Nehemiah - Commentaries by Unknown Author

Food for the Flock: Volume 5, This Day Is Holy: Mourn Not

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EH 8:1-20{EH 9:1-3{

They were a feeble people, but they had faith in God; so in all their feebleness they knew that God was working for them. If I have no faith in God, I shall have thoughts like those of Sanballat and Tobiah: " What do these feeble Jews? If a fox go up he shall even break down their stone wall." But if I get God before me, how different are my thoughts. I shall see that He is working for me, no matter what my own feebleness.

They were mixed with that with which they ought not to have been, but, in spite of that, God was working for them. They had the law, and they read it; and they were recovering truth out of it. And that is what we are doing in the present day. We cannot say that we have a fresh revelation; but, through God's grace, we can say that He has recovered truth for us. These people were no doubt looking back and remembering what their nation had been in times past; and they were weeping and making confession to God. And what does Nehemiah say? " This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep. Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is. holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." He recalls their hearts from occupation with themselves, from remembering the bright days in the past in contrast with those in which they were, to one sole point, and that was to God Himself-to Jehovah. This poor, feeble people, that had cause to weep, were recalled from all that to be occupied on this one particular occasion with what God was for them; and in the power of this they were able afterward to keep the Feast of Tabernacles-that feast which will be kept in its integrity by and by. The reason that they could keep it was that they were occupied with God.

Now God would bring us up to this point at the Lord's table. We have a tendency to be occupied here-in our prayers, in our words, in our hymns -with similar thoughts to those which occupied these people when they wept. But the Lord has set us in a place where we may say, " The joy of the Lord is our strength; " and, wore it so, nothing would flow out of our hearts but worship; because thoughts of ourselves would be then set aside, and we should have the power which enabled these people to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, and to occupy, as purged worshippers in the presence of the Lord, the very place in which God has set us now in His Son, and which we shall occupy in body by and by.

Neither the land nor the people were in a state suited to the feast; and if we take the ground of our state as that upon which we stand before God, I am sure we shall only weep. If I am occupied with my own wretched heart, how can I sing with any reality such a hymn as, "Not a cloud above, not a spot within " 2 They had occasion to weep, and the day came when they did; but they were not to do it on this particular day. I an sure that the more we realize what the work of Christ has done for us in setting us in all His own acceptance before His God and Father, and our God and Father, the more our prayer-meetings will take the character of confession, for the place in which I am set in the Beloved is that which should give character to my walk here. So, when the time, the due time, comes, we shall be upon our faces on the ground, that we so little answer to the place in which He has set us. But there is a day in which we are " to eat the fat and drink the sweet." I do not say that we are to force ourselves up to it, but I do say, if we are not up to it, do not let us be satisfied with being thus below it. When we are gathered here it is that, for the time, we may be done with everything, even to His gifts, so that there may be nothing but simple praise and adoration from our lips because we are occupied with Himself.

(J. G. H.)

" Then Jacob said, Put away the strange gods." Bethel was filling the gaze of his soul, commanding the powers of his heart, and he says everything must be suitable to that. The hindrances are discovered.

It is sometimes said, "What are the hindrances? How am I to know them?"

If you set out to be for God, you will soon find out what they are. When the soul has Bethel before it, it seeks to answer it, and everything that is unsuited to it must go. Do not tell me things will drop off like autumn leaves. They must be "put away."

(W.T. T.)

Present Testimony: Volume 5, 1853, Nehemiah 8:13-18

"And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. And 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: and that they should publish and proclaim in all 'their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.

"So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, 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 the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner."

Things New and Old: Volume 4, Christian's Cup-Bearer, The

Faith is to the Christian as Nehemiah was to Artaxerxes. (Neh. 2:1.) Of all the graces this is the Christian’s cupbearer. The Christian takes the wine of joy out of faith’s hand, rather than any other grace. It is Christ that we are allowed only to rejoice in. Christ’s blood is the wine that gladdens the heart of God by way of satisfaction to His justice, and, therefore, only that can bring true gladness into the heart of man. No grape of our own vine is pressed into this sweet cup.

Now, the Christian’s joy, flowing in from Christ, and not anything that the poor creature doth or hath. Hence it comes to pass, that faith brings in the Christian’s joy and comfort, because this is the grace that improves Christ, and what is Christ’s for the soul’s advantage. Faith is the good spy that makes the discovery of the excellencies in Christ, and then makes report of all to the soul it sees in Him and knows of Him. It is faith that broacheth the promises, turns the cock, and sets them a running into the soul. Till faith comes and brings news of the soul’s welcome, oh, how maidenly and uncomfortably do poor creatures sit at the table of the promises! Like Hannah, they “weep and eat not.” No, alas! they dare not be so bold; but when faith comes, then the soul falls to, and makes a satisfying meal indeed. No dish on the table but faith will taste of. Faith knows God sets them not on to go off untouched. It is, though an humble, yet a bold grace, because it knows it cannot be so bold with God in His own way as it is welcome. “I live by the faith of the Son of God.”—Gurnal.

