

# Ezra

## Part 1

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Place	Lowestoft
Date	04.05.2003
Duration	00:51:40
Online version	<a href="https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/ev003/ezra">https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/ev003/ezra</a>

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[00:00:00] We'd hardly have sung in a more appropriate hymn to the subject that's on my heart this afternoon than the one we sang.

We thank our gracious God, our Father, for his Word. It centers on our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of God is the one who inspired the Word, and he is the one who is able to give us understanding in the Word.

And yet, God has given us his Word that we might believe it, that we might receive it, that we would use it to serve our faithful Lord.

And it becomes increasingly important in this day of conflict, as we sang, to cleave to his Name and Word.

[00:01:12] I'd like to have us open God's Word to the book of Ezra, first of all, and would have us look at a few verses in chapter 7 of the book of Ezra.

To look at the character and exercises of a man whom God used in Old Testament times very much to work with his Word.

In Ezra chapter 7, we have actually a new beginning in the book. The first six chapters fit together. [00:02:01] They take us from the time that King Cyrus authorized the Jews to return from the captivity to rebuild their temple.

They take us to the time that the temple is completed, and that was a period of some 20 years at least.

Then between chapters 6 and 7, there is a hiatus of approximately 40 years, and the book of Esther actually fits into the slot between chapters 6 and 7 in terms of time.

So that at the beginning of chapter 7, we come to the reign of Artaxerxes, who were some 60 years after the beginning of this book. Here we find a genealogy, first of all. It's the genealogy of Ezra, the

son of Sariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, and so on.

[00:03:11] His genealogy is traced back to Aaron, the chief priest.

And we're told in verse 6, this Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was already scribed in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given. And the king granted him all his requests according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethanims unto Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. This Artaxerxes, incidentally, is the son of the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther.

Now, we're not told that he's Esther's son. Scripture gives us no record whether she had a child or not, but he is the son of the husband of Esther.

[00:04:08] And he came, that is, Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

And this tenth verse is the one that particularly stands out here.

Ezra had prepared his heart. Ezra is a man about whom we read in the final four chapters of this book, and we read about him in the book of Nehemiah also, and we hope to get to that this afternoon.

[00:05:06] He's a priest. He's a scribe, according to verse six. A scribe knew how to read and write. Not everyone did in those days.

And one of the responsibilities of the priests was to keep the copy of the law of God.

And every seven years, we're told in the book of Deuteronomy, the people were to be gathered together, and the law was to be read to them.

How well would we get along as Christians if we did not have copies of God's word for ourselves, and if we were gathered together once in seven years to have God's word read to us?

[00:06:05] You know, when we realize how well off we are spiritually by comparison to these people, we may not blame them quite so much for all the difficulties they got into.

They didn't have God's word in the sense that we have it. And yet, in many homes, Bibles collect dust on shelves rather than being read.

I think the brethren are generally known for having Bibles and bringing them to the meetings and using them, reading them. I'm not trying to scold anyone. I'm just saying we have a tremendous privilege that Israel didn't really have. Remember back in those days, Bibles had to be written out, copied out by hand. I read somewhere once that the average person writing in longhand, wanting to copy the entire Bible, [00:07:21] if he worked five days a week, eight hours a day, it would take the

average person about ten months to copy out the Bible for himself. I'm a slow writer. It would take me at least a year.

But nowadays we have the Bible on tape, we can hear it, we have the Bible in computers, and we can punch a few keys and the verses just pop out at us. There's so many ways in which we are blessed with God's word.

But this Ezra was a ready scribe in the law of Moses. And we read in verse 10 that he had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord. Now this is so important. This is where it starts. Preparation of heart.

[00:08:20] He wanted to seek the law of Moses. Ezra, we find in this chapter, is in Babylon and now goes to Jerusalem. 60 years prior to this, Cyrus the king of Persia had authorized the Jews to go back. Not quite 50,000 of them went back.

A very small company compared to the several million that came out of Egypt a few hundred years prior to this, where there were over 600,000 men of war besides their wives and their children.

