

Recap

What is the **problem** that Nehemiah is trying to **solve**?

They are in great trouble and disgrace. **1:3**

The wall was a **symptom** of the problem

Recap

When We Partner in God's Mission

Our enemies know us

The problem will always be greater than us

Our response defines us

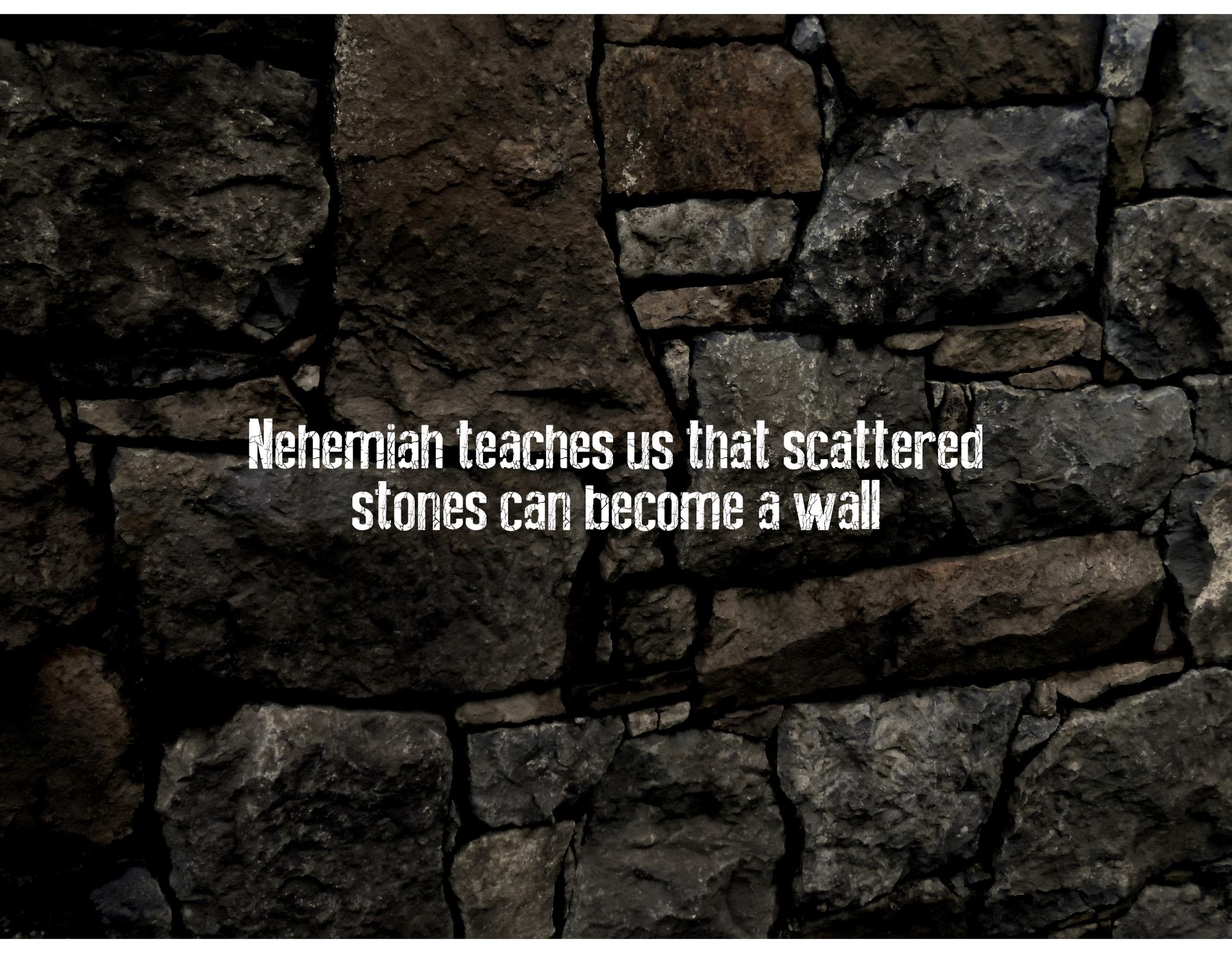
It's easy to have faith when everything is going great. The real test of faith is when you're facing something **that only your faith in God will get you through.** Geoffrey Canada

