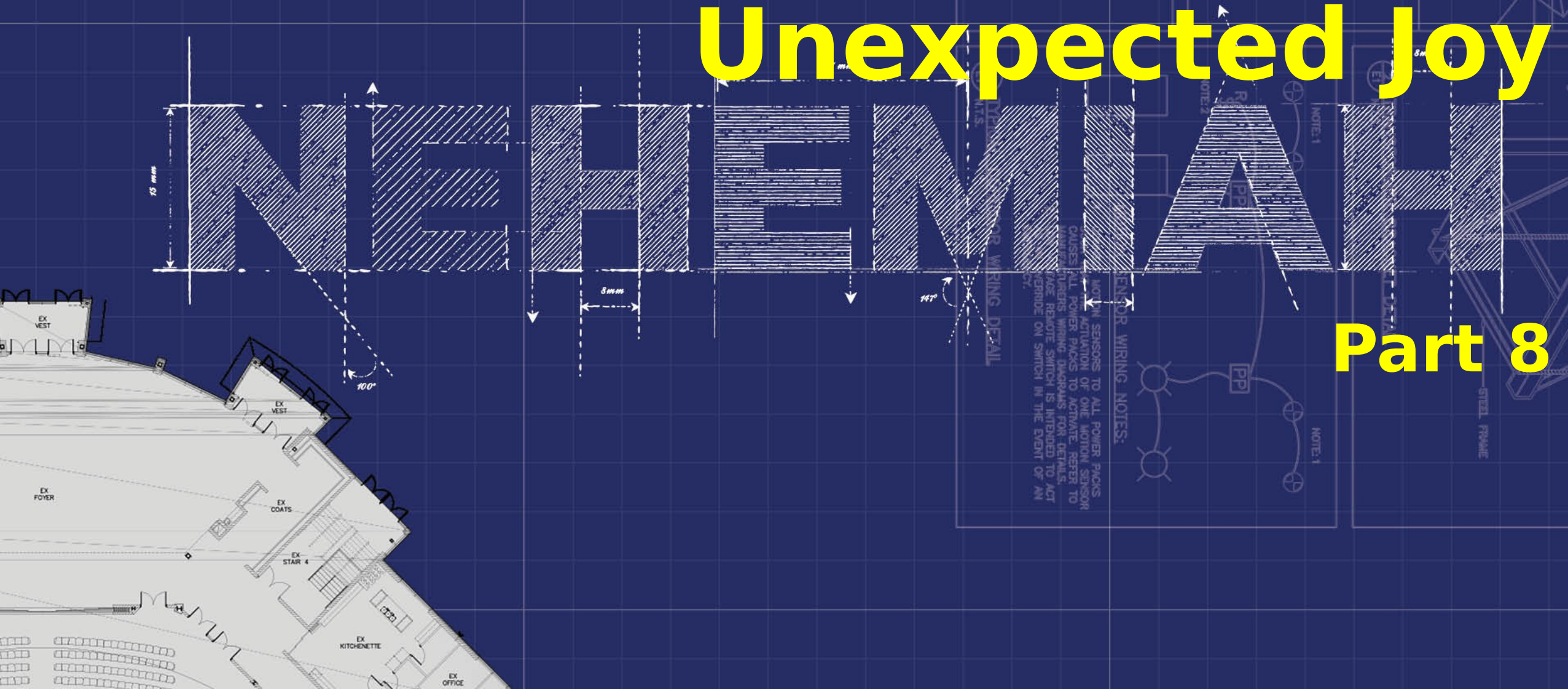


Nehemiah: Unexpected Joy

Part 8



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- Nehemiah heads in an unexpected direction.
 - Nehemiah sets down the cup and picks up the hammer.
 - Nehemiah has been:
 - Downtrodden
 - Discouraged
 - Distracted
 - Discredited

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- The wall is complete without much celebration.
 - Nehemiah was never there to just build a wall.
 - Nehemiah was called to Build a people.

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- Your position is not your purpose, it positions you for your purpose.
 - Wherever you are, you are there to build up the people around you.
 - The largest temptation for a great leader is the believe they are the best leader for every situation.

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- Thanks to Nehemiah, Jerusalem now had a physical wall to protect the Jewish people. Next it was up to Ezra to set up a spiritual wall.

Nehemiah 7:73 (CSB)

73 The priests, Levites, gatekeepers, temple singers, some of the people, temple servants, and all Israel settled in their towns. When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns,

Nehemiah 8:1-4 (CSB)

1 all the people gathered together at the square in front of the Water Gate. They asked the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses that the LORD had given Israel. **2** On the first day of the seventh month, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding.

