

## Nehemiah – Strength for the Fainthearted

*Profiles in Strength*

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**Bible Text:** Nehemiah 8:1-12

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Nehemiah 8, we'll begin reading in verse 8.

8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. 9 And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said unto them, 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. 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.

*God, we thank you that we have been bought with a precious price of the blood of the precious Lamb of God. Father, I pray that today as we look into your word this morning that it would be much more than ink on paper but, Father, that the Holy Spirit would speak to us, Father, that you're word would go forth with power and, Lord, that it would be received with power. Thank you again, God, for the strength that can be found in you and I pray that you would increase that in each of our lives as we seek to be made strong in the Lord. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Nehemiah is quite an exciting example of strength because he is one with whom the vast majority here can identify. It's interesting to note that he was not the religious leader of the people but was a layman with a burden for his city of Jerusalem. The book of Nehemiah chronicles for us the burden of Nehemiah as well as the eventual building of the walls of Jerusalem.

We have to keep in mind that Nehemiah is working here with a group of exiles. They were coming together, having been freed from captivity in order to rebuild the homeland, Jerusalem. This vision that Nehemiah had was not one without opposition. First of all, they were coming about 13 years after the failed attempt of the prophet Ezra. On top of this, they encountered verbal opposition by those who would come and scoff at them as they were working to build up the walls. Then the opposition became even stronger as the workers ended up having to hold a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other in order to accomplish the task at hand. Fearing for their lives while seeking to accomplish the vision the Lord had given them would cause any one reason to fear. Yet in spite of this, Nehemiah gathers the people around, again, to encourage them so that the work would continue forward. In chapter 6, verse 15, the miracle of the wall shared having been completed in 52 days and then Nehemiah moves forward in reminding the people of their spiritual commitment to God in order to press on with the continued task of occupying the restored city and building the houses within.

We think about Nehemiah and, of course, I would dare say if you took anyone who knew anything about the Scriptures and asked them to give you outside of Jesus Christ, the name of one who is associated with leadership, more than likely, 9 times out of 10, the first name off of their tongue would be Nehemiah. A wonderful example of one who was able to lead the children of Israel in a tremendous task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. But, you know, we think about Nehemiah and we realize that he was of the same flesh and blood as you and I are. There was nothing supernatural about him. There was not anything that he was able to accomplish in his day and age that you or I could not just as easily accomplish today in 2011. When we think about his life, it's important that we realize that he learned right from the beginning, having established a pattern of depending not on himself but on God for his strength.

At the beginning of the book, he learned the important lesson that everything of greatness accomplished in the history of the children of Israel was because of God's strong hand which is why in the very first chapter in verse 10, as he's praying he says, "Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand." I'm grateful that when we think of Nehemiah, he was one who was very strong in prayer but he shared this vision with the children of Israel while in captivity and they pled with God to strengthen his people which is why in chapter 2, Nehemiah says, "I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they," that's the people, "said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." Then, of course, we read just a couple of chapters later in chapter 4 where they wavered as some of their brethren came face-to-face with their own human weakness and in verse 10 the Bible says, "And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall." Then in chapter 6 their enemies came and tried to discourage them by causing them to cower, yet Nehemiah again prayed for God's continued strength to lead his people and he says, "they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands," said Nehemiah.

Sure, when we think about seeking to be made strong, we think about seeking to have the strength to be all that God desires for each of us, it's important that we remember how much of that is truly predicated on our prayer lives. You know, this last week, I'm sure all of us can think of tasks that we had to accomplish that perhaps were not the most pleasant. Maybe you have been working on something for a long period of time and you finally finished it this last week and you've come this morning and you're saying, "Man, I'm just exhausted. All of the pressure that I have had on me." Some of you moms are saying, "Man, having my children home for the summer, I'm exhausted and it's only half way over. What on earth am I going to do in the rest of the summer before the school year starts again?" Maybe you're going through some emotional stress, perhaps something is pressing you at work and you have a boss that is bearing down on you and you're just saying, "How am I going to be able to keep going through all of this?" Well, it's important when we think about being made strong in the Lord that we realize that being fainthearted is something that can very easily happen to any of us but the key is in going to God for prayer and saying, "Lord, I truly need your strength." We realize here that Nehemiah was able because of his prayer life to then serve as an example to the people of God and shared with them through his preaching although as a layman, how they too could benefit and furthermore must benefit from the strength of the Lord if they were going to accomplish yet greater things for God's honor and for God's glory.

