



## MESSAGE FOUR: WHEN JOY BECOMES OUR STRENGTH

*Pastor Mike Chapman*

A demoralized people, through the vision and persistence of Nehemiah, found the courage to believe that God would help them. In fifty-two days, they rebuild the walls and the gates of the city. What a great verse! What a fantastic accomplishment!

*Nehemiah 6:15-16, So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God. (NIV)*

However, Nehemiah was not finished. The walls of the city had been rebuilt. Now the people had to be rebuilt.

**A DIFFERENCE MAKER KNOWS IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE  
NOT PROJECTS**

The building of the wall was not an **end**. It was a **means to an end**.

The end was a restored people in covenant with God.

The ultimate protection of the people would not be rebuilt walls, but a reestablished covenant with God.

There was a growing spiritual **hunger** among the people.

*Nehemiah 8:1-3, All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. (NIV)*

### **A DIFFERENCE MAKER LETS GOD WORK**

*Nehemiah 8:5-9, Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. (NIV)*

The Word of God is **a powerful force**. (Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16:17)

Ezra **read**. The Levites **explained**. The people **worshipped** and **wept**.

## A DIFFERENCE MAKER BRINGS THE LAST WORD

*Nehemiah 8:9-12, Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites...said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep. Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.(NIV)*

Though weeping was necessary and important it is not the **final message**.

The final message was **joy**.

The basis of our joy is that we have been **forgiven** and that our true home is not a **city down here** but a **city up there**.

*Luke 10:19-20, The great triumph is not in your authority over evil, but in God's authority over you and presence with you. Not what you do for God but what God does for you—that's the agenda for rejoicing." (Msg)*

Our mission is to **share the joyful message** with those who have no basis for joy.

The people celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles which was to remind them that they were pilgrims and strangers in this world. Their true treasure was deeper than what they possessed.