

Joy

Nehemiah 8:10

Well, it is a good life, living for the Lord today, and I'm glad you could join me for this program. This is Lewis Woodard of Lewis Woodard Ministries of Fruitland Park, Florida. In just a few minutes, we'll be looking into the book of Nehemiah, chapter 8 and verse 10. We'll be talking about the joy of the Lord.

Let me invite you today to look at our website, www.LRWM.org. On that website, you'll find what I trust will be encouragements to you, and one of those encouragements will be a section that you will be able to share with us your prayer requests. Send those requests, and we'll be praying with you that God will answer those needs that you have. Also on that you could list some of the answered prayers that you have had, some of the blessings God has bestowed upon you. Be sure to look at the website today and share with us some of the prayer requests that you have.

Also, we would ask you to pray for us and with us. We look to the Lord and we want the Lord's best, not only for you but for those individuals who share this world with us. We want to see people saved, and we want to see Christians turn their lives over to the Lord. The Bible says, *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

We are trusting God to give us a great revival in this land. We want to see our country, our nation, turn back to the Lord. It's up to us as Christians to pray and seek God's face and ask Him to turn our nation back to Him. Now, you can also write me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731.

Now, in Nehemiah chapter 8, verse 10, we're reading about a man who was called of God to go back and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. It says there in verse 10, *Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for [this] day [is] holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.* We need the strength of God today in our lives, and one way that we can have that strength is to have the joy of the Lord fill our hearts.

Here in this section of Scripture, there has come a time in Nehemiah's great enterprise of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem where the law had long been broken by the captives and is now to be established again as the rule of the newly founded commonwealth. Now, naturally enough, there comes a remembrance of many things in the past history of the people, and tears not unnaturally mingle with the thankfulness that again they are a nation, having a divine worship and a divine law in their midst.

The leader, Nehemiah, knowing, for one thing, that, if the spirits of his people once begin to drag, they could not face nor conquer the difficulties of their position of rebuilding the wall. And he said to them, *[N]either be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength* (v. 10). We have a tendency to look back on the things that have caused us problems and maybe we failed the Lord. Maybe we've been out of the will of God, and maybe we don't think we can live for the Lord as a Christian at this point.

In Philippians chapter 3 and verses 13 and 14, Paul the apostle writes, *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but [this] one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things*

which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We need to forget those things that are of the past. We can't change those things, but we can look to the present. We can look to the future as Nehemiah was here and as he was getting these people to understand. "Forget those things that are in the past. We know that you've messed up. I know that you've messed up. God knows that you've messed up," and he says, "We need to press on."

Paul the apostle reinforces that in the book of Philippians where he says, *[F]orgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 3:13-14).

If you've fallen away from the Lord...now, I didn't say you lost your salvation. I said, if you've fallen away from the Lord, if your fellowship has been broken with the Lord because of disobedience or some other reason in your life, the joy of the Lord can be yours today by simply saying, "Lord, I'm sorry for failing You. Please forgive me. From this point on, I am going to serve You."

The Bible teaches us that we are to look to today; we are to look to tomorrow; we are not to look to the past, but we are to look to the Lord for the future.

Now, the joy of the Lord is the natural result of Christian faith. Notice what the Gospel says, the Gospel's provision for joy. In John 1:12, it says, *But as many as received him....that's Jesus....to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name....*

And then in Romans 1:16, it says, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

It makes no difference who you are, where you come from, or what has happened to you in your past. The Bible teaches that, as many as receive Him, to them gives He power to become the sons of God, and that should bring joy and happiness into all of our hearts today, knowing that by trusting Jesus Christ we have passed from death unto life. And it's because of that passing from death unto life that we can have the joy of the Lord in our hearts.

Notice something else, the Gospel provides joy by what it takes away. In John chapter 5, verse 24, the Bible says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.* What joy that brings and should bring to our hearts today that we are no longer condemned, that we have passed from death unto life through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

John 3:18 says, *He that believeth on him is not condemned....* He that believeth on Jesus, in other words, is not condemned but has eternal life. Notice the joy of the Lord is a matter of Christian duty. Sometimes we forget this. We go around with a long face as a Christian, and we sometimes forget who we are. We have a Christian duty to have joy and let that joy be seen in our lives.

Notice it's a commandment of God. In chapter 8 and verse 10 of Nehemiah, once again Nehemiah is speaking to these people as his countrymen, and in verse 10, it says that *[this] day [is] holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*

The Lord commands us to be happy. In Philippians 4, verse 4, it says, *Rejoice in the Lord alway: [and] again I say, Rejoice.* We have no reason to be sad today. We need to be looking to the Lord for our strength, and as we

look to the Lord for our strength, we understand that joy in the Lord is our strength. Not only is it a hindrance not to have the joy of the Lord being shown in our lives, but we see that the reason for that is the lack of faith. We also see that it's a failure to take the position that a Christian has the right to take.

We have been given the right to be happy, not walking around looking like...I've heard someone say that they look like someone who swallowed a peach seed. In other words, you're choked up and you just can't serve God because you're just too unhappy. Well, that's not pleasing to God and that's showing a lack of faith on the part of a Christian. We need to be joyful today in the Lord, and the joy of the Lord is a source of strength.

Joy lightens work. Joy repels temptations. Temptation is not a sin, but giving into that temptation is. If the soul is full of joy, what side of us will be exposed to the assault of any temptation? Joy is necessary for strength. For strength, there must be joy. God loves you today and wants you to be happy. There is no happiness apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you do not know Him as your Savior, you really don't have any reason to be happy, because, you see, your future is bleak. The Bible tells us that there is condemnation for those who do not know Jesus Christ. You're already condemned. It's not what God is going to do to you. God does not do anything to you. God is the one that wants to do for you. He sent His Son that you might have eternal life and that you might have this joy that I've spoken of today. The joy of the Lord comes, first, by trusting Him as your Savior. You need to pray something like this:

"Lord Jesus, I know I can't save myself. If I were to die right now, I would not go to Heaven. I would go to hell. Lord, I ask You to forgive

me of my sin and come into my heart and save me."

Now, if you'll pray that prayer and mean it in your heart, if you'll trust Him to save you today, the Bible says, *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, or the children of God.* If you'll pray that prayer, the Bible says it's through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that you can be saved and on your way to Heaven.

If you are saved today and you do not have or you are not exhibiting that joy of the Lord, you need to get things right with God. You need to ask His forgiveness. "Lord, forgive me for not exhibiting the joy that I have the ability to exhibit because You've saved me."

If you're out of the will of God today, He's willing to help you with that. And remember, He hasn't left you. You haven't lost your eternal life. What do you have to be sorry about? The only thing you have to be sorry about is the fact that you have broken fellowship with the Lord. And that fellowship can be restored today by asking His forgiveness, not for your salvation but for that joy that needs to be in your life. "Lord, forgive me for not letting people know of Your joy that You've given me by trusting Jesus Christ as my Savior."

It's a joy for me just to be able to come to you and to share with you the things that God has placed on my heart. May the Lord bless you, and remember, it's a good life.