We find here in chapter 8 some interesting divisions that are given to us because if we were to look at the first section of the chapter, we would come up with a number of verses that really talk to us about the impact of the word of God on our intellect or on our mind. Then beginning in the passage that we have just read, starting in verse 8 and going through about verse 12, we see the impact that the word of God should have on our emotions, keeping in mind that our emotions were given to us by God. Then, of course, we realize and we think about it effecting our intellect, we think about it affecting our emotions, so too should it affect our will which is where we see in verses 13 and following the way in which the children of Israel responded having heard the message of the Lord.

But here we understand at the beginning of this chapter the preaching that takes place is not coming from the lips of Nehemiah at that point and time, it's not something that he is sharing with the people, but he knew the role that God's word must play in the lives of the children of Israel if they were going to continue forward with all that God desired for them. You know, we think about our desire to accomplish God's will for us at Fairfax Baptist Temple and as members of Fairfax Baptist Temple in our homes, in our personal lives, it's important that each of us acknowledge the role that the word of God has to have in order for us to be strong Christians for the Lord. And all too often as we think about being strong in the Lord, it's very easy for any of us to be guilty of thinking, "Well, God, you know, I just really don't have that much time for your word today. Lord, you know, there are so many passages that when I come to them I don't fully understand them and so, you know, if you don't mind, I'm just going to put it off another time." Of course, as we do that, then we begin to depend upon our own strength and we fall woefully short of all that God would have desired for us to accomplish had we learned to have a greater dependence upon his word.

But do you know it's interesting to note that as Ezra here gathers the people together, he's formed a platform, a pulpit if you would, that is able to hold 14 men on it. Made of wood, it is above the eyes of the people. It is something that they would look up to and here for nearly 6 hours a day for about 6 days, Ezra goes day in and day out and reads to the people the law of the Lord. There is a little bit of debate as to what that was referring to and some would try and think that it referred almost exclusively to the book of Deuteronomy, yet there is nothing wrong with believing that it equally had portions coming from all of the Torah or the Pentateuch or the first 5 books of the Old Testament and that he would have selected portions to have read to them.

But you notice here in this passage as we see the way in which the preaching, if you would, took place, that he was concerned about the understanding of the people and Ezra says there in verse 2, "The priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month." Then, of course, when we think about what was to take place here, we find in our text that we have already read in verse 8, "They read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Then as we skip down to verse 12, the Bible says, "All the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them."

Now, I ask you, this last week if you are a child of God, you spent time reading God's word, what did you understand from what you read? What did you take with you as you went about your daily business? As you went working at home? As you were there with the children? As you were there at the office? As you were out in the community? What did you take from your understanding of this sacred book? You see, the difference between where we are today and where the children of Israel found themselves in our specific context here is that you and I, if you are a child of God, have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that is able to help us to understand the things that are spiritually discerned, things as Paul tells us that the natural man is incapable of understanding. Yet at the same time, when we think about what was taking place here, it was not so much just what they were reading but what was being declared unto them. Of course, in their context, they didn't have the capabilities that you and I have of having a Bible and holding it in our hands, let alone putting it on some type of electronic device where we can have volumes and volumes. But there was an understanding that was absolutely key for the people in order to accomplish all that God desired for them and I would ask you this morning as you are here in God's house, if you were here earlier in our Bible study fellowship hour, what did you understand from the word of God? But, you know, when we think about the context here in these people and Nehemiah's concern so he has called in the religious leader, he has called in Ezra, a man who obviously was older than he was, to share with the people the words of the law, to put them in mind of God's standards, to help them remember again what, "Thus saith the Lord," it was very important for the people to listen attentively.

