Devotion #290

**Rejoice in the Lord**

**Nehemiah 8:10 (NASB) *“****Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."*

We live in a very blessed time compared to many years gone by and compared to many other nations. We have more disposable goods at hand than ever before. We have technological and medical advances that are second to none. Yet, many people are still depressed or at least living their lives as if there is no hope for tomorrow. It is easy to understand that from a purely human perspective. If God is not the source and focus of our lives, there is nothing but gloom and doom to look forward to. But even then, there are many people who believe God has saved them, but cannot get passed mistakes they have made or sins they have committed, even though the Lord has forgiven them.

That was the case with the people in Nehemiah’s day. As they had come back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and accomplished that task under the leadership of Nehemiah, they still felt the weight and conviction of their sin that caused the problem in the first place. They knew the city of God was in ruins because of their lack of faith and obedience to the Lord, and it overwhelmed them as they heard the prophet Ezra read from the book of the Law. The truth is that law can only bring conviction. It has no ability to offer grace or mercy - only condemnation. Although the law is good and righteous, it has one goal, to point out unrighteousness.

Often God’s people feel the weight of their unrighteousness, which is not a bad thing, but it can weigh people down to the point that they become ineffective for the Lord and people in general. When a person gets this way, they abandon life for the most part and, even though they still love God and consider themselves servants of His, they don’t really do much for Him, and they don’t live their lives joyfully. This was the situation for the people in Israel at the time of Nehemiah’s writing.

So, knowing this, Nehemiah says basically that this is not a time for sadness but for rejoicing. Meaning that even though they had been wayward and sinful and the Lord had judged them, they must return to Him and rejoice since He has forgiven you. They must take delight in the fact that God is a forgiving God and, when He forgives, He no longer holds your sin against you. Nehemiah wanted the people to understand that they needed to stop mourning over what they had done and start celebrating because God had forgiven them.

Warren Wiersbe said of this passage, “It is as wrong to mourn when God has forgiven us as it is to rejoice when sin has conquered us. The sinner has no reason for rejoicing any more than the forgiven child of God has no reason for mourning.” So even though you and I weep or are sorrowful over sinful situations that we have experienced, and we feel the weight of those things, the true child of God has as much, if not more, reason to rejoice. You and I have the power of God that transforms all of our sorrows into joy.

That’s why Nehemiah could say, “The joy of the Lord is our strength”. As much as sorrow brings us down, God has made a way for joy to bring us up. God has done it! He rescued us. So we are not to dwell on the sorrows of life - feel them, yes - experience them, yes - be sorrowful over them, yes - but only for a time of repentance – not for a time of taking away from our joy. God didn’t send His Son to die on our behalf so that we would live our lives in despair and sorrow. He sent Him so that we could and would enjoy life and be at peace in our hearts.

What are you dwelling on that is keeping you down? Certainly there are those troubling times. But don’t let your sin keep you from living in the fullness of God and the joy He wants for you. If you have repented and God has forgiven you, rejoice and let God be your strength as you trust Him for everything. You will find yourself at peace and full of joy.