

Nehemiah: The Source of True Joy  
Nehemiah 8:1-12

- I. People prepared by the Word love the word
  - A. Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
    1. Baseball Game against Vulcan starship crew in the holosuite
      - a. Fierce competition between captains
      - b. Space station captain gathers and prepares senior staff (who have never played baseball) to play against a trained staff of aliens
    2. Preparing and playing created a mutual respect and reliance among the staff
    3. New reliance brought their interpersonal relationships to a new level of appreciation and trust, despite the fact they lost 10-1.
    4. Results of taking on a hard task together
      - a. Finding untapped resources in each other's commitment to one another and to success
      - b. Sharing the cost of victory and the burden of success build more than projects; it builds people
  - B. Ezra, Nehemiah, and the People of God
    1. Preparations
      - a. 13 years of Bible preparation under Ezra
      - b. 52 days of hard rebuilding for the glory of God under Nehemiah
    2. Results:
      - a. Men, women, children, even aliens and foreigners gather "as one man"
        - (1) Unity of attitude
        - (2) Unity of expectation
        - (3) Unity of Purpose
      - b. Gather to hear God's word
        - (1) "What does God have to say about us and about the work we have done for His glory?"
        - (2) Imagine: People so dedicated and committed to the glory of God in all they are and all they do, they celebrate their success by going to church and listening to sermons from God's word.
    3. Bring the book
      - a. Commanded: **Deuteronomy 31:9-13 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> *Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.* <sup>10</sup> *And Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths,* <sup>11</sup> *when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.* <sup>12</sup> *Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that*

*they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law,<sup>13</sup> and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.”*

- (1) To be read before the Festival of Booths
- (2) To be read to men, women, children, and strangers/visitors
- b. For the purpose
  - (1) That the entire nation may hear and learn to fear the Lord and do the word
  - (2) That the next generation may hear and learn to fear the Lord
- C. Revival breaks out among the people at the preaching of the word
  1. What happens
    - a. The ears of the people are attentive to the word of the Lord
    - b. The people stand for the reading of the word in preparation to hear, understand, and obey
    - c. The leaders of the people read, translate, and teach/interpret for the people
  2. What happened
    - a. The people understood the reading
      - (1) They understood from God’s word God’s holiness and uniqueness
      - (2) They understood from God’s word the privilege and potential of God’s covenant
        - (a) For blessing
        - (b) For curse
      - (3) They understood the awfulness and disaster of their sin
        - (a) They are the reason they are in the situation they are in
        - (b) NOTE: It is helpful and healthy from time to time to look around and ask,
          - i) “How have I contributed to the situation I am in?”
          - ii) “How might my situation change if I devote myself to faith and obedience to the word and will of God?”
    - b. The people began to weep and mourn in repentance
- II. The Joy of the LORD is Your Strength
  - A. Not your usual response
    1. One would expect encouragement for full confession and repentance
    2. Instead, Ezra and Nehemiah point the people to the gracious character of God in bringing them all to this moment.
      - a. **Nehemiah 8:9 (ESV)**<sup>9</sup> And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people

said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.

- b. **Nehemiah 8:10 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”
- c. **Nehemiah 8:11 (ESV)** <sup>11</sup> So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.”

B. The Joy of the LORD

- 1. Joy = chadah
  - a. Verb used twice, noun used twice
  - b. **1 Chronicles 16:27 (ESV)** <sup>27</sup> *Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place.*
- 2. What is this joy?
  - a. It is not an emotional response produced in us from our own personality potential by a work of the Holy Spirit
  - b. This joy is God’s
    - (1) indescribable delight in being God
    - (2) His untroubled satisfaction in the outworking of His will
    - (3) His unflappable contentment with the pace of His mission to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory
    - (4) His unbridled, passionate love to forgive and strengthen and guide and lead and rebuild those who come to Him in faith.
  - c. This joy belongs to God, is God, and relies solely on the conditions God experiences in being God and is not subject at all to the conditions we present or perpetuate in the world.
    - (1) This is cause for celebration
    - (2) God does not cease being God or delighting in being God because we sin or fail or succeed and obey.
    - (3) God’s joy in His own glory is our stronghold for hope, our source of true joy for endurance, for all that we need to walk and live victoriously in this world.
  - d. This joy is not an ability God infuses in you (there is a joy like that from the Holy Spirit); this joy is the gift of Himself God bestows upon you!

C. How do we respond?

- 1. Rejoice and be glad: The glory that left the temple has returned.
- 2. Rejoice and be glad: The king once crucified lives.
- 3. Rejoice and be glad: The sin was judged is pardoned.
- 4. Rejoice and be glad: The joy once lost is found in Jesus Christ, who comes to live in us when we put our faith in Him.
- 5. Rejoice and be glad.