

I’ve **said** many times in this study
that **WE** are actually the **Wall of Testimony** for God

& **today** we’re going to **see that** unfold in the Neh

You see – God **didn’t send** Nehemiah to Jerusalem **ultimately**
to build a wall of **blocks & mortar** –

A **wall** – or a building – or **anything** built physically on this earth
would **NEVER** be God’s ultimate intention

in fact – He allowed **His own Temple** to be destroyed **TWICE**
& then made it clear that **WE** (His believers) are actually His Temple

We are **God’s Living Stones**, being built up as a **spiritual house**,
to offer spiritual sacrifices to Him

& so - the **2nd half** of Nehemiah shows us
the **ULTIMATE PURPOSE** of Rebuilding the Wall

God’s **ultimate purpose** was, actually – to **raise up God’s people**

Into a **Worshipping Community** that would be
an **Undeniable Testimony** to the world around them

The Wall of Block & Mortar **was NOT** the End Goal for God

God’s **end goal** was to **Transform His People**
into a **Great Worshipping Community**

that would be an **Undeniable**, **Unstoppable**, **Testimony** to Him

Let’s Pray

The physical Wall of Testimony had been built

& now it was time to Build the Much More Important, Spiritual Wall of Testimony – meaning – the People

Last week we saw Nehemiah Organize the People,
& put all the leaders in place - - & put all the servants in place

& this week – we see God begin the great transformation

of these 50,000 ragtag Jews – into a unified, purposeful,
wonderfully worshipping, community

Ahhh – this is a GOOD, GOOD Ch – I LOVE this CH

We are going to see - a phenomenal worship service today

that sparks a Revival - & begins the Building
of the REAL Wall of Testimony - among God's people

Previously - at the end of Ch 7

Nehemiah had sent everyone back to their own towns
after the miraculous finish of the wall

& maybe as he dispatched them – he told each family group
Hey – you need to be back here in ONE WEEK

Because we've got something else that's HUGE
that we need to do together

It's funny to me – that the event we read about today
occurred just one week after the Wall was finished

& I love this for **Ministry training** – because Nehemiah says;

Hey, **great job** on the miraculous finish of the Wall
see you in a Week for the **NEXT HUGE** undertaking

Isn't that what the **ministry feels like** most of the time?

Now **remember** – these **50,000 people** who returned to Jerusalem
had **Mostly** been **born & raised** in **Babylon**

They **certainly** knew **OF** God's Word,
& probably knew **SOME** of God's Word

but they had **probably NEVER** heard it
Publically taught or **Responded** to – *so this is a Huge Moment*

Nehemiah 7:73(B)-8:1 - NLT

***73 . . . In October, when the Israelites had settled in their towns,
1 all the people assembled with a unified purpose . . .***

There's an **entire Msg** right there –

ALL the people assembled with a unified purpose . . .

. . . at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had given for Israel to obey.

The way this is written – it appears **THE PEOPLE**
asked **Ezra** to bring out God's Law

THIS is what they had **gathered** for - -
they had **come back** after only being home a **few days**

& they **came back** *anxious & excited*
to hear the **Word of God** Read & Taught

This is like the **Joy of teaching** in the bush in **Africa**,
where the **Bible** has **never** been *clearly & accurately taught*

The response to the Word of God - is **OVERWHELMING**

So the people gathered **together** – Probably **ORGANIZED**
by **Nehemiah** (with his *kingly* gifts)

& they **WANTED** to hear God's Word
They were **ASKING** to hear God's Word

Man – this is a **Preachers DREAM**

Ezra was a scribe (& priest) he had **translated** the Torah (Pentateuch)
from *Hebrew to Aramaic*

& **we know** he was an **expert** on matters of God's Law

& the **PEOPLE** asked him to bring out
The Book of The Law of Moses - - & **READ IT**

Thru 70 yrs of captivity -
& **incredible difficulty** getting Jerusalem Rebuilt

God's people maintained a **deep reverence**,
& **strong desire** - to Hear God's Word

