

Why Is Thy Countenance Sad?
(Nehemiah 2:1-5)

Introduction:

1. In John 14-16 Jesus showed how He provides peace for troubled hearts.
2. This evening we are concentrating on a question that King Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah: "*Why is thy countenance sad?*" (Nehemiah 2:2).
3. In other words, "Why are you so unhappy?"
4. We live in a world filled with unhappy people.
5. God's people must guard against this influence.
6. Let us first examine . . .

Discussion:

- I. SOME PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE WHO EXPERIENCED SADNESS
 - A. As we do so we will see that . . .
 1. there are some legitimate reasons for being sad
 2. some reasons are not legitimate.
 - B. Bible characters who experienced sadness for legitimate reasons include:
 1. Nehemiah
 - a. He became sad when he learned about the condition of Jerusalem.
 - b. His sadness was a matter of concern for the king.
 - c. Nehemiah dealt with his sadness by:
 - 1) praying
 - 2) asking the king for permission to go to Jerusalem
 - 3) going to Jerusalem and building the wall.
 2. Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:6-8)
 - a. Hannah was sad because her husband's other wife provoked her.
 - b. Hannah dealt with her sadness by praying (vs.10) and asking God to give her a son (vs.11).
 - c. (vs.17) Eli assured Hannah that God would grant her request.
 - d. Notice how her countenance changed (vs.18b).
 3. Jesus -- at the tomb of Lazarus, "*Jesus wept*" (John 11:35).
 4. From these Bible characters we see that there are legitimate reasons for experiencing sadness -- there is "*a time to weep*" and "*a time to mourn*" (Ecclesiastes 3:4).
 - C. Some Bible characters who experienced sadness for reasons that are not legitimate include:
 1. Ahab (1 Kings 21:4-5)
 - a. Ahab wanted a vineyard that belonged to Naboth, but Naboth would not let Ahab have it.
 - b. Ahab became very sad because he could not have his way.
 - c. Jezebel had Naboth killed so Ahab could have his vineyard.
 2. The Pharisees (Matthew 6:16)
 - a. They put on sad faces when they fasted to impress other people.
 - b. Jesus gave His followers some different instructions (vs.17-18).
 3. The rich young ruler (Mark 10:22)
 4. These Bible characters show that it is possible to experience sadness for reasons that are not legitimate.
 - D. Even though there are legitimate reasons for being sad temporarily, . . .
- II. THE LORD WANTS HIS FOLLOWERS TO BE HAPPY
 - A. (John 10:10) Jesus came so we could have "*life*" and have it "*more abundantly*."
 - B. (Galatians 5:22) The fruit of the Spirit includes "*joy*."
 - C. (Philippians 4:4) "*Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*"
- III. PASSAGES IN PSALMS AND PROVERBS SHOW HOW WE CAN BE HAPPY, EVEN WHEN WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SAD PEOPLE
 - A. (Psalm 128:1-2) We must fear the Lord and walk in His ways.

- B. (Psalm 144:15) We must have God as our Lord (33:12a).
- C. (Psalm 146:3-6) We must avoid putting our trust in man (118:8).
- D. (Proverbs 3:13, 18) We must find wisdom and retain it.
- E. (Proverbs 4:23) We must keep our hearts diligently.
 - 1. The key to keeping the heart is thinking properly (23:7a).
 - 2. A list of good things to think on is given in Philippians 4:8.
 - 3. Thinking on such things will affect:
 - a. your countenance (Proverbs 15:13a)
 - b. your disposition (Psalm 118:24).
- F. (Proverbs 16:20b) We must trust in the Lord (3:5-6).
- G. (Proverbs 29:18b) We must keep the law of the Lord.
 - 1. (Psalm 1:2) A *"blessed"* man has his *"delight"* in the Lord's law, and he meditates upon it *"day and night."*
 - 2. (John 13:17) Jesus said, *"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."*

Conclusion:

- 1. A practical exercise is for each person to take a serious look at himself in a mirror.
- 2. Do you see a happy person or a sad person?
- 3. If you see a happy person, do not let the world cause you to become sad.
- 4. If you see a sad person, the Lord will help you become a happy person.
- 5. Before the Lord can help you, you must make the decision to let Him.
- 6. If you need to become a Christian, by doing so you will have reason to rejoice (Acts 8:39, 35-38).
- 7. If you have become a Christian but you have allowed the world to rob you of happiness, it can be restored (Psalm 51:12a).