



**Title:** Repentance & Rejoicing (Nehemiah: week 10)

**Text:** Nehemiah 8:1-18

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**Intro:** The wall has been rebuilt, and the people are occupying the city, but the mission is not finished. More than just merely a physical city, God's desire for Jerusalem was for it to be a spiritual city, where all the nations could come to Him. To that end, we see a shift in Nehemiah 8 as the mission moves from the external wall to the interior hearts of the people.

**Text: Nehemiah 8:1-18**

**1. The Spirit of God moved upon the people in such a way that they took the initiative.**

Something God-breathed was obviously moving through the people. They go from cheating each other on interest rates a few chapters back to demanding that the Bible be read to them. Imagine the scene, upwards of 42,000 people gathered on the city square demanding a half-day long sermon and application. Something God-ordained was definitely stirring the people.

**2. The Word must first devastate us, not merely help us or make us feel better.**

After letting the Law lie dormant for years, the people hear it and it produces sorrow and repentance. This is a great lesson for us today in an age of all too quick happy easy-believism. The Word of God must first break us before it can build us. Although their reaction was out of line with the Feast of Booths in which they should have been celebrating, their reactions is at least an indication of the fact that they felt the conviction of their distance from God as a people.

**3. Obedience to God is almost always counter-cultural.**

Certainly they had taken on some of the customs of the Babylonians and Persians. So, for Israel to recapture the festival of the Feast of Booths and do something as unique like live in tents made of palm branches outside the city limits must have been peculiar to their Gentile neighbors. This is another great lesson for us today that living for Christ runs counter-cultural to the wisdom of this world.

- 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

**4. God will not forsake His people, but will complete His work in them.**

God is faithful to His promise. He told Abraham generations before that his people would be a blessing to the nations. And, even in the midst of their rebellion and sin, God moves on his people so that they continue to be conformed to the image of Jesus. This promise, rather than causing spiritual laziness, should give the Christian great confidence and passion for pursuing Christ-likeness.

- Romans 8:29
- Philippians 1:6

**5. Something unusual thing happens when God gets a hold of people—an unusual mix of repentance and rejoicing.**

A strange combination of emotions hit the people at one once, both sorrow for their sin and joy in God's salvation. The lesson for us is that we are to be a display of God's glory by our joy and satisfaction in Him. Contrary to the pragmatism and self-help techniques of cultural Christianity, people are drawn to Jesus not because he is a helpful life coach, but because He is a Great Savior.

- John 1:29-35