

The Joy of the Lord is our strength!

Nehemiah 8:9-11 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, 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 nor weep." **For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law.** Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. **Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.**" So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "*Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved.*" And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and **rejoice greatly**, because they understood the words that were declared to them.

Psalms 16:11 You will show me the path of life; **in Your presence is fullness of joy**; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalms 28:7 The Lord is **my strength and my shield**; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; **therefore my heart greatly rejoices**, and **with my song** I will praise Him.

Psalms 30:5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but **joy comes in the morning.**

Proverbs 17:22 A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.

Isaiah 12:2 Behold, God is my salvation, **I will trust and not be afraid**; for Yahweh, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.

Habakkuk 3:18 Yet **I will rejoice** in the Lord, **I will joy** in the God of my salvation.

Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope **fill you with all joy and peace in believing**, that you may **abound in hope** *by the power* of the Holy Spirit.

James 1:2-3 My brethren, **count it all joy** when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith **produces** patience.

John 15:9-11 As the Father loved Me, **I also have loved you; abide in My love.** *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love,* just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, **that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.** *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* **Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants,** for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. **You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you** that you should go and **bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain**, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.

Psalms 91:13-16 You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon **shall you** trample under feet. **Because you have set your love** upon Me, therefore will I deliver you: I will set you on high, because **you have known** My Name. **You shall call** upon Me, and I will answer you: I will be with you in trouble; I will deliver you and honour you. With long life will I satisfy you and show you My salvation.

John 16:16-33 Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.

Until now you have asked nothing in My name. **Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.** These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; **but the time is coming** when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but **I will tell you plainly** about the Father.

In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; **for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed** that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.”

Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. **And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.** These things I have spoken to you, **that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer,** I have overcome the world.”

Psalms 37:3-8 Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land, and **feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord,** and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; **do not fret** because of him who prospers in his way because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

Cease from anger and **forsake** wrath; **do not fret** - it only causes harm. (KJV: to do *-leads to-* evil.)

Concluding Prayer:

Romans 8:31-39 What shall then we say to these things? **If God is for us,** who can be against us? **He who did not spare** His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, **how shall He not** with Him also freely give us all things?

Who shall lay/bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ that/who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also **makes intercession** for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

Nay/Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that/who loved us.

For I am persuaded that **neither** death **nor** life, **nor** angels **nor** principalities **nor** powers, **nor** things present **nor** things to come, **nor** height **nor** depth, **nor** any other creature/created thing, shall be able to separate us from **the love of God which is in Christ Jesus** our Lord!!!! [Home - Listener's Bible](#)

A Deeper Dive into Nehemiah 8

Nehemiah 8 naturally divides into **four** distinct movements. [\[1\]](#)

1. The Hunger for God's Word (Nehemiah 8:1–3)

The Israelites assemble "as one man" in the public square and ask Ezra to read the Book of the Law. Instead of being coerced, the people possess a deep, organic hunger for divine truth. [\[1, 2\]](#)

- **The Takeaway:** The foundation of any spiritual awakening is a gathered community actively hungering to hear from God. [\[1, 2\]](#)

2. Reverence and Worship (Nehemiah 8:4–6)

Ezra reads from a raised wooden platform alongside other leaders. When Ezra opens the scroll, the entire congregation stands up, lifts their hands, and responds with "*Amen, amen!*" before bowing their faces to the ground. [\[1, 2\]](#)

- **The Takeaway:** Approaching Scripture requires humility and physical reverence, acknowledging the weight and authority of God's Word. [\[1, 2, 3, 4\]](#)

3. Clear Teaching and Conviction (Nehemiah 8:7–9)

A team of Levites circulates among the standing crowd to translate and explain the meaning of the Law so everyone can understand. Upon hearing the reading, the people are deeply convicted of their sin and begin to weep. [\[1, 2, 3, 4, 5\]](#)

- **The Takeaway:** Faithful teaching bridges the gap between ancient text and modern application. The Word of God exposes our flaws, naturally leading to a healthy conviction of sin. [\[1, 2, 3\]](#)

4. The Joy of the Lord (Nehemiah 8:10–18)

Nehemiah and Ezra intervene, telling the people to stop mourning because this sacred day is meant for a feast. They deliver the famous declaration: "*Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*" The conviction of sin gives way to the joyful celebration of God's grace, culminating in the joyous observance of the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles). [\[1, 2, 3, 4\]](#)

- **The Takeaway:** While conviction is necessary, it shouldn't overshadow the grace of God. Understanding His grace provides a resilient, joyful strength to navigate life's challenges. [\[1, 2\]](#)

David Guzik

Study Guide for Nehemiah 8

[Study Guide for Nehemiah 8 by David Guzik](#)

THE SPIRIT OF GOD, WORKING THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD, BRINGS REVIVAL

J. Edwin Orr defined revival as: “The Spirit of God working through the Word of God, in the lives of [t]he people of God.” This chapter is a great example of this.