I LOVE THIS CHAPTER

Neh 8:2 - NLT

2 So on October 8 Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand.

Notice – **EZRA** – *Not* Nehemiah

Remember from last week - **Nehemiah** had ***kingly*** gifts,

& so he steps aside & allows **Ezra** to use his ***prophet*** gift to bring the Word of God to the people

& in a minute we'll see the **Levites**, who have the ***priestly*** gifts, & we'll see them get in there & care for the people one on one

& so we see; the **prophet** gifts, the **priest** gifts, & the **king** gifts & it **takes ALL 3** for the ministry of God to move forward

Now - in these next vs's – we're going to see one of the Clearest Biblical examples of **EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING** there is

& BTW – **Expositional Preaching** is what we are committed to here, and what I try to do for you each week –

Expositional Preaching means simply:

To “set forth” the accurate meaning & purpose of a scriptural text - & to convey it in a way that makes it easily understood

Chuck Swindoll - - the 3 tests of Expositional Preaching are;

- 1) Is it Biblically **ACCURATE**
- 2) Is it **CLEARLY** explained
- 3) Can you **APPLY** it to your life

That is exactly what we're about to see here in Neh
AND - THAT is what I strive for **EVERY** single week

& we're **about to see** – that it is **EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING**
that **Lit the Revival** in the Book of Nehemiah

& it is **EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING** that has been at the heart
of **Every Great Revival** since the Reformation

So - **Wherever** you're at – **Find a church** – or find a way
to hear **Genuine EXPOSITIONAL Teaching** of God's Word

& if you're **not hearing it here** – then find **somewhere else** to hear it
Please **don't settle** for anything less

Because **the Regular**, in-depth, **study** of God's Word
will **RADICALLY** Transform your life

Neh 8:3 - NLT

3 He (Ezra) faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon (SIX hours) and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law.

This is the **summary statement** of all that follows here –
this is the Big Picture

[REPEAT / REVIEW V.3]

Now **THAT** my friends – is a **CHURCH** service
& don't worry – the **WORSHIP** is coming

Vs's 4 – 5 – 6 - fill in all the details of what was happening

Neh 8:4 - NLT

4 Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform that had been made for the occasion. To his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. To his left stood Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

So Ezra stood Literally – on a High Wooden Platform –
Lit the word is “Tower”

Which – BTW – is the 1st use of pulpit in the Bible

& notice (end of 1st sentence) – *it had been made for the occasion*
I'm sure – due to Nehemiah's kingly planning

& around him stood 13 men
Presumably other Priests & Scribes

This was a full-on, Well-Planned, Massive Church Service

Then – in V.5 - something very powerful happens

Neh 8:5 - NLT

5 Ezra stood on the platform in full view of all the people. When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet.

God's Word is raised above the people (on the pulpit)
& when it is opened they all RISE to their feet - out of Reverence

Which is very cool - & still Literally Done at many churches

& I want you do know – at this church –
we stand in absolute awe & reverence to God's Word

because it is God-Breathed & the Infallible rule of Faith & Practice,
EVERY SINGLE WORD OF IT

1Tim 3:16-17 – ESV

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

We don't press our opinions or our feelings on God's Word
God's Word presses His truth into our Lives

& we don't reinterpret or skip over anything we don't like,
or don't want to hear

We STRIVE - with everything we've got to;

Teach it ACCURATE - Explain it CLEARLY - & APPLY it to your Life

& I Sincerely PRAY – THAT is what you WANT us to do, Amen?