[00:09:06] And perhaps the very aged people. This was a small group. But Ezra's grandfather or great grandfather had not been one of those who had gone back.

Ezra comes along a few generations later, but he has an exercise. You know, oftentimes we look to the past and we appreciate if we have a goodly heritage, a godly heritage.

Some of us don't have that. Some of us do. I have to say my grandparents on both sides of the family left the state churches in Germany in their youth and gathered out to the Lord.

So I'm third generation in one sense, and yet every generation has to determine to follow the Lord for themselves.

[00:10:09] Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord. He wasn't going to be a scribe and a priest simply because that was his hereditary responsibility.

He prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it. And this is so important. Scripture tells us in Corinthians that knowledge puffs up.

We can have a great head full of knowledge of God's word and become top heavy.

But God wants us not simply to know his word, but to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

[00:11:10] If we have prepared our hearts to seek God's word, and Timothy is told to study, to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

If we've prepared our hearts and have gone ahead and dug into the word and then do what we find, obey the word, then God may use us to teach the word too.

And it's a blessed privilege to be able to teach the word, but it's a tremendous responsibility too.

Ezra no doubt found as he studied God's word, as he read it, as he wanted to do it, that God's gathering place was Jerusalem, the place he had chosen.

[00:12:13] His forefathers had not gone back, but he determines many years after the others have gone, this is where I'm going to go.

And he's able to persuade a group of people to go with him. We find these people enumerated in the next chapter, and it's a group of less than 2000. You know, as time goes on, the coming of the Lord Jesus moves closer for us, but in many ways things go downhill.

It's going to be a wonderful thing when he gives that shout and we go up to meet him. But in the meantime, we can expect that the testimony of God will get weaker. [00:13:08] I hate to say it, but I believe that is scriptural. It doesn't mean that we should be satisfied with weakness.

It doesn't mean that we should give up in any way, but whatever has been committed to man, man has been a failure with it.

And we find every dispensation in human history ends in failure and in judgment.

Well, Ezra has prepared his heart, he wants to do what he reads in God's word, and he gathers others to go with him. And we find when the heart is right, God can be counted upon.

Verse 6 tells us that the king granted him all his requests according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. [00:14:06] And some of the Israelites, the ordinary people, some of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the porters, the Nethanyims, those who had special responsibilities in connection with the service of the Lord, go with him to Jerusalem.

And he not only begins to go, but he arrives there. If we were to trace out the trip in some detail, we would see that he got the people together in chapter 8.

There were hardly any Levites. The Levites were those set apart for service for God.

And you know, in a day of declension, as we approach the end, I think we find less and less outstanding servants of God wanting to walk in a narrow pathway.

[00:15:11] Wanting to walk in that pathway that is according to the word of God. Because, you know, people like to be patted on the back. They like to be told they preach good sermons. They like to have a place. And servants of God have a heart that is just as corrupt as anyone else's.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? And I don't want to knock those who serve the Lord in any way, but simply to say that such are not exempt from the temptations that come to mankind.

But Ezra in chapter 8 proclaims it fast in verse 21 that we might afflict ourselves before our God to seek of him a right way for us and for our little ones and for all our substance.

[00:16:12] There was no more pillar of cloud and pillar of fire to lead these people across a wilderness from Babylon to Jerusalem. Part of the journey, at least, is wilderness. God didn't do special miracles, but they could pray. They could fast.

They would seek of God a right way and notice what Moses had insisted on with Pharaoh.

They have in mind to seek of him a right way for us and for our little ones and for all our substance.

Pharaoh had attempted to make compromises. First of all, serve the Lord in the land. We'll give you freedom of religion. [00:17:03] Your God can be the 43rd God that we have here. I think Egypt had some 42 gods that they worshipped. And Jehovah could have been another one. Moses insisted that cannot be. And Egypt's gods often were depicted by part human, part bird or part animal.

And remember they had their holy cats, they had their holy bulls, they had their holy crocodiles and so on. Moses said, why, if we were to serve the Lord here, we would be offering some of your gods as sacrifices.