When it talks about their reading with distinction and sharing the word of God there distinctly in verse 8, it's interesting that that just simply talks about complete understanding. A careful explanation. Do you know what happens in too many of our churches today is we find people that may talk about the word of God and then they simply use that as a springboard to go ahead and share their own personal ideas and they read it because they know that's the expectation when you've come to God's house and so they'll throw, if you would, a little treat out to you supposedly in a spiritual sense and then they diverge from that and they spend the next half hour or more not giving any explanation of the text; not in any way helping people to understand it but simply trying to entertain them.

But, you know, when the people here heard that the word of God was going to be spoken to them, when Ezra was there with those 13 men surrounding him on that platform as he stood up, we see the people of God standing all morning long until midday to hear the word of God proclaimed. You know, it's interesting, we think of where we are culturally today. I mean, a sermon goes 20, 25 minutes and we've already looked at our watch probably 20 or 25 times. "Man, if it goes 30 minutes or a hair beyond that, come on, when is this guy going to shut up? Doesn't he know I've got other things I've got to do this afternoon? I mean, come on now, we've got all these other things we're working on." And we look back here and they were standing for close to 6 hours and this wasn't a one-time occasion, they came back the next day and the next day and the next day successively for a week because they wanted to know what God had to say.

Do you know what happens too often in our lives today and even can happen here at Fairfax Baptist Temple is we come to church, we sit in the pew, our body is here but our mind is miles from here. You know, yes, we can sit here and we can turn to the passage that is given to us and our eyes can follow the words that are written on the page and yet we're not understanding anything that is being spoken, anything that is being preached, anything that is being taught. It's having zero impact on our lives and we leave here the same way we would had we just heard a seminar at work. No change. Think back, if you would, over the last 6 months. I'm not talking about the last 6 years, just over the last 6 months, at what you have heard taught in Bible study fellowship, what you have heard preached from the pulpit: how has that impacted your life in 2011? What is the difference that is there? How have you become a stronger Christian? Or is the purpose of our coming to church, "Well, I want to see So-and-so and I'm dying to watch this and I want to hear this and I want to see what they are doing and I want to hear about what they did this week and I want to see how they dress." Are we truly coming and saying, "God, I want to hear from you. Lord, I really want to be able to have a clear explanation of your word so that I can take this and live it the next week everywhere I go."

I mean, when was the last time that the Holy Spirit so spoke to you as you were reading God's word, as you heard God's word faithfully declared unto you, that you came under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and you realized something was amiss in your spiritual life and you made that right with God and that area of your life became strengthened? Or do we say, "Well, Pastor, you know, I've been saved now 25 years and there is probably not a verse you can preach on that I haven't heard before. In fact, there's

probably not a verse you could preach on that I haven't read a dozen times or more." Listen, where is our desire to be made stronger Christians for the Lord? Where is our desire to be drawn closer to our God? To be more like Christ? To be able to be that more effective witness for God's honor and for God's glory so that others will see us and see people who are being changed by the power of the word?

Do you know what's interesting here? We see the impact that the word of God had on these people. Now, at the same time, we have to appreciate the fact that years have gone on since they have been in this specific religious setting. Years have passed. Decades since they were formerly gathered as an assembly to hear the word of God taught and preached. Of course, again, they didn't have their own scrolls that they could open up every night and read on their own. But nevertheless, as they are in this setting, as they have come together, as the word of God has been declared to them, the word of God pierces their hearts because now it is being made clearly explained to them and it is impacting them so much so that the Bible says all the people wept. When was the last time you were in a service where everyone was visibly impacted by the power of the word of God? It's interesting here that it doesn't say that some of the people were greatly moved. It doesn't say that the men's hearts were stirred. No, it says all of the people and from the very beginning of the chapter, it is established to us very clearly we're talking about men, women and children. They have heard the word of God. They have understood its message and they have realized again how short they have fallen when it comes to God's standards.

