

Listening for the Promise

Sola Publishing – Weekly Devotions

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“They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.”

- Nehemiah 8:8 -

Sometimes when we pick up the Bible the words don't make any sense to us at all. Even though we are reading it in our own language, there is something about it that is not really our language. There are words and ideas that are confusing and foreign. Sometimes we need to work hard to understand them. And that's nothing new.

When they returned from their exile, the people of Israel were re-introduced to the laws of their ancestors. When they had finished rebuilding the Temple, the prophet Ezra read the law out loud to all the people. They were reminded of who their God was, what he had done for his people, and what was required of them. After their long period in exile, the people needed this reminder.

But Ezra didn't stop with just reading the text to the people. He also helped them understand it. Nehemiah says he “gave the sense.” Their time of exile had made the word of God sound strange to them. It was foreign to their ears. They needed some help in understanding it, and that is what Ezra provided. He helped the people figure out what this word meant.

This is exactly what we continue to do in churches today. We don't simply read the Bible to each other and then go home. We talk about it. We study it. We wrestle with it. We explain it. We work to find the sense so that these strange words of scripture start to become our language, the language of our faith.

As we begin to understand the sense of Scripture we begin to see more and more about who our God is, what he has done, what he is doing in the world. And the center of what God is doing in the world is bringing salvation through Jesus Christ. That is the Word made known to us in Scripture. And the proclamation of that Word of Christ is what moves us from confusion to faith. When the Word of Christ is proclaimed, it opens our ears, our hearts, and our minds, so that the language of God becomes our language. That Word of Christ is simply this, your sins have been forgiven, taken from you, on account of Jesus death and resurrection.