

1. Welcome & Opening

Catch up and share any experiences in God's grace during the past month.

2. Praise 갈 길을 밝히 보이시니(524) / 주만 바라볼찌라**3. Prayer****4. Scripture Reading****Nehemiah 8:1-12 (ESV)**

¹ And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. ² So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. ³ And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. ⁴ And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. ⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. ⁶ And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. ⁷ Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. ⁸ They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. ⁹ And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. ¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." ¹¹ So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved." ¹² And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

5. Video Viewing**6. Reflection & Sharing**

In the first half of Nehemiah, we can observe the internal struggles that God's people encounter. However, even under difficult circumstances, they maintain their faith in God and rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem. And through the Law of God that is proclaimed in today's scripture, they were able to revive their wounded hearts. They yearned for God's words and listened to his commands being proclaimed by Ezra and became anew by responding with repentance. As such, in the center of "Return & Rebuild," there must be God's words. It is only through the guidance of his words that we may be led to confess our sins, repent, and bring upon change in our lives. God does not lead us through such process alone, but together as a community.

Q Question **S** Sharing

1) God's People Desire God's Word

- Q** After the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, what did the Israelites request from Ezra? (Neh 8:1)
- S** The Israelites wanted to hear the word of God. The Israelites lived in captivity in Babylon for 70 years because of idolatry. During this meantime, they lived a life in which they could not properly listen God's word nor worship God. Through God's grace, the Israelites were able to end their long time in captivity and returned to Jerusalem to complete rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. After the walls were completed, the Israelites finally congregated to listen the words of God that they so longed for and offer worship. Today, we can freely hear and read God's Word. This is God's blessing. However, because God's words are so easily accessible to us, we often forget how precious those words are. Let us consider what we need to do in order to realize the value the Word of God and to live a life of longing for it.

2) God's Word moves the hearts of his people to repentance.

- Q** What was the reaction of the Israelites when Ezra recited the book of God's law and made them understand its meaning? (Nehemiah 8:9)
- S** When the Israelites heard God's word and understood its meaning, they began to weep. As the Israelites listened to the Word of God, they realized the disobedience (idolatry) that had been passed down from generation to generation, and as they looked at their sins revealed before the Word, their hearts were broken. Those who hear the word of God are confronted with absolute truth and examine their lives in the light of God's commands. God's Word pierces our hearts and minds. Have your hearts ever been pierced by the word of God? What was your reaction?

3) God comforts and gives joy to those who repent

- Q** What is God's Word to the Israelites who grieve and realize the disobedience that has been passed down from generation to generation? (Nehemiah 8:10-12)
- S** And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength. God gave the Israelites the opportunity to rely on Him and gain strength to live a new life. God comforts the Israelites who realize their mistakes and repent with tears and restores their joy. He also provides the Israelites with strength to lead the community to change their lives, encourage one another, and lead them on the path of righteousness. From what are we currently garnering our strength? How is the peace and joy that God provides manifest in our lives in the communities in which we belong?

Wrap Up

When we lose faith, we begin to look at our own abilities instead of God's, and we forget not only the grace of God we had experienced in the past but also the promises of the future that He has given us. God is the one who happily guides us in the path He has prepared. If we do not lose faith and always stand on God's side, God will give us grace to overcome all our fears and lead us to the promised land.

Pray Together

- 1. Help me to overcome my fears by remembering what God has done in my life.**
- 2. Pray for Pastor Taehoo Lee and his work in North Philadelphia (supported by our Community Group)**

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