Recap

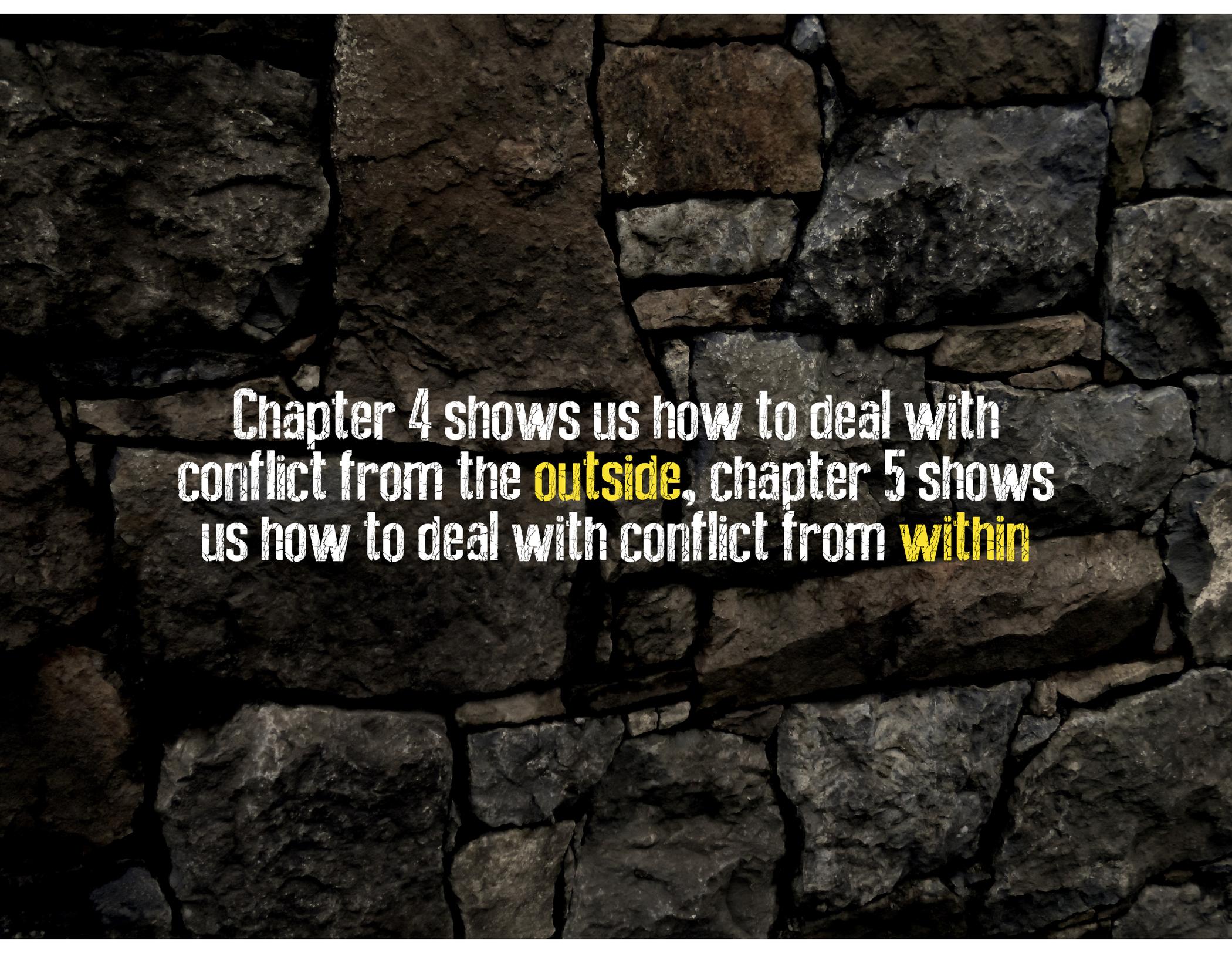
Dear friends, don't be **surprised** at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. **1 Peter 4:12**

