

Ezra's Reading of the Law to the People

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of God's Spirit in our lives, the significance of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the power of Jesus Christ holding creation together.

Duration: 25:04

Scripture: Exodus 17:6, Nehemiah 8:7, Nehemiah 8:10, Matthew 25:35, John 4:14, John 7:37, Acts 8:8

Topics: "Law Of God"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith emphasizes the importance of experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He highlights the joy that comes from understanding and following God's word, as seen in the examples of the apostles and the people of Samaria. Pastor Chuck also discusses the significance of fasting and repentance as a means of seeking God's forgiveness and guidance. He encourages believers to rejoice in the work of the Spirit and to share their blessings with others, particularly the poor.

Transcript

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you With His Spirit and His love Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul
Oh, let Him have the things that hold you And His Spirit like a dove Will descend upon your life And make you whole
As we pick up in Nehemiah, chapter 8, verse 7. And now, with today's message, here's Pastor Chuck Smith. In Nehemiah, which was the governor, the Tershatha, now up until this point, Zerubbabel was under the title of Tershatha, but there were two, and there could be even more, they were just the governors or overseers. Ezra was the priest, the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people said unto the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God.

Mourn not, nor weep, for all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. It is interesting to me how that weeping is so often a response or a reaction to the work of God's Spirit in your heart. I have so many times people come up, and just as they come up, they just break out weeping.

And then they get all embarrassed. And I say, no, this often is a sign that God's Spirit is just working in your heart. Don't be embarrassed or ashamed about weeping.

It's our response, often, when God's Spirit is really working in our hearts. In my own heart, in my own life, I've had those experiences where as God's Spirit begins to move on your heart, there's just that spontaneous weeping. And as these people heard the law of God, they had the law of God explained to them, the Spirit of God began to work in their hearts, and they began to weep.

The weeping was, in this case, out of the sense of failure. We have failed to keep the law of God. We have sinned against the law.

The weeping of conviction. There can be weeping for joy. Joy, there can be weeping for many things, as it is an emotion that can express so many different things.

The people began to mourn. They began to weep. When they heard the words of the law, God's Spirit began to work in their hearts.

Some people, just when they come in the door, start to weep. God's Spirit just comes upon them, and His Spirit begins to work in their hearts. And they just begin to weep before the Lord.

And that's a beautiful experience. And so they told the people, This day is holy unto the Lord. Now don't mourn or weep.

And then He said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy unto the Lord. Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

When God's Spirit begins to work through the word and the heart of an individual, God is working. It's time to rejoice. There are going to be changes as God's Spirit begins His work in their life.

And thus, as they were convicted for their sins, convicted for their failures, began to weep over it. Good indication that God is working and there's going to be changes. So this is a special day.

God has begun a work in our hearts and in our lives. It's a time to rejoice. And the joy of the Lord will be your strength.

So, prepare a feast. Send portions unto those for whom nothing is prepared. Give to the poor.

And so the Levites stilled all the people saying, Hold your peace, for this day is holy. Don't be grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, to drink, and to send portions to the poor and to make great merriment because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

In the New Testament, it is interesting that as the gospel was taken to Samaria and to other places, the last little footnote, and there was great joy in that city. The ultimate effect of the work of God in our lives is great joy. As we come to the realization that our sins are forgiven, God has worked in our lives, and the sorrow is so often turned into great rejoicing as we see the fruit of the work of God's Spirit within our hearts and within our lives.

And so they found written in the law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month. Now, they began reading on the first day of the seventh month, and as they were reading, they discovered in the law that on the seventh month, the people were to build little booths, and for the period of the feast, the eight days of the feast, they were to move into these little booths with their families. The feast of tabernacles, or tents.

It was the feast that commemorated God's miraculous preservation of their fathers through the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. And thus, the whole idea of the feast was to bring them into remembrance of God's special work in creating this nation. You are a special people.

You are a nation that has been created by God for the purposes of God. And your fathers, when they were brought by God out of Egypt, spent 40 years in the wilderness, and God preserved them. And so these little booths, they would build outside of their houses or on the roofs of their houses, and they move into these little booths with their families.