But, you know, sometimes when we come to God's house again, we're not truly coming to be fed. We're coming with an agenda. "Let me see what I can set straight. Let me see what's not to my liking. Let me see what's over here. Let me see about all these other people. Let me see how she does this and how he teaches this and how she treats the children here and how he's going to work with the teens over here." All of this as opposed to saying, "Wait a minute, God, I am in your house to serve and to be spiritually fed so that I leave here different than when I came to God's house."

You know, it's kind of like the person who goes to the gym and he gets in and they've got all the sophisticated equipment and he looks at it and admires each one of those machines and he sees all of the people that are there and sweat is just pouring off of them and somehow he thinks that, "You know, I've got to go out now. Before I get in the gym I've got to make sure I've got just the right clothes," and so he goes to the sporting goods store and he buys the expensive workout clothes. "Now I've got to have just the right iPod." So he's got that he gets the sports band and has that on and has the athletic earbuds so that he can move around and they are not going to fall out and everything is just so. And then he walks in and he stands next to the guy who is lifting the weights or stands next to the individual who is running on the treadmill or gets next to the one who is going on the stair climber and he just says, "Okay now, let me just see if that will just rub off on me. You know, I don't want to get as sweaty as they are and I'm not really as interested in exerting myself quite the way they are but I am in the same gymnasium. I've got all of the right equipment. I'm seeing others here that are being affected. I'm seeing the results. I'm hearing the groans. I'm hearing the moans. I'm seeing that energy that is being expended

and, boy, I sure do know I'm in the right place, I've got everything I need and I know I'm just going to walk out of here a new man."

Now, we would all laugh at that but could that be said about some of us today about what is transpiring in a worship service? God is speaking. Thank God he is alive. Thank God we have the holy, inspired, infallible word of God. It is changing lives but is it changing yours? Is it impacting you? Could you get up if you were to be named right now and put on the spot and said, "Stand up and share with the church what God has taught you how you have been made strong through a better understanding of his word this year in 2011." Sputter...sputter. "Calm down. Calm down. Share with us." Think about it. What change has occurred in your life intellectually, emotionally and volitionally and if there has not been a change, if you have not been drawn closer to God, if you don't have a greater strength in your spiritual life, then I suggest you look inward and say, "God, soften this heart of mine. Lord, speak to me. God, help me to be much more than one who warms a pew. Lord, help me to be one who truly works the work of the Lord."

You know, as we see here, all that Ezra has shared with them, the immediate response of these people, they are beginning to weep but then it's Nehemiah and you see that word "Tirshatha" and I thought, "What in the world is that?" It's a title of honor. It is also translated in other places as "Governor." It's just recognizing who he was. He was the designated leader of the people. He knew he wasn't the religious leader, that's why he called Ezra to come in and Ezra to come and read the law of the Lord. He wasn't usurping that authority that was there but he was very concerned that the people take what God had given them and use that as a learning experience to go forward for God. So that's why he says, "Stop the tears. Stop the mourning. We can't change the past but what we can do is go forward in the joy of the Lord." And the joy of the Lord can and should be the strength of every single child of God. You see, when we talk about, again, having that proper perspective, as one commentator said, "Joy that is not the result of faith is not joy at all. It's only a good feeling that will soon disappear."

This morning, God's word ought to impact you. It ought to impact you today. It ought to impact you tomorrow when you have your personal devotions. It ought to impact you Tuesday when you have your devotions. It ought to impact you Wednesday when you have your devotions. It ought to impact you Wednesday night when you're back in God's house. It ought to impact you Thursday, Friday, every day. And at the same time, it ought to emotionally speak to you and say, "Wait a minute. From here I can go forward in a strength that is given to me by God that produces one of the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy." Joy.