The bulls, in any case, they had a sheep headed God or goddess too. That can't be. Well, Pharaoh said, well, then don't be too different. Don't go very far away. And Moses almost succumbed to that temptation. [00:18:04] Pharaoh changed his mind.

And then the next compromise that Pharaoh offered.

Well, you know, if you're going to go out into that howling wilderness, that's too much for your children. Leave them behind. Well, the children would stay behind. The parents would soon return, wouldn't they? And finally, the last compromise Pharaoh offered was, well, okay, I'll let you all go.

But don't take your cattle along.

Don't take your sheep along. Don't take your goods along. They stay in Egypt. Religion and business don't mix. Moses rejected all these compromises.

And we see Ezra, who was diligent in getting into the word, seeks of the Lord a right way for us and for our little ones and for all our substance.

[00:19:06] And in verse 23, so we fasted and besought our God for this.

And he was entreated of us. God heard and answered their prayers.

And. In verse 31, then we departed from the river of Ahab on the 12th day of the first month to go on to Jerusalem. And the hand of our God was upon us and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and of such as lay in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem.

And abode there three days and so on.

The Lord brought them safely to their goal.

When they got there. They were there only a few days. [00:20:02] And they found that there were

problems at Jerusalem.

You know, sometimes we feel that if we're there where the Lord would have us to be.

Doing that which the Lord would have us to do. That somehow there won't be any problems. Everything will be wonderful. These people didn't find it that way. Those that had gone back 60 years earlier and had rebuilt the temple. After much tribulation.

Had begun intermarrying with the heathen nations round about them. At first they had rejected the help of offered them by the Samaritans. And then we find them intermarrying and really compromising their testimony.

And Ezra has to deal with that situation when he comes back.

[00:21:05] It's a sad picture. But we're going to go some 13 or 15 years further.

We'll turn to the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah is another godly man.

Who is exercised to come back.

He's not a priest. He's one of the people.

But he's a man who had been given a very high position in the government of Persia.

He was the king's cupbearer. And that would be the equivalent of chief of security for the king.

Wine in scripture is a picture of joy.

And giving the king his drinks is ministering to his joy.

[00:22:03] But Nehemiah, I think I slipped in a word there.

Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer.

And the cupbearer had to taste what was in that cup.

Because people tried to poison, tried to assassinate high officials in those days. The cupbearer was responsible that what the king got would bring him pleasure and not bring him death. So he was in a very high position, a very trusted position.

And he is very concerned about what is going on in Jerusalem.

The temple has been rebuilt. But the wall is down. The wall is in ruins. There's no separation. The end of Ezra comes out. The separation had broken down. [00:23:01] And there was no wall to protect Jerusalem.

And Nehemiah is concerned about that.

He weeps.

He prays for months.

And then when God gives him opportunity, he requests a demotion in his job.

He requests to be sent to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall. He becomes governor of one of the obscure provinces in the Persian Empire. The book of Esther tells us there were 127 provinces. And he requests a demotion from his high position so that he can go and rebuild the wall.

And the first part of the book of Nehemiah tells us the problems that he encountered in rebuilding this wall that would protect Jerusalem and that would effectively separate God's people there and the temple and its worship from the enemy roundabout.

[00:24:19] I think sometimes we say so much about separation that we forget that separation is also protection.

Protection from the influences of the world roundabout us.

Well, at the end of chapter 6, the wall has been rebuilt in 52 days. And everyone is astonished. It just seems miraculous that God has helped them to do that. In chapter 7, there's a review of those who came back some 73 or 75 years prior to this. And in chapter 8, we find, [00:25:01] And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate. And they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel. So now, Ezra comes into focus once again.

From the end of the book of Ezra until here, he's really not in focus. He's simply quietly seeking the law of the Lord, doing the law of the Lord, and waiting for the opportunity to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Now, God has prepared the hearts. And the people ask Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding upon the first day of the seventh month. [00:26:06] The first day of the seventh month was the Feast of Trumpets. It was one of the feasts of Jehovah. People were to be called together. But what we have here is a rather unusual thing in the Old Testament.

