

## The Book of Nehemiah

# 23

## Morning Devotions

Select a passage in God’s Word. Talk with the Lord as you read the passage, then go back and find one or two verses which the Lord has impressed on your heart and meditate on them.

## Morning Study

This morning we move on to the book of **Nehemiah**. As we saw in the last morning study, the *Talmud* (an ancient collection of commentaries and applications of Jewish Law) counted **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** as a single book – **Ezra-Nehemiah**. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (AD 37-100) regarded **Nehemiah** to be an integral part of **Ezra**, and the oldest manuscripts of the *Septuagint* also treated **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** as one book.

Although the **Nehemiah** clearly follows on from **Ezra**, there is also a distinctiveness about the book. While the priest Ezra most likely wrote (or at least compiled) the book that is attributed to him, the opening words of **Nehemiah** clearly identify its author: “The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah...”

In both **Ezra** and **Nehemiah**, like **1 and 2 Chronicles** before them, many official documents are quoted, including extensive lists of those participating in the rebuilding of the Temple and of the city walls. Letters from the Persian kings, authorizing Jewish rebuilding activity, are also quoted verbatim in **Ezra**.<sup>\*</sup> This is because all four books are tracing one contiguous historical record – traced from David’s reign and the building of the Temple through to the Jew’s return from exile and the rebuilding of the Temple. In this way, **Nehemiah** continues a trend that holds forth the highest standards of historical record in the pre-classical world.

Whereas **Ezra** focuses on the rebuilding of the Temple, **Nehemiah** focuses on the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s defensive walls. The spiritual lessons that can be drawn from Nehemiah are plentiful and the book is full of leadership principles as good as any found in today’s best sellers.

With this in mind, let’s now pull up a comfortable chair and read the book of **Nehemiah** in one sitting.

<sup>\*</sup> Although both **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** were written in late Hebrew, **Ezra** contains four letters written from Persian kings in Aramaic, the international language of that day. The fact that they are quoted word for word in Aramaic shows Ezra’s integrity in his reporting and his dependence upon official records in the compilation of his book.

# Memory Verse

For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.

Romans 9:15-16

Here are a few suggestions that may help you to memorize your memory verse:

- ➡ Ask the Lord to help you remember his Word (see [John 14:26](#)).
- ➡ Use the version of the Bible you are most familiar with. What you normally read in your Bible is what you need to be memorizing.
- ➡ Don’t just memorize the contents of the verse; memorize its “address” (the verse reference) as well. You can do this by following this pattern: Step 1: **reference**; Step 2: **verse content**; Step 3: **reference**. Then repeat steps 1-3. Note that you are quoting the reference twice as many times as you quote the actual verse content. This gives the verse a clear “reference tag.”
- ➡ After you have read your memory verse out aloud several times, try going through your memory verse *without* reading your computer screen.
- ➡ Look up your memory verse in your Bible. Look at its immediate context and read the verses that come before and after your memory verse.
- ➡ Print out your memory verse or jot it down on a piece of paper. Take this paper with you when you go to work or do other daily activities. Meditate on the meaning of the verse throughout the day.
- ➡ During your noon appointment with the Lord, take out your memory verse and go over it again. Talk to the Lord about what this verse means to you personally.
- ➡ In the evening (at either your evening study or your evening devotions), see if you can quote your memory verse from memory. Then, without looking at the memory verse itself, see if you can find it in your Bible.
- ➡ The next day, before you begin committing a new verse to memory, rehearse your previous day’s memory verse and see if you can remember it (without cheating!).
- ➡ Finally, at the end of the week (possibly on the Sunday), collect all your week’s memory verses, rehearse them and see if you can recall them without reading them. Spend a little extra time on any verses you have difficulty recalling.
- ➡ Remember: Don’t just memorize a verse. Put it into practice ([James 1:22](#)). It is not being able to quote a verse from memory that counts. It is His Word *abiding* in your heart that counts ([John 15:7](#)). When you actually apply a verse consistently to your daily life, that is when you *truly* know that verse!