I have to confess as a proud papa this last week I had the opportunity of attending the spiritual leadership conference at Lancaster Baptist Church out in Lancaster, California and they brought back the singing groups there from West Coast Baptist College and my daughter is in one of them. You heard her a few Wednesday nights ago and she got up there and was in a group and they combined some of the groups because she's in a trio you but this happened to be a group of about 12 students and it was an absolute thrill for me as a dad to sit there and to see my daughter singing forth praise to the Lord with a

joyful heart. You can take the same song and get up and sing it like this and you can have every note just right and have the perfect pitch, can have all the right dynamics but if there is not joy in your heart, it's not worth one cent. And it was exciting to me when after the service, again allow me to indulge myself as a father, to have several other people come up to me and say, "Wow, you could really see that Raquel was enjoying what she was singing and was communicating a message."

But you see, that ought to be the attitude of every single person here this morning. "Okay, I've come to God's house. It has impacted me. It has helped me in my mind to think through and to assess what God desires of me, now it ought to produce joy in my heart of realizing who my great God is. Of realizing my God has all the strength that I need. Of realizing my God is going to go with me through every trial that I may face this week. Of realizing that my God is never going to leave me. Is never going to forsake me. Yes, there is going to be opposition out there. Yes, there are going to be people out there who are going to try and stop the work of God. But the joy of the Lord will be my strength." And then we realize, yes, there is joy in God's word, there is joy in God's way, but then we appreciate the progress of the people.

You know, we think of the psalmist and he tells us, "The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes," in Psalm 19:8. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart," in Psalm 119:111. "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil," in Psalm 119:162. Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts." And do you know what's interesting when you think about that? Who was the one who said that but the one who was referred to as the weeping prophet? He had his tears. He was concerned about the children of Israel. He was concerned about their hardness. But that did not rob him of his joy that was derived from the word of God. Does it concern your pastor when we have sheep that can go astray? When we have sheep that can be unfaithful to God? Unfaithful to their spouse? Unfaithful to their brethren? Yes, but it's not going to rob me of my joy because I can always go back to God's word and find that wonderful spiritual strength and sustenance that more than satisfies. Maybe what we need to do is go back and say, "God, help me to slow down and truly allow you to speak to me in a greater fashion through your word, through what I read, as well as through what I am reminded of through the preaching and teaching of it."

We see now the progress of the people. They reacted. They went out and they began to celebrate and then they were mindful of the Feast of Tabernacles. It was about to occur and so they went out and told all of the people there, "We've got some work to do." The Bible says in verse 13,

13 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. 14 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: 15 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. 16 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. 17 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.

Hey, the intellect was engaged. Then the emotions were spoken to. And now their will was equally put in motion. They said, "You know, we've got this Feast of Tabernacles. The law says that this was something that we're supposed to observe in the seventh month, on the 15th day, so we'd better get busy and let's go out and tell those that might not have been there at that meeting to hear Ezra proclaim that that we've got some work to do." Of course, this was how they would build a temporary structure made of branches that would put them in mind of their wilderness journeyings, something that God had ordained for them to do so that they would be able on a yearly basis to look back and remember and rejoice in all that God had done.

I'm so grateful, having been saved for nearly 4 decades, I can look back and see a lot of wonderful things that God has done in my life. Yes, there have been some difficult times. Yes, there have been some struggles. Yes, there have been some trials but I am grateful that as I read God's word, as I allow God's word to impact my heart, to impact my head, that it impacts my hands and I can get out and get busy about what God has told me to do. And as I am engaged in the work of the Lord, as I am busy serving the Lord, do you know what happens? I experience great gladness. Do you want to know who are some of the saddest Christians in this church or in any other church? Those that are not serving. "Oh, I just don't know about this. Yeah, did you hear that sermon? Yeah. Did you see what she said to me? Did you see how he talked to me?" Those are the ones that are not serving.

