

A Call to Alignment

(Nehemiah 8:1-12)

Yearly Theme: *“Peace is...”*

Series Title: *“A Return to Peace”*

July 25th, 2021

Something to think about:

Many years ago, a man in Kansas City was severely injured in an explosion. Evangelist Robert L. Sumner talks about him in his book, *The Wonders of the Word of God*.

“He writes, ‘The victim’s face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands. He was just a new Christian, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible. Then he heard about a lady in England who read braille with her lips. Hoping to do the same, he sent for some books of the Bible in braille. However, much to his dismay he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips had been destroyed by the explosion.

“‘One day, as he brought one of the braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters, and he could feel them. Like a flash he thought, I can read the Bible using my tongue. At the time Robert Sumner wrote his book, the man had “read” through the entire Bible four times.’”

Our desires show the condition of our hearts. When our desires are for GOD, our hearts reflect the image and the things of GOD. When our desires are for other things, our hearts and actions reflect those things. Our desire for GOD, however, is the only thing in life that really matters because it is GOD who gives us life in the first place.

What are the desires of your heart? What is it that drives you and pushes you forward? Do you desire GOD like you desire the air you breathe? Are you seeking Him while He may be found?¹ Like the gentleman above, would you desire to seek GOD so much that you would learn to read the Bible with your tongue if you had to? Most people give up under much less difficult of circumstances.

Today, we come upon a scene in the Old Testament book of Nehemiah where the exiles have been returning to Jerusalem in waves. The ones who had returned had rebuilt the altar of sacrifice and the Temple, and the walls around Jerusalem had just been completed. After reestablishing order in worship at the Temple, and reestablishing security for the city, the exiles *desire* something more. Let’s take a look...

Turn in your Bible to: ***Nehemiah 8:1-12***

So, what’s our key point for today?...

Key Point: “God’s Word leads to repentance, peace, and restoration.”

The people of GOD who had been in exile and had returned to Jerusalem, and who were now beginning to worship again the way their ancestors did a couple of generations before them, are now realizing their deeper need to seek GOD through His Word. So, they asked Ezra, the priest/scribe, to bring out the scroll of the Law (the Torah, the Pentateuch, Genesis-Deuteronomy) and read it in the city square. This wasn’t just some rote ceremony to dedicate the new wall around Jerusalem; this was a true desire to know GOD and to not repeat the same mistakes that their ancestors did. When they heard the word of the Law read, several things happened that day. Let’s explore the reactions of the people...

- **The people had a hunger for GOD’s Word.**

Nehemiah 8:1b (NLT), They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had given for Israel to obey.

- **The people were attentive to GOD’s Word.**

Nehemiah 8:5b (NLT), When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet.

- **The people were responsive to GOD’s Word.**

Nehemiah 8:6 (NLT), Then Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people chanted, “Amen! Amen!” as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

- **The people were repentant at the hearing of GOD’s Word.**

Nehemiah 8:9b (NLT), The people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

Something to take home:

It has been said that people do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them. A desire for the truth should necessarily begin where the truth can be found. If the source of all truth is GOD, then the easiest place to find the truth is in the Word of GOD, the Bible. However, in our culture today (and even in our churches) there seems to be a diminished desire, or a lack thereof, for real truth and true change. Too many of our churches, and to many Christians are adrift today in a sea of opinions and truth claims that do not align with Scripture all because they lack compass to show them “True North.” GOD is our True North, and His Word is our Compass, and His Living Word (Jesus) is our Guide. We are lost without them.

We need to have a hunger and thirst for GOD and His Word again. We need to drink from its truth daily so that we never thirst again. Our heart and desires should be for the things of GOD, and for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, but we cannot know that will and desire when we are not connected to His truth.

Where do you find truth today? What is the desire of your heart? Show me your desire, and I’ll show you your destination.

Key Point: “God’s Word leads to repentance, peace, and restoration.”

¹ Isaiah 55:6.