ALRIGHT – In V.6 this Church Service really takes off

As Ezra stops – to PRAISE the Lord – either after (or during)
the Reading (or Preaching) of the Word

Neh 8:6 - NLT

6 Then Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people chanted, “Amen! Amen!” as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

MAN – **THIS** is a **HUGE VERSE**

I want to show you THREE Responses to God’s Word

that are **ALL ATTACHED** to one another - &
that are **ALL REQUIRED** in each of our lives

You **may not** participate fully
in the “**Physical Display**” of these three responses

But we **MUST** fully **EMBRACE** what each of these three responses
MEAN – - what they **ILLUSTRATE**

1st Response is – the AMEN

6 Then Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people chanted (LIT Responded) “Amen! Amen!”

Chuck Swindoll says; “***Saying AMEN to a Preacher, is like saying “Sic ‘Em” to a Bull Dog”***

It means ***YES Lord, I agree,***
may it be so, & may it be so in MY life

This is the **BEGINNING**
of the people **RESPONDING** to God’s Word

They called out **AMEN** – Meaning - **May it BE SO – In our lives !!**

This is the **FIRST** Appropriate **RESPONSE** to God’s Word

May it BE SO Lord – In our lives !!

& then – The 2nd Response is – An Act of Surrender

. . . and all the people chanted, “Amen! Amen!” as they lifted their hands.

Let's just talk about **lifting hands** for a minute

Let's read some Psalms

Ps 28:2 - “*I cry out to you for help, as I lift my hands toward your holy sanctuary.*”

Psa 63:4 - “*I will praise you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer.*”

Psa 77:2 - “*All night long I prayed, with hands lifted toward heaven,*”

Psa 88:9 - “*O LORD; I lift my hands to you for mercy.*”

Psa 119:48 - “*I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love,*”

Psa 134:2 - “*Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the LORD!*”

Psa 141:2 - “*Accept my prayer . . . and my upraised hands as an evening offering.*”

Psa 143:6 - “*I lift my hands to you in prayer. I thirst for you as parched land thirsts for rain.*”

Obviously – the **Lifting of Hands** is a **Biblical** form of Worship
But – **WHY** do we Raise our Hands ??

Because **THIS** (Raised Hands) – is a **SIGN** of **SURRENDER**

I **give up** - - - I give up God

I give up all my **Pride**, all my **Self-Centeredness**, all My **Ways**,

I give up, I **Surrender** all to you

You are God, & I am Not – I surrender

Lifting your hands is a sign of surrender

& even if you NEVER Lift your hands “Physically”

We MUST SURRENDER to God’s Ways - & God’s Word

& the more uncomfortable you feel about showing a sign of surrender to God - - - the more you might need to try it

So – the FIRST Response to God’s Word was AMEN
May it BE SO – In my life

& then the SECOND Response is;

Lord – *I SURRENDER ALL* – I give up all my own ways

& then – the THIRD Response
is in the 2nd half – of V.6

... Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

This is describing the Kneeling position with your face to the floor

this is a very appropriate - & a very healthy response to understanding WHO’S GOD - - - & who’s NOT

So often we Stand at God and (*at least in our hearts*)
& we shake a fist at him – or at least Wag a finger

& we puff out our chest

& we try to convince God to do things OUR way

THIS RESPONSE – is the **OPPOSITE** – of **THAT**
Please – try it sometime

I do this most often when **I'm alone**
because it is a **very vulnerable** thing to do

You **ARE** welcome to **bow down** with your face to the ground
right here – during **worship** – **anytime**

But I would **especially encourage you** – to bow down, **privately**
with you **face to the ground** as you cry out to God for some matter

Really, please TRY IT – ***Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord
& He will Lift you up***

This Response to God's Word says
You are the God of Heaven & Earth, & I am NOT

So – **I will Bow to your will Lord- I will Serve YOU**
do you see it?

FIRST Response - - - ***May it BE SO – In my life***

SECOND Response - - - ***I SURRENDER All***

THIRD Response - - - ***I will Bow to your will***

& **NOTICE** – ALL of this is done in an **Environment of Worship**

It **began** with Ezra **PRAISING** the Lord
After (or during) the **Proclaiming** of God's Word

God's Word should bring a **Response of Worship**

Now - **I know** that the “**Physical Display**” of these **Worship Truths** is **difficult** for some

Some of us were raised in an environment that says
“***we believe the Bible – we just don’t want it so SHOW***”