Xenizo: to receive as a guest, to entertain, to surprise or astonish by the strangeness and novelty of a thing

we invite / receive surprise because
we have misunderstood the situation



**Nehemiah teaches us that scattered
stones can become a wall**

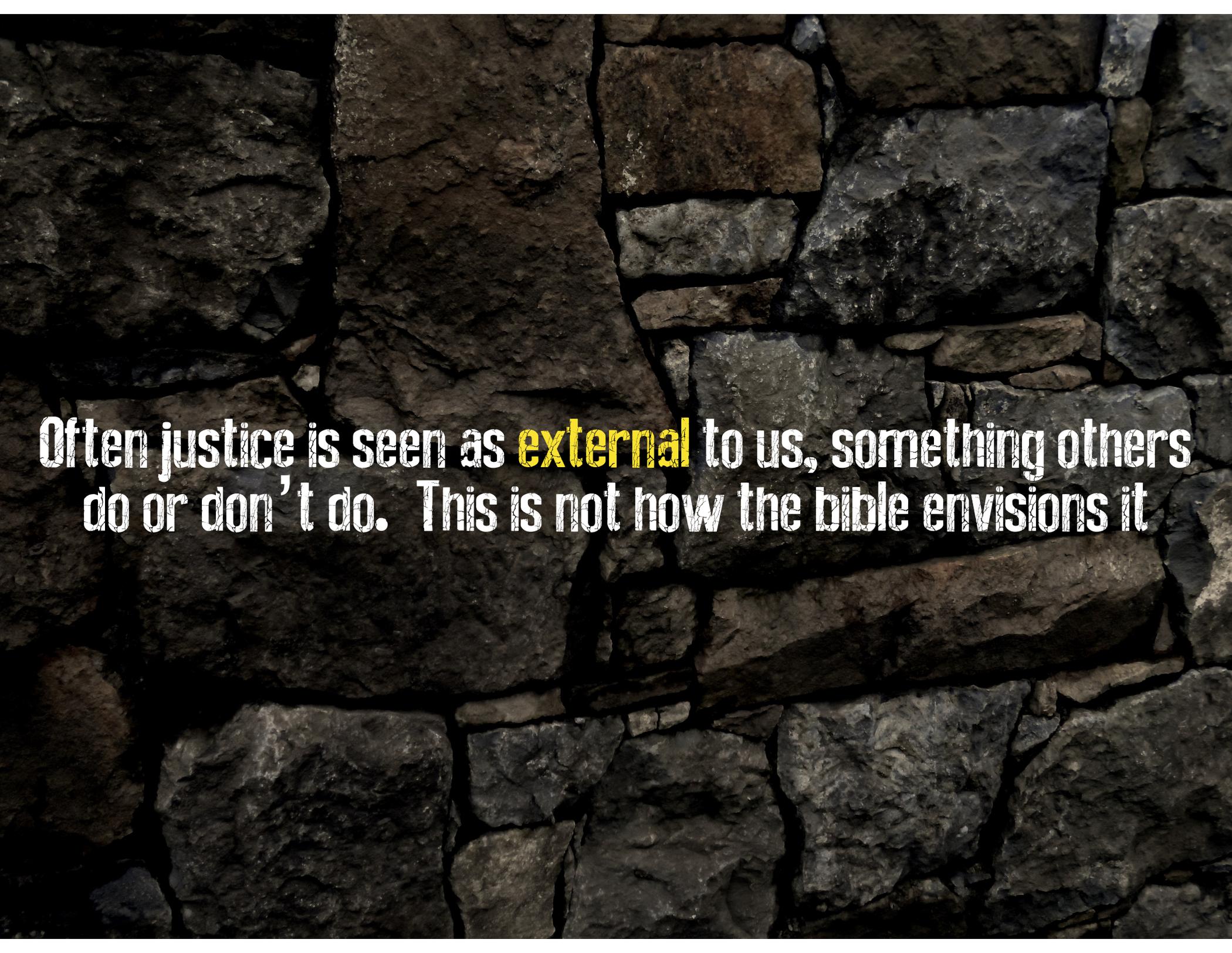


Chapter 4 shows us how to deal with conflict from the **outside**, chapter 5 shows us how to deal with conflict from **within**

