Sermon Notes – Nehemiah 8 **"Understanding Grace"**

A Change in Focus

The first half of Nehemiah is about building the wall. The second half is about rebuilding their relationship to God.

A period of intense reawakening is called "revival." Revivals are consistent historic pattern with God's people.

One of the features of revivals is that the people remember God's holiness and the depth of their sin.

Understanding Grace

Holiness and sin

Why do the people weep?

Renewed understanding of grace

Why are the people encouraged not to weep?

They understand grace

1. "They understood the words that were declared to them." (vs. 12)
2. They celebrated the feast of booths in remembrance of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. (vss. 13-18)
3. All of chapter 9 is a recounting of this pattern of great sin, greater grace.

Grace is the Engine of True Spirituality

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." – vs. 10

Two ways to approach the Bible

Is the Bible primarily about what we must do, or primarily about what God has done?

An example: Matthew 5:27-30

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already ***committed adultery with her in his heart [emphasis added]***. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."

Most people know that Jesus is not teaching to actually cut off your hand or pluck out your eyes. Then what's the point?

Same thing, different day

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart…" – Acts 2:37

"And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, **47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Acts 2:46

What can we do to make revival happen?

You can't make revivals happen, but you sure can stop them!

God is the one who sends a revival, as a movement of his Spirit by his own sovereign will.
Yet there are necessary preconditions of revival, namely the awareness of God's holiness and man's sinfulness.

Nearly always, revivals are preceded by a time of fervent prayer.

Conclusion: Do you need a personal revival?

What to do?

1. Meditate on God's absolute holiness in comparison to your sin.
2. Meditate on the cross of Christ and what he did for you.
3. Get some time away from distractions to be with Jesus.

Questions for Further Study and Application

1. Why do you think our culture enjoys the rewriting of famous villains' backstories to make them understandable?
2. Which of God's good characteristics do you need to focus on this week? Why?
3. Are you willing to admit to the evil inside of you, confess it, and ask for God's forgiveness?
4. Why does our world need courage for moral clarity today? How can you be courageous like Nehemiah?