

September 4th, 2022AM – Pastor Kevin Olivier

Nehemiah 8:9-12 – “Rejoice in God’s Grace”

A. When you come to worship on the Lord’s Day, think about what words come in your mind regarding your time here at church.

1. Today’s text teaches that the worship of our God should lead us to rejoice.
2. Coming in the Lord’s house to receive the means of grace should bring us great joy & thankful hearts.

B. The people of Judah had a great deal to be thankful for.

1. God’s hand of favor was upon Nehemiah & the people of Judah for King Artaxerxes to grant Nehemiah 12 years of leave to go help his fellow Jews in Jerusalem.
2. The broken-down portions of the walls were repaired in 52 days. According to **Neh 6:16**: their surrounding enemies “**recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.**” **Neh 7** said the gates were setup & guards were appointed to the wall.

God calls you to rejoice in His Grace.	I. <u>RECEIVE WORDS OF COMFORT</u> II. <u>CELEBRATE GOD’S GRACE</u>
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I. RECEIVE WORDS OF COMFORT → Look at **v9**.

A. Why were the people of God weeping when they heard the words of the law? The text does not tell us; however, other passages tell us why a true believer may weep when hearing the law of God:

1. During the 18th year of King Josiah, Hilkiah the high priest found the holy Scriptures which had been hidden away in the temple.
 - a. **2 Ki 22:11** “**When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes.**” That is Jewish expression of grief similar to the weeping in today’s text.
 - b. **2 Ki 22:13** King Josiah said, “**great is the wrath of the Lord that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.**”
2. The NT gives us reasons to weep when the law is read. **Rom 7:13** says the law is a schoolmaster in that “**through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.**”

B. Yes, we ought to weep because of sin, yet God does not want us to remain there. In **v9**, Nehemiah & Ezra both told the people: “**This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.**”

1. This was a special day of Thanksgiving after the wall & gates were repaired; nevertheless, this day had the components of what we do here every Lord’s Day (**Neh 7:70 to 8:8**).
2. The words of encouragement & comfort in **v9** should be applied to every Lord’s Day. Also look at the end of **v10**: “**Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.**”

- a. Worthwhile preaching should bring a conviction & even mourning over sin, yet it should also bring in the grace of God.
 1. **Ex 34** teaches God “**will by no means leave the guilty unpunished**” (**v7**), yet that same chapter teaches: “**the Lord God, [is] compassionate & gracious, slow to anger, & abounding in lovingkindness & truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression & sin**” (**vv6-7**).
 2. In the NT, we have the fullness of exactly how God remained both “**just & the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**” (**Rom 3:26**).
- b. The saints of Nehemiah’s day had reason to rejoice & be comforted in the grace of God, yet we have much greater truth & grace revealed to us on this side of the cross.

II. CELEBRATE GOD'S GRACE → Look at **v10**.

- A. There are reasons for celebration— for eating some delicious food & drinking sweet drinks.
1. Some celebrate at football games; we celebrate birthdays. Jesus did His 1st miracle to help His people celebrate at a wedding.
 2. Today's text says they were to celebrate because **“this day is holy to our Lord.”**
 3. We should celebrate every Lord's Day because **“this day is holy to our Lord.”**
- B. Turn to **Isa 58:13-14** to read how we should endeavor to make every Sabbath a delight.
1. It should be a delight for us to come to the Lord's house.
 2. God will bless you if you delight in Him, in His Word, & in His Holy Day (**v14**).
- C. **Neh 8:10** says you have reason to celebrate God's grace because **“the joy of the Lord is your strength.”**
1. You cannot seek your ultimate joy & strength in things of this life or in people. Both fail to meet the standard that only God can fill.
 2. Your ultimate joy & source of strength must be in the Triune God.
 3. A joyless Christian is one who lacks strength & perseverance in this life.
- D. You should celebrate because of God's sovereign, electing love. In **v12**, they ate & drank & celebrated **“a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.”**
1. **1 Cor 2:14**: **“a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; & he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”**
 - a. This word “appraised” here can also be translated as “examined.”
 - b. When the natural, unregenerate person “appraises” Scripture he or she sees no true, spiritual value in it. It is worthless to them because they are spiritually dead.
 - c. When they examine the Word, they place God & His holy revelation under the microscope of their faulty, corrupt reason.
 2. If God has opened your mind & your heart to understand & trust His Word & gospel, you ought to celebrate His sovereign, electing love. This truth is beautifully put in song by Isaac Watts: “Why was I made to hear your voice, and enter while there's room, when thousands make a wretched choice, and rather starve than come? Twas the same love that spread the feast that sweetly drew us in; else we had still refused to taste and perished in our sin.”¹

Review, further application, & conclusion:

¹ #425 “How Sweet and Awesome Is the Place”