
⁹And Nehemiah, who *was* the governor, 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 nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. ¹⁰Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for *this* day *is* holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." ¹¹So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day *is* holy; do not be grieved." ¹²And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.

1. The effect of reading the Law

- a. As the Law is being read by Ezra & explained by the Levites, the people wept
 - a1. The conviction of sin brought about by the hearing of the Law produces grief over sin
 - a2. Heb. 4:12 the Word of God is convicting
- b. Grief over sin is a common theme in the Bible (Ezra 10, Is. 57, Jer. 31, Esth. 9, etc.)
 - a1. Sorrow over one's sins is a proper response to understanding our guilt
 - a2. Guilt is the 1st step to repentance
- c. Regret can have 2 dimensions:
 - a1. One can have remorse over sin in which he feels guilty, sorrowful, & exposed
 - b1. Remorse is an emotional response
 - b2. Once the feeling of guilt dissipates, so does the desire to change
 - a2. One can repent of sins, where a permanent change occurs in one's life
 - b1. A core change comes from recognizing one's violation against God
 - b2. True repentance comes only from

those who genuinely love God & seek to serve him with a whole heart

- d. Repentance should come before celebration (1 Cor. 5:1-8, 2 Cor. 2:5-11)
 - a1. 1 Cor. 11:27-32 before we approach God, we should examine ourselves for sin
 - a2. A holy God must be approached in holiness

2. Rejoice!

- a. Nehemiah, Ezra, & the Levites stopped the people from weeping
 - a1. This was a time for rejoicing
 - a2. God had brought the people back to Jerusalem, had them rebuild the temple & the wall, & led them to rededicate their lives
- b. This was a time for celebration
 - a1. Even though the people had much to repent of, the purpose of the rededication was to celebrate God, his goodness, & his glory
 - a2. The focus of the rededication was not on self-reflection, but upon the greatness of God & his grace (Lv. 23:23-25)
- c. The Feast Days were times of celebration
 - a1. Passover celebrated the deliverance of Israel from captivity in Egypt
 - a2. Pentecost celebrated the bounty of the harvest & the goodness of God
 - a3. Tabernacles celebrated God's protection & provision in their wilderness wanderings

3. Celebrate with God

- a. God wanted the people to rejoice in God's goodness & in his bounty (a remembrance of his grace)
- b. Nehemiah gave 3 commands:
 - a1. Stop weeping & start rejoicing
 - a2. Feast with choice meats & sweet drinks
 - a3. Share with those who have nothing
- c. The end result of repentance & rededication should be rejoicing, celebration, & praising God (Php. 4:4)