

The Impact of the Word of God

Nehemiah 8:1-18

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Introduction: Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the Temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem (Ezra 1-6). Public worship was re-established by Ezra (Ezra 7-10). Nehemiah led in the re-erecting of the walls of Jerusalem, which were completed in only 52 days (Nehemiah 1-6). Following the rebuilding of the walls, the people of Israel met together to hear publicly the Word of God. At their request, Ezra brings forth the book of the Law of Moses & leads in a worship service. But this was no ordinary worship service. Consider in this chapter the extreme importance of the Word of God to the people of that day. Note with me the principles that we can apply to our day, as we consider the attention to the Word of God (:1-6), the application of the Word of God (:7-8), & the actualization from the Word of God (:9-18). Ask yourself whether or not the Word of God is having such an impact on your life. Attention to the Word & application of the Word results in a life-changing impact by the Word upon one's life.

I. Note the **attention** to the Word of God (:1-6)

A. There was **respect** for the Word of God (:1-5)

1. The **actions** of the people:

- a. They stood up when the Book was opened (:5).
- b. They stayed put while the Book was read (:3) > 3-6 hours? (cf. 9:3).

2. The **attitude** of people today? (:1, 3, 5):

- a. Do we handle it properly? [cf. I Sam. 21:9].
- b. Do we humbly receive it? [cf. Ps. 119:18].
- c. Do we heartily seek it? [cf. Jer. 15:16].

B. There was **reverence** for the Person of God (:6) [cf. Isa. 57:15]

1. **Preparation before** the service [:4, "*pulpit of wood which they had made...*"].

- a. Planning > Hebrews 10:25 (Do you plan on being faithful to God's house? My pastor used to say, "You ought to be in church every time the doors are open unless you are providentially hindered.")
- b. Prayer > II Thessalonians 3:1, "*Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, & be glorified, even as it is with you.*"

2. **Participation in** the service - Psalm 27:4.

- a. We see the beauty of the Lord (see II Corinthians 3:18). This is worship.
- b. We seek the blessing of the Lord ("*enquire*" – "to do research; to make thorough inquiry"). This is wisdom.

II. Consider the **application** of the Word of God (:7-8)

A. "*So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly*"

1. This is the public **enunciation** of the text (see Rev. 1:3 & I Tim. 4:13).
This means giving attention to pronunciation & punctuation.
2. This is the **examination** of the Word: What does it say?

B. "*And gave the sense*"

1. This is the proper **interpretation** of the text ("If the plain, literal sense makes sense, seek no other sense").
2. This is the **explanation** of the Word: What does it mean?

C. "And caused them to understand the reading"

1. This is the practical **illustration** of the text.
2. This is the **exhortation** of the Word: What difference does it make to me? [Consider that verse 7 speaks of the Levites & others assisted in the teaching of God's Word; could this compare to our age-graded Sunday Schools or Junior Church services?]

This is the basis of Biblical sermons (expository preaching).

This is the benefit from Bible study (exceptional profit).

III. Compare the **actualization** from the Word of God (:9-18)

"Actualize" – "to make actual or real; to realize in action; to make realistic."

A. The people repented (:9)

1. They demonstrated **sorrow** - cf. II Corinthians 7:9-10 & see Nehemiah 1:5-7.
2. They demonstrated **sincerity** - cf. II Corinthians 7:11.

B. The people rejoiced (:10-12)

1. An **exhortation** from Nehemiah (:10).
2. An **encouragement** by Solomon (Proverbs 28:13).

C. The people reacted (:13-18)

[8:13, "were gathered" again – they wanted to hear more of God's Word.]

1. Their **observance** of the Feast of Tabernacles (:14-17).
2. Their **obedience** to the Word of God (:18).

"A person's relationship with God becomes apparent in his active response to Him... Only a living faith which works by love (Galatians 5:6) produces the kind of obedience that is worthy of true worship... Believers can restore true worship only as they reinstate true obedience." (Custer).

Conclusion: Has the Word of God made an impact upon your life? Romans 10:17 declares, "Faith cometh by hearing, & hearing by the Word of God." Have you come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in obedience to His Word? Christ declares in John 3:7, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." If you are a believer, do you give proper attention to the Word of God? You must have a respect for His Word, in order to handle it properly, to humbly receive it, & to heartily seek it. You must also have a reverence for His Person, preparing before each service & participating in the service by seeing His beauty & seeking His blessing. My responsibility as your pastor is described in verse 8, the application of the Word. It involves my examination, explanation, & exhortation of the Bible text. What I seek to do in each message is what you should do in your own study, to answer 3 questions about the text: What does it say? What does it mean? What difference does (should) it make to me? This should lead us all to the actualization (making real) from the Word. It should motivate us to repentance, rejoicing, & reaction. There were continuing & further results of the impact of God's Word found in 9:1-3, as the people responded by confession (an attitude of humility), separation (the actions of purity), & adoration (acknowledgement of Sovereignty). Will you allow the Word of God to make such a life-changing impact upon your life?