Or **worse yet** – an environment that said - “***just because you love God, that doesn’t mean it has to SHOW*** ”

here’s a good test for you
apply that to your **spouse** for the next year or so

make sure you **NEVER** show **ANY** outward response to them
Just **stare blankly ahead** anytime you’re in their presence
& **NEVER** show any **response** of your love for them
& **see how that works** out for you in your marriage

Now **I KNOW** there are different “**personalities**”
when it comes to **RESPONDING** to God

I know the **demonstrative, outgoing** people
Respond **demonstratively** & **outgoing**,

& the more **reserved people** respond more **reservedly**
I know that - & that’s **OK**

But the **Word of God** – Alive in a person’s life by the Holy Spirit
will accomplish **SOME PURPOSE** - - - Some Response

Isa 55:11 – ESV

11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

God's Word is designed to "***Accomplish a Purpose***" in our lives

& that purpose – for us personally (individually)

Always involves some **LEVEL** – some **TYPE** – of **Response**

Now – Here's the **NEXT** really **cool thing** here

Not only was there Public **PREACHING** - & Responsive **WORSHIP** –
but there was **ALSO** - **In-Depth Discipleship**

& this is **AMAZING** – because this is **exactly**
what **we're trying so hard** to do here

After Ezra had **Read the Law**

& **after** (or maybe during) the **People's Response** in Worship

The **Levites** moved out among the people

& they **taught them** the **deeper meaning** of what they had just heard

This is the **follow-up** to the **Proclamation** of the Word,

& the **Response** of Worship

Neh 8:7-8 - NLT

7 The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah—then instructed the people in the Law while everyone remained in their places.

8 They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.

This is the **beginning** of Nehemiah & Ezra's

Discipleship Group Ministry

& it's exactly what we're doing around here

The Levites (those who were qualified)
put the people in small groups

& they *clearly explained the meaning of what was being read*
helping the people understand each passage

The Levites explained the meaning – & helped the people understand
what Ezra was Preaching from the Pulpit

THAT is Such a **POWERFUL** & **LIFE CHANGING thing** to do
& **THAT** is why we **STILL do it - TODAY**

This is exactly what our Discipleship hour is for
& what our midweek Discipleship groups are for

& you can come over to one of the Discipleship tables
or go into one of the classrooms –
or attend one of the midweek groups

& have a *qualified person* Explain & Help you Understand
what God's Word really says for your life
IS THAT COOL OR WHAT

& for our Word-By-Mail Family
Please - try to find a Small Discipleship Group if Possible

Because in small groups we can dig in deep
& understand what God is saying to us *personally*

& it's in Small Discipleship Groups
where we really learn to APPLY God's Word

& **THAT** – is the *Greatest Response* of **ALL**

& So - After the **Proclamation** of God's Word
After the **Response** of Worship
After the **Instruction & Meaning** were given

After all that - - - The people **broke down** and **CRIED**

They were **CRYING** – they're **WEEPING** – they're **MOURNING**
just glance ahead at the **end of V.9**

“For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law”

Why were the people **crying** & weeping
in **response** to the **Law** being read & explained to them?

Allow me to give you the **NT explanation** of this **OT truth**

You can't have the **JOY** of a Savior,
until you have the **CONVICTION** of Judgment

You can't have the **JOY** of being **Given New Life**
Until you're **fully aware** you're currently **DEAD** in your Sin

The **hardest person** to get to see their **need** for Jesus
is **the person** that thinks they're **alright with God**

But **if we'll allow** the **Holy Law of God** to thoroughly **convict** a person
of their sin – *like it was designed to do*

Then **they will** not only **fully recognize** their **need** for a Savior
but will be **ANXIOUS** to make Him their **LORD**

Gal 3:24 says that the **OT LAW**
was our **GUIDE** to *Lead us to Christ*

because **without** God's Law
we **don't know** of our great **NEED** for a Savior

& so the **LAW** had done its **JOB**

But now – **Nehemiah** & **Ezra** needed
to turn that **MOURNING** into **DANCING**

Neh 8:9 - NLT

9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, "Don't mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the LORD your God." For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