A. Hearing God’s Word sparks revival.

1. (Nehemiah 8:1-3) The people gather and ask Ezra to read God’s Word.

Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that **was** in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who **could** hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that **was** in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people **were attentive** to the Book of the Law.

a. **They told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law**: This demonstrates that the Spirit of God was at work even before the reading of God’s Word. People do not gather **together as one man** for the things of God unless the Spirit of God has moved them, and they do not desire God’s Word unless the Spirit of God has moved them.

- If you attend to the hearing of the Word of God, it is evidence the Spirit of God is working with you. But it is still important to cooperate with that work and to not resist it. We need to cooperate and flow with the work of God’s Spirit if the Word of God is going to do its full work in us.

b. **The book of the Law of Moses**: This refers to the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). This was Israel’s instruction manual for how to walk before God.

c. **Ezra the scribe... Ezra the priest**: Ezra was the man responsible for having the temple rebuilt, and for returning God’s people to worship. Nehemiah, in all his work of rebuilding the walls, just carried on the work Ezra had begun.

- We know Ezra cared about God’s Word, because he was a **scribe** — someone who copied the Bible by hand. We know he was a man devoted to God Himself, because he was a godly **priest**.

d. **All who could hear with understanding**: This shows us **who** needed to hear the Word of God. Everyone who could understand it needed to hear it.

e. **Then he read from it in the open square**: Ezra read God's Word from daylight to mid-day. For some six hours he read God's Word and the people listened.

- This was a move of the Spirit of God. People who will be **attentive to the Book of the Law** for some six hours are people touched by the Spirit of God.
- ii. **From morning** is literally, "from the light." These people gathered from dawn to hear God's Word. They were willing to sacrifice something to hear it — they **wanted** it, and like Jacob they would not let go until they had their blessing.

2. **(Nehemiah 8:4-6)** How God's Word was received.

So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah; and at his left hand Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was **standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with **their** faces to the ground.**

a. **So Ezra... stood on a platform**: They had taken the time to build a wooden platform, so the Word of God could be heard. They did practical things, so God's Word would have the greatest effect.

- There are practical things we can do also to help God's Word have the greatest effect; when a room is comfortable, low in distractions, and the preacher is clearly heard, it helps God's Word have the greatest effect.
- But by far, the greatest preparation must happen in the heart. We must come, willing to forget about ourselves and our own agenda, and submit ourselves to God's Word — not the preacher's word, but God's Word.

b. **At his right hand... and at his left hand**: On the right hand and left hand of Ezra were men who were supporting him in his ministry of teaching God's Word. The ministry of God's Word has the greatest effect when people can see men who are in support of it and obedience to it.

c. **When he opened it, all the people stood up**: They had a **respect** for God's Word. They recognized it for what it was — the Word of God, not the word of man. They honored it.

- This is evidence of two things. First, that the Spirit of God is at work; second, that something good is going to happen.

d. **Then all the people answered**: This work of the Word of God and the Spirit of God had three immediate results.

- The people **thanked God** (by saying **Amen** when Ezra blessed the LORD).
- They prayed (by lifting up their hands).
- They worshipped (by bowing down before Him).
- Thanksgiving, prayer, and praise are all good measures of how the Spirit of God and Word of God are working in us.

3. **(Nehemiah 8:7-8) God's Word is presented so the people may understand.**

Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

a. **Helped the people to understand the Law**: Special men were appointed to help the people **understand** God's Word. After the reading they needed to understand it because if they did not understand it, it would do little good.

- **Understanding** needs to be the first goal of any preacher or teacher. When I stand to teach God's people, there are some things that I always need to remember:
 - If you leave knowing five helpful hints to a better life, but do not have a greater understanding of God's Word, I have failed.
 - If you leave having been amused by humor, entertained by anecdotes, or captivated by dramatic stories, but do not have a greater understanding of God's Word, I have failed.
 - If you leave motivated to action, or praying a prayer, but it is not based on a greater understanding of God's Word, I have failed.
 - If you leave admiring me, but do not have a greater understanding of God's Word, I have failed — and will be accountable before God for my failure.

b. **Helped the people to understand the Law**: It is important to see why God's people need special help in understanding God's Word.

- First, because the things of God are spiritually discerned and not intellectually discerned. The Holy Spirit uses gifted teachers to bring spiritual discernment to us, helping us to understand what God's Word says.
- Second, because it was first written in a different language, in a different culture, in a different place, and at a far distant time. Teachers help us understand it all in our own day.
- Third, because our minds are often slow to understand things that will convict our hearts. We often need it spelled right out to us.