Nehemiah 8:1-4 (CSB)

3 While he was facing the square in front of the Water Gate, he read out of it from daybreak until noon before the men, the women, and those who could understand. All the people listened attentively to the book of the law. **4** The scribe Ezra stood on a high wooden platform made for this purpose.

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- Ezra read from the law for 6 hours.
 - There was a reverence.

Nehemiah 8:5,6 (CSB)

5 Ezra opened the book in full view of all the people, since he was elevated above everyone. As he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and with their hands uplifted all the people said, "Amen, Amen!" Then they knelt low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

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- We have become so casual, callous, and even critical to the Word of God. The Word of God demands a response.

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- Negative Responses to the Word of God
 - Casual - good book
 - Callous - irrelevant book
 - Critical - dangerous book
 - None of these responses recognize the focus, attention and honour to be given to the Scriptures.

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- King David says this about the Word of God
Psalms 119:105 (CSB) **Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.**

Isaiah 55:8-11 (CSB)

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." This is the LORD's declaration. **9** "For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. **10** "For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return there without saturating the earth and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat,

Isaiah 55:8-11 (CSB)

11 "so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do."

Nehemiah 8:7 (CSB)

7 Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah, who were Levites, explained the law to the people as they stood in their places. **8** They read out of the book of the law of God, translating and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was read.

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- Tremendous conviction swept over the people.
There were sobs heard in various places.
 - God was speaking through the Scriptures that day.
 - The Lord was revealing at least three things that day through His Word.

I. God's Promise:

- The story of Isaac (the Promised child) is a traditional Rosh Hashanah scripture reading.
- Covenant renewal is important.

Deuteronomy 30:11-20 (CSB)

11 "This command that I give you today is certainly not too difficult or beyond your reach. **12** "It is not in heaven so that you have to ask, 'Who will go up to heaven, get it for us, and proclaim it to us so that we may follow it?' **13** "And it is not across the sea so that you have to ask, 'Who will cross the sea, get it for us, and proclaim it to us so that we may follow it?'

14 "But the message is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may follow it.

Deuteronomy 30:11-20 (CSB)

15 "See, today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and adversity. **16** "For I am commanding you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, statutes, and ordinances, so that you may live and multiply, and the LORD your God may bless you in the land you are entering to possess. **17** "But if your heart turns away and you do not listen and you are led astray to bow in worship to other gods and serve them,

Deuteronomy 30:11-20 (CSB)

18 "I tell you today that you will certainly perish and will not prolong your days in the land you are entering to possess across the Jordan. **19** "I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, **20** "love the LORD your God, obey him, and remain faithful to him. For he is your life, and he will prolong your days as you live in the land the LORD swore to give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

I. God's Promise:

Summary of God's Promise:

- If you listen to the Word, you will stay in the Land.
- If you disobey, you will be scattered.

II. Our Position:

- They have just returned from being scattered, so clearly they didn't listen to the promises.
- Now they were confronted with the same choices.
- But as the Word of the God is read, they spot the gap between where they should be, and where they are.

II. Our Position:

- When people are confronted with sin they usually:
 1. Fight (argue that the sin is not sin)
 2. Flight (run and hide or despair)
- When they understood God's word, they were **dis**couraged by their deficiencies and not **en**couraged by God's divinity.

II. Our Position:

- How do we avoid that mindset?
- What we need is Revival--new life and hope in a hopeless situation.
- Survival vs Revival
- Revival has two main ingredients:
 1. Proclamation of the Word of God.
 2. Obedience of the People of God.
- Our position should humble us.

III. God's Purpose

- Nehemiah 8:9-11

Nehemiah 8:9-11 (CSB)

9 Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all of them, "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. **10** Then he said to them, "Go and eat what is rich, drink what is sweet, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, since today is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, because the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Nehemiah 8:9-11 (CSB)

11 And the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Be still, since today is holy. Don't grieve."

III. God's Purpose

- The people receive some unexpected instructions.
- Don't cry, rejoice.
- Yes, God is holy.
- Yes, God's Promises have expectations.
- Yes, Your Position is far from where it should be.
- But don't weep, rejoice!

III. God's Purpose

- We primarily think of the Joy of the Lord as an object that is given from God to us.
- What if the Joy of the Lord is referring to God's Joy, the things that give him joy?
- God's purpose bridges the gap.

John 14:23 (CSB)

23 Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

III. God's Purpose

- His joy is your strength.
- God's Joy is our strength to live as we ought to.
- God's purpose should fuel us.

Nehemiah 8:12 (CSB)

12 Then all the people began to eat and drink, send portions, and have a great celebration, because they had understood the words that were explained to them.

III. God's Purpose

- God's Joy is our strength to live as we ought to.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (CSB)

1 Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us,
2 keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

III. God's Purpose

- God's Joy is our strength to live as we ought to.