

Reflection Questions

1. When you read passages of the Bible that outline rules for righteous living, what is your first reaction? Guilt? Joy? Helplessness? Why do you think you have that reaction?
2. Reflect on the gifts you have received in Christ. How have these things brought joy to your life?
3. Nehemiah declares, "The joy of the LORD is your strength." How have you found this to be true in your life?

Prayer for Those Searching for Truth:

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open me to the reality of who you are. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent and convincing, and that leads to the life you promise. Amen.

Prayer of Belief:

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever dared admit, but through you I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt on the cross, taking what I deserved in order to offer me complete forgiveness. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Amen.



Nehemiah 8:1-4a; 9-12
November 15, 2015

Eager for the Word

"They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses." -Nehemiah 8:1

The people in Jerusalem, after the completion of the wall, were eager to have the word of God spoken over them, but why?

Remember that in chapter 5, Nehemiah was challenging them to be a new kind of community. Now they wanted to know what it meant to be this new kind of people! The words written by God to the people of God would help give them the corporate identity for which they were looking.

NOTES:

Response to the Word

“All the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.” -Nehemiah 8:9b

The people are eager to hear the word of God, but once they hear it they respond by weeping.

They learned that they weren't living up to the corporate identity the law (word) of God gave them.

It was more than that, though. It wasn't just that they weren't doing it, it was that they couldn't do it. They couldn't live according to all the laws all the time! This brought them to tears.

The law revealed something about the character of God (He is holy). But, it also revealed something about the condition of the human heart (incapable of perfect obedience).

A Call to Joy

“This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” -Nehemiah 8:10b

Nehemiah and the other leaders encouraged the people to respond with joy instead of weeping! Why would they do that?

The law is broken into four main categories:

1. Criminal law: All the laws related to crimes done against another and the punishment for those crimes.
2. Civil law: Laws that reveal your legally held rights against abuse.
3. Social law: All the behavioral laws of what you can and cannot do.

-Cultic (Ritual) Law: Laws that outlined all the religious rituals for the people of God.

The cultic laws included rituals for experiencing the forgiveness of God because of all the ways you didn't follow the other laws!

By calling the people to joy, the leaders were declaring this truth: “God hasn't left you in your guilt.”

In Light Of Christ

In light of Christ we live in the same tension. In the life of Christ we see the beauty of God himself, but we also see a life we cannot live.

We can respond with weeping, anger, rebellion or ignorance. When respond with weeping, it opens up room for celebration.

May our weeping lead to joy that our shortcoming is not the final word!

NOTES:

Prayer

Romans 8:3-4 (NIV), “For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, n God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”