

Strength In Joy

Harmony M.B.C., September 11, 2011

Robert P. Myers

Nehemiah 8:1-10

We read here about a happy occasion among the remnant of Israel. They had been laboring to renovate Jerusalem. It had been destroyed by war. The Jews had been scattered and beaten down. But, king Artaxerxes had let Nehemiah and this group of 42,000 men with their wives, children, and servants, come back to Judah and work on rebuilding Jerusalem. They had labored hard while their enemies tried to stop the work. They had gotten the walls repaired and the gates rebuilt, and it was at this time that the month of the Feast of Tabernacles came and this faithful remnant began to think about how the Lord had given them this great task and had blessed them in it, and protected them from the enemy. This is where our text takes up. The people are ready to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in their homeland for the first time in years. They had done the work of God. They had gotten their lives in order. They had reclaimed their holy city. They were looking to God, and they were at a place to rejoice over what they had accomplished. They have something to teach us.

I. God's people can always find joy in getting things right in their lives

- ❖ This occasion began with a change in the hearts of God's people - See verses 5-9 in Chapter 8 (like a new day always begins with the rising of the sun, a new time in our relationship with God begins with a heart experience):
 - V.5 - there was a renewed respect for the Word of God
 - V.6 - there was a renewed reverence for the worship of God
 - V. 8 - even the teachers were enabled to teach in a way that understanding was universal in the congregation
 - V.9 - There was heartfelt responsiveness to what was happening here

II. When God's people get right it is time to rejoice and celebrate - V.10 (first two phrases)

In the same way that being really hungry makes food taste extra-good, when our souls are on good ground with the Lord, and we feel the blessing of His presence, we are then able to rejoice and celebrate our spiritual life, spiritual hunger, and spiritual well-being.

- ❖ Things of life are flavorful and sweet when God's people find and hold to joy (eat the fat and drink the sweet)
 - There is a sense of sacrifice and giving when God's people have joy (send portions)
 - There is an awareness of other of the children of God who are not so blessed as we (unto them for whom nothing is prepared)
 - Every day that God-sent and heart-felt joy stays with us, it is a holy day unto the Lord (for this day is holy unto our Lord)
 - God's people can always find joy when they know that all is well between them and the LORD.
 - The key to this is found in the words of Christ: **John 15:9-11** As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his

love. 11 These things have I spoken unto you, that **my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.**

III. The ultimate reason for discovering and keeping this joy is found in Nehemiah's words in V.10 - "the joy of the LORD is your strength."

- ❖ When nothing else will lift up your head, the joy of the LORD will
- ❖ When nothing else will give you sunshine of spiritual peace, the joy of the LORD will
- ❖ When nothing on this planet will give you any reason to smile and be glad, the joy of the LORD will.
- ❖ Our spiritual strength is renewed when we are able to find joy in the Lord
- ❖ So, when the Lord's joy enables you to possess these things:
 - 1) a shield against depression and discouragement,
 - 2) a calm soul that is at peace with God,
 - 3) an inner happiness that springs from a spiritual fountain,
 - They are the source of joy in the Lord...
 - So, when you possess these, they will make you strong in the Lord and the power of His might!