And at night, as the children would be lying there, looking up through the thatched ceiling at the stars, they'd say, Daddy, I can see a star up there. How come we're living out here? How come we're sleeping out here tonight, Daddy? And the daddy would have a chance to say, Well, honey, our forefathers slept out under the stars for 40 years as they were coming out of Egypt into this land that God had promised to Abraham. And the little children had to sleep at night next to their parents in tents or under the stars.

And as the winds would come blowing through the thatches, they'd say, Daddy, I'm cold. The wind is blowing. Well, honey, our forefathers lived for 40 years like this.

And so it was a method by which they were to be able to pass on to their children the glorious heritage that they had as a nation, a special people created by God for His purposes to bring His Son into the world, that through the seed of Abraham, all of the nations of the earth might be blessed. And so they came across there in Deuteronomy where on the seventh month they were to build these little booths and they were to move out of their houses and live in these booths during this memorial period to remind them of what their forefathers had experienced. And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem saying, Go forth unto the mount and cut down olive branches, pine branches, myrtle branches and palm branches and the branches from the thick trees to make booths as it is written.

So the people went out and they brought in these branches. They made themselves the booths. Every one upon the roof of his house or in the courtyards of their houses and in the courts of the house of God and in the street of the water gate and in the street of the gate of Ephraim and all of the congregation of them that were come again out of captivity made the booths and they sat under the booths for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so and there was very great gladness.

So they found this in the law. They said we ought to be doing this and so they inaugurated again this practice. We were in Israel a few years ago during the Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkoth, the Feast of Booths and it was interesting going down the street next to these high-rise apartments.

You'd see all these little lean-to shanties where the families moved out, the Orthodox and practicing Orthodox families, the Jewish families still to the present day build these little palm-thatched rooms next to their houses and they move out and live in these booths. And so day by day from the first day until the last day he read in the book of the law of God and they kept the feast for seven days and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly according unto the manner. So the feast actually lasted for seven days and then the eighth day was a holy day, a Sabbath day, a very solemn day and you remember in John 7:37 it speaks concerning Jesus on the last day, the great day of the feast.

He stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Again, during the Feast of Tabernacles they would pour water out on the temple pavement out of these large pitchers to remind the people of the water that came out of the rock in the wilderness that helped their fathers to survive the tremendous thirst. So Jesus said, If any man thirst, come unto me and drink.

Paul tells us that he was that rock from which the water came and so Jesus sort of confirms that saying, Hey, come unto me and drink, all of you that are thirsty. And as the scripture saith, He that drinketh the water that I give out of his belly there shall begin to gush torrents of living water as he spoke to them of what would happen when they were filled with the Spirit. It would be like a river of water gushing forth from their lives.

Now in the 24th day of the month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, sackcloth, and earth upon them. Now sackcloth was a form of penance. It was itchy, miserable, and it was sort of to afflict yourself.

Even as fasting is sort of a self type of affliction, it is the denial of the flesh. It's going against the flesh, the fasting, the sackcloth, and the earth upon them. They put dirt on them just as a sign of penitence, as a sign of mourning.

And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all of the strangers. And they stood and confessed their sins and their iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and they read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day and another fourth part they confessed and worshipped Jehovah their God.

Now they divided the day into four parts. From six in the morning till noon, from noon till six in the evening, six in the evening till midnight, and midnight till six in the morning. So the fourth part would have been from six in the morning till noon.

They read the scriptures. And then from noon till six o'clock in the afternoon there was that response, the worshipping of God by the people. And so, I mean, you try and get people to do that today and you probably have a very difficult time even in upholstered pews and an air-conditioned building.

Here these people were standing out there for six hours listening to the word being read and then spending the next six hours in worshipping the Lord. And then they stood upon the stairs, the Levites, Joshua, and these other fellows, and they cried with a loud voice unto Jehovah their God. And then the Levites and Joshua and these other men said, stand up and bless Jehovah your God forever and ever.

And blessed be the glorious name which is exalted above all blessing and praise. So they encouraged the people to begin to praise the Lord, to worship the Lord, to bless the Lord forever and ever. And then declaring the blessedness of God's glorious name, the name Yahweh, or I Am, the I Am, the Becoming One.

And then they declared, Thou even, Thou, O Yahweh, alone, Thou hast made the heaven and the heaven of heavens with all their hosts, the earth, and all of the things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and you preserve them all, and the host of heaven worships you. So as they begin to praise the Lord and worship the Lord, they are acknowledging, first of all, the vastness of God and His creation. He is the God who has created the universe.