It seems this day was actually a **FEAST DAY** - -
apparently - the **Feast of Trumpets**

& so **Nehemiah** & **Ezra** encouraged the people - **NOT to weep**
because it was actually a **celebration** "feast day"

However - At the very **ROOT** of **Spiritual Revival** - is **BOTH**

A **clear Realization** - of God's **Holiness**,
Justice & **Right Judgment** upon our sin

AND a **clear Receiving** - of His **Unending Grace** & **Mercy**
to **save us** from the **judgment** we rightly deserve

GREIF because of our **Sin** - & **JOY** because of **God's Salvation**
are **NEVER too far** apart

So - thru the Law – the people had a Good Grasp
on the Judgment that was rightly due for their sins

But Nehemiah & Ezra (*because it was a FEAST DAY*)
wanted the people to Move FROM;

Mourning their Sin - & the Judgment they rightly deserved

TO; Rejoicing in God's Grace
that provides Salvation from that Judgment

So Nehemiah sends them away REJOICING instead of MOURNING

& in doing so – he tells them something Critically Important

Neh 8:10 - NLT

10 And Nehemiah continued, "Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!"

Nehemiah & Ezra were beginning
to bring the people to OBEDIENCE to God's Word

& since this was a FEAST DAY
they were encouraging the people - to celebrate it correctly

But notice the GREAT TRUTH at the end of V.10
for the joy of the LORD is your strength!

The **Joy of the Lord** is the Joy that strengthens us in **ANY** situation
*Because of **Our Relationship** with the Lord*

It is a **JOY** found in **Communion** with the Lord
in **ANY** Situation

The **Joy of the Lord** is **NOT** contingent
on **ANY** outside circumstance or situation

When we can say with Paul – in **ANY Situation**
*“**That I may KNOW HIM**” - & be able to Commune with Him there*

The **“Result”** will be - Supernatural Joy

& what does this **Joy** Bring (v.10) ? - - - **STRENGTH**

The word **Strength** here means;
*“**A Place of Safety**” – “**A Refuge** or **Protection**”*

The *Joy of the Lord* – is our **Place of Safety - Refuge – Protection**

IF - we will learn to **MEET Him**, and **COMMUNE with Him**
in **ANY Circumstance or Situation**

THEN – the Joy of the Lord – **WILL BE** our Strength

The **Joy of the Lord** comes from;
an *Ever-Increasing, Intimate, Personal Relationship*, with the Lord

& I can **ASSURE YOU** – That **Relationship** . . .
is a **RESPONSE RELATIONSHIP**

& to grow in your **RELATIONSHIP** - *with* Him
you must grow in your **RESPONSE** - *to* Him

No matter WHERE you're at with Jesus Christ today

you can grow in your **RELATIONSHIP** with Him –
& your **RESPONSE** to Him

Maybe **Mourning & Crying** is the appropriate **First Response**
as you **come to grips** with your *Sin* & *God's Judgment*

But **IF** you will **Acknowledge** your condition before God
& **REPENT** of your Sin - & **Come to Him** for Forgiveness

You will **KNOW** the **JOY** of the Lord

& as you **GROW** – in your **RESPONSE** to Him
The **JOY OF THE LORD** – Will be your Strength !!!

Let's Close

Neh 8:11-12 – NLT

***11 And the Levites, too, quieted the people, telling them, “Hush!
Don't weep! For this is a sacred day.”***

***12 So the people went away to eat and drink at a festive meal, to
share gifts of food, and to celebrate with great joy [WHY ?]
because they had heard God's words and understood them.***

The people went away – to **Celebrate** with Great **JOY**
because they had heard God's Word and understood it.

My **NUMBER ONE Prayer** for this **Church** - & for **W-B-M** is that;

You would **HEAR** God's Word

You would **UNDERSTAND** God's Word

You would **RESPOND** to God's Word

& by a **Growing RESPONSE** to God's Word

The **JOY OF THE LORD** – *WILL* be your **STRENGTH**

Let's Pray