- Understanding isn't only necessary for those who haven't become familiar with the Bible. Sometimes if we have heard it ten times before, we really don't understand it for right now. When an art restorer cleans a painting, he reveals things that were always there, but the colors weren't as bright, and the details weren't as clear, because they were obscured — then the real impact of the painter's work can be seen.
- c. **They read distinctly**: The preacher must speak in a clear, easy-to-understand way. His main goal is to make the people understand, not to impress or entertain them.
- d. **They gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading**: The preacher must communicate the sense of the passage of Scripture, and not his own agenda or favorite personal topics. The people must leave understanding God's Word better, not understanding the preacher's opinions better.

B. Response to God's Word prompts revival.

1. (Nehemiah 8:9-11) The people respond with weeping.

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, 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 nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our LORD. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved."

a. All the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law: The Word of God was doing its intended work. [2 Timothy 3:16](#) tells us two things the Word of God is profitable for: **reproof** and **correction**. Sometimes it hurts to be reproved and corrected, and these tears were evidence of some of that pain.

b. **Do not mourn nor weep**: Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Levites did not want the people to mourn, even though it is a good thing to be sad under the conviction of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. Yet if the sense of conviction is greater than the sense that God is doing a good and holy work, then tears are not good.

- Our knowledge of our sin should never be bigger than our knowledge of Jesus as our savior. We are great sinners, but He is a greater savior.

- Therefore, **the joy of the Lord is your strength** — even when you are being convicted of sin. When we are convicted of sin we know that God is doing a work in us, so we can be glad and take joy.

c. **Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength**: The people **felt** sad, because they were aware of their own sin. But they could walk in **joy** because God was doing a great work. Our emotions are not beyond our control; we can do God's will even when we don't feel like it.

2. **(Nehemiah 8:12)** The people choose to rejoice.

And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.

a. **They understood the words that were declared to them**: They went away praising God, because understanding God's Word brings such a sweet sense of joy.

3. **(Nehemiah 8:13)** The leaders gather for more study of God's Word

Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law.

a. **The heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites**: Leaders have a special need to understand and walk in God's Word. Their ignorance or disobedience affects far more than themselves — it affects everyone they have an influence on.

4. **(Nehemiah 8:14-18)** The people keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as **it is written." Then the people went out and brought **them** and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness.**

Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day **there was a sacred assembly, according to the **prescribed** manner.**

a. **And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses**: This was beautiful, simple obedience. Their attitude was that God said it, so we will do it. Even though tradition did not tell them to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (it had not been done **since the days of Joshua**), but they relied on God's Word, not on tradition.

b. **That the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month**: The Feast of Tabernacles was all about remembering how God had blessed and provided for Israel in the wilderness during the Exodus. They could see God's blessing and provision for them right then, and it made something old seem brand new to them.

c. **And there was very great gladness**: Because of their great obedience to God's Word, there was **very great gladness**. We often are deceived into thinking the path of gladness is in doing our own thing, but gladness and freedom come only through obedience.

d. **Day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God**: This revival began by the Spirit of God working through the Word of God; it continued that way also.

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https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/nehemiah/nehemiah-8.cfm

Nehemiah's Prayer (Chapter 1)

8. Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations;

9. But if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'

10. Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.

11. O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Broader Old Testament Context

Historically, Nehemiah's timeline is the culmination of a three-phase return of the Jewish exiles to their homeland following the Babylonian captivity:

- **Zerubbabel:** Led the first return around 538 BC to rebuild the Temple.
- **Ezra:** Led the second return in 458 BC to teach the Torah and restore religious community practices.
- **Nehemiah:** Led the third return in 445 BC to rebuild the physical city walls and government infrastructure.

Timeline of Nehemiah (5th Century BC)

446 BC (December): Nehemiah is a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes I in Susa. He receives a report about the ruined, defenseless state of Jerusalem and begins praying and fasting.

445 BC (April): Artaxerxes grants Nehemiah permission to return to Judah, providing official leave and resources to act as governor.

445 BC (September): After a 52-day sprint, the defensive walls and gates of Jerusalem are finished, despite heavy opposition from neighboring factions.

445 BC (October): Nehemiah and the priest Ezra gather the Israelites to read the Torah, publicly repent, and renew their covenant with God.

445-433 BC: Nehemiah serves his first term as governor, implementing social reforms, securing the repopulation of Jerusalem, and dedicating the city wall.

433-432 BC: Nehemiah returns briefly to the Persian court in Susa to report to King Artaxerxes.

432 BC and beyond: After a period of time, Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem for a second term as governor. He finds that the Israelites have slipped back into sinful habits and enforces strict religious and social reforms.