And that heaven of heavens goes on out and takes in the universe. He is the creator. You made the heaven, the heaven of heavens.

With all of the hosts, that is all of the spirit beings, the angelic beings that are in them. You made the sea and all of the creatures that inhabit the sea. And you preserve them all.

God is not only the creator, but He is the preserver of that creation. The natural laws of entropy, the irrecoverable energy that takes place with friction and with time, the aromachesis, the slow-burning fire of nature, where gradually things are being reduced. Our mountains, these lofty granite mountains, are being gradually eroded.

There is a breakdown as the rain and the winds and the so forth beat down upon it. There is that gradual deterioration. And God is the one who preserves His creation.

But I think that this could go even a little bit deeper. As we mentioned a few weeks ago, in Colossians, where Paul comes with this kind of a description of the creation, God the creator, Jesus Christ the creator, by whom and for whom all things were created, and by Him all things are held together. And we talked about the atom and how that the nucleus of an atom is a cluster of positive charges, the protons, and how that the nature of the positive charges is that of repelling, the repelling force of the positive charges.

And we have seen the power of the atom when it has been upset. When we bombard the nucleus of an atom with slow-moving neutrons within the heart of the atom, we release that tremendous energy. And we have what we call the atomic explosions by the releasing of the energy that is pent up within an atom, all of these positive charges that are clustered together.

In upsetting the balance, we allow them to follow their natural bent and to repel each other. And when they repel each other, we have this tremendous release of force and energy. Now the power that holds the positive charges together has to be greater than the power that is released when it's upset.

And so the tremendous power by which the material world is held together, it's inestimable as far as man is concerned, the power of Jesus Christ holding together, the preserver of creation. And the host of heaven worships you. In the book of Revelation, we get an insight in chapter 5 of the angels worshipping the Lord, the host of heaven worshipping him.

Then it goes on, You are Jehovah the God who did choose Abram, Father, and you brought him forth out of the Ur of the Chaldees, and you gave him the name of Abraham, father of many. For you found his heart faithful before you, and you made your covenant with him to give him the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, Jebusites, and the Gergesites. To give it, I say, to his seed, and you have performed your words, for you are righteous.

Now, as we find them beginning to praise the Lord and to acknowledge God, first, God is the creator of the universe and of the various life forms within the universe. Secondly, we find that they will be talking of the faithfulness of God. He created now a nation, beginning with Abraham, and made promises to Abraham to give unto his seed this land of Canaan, and God has fulfilled that promise.

They acknowledge that, for you are a righteous God. We'll return with more of our verse-by-verse venture through the book of Nehemiah in our next lesson. As Pastor Chuck explains, The Great Deliverance of God.

And we do hope you'll make plans to join us. But right now, I'd like to remind you that if you missed any part of today's message, or perhaps you'd like to order a copy for that special friend or loved one, you can do so by simply contacting one of our customer service representatives, and they'd be more than happy to assist you with the ordering details. Simply call 1-800-272-WORD and phone orders can be taken Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time.

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And now, on behalf of The Word for Today, we'd like to thank all of you who share in supporting this ministry with your prayers and financial support. And be sure to join us again next time as Pastor Chuck Smith continues his verse-by-verse study through the book of Nehemiah. That's right here on the next edition of The Word for Today.

And now, once again, here's Pastor Chuck Smith. May the Lord give you a great week, watching over you, filling you with His love. May you experience the work of the Spirit within your heart, deepening your commitment unto Jesus Christ, causing you to have a true perspective of life.

And thus may God's hand be upon you to guide and to keep and to make it a blessed week for you as you commit yourself to following Jesus Christ. Since the original sin of Adam, God has been looking for a man that He can use to accomplish His purposes on this earth. The apostles were more than willing to be used by the Lord.

What was it that gave them certain spiritual characteristics necessary to be used by God? Pastor Chuck's book, entitled *The Man God Uses*, examines the book of Acts. He reveals the secret of the apostles' boldness, the five essential components of prayer, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. So if you've ever wanted to accomplish more for the Kingdom of God, then I encourage you to pick up a copy of Pastor Chuck's book.

Once again, it's called *The Man God Uses*. Now, for those of you that wish to call, our convenient toll-free number is 1-800-272-9673. Once again, that's 1-800-272-WORD.

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