There are three things which faith does, namely: It purifies the heart. (Acts 15:9.) It works by love. (Gal. 5:6.) It overcomes the world. (1 John 5:4.) It acts on the fountain-head of all my feelings and affections. It exerts its hallowed influence upon all my relationships and associations. And, finally, it renders me victorious ever the circumstances and influences which surround me.

The Christian Shepherd: 1997, Christian's Cupbearer, The

“And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king” (Neh. 2:1).

Faith is to the Christian as Nehemiah was to Artaxerxes. It is the believer’s cupbearer. The Christian receives the cup of “wine” out of faith’s hand, realizing that it is in Christ alone we find our joy. Christ’s blood is the wine that gladdens the heart of God by way of satisfaction to His justice, and, therefore, only that can bring true gladness into the heart of man. No grape of our own vine may be pressed into this sweet cup.

Now the Christian’s joy is flowing in from Christ, not from anything that the poor creature does or has. Hence it comes to pass that faith brings in the Christian’s joy and comfort, because this is the grace that realizes Christ and what is Christ’s for the soul’s advantage. Faith is the good spy that makes the discovery of excellencies in Christ and then makes report to the soul of all it sees in Him and knows of Him. It is faith that reveals the promises, turns the faucet on and sets them running into the soul. Till faith comes and brings news of the soul’s welcome, oh how uncomfortably do poor creatures sit at the table of His promises! Like Hannah, they weep and do not eat. No, alas! they dare not be so bold, but when faith comes, then the soul gets to eating, and makes a satisfying meal indeed. No dish on the table but that faith will taste of it. Faith knows that God does not provide them in order that they remain untouched. Faith is humble, yet bold, because it knows God and knows it is welcome. “I live by the faith of the Son of God.”

There are three things which faith does: It purifies the heart (Acts 15:9); it works by love (Gal. 5:6); it overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). It acts on the fountainhead of all my feelings and affections. It exerts its hallowed influence upon all my relationships and associations. And, finally, it renders me victorious over the circumstances and influences which surround me.

Things New and Old, Vol. 4

Nehemiah: The Remnant in Jerusalem, Nehemiah: The Remnant in Jerusalem, Chapter 12:27-47

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Neh. 12:27-47.

FROM ver. 27 is recounted the dedication of the wall, with the thanksgivings of the remnant. It was all in keeping with the circumstances of God's people; yet what a contrast with the building of the altar on their return from Babylon in the seventh month, or the laying of the foundations of the temple in the second year under Zerubbabel and Joshua! Then too there was loud expression of joy on the people's part; but the chiefs, the ancient men who had seen the first house, wept no less loudly. Faith was feeble enough in both then; for how far were either from steadfast anticipation of His coming in the humiliation of grace, Who is to fill the house with glory! Now it was feebler still; for there was nothing but gladness, both with thanksgivings and with singing, cymbals, lutes and harps.

How different will all be when “a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall reign in judgment, and a man [not a wall] shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as brooks of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.” The eyes that look in that day shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, whose stakes shall never be pulled up, nor any of its cords broken. And why but that there Jehovah is to be to His own glorious, in the place of rivers of broad stream; wherein shall go no galley with oars, nor shall gallant ship pass thereby? For Jehovah is their judge, Jehovah their law-giver, their king; He will save them. The afflicted city's stones shall be set in antimony, and its foundations with sapphires; its battlements will Jehovah make of rubies, its gates of carbuncles, and its borders of precious stones. Violence shall no more be heard in the land, wasting nor destruction within the borders; but Jerusalem shall call its walls Salvation and its gates Praise; no more Forsaken or Desolate, but called Beulah and Hephzibah; for Jehovah delighteth in it, and its land shall be married. What a change from the day when a pious son of David numbered the houses, and broke them

down to fortify the wall! Immanuel there in glorious power makes the difference, for He will tread down the enemy and give effect to all suited blessing. And of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

But as things were for the returned, they looked for the protection of a wall like the nations, and rejoiced over what their earnest and self-denying labor had reared, before envious adversaries, and in their midst false brethren truer to the Gentile than to Israel. And the inspired writer took his part in the celebration, and their heartfelt thanks the grace of God did not disdain, Who accepts according to what one has, not according as he has not. It was meet that they should be thankful, whatever they might lack.

“And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. And the sons of the singers, gathered themselves together, both out of the plain round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of the Netophathites; also from Beth-gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem. And the priests and the Levites purified themselves; and they purified the people, and the pates, and the wall.

“Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies that gave thanks and went in procession; whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate. And after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah, and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets: Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph; and his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, and Judah, Hanani, with musical instruments of David the man of God; and Ezra the scribe was before them. And by the fountain gate, and straight before them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward. And the other company of them that gave thanks went to meet them, and I after them with the half of the people, upon the wall, above the tower of the furnaces, even unto the broad wall; and above the gate of Ephraim, and by the old gate, and by the fish gate, and the tower of Hananel, and the tower of Hammeah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the gate of the guard. So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I and the half of the rulers with me: and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; and Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar and, Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud with Jezrahiah their overseer. And they offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy; and the women also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

“And on that day were men appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the heave offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them, according to the fields of the cities, the portions appointed by the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that stood. And they kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, and so did the singers and the porters, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. For in the days of David and Asaph of old there was a chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God. And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, as every day required: and they sanctified for the Levites; and the Levites sanctified for the sons of Aaron” (vers. 27-47).

The Levites and the priests were duly summoned and purified themselves; the princes, with the priests and the singers took their due place and part, dividing into two companies to complete the circuit, and meet with songs and great sacrifices at the house of God, and the joy of all with women and children heard afar off. As usual, the word of God was heeded all the more “according to the commandment of David and Solomon his son” (vers. 45, 46). The priests and the Levites were more assiduous in their functions to the joy of the people, and reaped proportionately from what was consecrated to the Levites, as the sons of Aaron did from the Levites' consecrations. When joy fails, duties are neglected, and love grows cold.

Nehemiah: The Remnant in Jerusalem, Nehemiah: The Remnant in Jerusalem, Chapter 12:1-26

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Nehemiah 12:1-26.

HERE we have little to remark save that the Lord takes pleasure in recording even the names of His servants. The special object appears to connect the priests and Levites in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra at this point with those who at the first returned from the captivity, and with the intermediate generation. It is not only that He has been a dwelling place for His own in all generations, but He honors those that honor Him and records their names in His word now, as He will glorify their persons in the great day that hastens.

First then we begin with the earlier company.

“And these [are] the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra; Amariah, Malluch, Hattush; Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth; Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah; Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah; Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah; Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua” (vers. 1-7).

The reader must not confound the last two of ver. 1 with the inspired men of similar names, who were also priests, but at a different epoch; the one before, the other after the return. Those enumerated were contemporaries of Jeshua or Joshua the high priest of that day, which was weak indeed compared with the past, shorn of its ornaments as became a remnant of the people now Loammi, but under all that provisional condition about to behold at length the Man that is Jehovah's fellow, His shepherd, smitten, and the sheep scattered, whatever the hand that protected the little ones. (Zech. 13:7). Yet neither that glory nor the dark cloud that veiled it appears in the book, which opens out the intermediate services of the humble, devoted, courageous, Israelite who was too glad to leave a splendid court to serve his poor and little grateful brethren for His sake Who watched over them aggrieved, but ever compassionate and faithful.

Next we have the Levites of the same early period. It is of interest to note that “the thanksgiving” did not fail in that day of shame and small things, any more than the “wards” or “watches.” They were careful of order to God's glory.

“And the Levites Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, which was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. Also Bakbukiah and Unno, their brethren, were over against them in wards” (vers. 8, 9).

In verses 10, 11, we have the succession of high priests from Jeshua to Jaddua. Now the history of the book does not carry us later than the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, and the high priesthood of faithless Eliashib and the unworthy son of Joiada his son. It is a brief record of humiliating ways to the last high priest of whom O. T. scripture takes any notice.

“And Jeshua begat Joiakim, and Joiakim begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada, and Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua” (vers. 10, 11).

Then we have mention of the next generation, which accounts for “of” or “for” each of these persons, priests, chief fathers.

“And in the days of Joiakim were priests, heads of fathers' [houses]: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; and of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel” (vers. 12-21).

In due place follow the Levites, though first in a general way to the days of the latest high priest named (ver. 22), recorded (yen. 23) “in the book of the chronicles” until the days of the high priest before, Jonathan or Johanan. Then in vers. 24, 25, we have the specific services first of the chief Levites, next of door-keepers keeping the ward at the storehouses of the gates in the days of Joiakim, Jeshua's son, and in the days of Nehemiah and of Ezra. This gives the connection, if not the reason for the insertion of the paragraph here.

“The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded heads of fathers' houses: also the priests, in (or, to) the reign of Darius the Persian. The sons of Levi, heads of fathers' houses, were written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward against ward. Mattaniah, and Baksbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the ward at the storehouses of the gates. These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest the scribe” (vers. 22-26).

It is good to serve the Lord in the position He assigns each and for the end of attesting His glory; and it is full of cheer to know that He remembers each and would have all to forget not even the least one that serves Him.

Christian Friend: Volume 12, Fragment: One at the King's Hand

Nehemiah 11:24

We read in Nehemiah of one who was “at the king’s hand in all matters concerning the people.” This is no mean shadow of the present place of our Lord and Saviour, who has gone into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us. He is there at God’s right hand, ever living to make intercession for us, having, we might say, undertaken the whole of our cause in all matters which concern us.

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