your testimony among outsiders? (9)

What is expected of the rich?

WHAT MUST THE RICH DO?

Walk in the fear of God (9)

- Proverbs 9:10 Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
- Fear that is seen in reverence to God in awe of his greatness,
- Fear that understands the love & justice of God
- Fear that is seen in obedience to laws of God

Follow Nehemiah example (10) – lend without charging interest.

Repent and Restore to those who have been exploited wrongfully (11)

POSITIVE RESPONSE BY RICH (12-13)

¹² Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. ¹³ Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise.

RESPONSE

Rich will obey Nehemiah and restore

Took an oath to confirm (oath makes it personal, intentional, accountable)

Nehemiah shook his lap (God will deal justly if they fail to keep the oath)

PRAISED THE LORD

- first worship recorded in Nehemiah
- prompted by repentance, love & unity among people of God

NEHEMIAH'S EXAMPLE (14-18)

¹⁴ Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work.

¹⁷ Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us. ¹⁸ Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

NEHEMIAH'S EXAMPLE

Nehemiah did not exploit his position ... he did not impose tax or additional burden on his people during his 12-years as governor. He did not take from the treasury like other governors.

Nehemiah shared his wealth with others ... 150+ at the table (officials, employees, and others who returned from Babylon)

Nehemiah did not invest in land for future profits ... was focused on the mission of building the walls.

What inspired Nehemiah's behavior?

WHY?

He sought to please the Lord. He served God faithfully for 12 years.

He remained focused on the mission of rebuilding the walls, and did not get distracted by personal wealth building

He feared the Lord

He displayed courage to stand for truth and God's counsel

NEHEMIAH'S (PRIVATE) PRAYER

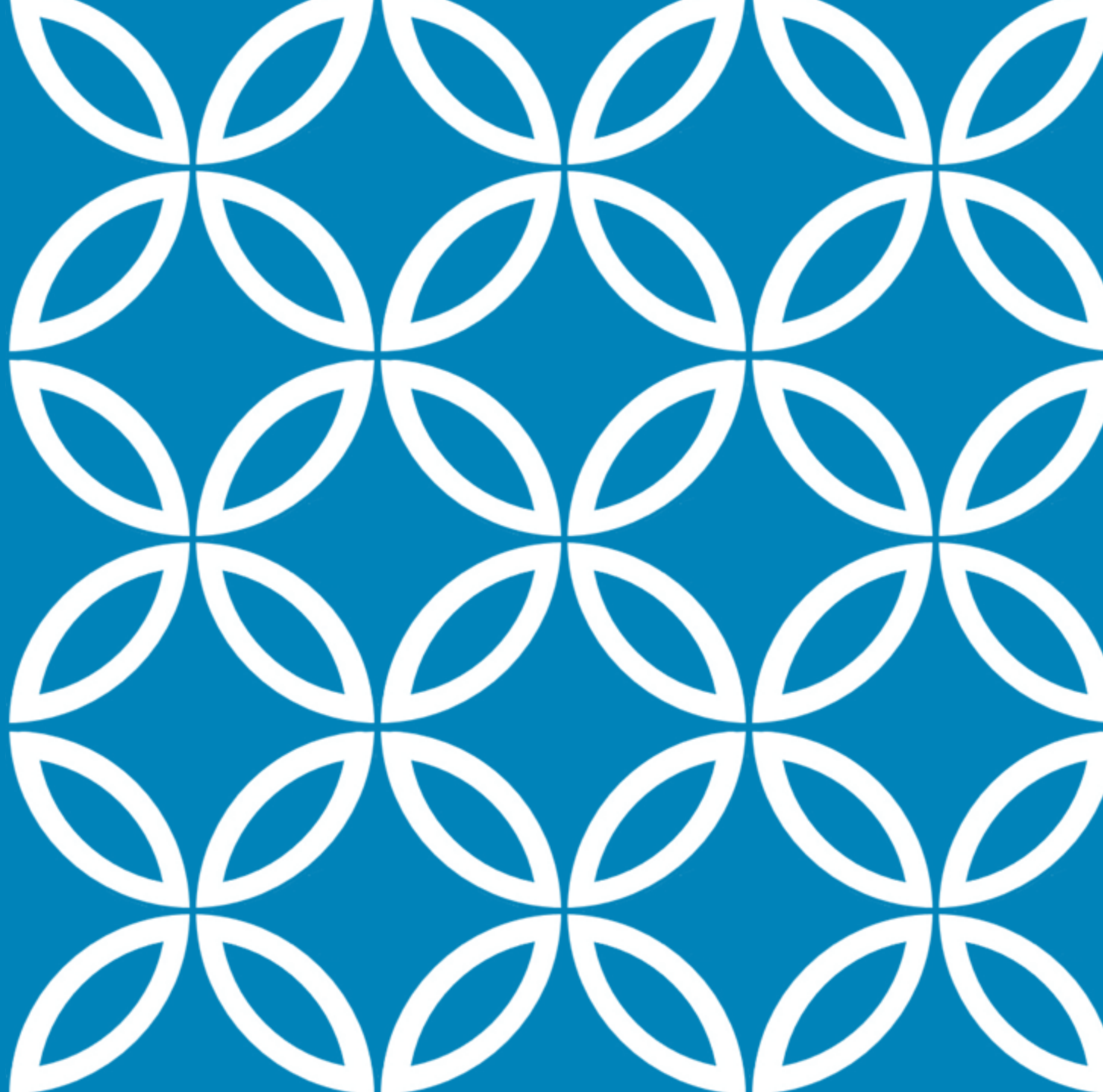
¹⁹ Think upon me, my God, for good,
according to all that I have done for this
people.



It is okay to boast to the Lord (in private)

But Better to boast in the Lord (my soul
shall make her boast in the Lord, Psalm 34:2)

REFLECTIONS



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#1 GOD'S WORK WILL FACE OPPOSITIONS



#2 OPPOSITION DEMANDS A WISE RESPONSE

External Opposition:

Prayer + Action (ch.4)

Physical Exhaustion:

Encouragement (ch.4)

Internal Opposition:

Confront boldly based on truth



#3 GOD'S WORK MUST GO ON

Opposing forces should not discourage us
or derail us from our mission.



#4 ANGER SHOULD NOT LEAD TO SIN

Pause before acting on anger



#5 UNITY LEADS TO BLESSING

Divisions disrupt the work of God.

WARNING OF MARK 3:25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.