You know, there is a twofold responsibility here: if you are one of those that are not serving, you need to come and confess your sin to God and say, "Lord, I want that joy. I want that gladness that Nehemiah experienced." He found that strength as we already established in the very beginning because of his earnest prayer life, not a 30 second one either, but earnest communication with God on a daily basis. Full of opposition but he still pressed forward and he still accomplished a great work for the Lord. So some of you this morning really need to think seriously, "What impact is this message today, July 17, going to have on my life and how does the Holy Spirit want me to react?" But also there is another group out there. Maybe you say, "You know, Pastor, I am seeking to be involved." Then what we need to do is go to those that are not involved and say, "Let me share with you what the word of God says," and as you go and encourage those that are not serving and encourage those that are not worshipping and encourage those that are not giving their heart over to God as they should, then you will experience great gladness

because your company will increase, you'll have more people to work together with you and at the same time you will have greater strength from our God.

You see, we think about revival, we think about all of the ebb and flow, if you would, of difficulties that can be encountered, and some people will be the ones that are always there to cast cold water on whatever is taking place and saying, "Well, you know, yeah, everything is exciting. Yeah, but I just wonder how long that's going to last. Yes, you know, we really saw God working but I wonder how long that will be sustained." And someone once asked the evangelist Billy Sunday if revivals lasted and I love the deep theology in his response when he said, "No, but neither does a bath and it's good to have one occasionally."

You know, we think about Nehemiah, chapter 8 is not the end of the story. The book goes on. The people came back to this abandoned city after the walls had been built in 52 days in spite of Sanballat and Tobias and all those that were out there trying to mock and scoff at the work of God. Trying to stop it at all expense. Trying to distract them from doing what they knew God wanted them to do. But Nehemiah was focused on the task and going forth in the strength of the Lord and just as the people began to think, "Well, I'm not so sure we can keep going on. I'm not so sure we can sustain this level of productivity. I'm not so sure we can continue forward with this amount of energy," then he says, "Let's go back to our commitment to God and realize that our greatest commitment is not a commitment that we make to man but it's a commitment that we make to our holy God, Jehovah." And we can go forward and we can accomplish more for our Lord and we can see God work in a great and mighty way.

Are you fainthearted this morning? Are you one that is a little bit downtrodden? Maybe you have done something on a grand scale for God recently and you just feel like your energy is waning. "How can I keep going forward?" Go back to God's word and beg and plead with the Holy Spirit to make this book come alive and as God begins to move in your heart and in your spirit, respond. Don't sit there like a rock. Don't sit there unmovable. Say, "Wow, Lord, I can go forward in more strength. I still have the joy of the Lord." Am I tired? Sure, I'm tired. Have I had a lot of things going on? Yes, I've had a lot of things going on but I can move forward with the joy of the Lord is my strength.

So again this morning, I ask you: are you among those that are not serving? "Oh, well, you should see what I do at my work. You should see what I do at my office." I'm talking about what you're doing for the work of God. I'm talking about what you're doing with your talents, with your gifts, right here in the local church as Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4:11 and 12. If you're not serving, you need to come to this altar today and say, "Lord, I want the word of God to have an impact on my life. God, I want to get busy about the work of the Lord. I want to be made strong in the Lord." And if you are serving, then you need to ask yourself: is there someone that I could or should come alongside who is not serving and encourage them to get involved? To let them know the joy that they are missing by not being involved in the work of the Lord? Of course, if you're here today and you don't know Christ as your personal Savior, there is nothing that

you can do to find joy apart from coming and receiving Jesus Christ and having all your sins washed away.

You know, it was interesting there and I don't want to put too much insinuation into what the Scriptures did not deliberately say but it was interesting to note that out of all the gates and there are several, if you have ever been to Jerusalem that even exist to this day, out of all the gates, Ezra chose to declare the law of the Lord by the water gate. When we think of the way in which our lives are made pure and holy and it is by the washing of the water of the word. While not wishing to read more into it than what is there, at the same time, it ought to remind each one of us, "I can be made whole. I can have strength. I can go forward. Even when it seems like the whole world is against me, I can have the joy of the Lord."