What does social justice really mean?, Adam Taylor

Biblical references to the word “justice” mean “to make right.” Justice is, first and foremost, a relational term — people living in right relationship with God, one another, and the natural creation. From a scriptural point of view, justice means loving our neighbour as we love ourselves and is rooted in the character and nature of God. **As God is just and loving, so we are called to do justice and live in love.**

* **As mission** is not a what but a who,
justice isn't a what but a who



Often justice is seen as **external** to us, something others do or don't do. This is not how the bible envisions it.

About this time some of the men and their wives raised a cry of **protest** against their fellow Jews. They were saying, "We have such large families. We need more food to survive." Others said, "We have mortgaged our fields, vineyards, and homes to get food during the famine." **5:1-3**

"Genesis 18 contains Abraham's classic **protest** against what he perceived as Divine injustice.. **The importance of protesting an injustice or a transgression** is emphasized numerous times in rabbinic literature" **Rabbi Prof. David Golinkin**

Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards. 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.” **vs 4-5**

Does the Bible Condone Slavery?, Rabbi Lev Meirowitz Nelson

First, we need to distinguish between the Torah's two categories of slaves: the **Eved K'naani** (non-Jewish slave) and the **Eved Ivri** (Jewish slave). The former refers to slaves who remain so for a lifetime; the latter refers to indentured servants trying to pay off a debt or raise money for their families.

The **Eved Ivri** works for a set period of time, and then goes free.

Does the Bible Condone Slavery?, Rabbi Lev Meirowitz Nelson

The Israelite authorities are obligated to extend to such a slave (non-jewish) their **patronage** and **concern**, and according to Maimonides' system (Laws of Slaves 8:10), which is affirmed in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 167:85), they must bring about the freeing of the slave, and towards this purpose they must offer the owner these options: either he writes the slave a bill of manumission and accepts in return an IOU for the slave's monetary worth, or if he refuses the **court** will annul the enslavement and the slave will go free., **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the 19th-century German scholar**

As we learn in the Torah, if a slave from another town escapes, **the Torah forbids the return of the refugee slave to his master** (Deuteronomy 23:16). The Torah could have gone in a very different direction, based upon contemporary values. For example, in the ancient law found in the Code of Hammurabi (which was issued before the Torah, about 3,800 years ago in Babylonia), Hammurabi legislated (16-17) that one who hides a refugee slave in his home should be put to death, while one who hands over the slave to his owner should receive a payment. **The Torah, on the other hand, ruled that it is forbidden to return a runaway slave.**

Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz

According to the Talmud, one may not remind someone of their past (where they have run from) if they have changed their ways, and we may never do anything to block others from their own teshuva (repentance and transformation). **This requires humility.** In approaching others, we must remember that we do not stand in their shoes and we must not judge them.

Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz

Slaves earned pay (to purchase freedom or provide for their family)

Slaves weren't meant to be kept for life

If they were abused they could legally leave

Slaves celebrated Sabbath

servant would be a better understanding

When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. 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 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. vs 6-8

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? I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest! Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.” **vs 9-11**

“We will give it back,” they said. **“And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.”** Then I summoned the **priests** and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. **vs 12**

I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, **“In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So may such a person be shaken out and emptied!”** At this the whole assembly said, **“Amen,”** and **praised the Lord.** And the people did as they had promised. **vs 13**

Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year—twelve years—neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor. But the earlier governors—those preceding me—placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. **But out of reverence for God I did not act like that.** Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we did not acquire any land. **vs 14-16**

Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations. Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me, and every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people. vs 17-18

Lessons From Chapter Five

There is no **hierarchy** within the kingdom

What we do with our **resources** matters to God

Justice is **transcendent**

Remember me with **favour**, my God, for
all I have **done** for these people. **vs 19**

When the Bible says "remembered," the original Hebrew verb is zakar. Zakar does mean "to remember," but it also means "to bring someone to mind and then **act upon that person's behalf.**" The Hebrew idea of remembering always includes acting on behalf of the one brought to mind.