There are two chapters in the Old Testament that are very especially devoted to the word of God. One of them is the longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119. And there we see the effect of God's word upon the individual.

So often, I will, when thou hast, again and again, my response to the word of God.

This chapter is the great chapter that brings before us the collective responsibility of Israel toward the word.

[00:27:06] And how the word affected the people as a whole.

Ezra brings the law before the men and women and all that could hear with understanding. We find in these verses that he reads before the street that's before the water gate. Water is so often a symbol of God's word. And they have to read in an open place. There are so many. If 50,000 had come back 75 years before and a few thousand more with Ezra and they had multiplied, one can imagine that this would have been a large crowd. No building big enough to contain them. But they read there in the open place, the street before the water gate. And I've often wondered about the logistics of this. They're all standing there. [00:28:01] They're not sitting comfortably. He reads from early in the morning until midday. You know, for us, a meeting gets long if it goes much over an hour. And we can sit comfortably. They had to stand. One wonders what about the toilet facilities and things like this. With children, all that could hear with understanding. When I was unmarried yet, I always looked at real small children as, you know, a good step above animals.

But, you know, they couldn't do much with real small children. They couldn't teach that much. And the Lord amazed me when he gave us children, how early they pick up things from the word of God. How early they begin to pick up things in the meeting. You know, they're not perfect by any means. And they don't like to sit still very long and so on. [00:29:04] But it's interesting when you have small children. And if they go along to the meeting and maybe two weeks later, you hear them playing meeting. And it's interesting to hear what they have picked up and to see what they've picked up. Well, here, there was quite a group.

They're gathered there and Ezra reads before the street, before the water gate.

From morning until midday, before the men and the women and those that could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. Wonderful thing, isn't it? God's people attentive to the word of God.

I imagine most of these people had never seen a copy of the law of the Lord. This would very especially be the book of Deuteronomy, but perhaps the whole Pentateuch. [00:30:06] How many hours would it take to read a whole book of scripture like that? I remember when I was about 17 or 18, I was invited to the home of a brother for Sunday dinner.

A meeting that was not my home meeting. And we were accustomed in our home.

My father would read a chapter after a meal oftentimes. But this brother read the whole epistle to the Ephesians after the meal. I thought that was kind of long. But what about the book of Deuteronomy? Or say Leviticus.

Read the book of the law of Moses.

As we read, the people are attentive, they're listening. They've built a platform of wood, a pulpit of wood. I see you've built one too. [00:31:03] I admire this this morning. I found out that it folds back here, folds in. But they had built something for the purpose. Because they wanted to hear. They didn't have all these mics in those days. Electronic gadgets had not been invented.

And you have a crowd that may have been 50,000 or 100,000 people here. How is his voice going to carry? Well, put him up on a platform. And he must have read quite loudly. And there are others on that platform with him. It wasn't a small one like you have here. There are a number of other brothers with him. On his right hand and on his left hand. They're named for us. This is important to God. In



verse 5, Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people. For he was above all the people when he opened it. All the people stood up. You know, your customs and ours are different. [00:32:01] You stand up for singing very often.

We would be more apt to stand up for prayer. And sit for singing. Here, when Ezra opened God's word, everyone stood up. And we don't read that they sat down again. Until things were over, I guess. Because the meeting was some six hours long, apparently. Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen. With lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord. With their faces to the ground. This must have been a very impressive thing. But we find in the next verse.

That these men who are named.

Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherabiah, and so on. And the Levites. So it may have been several hundred people. Caused the people to understand the law. [00:33:04] And the people stood in their place.

You know, you'd think with a large crowd. There'd be a certain amount of milling around. And as they're shuffling their feet from time to time. It's hard to stand still. You know, it becomes a little noisy. But no, they are so interested. They are so attentive. We have the privilege of coming together.

Week after week. And several times in the week. To have God's word before us. And sometimes we forget that it's a privilege. And regard it as a somewhat burdensome duty. To go to the meetings. You know, if you put yourself in the place of these people. What a privilege they felt. We're going to hear God's word today.

We're going to hear God speaking to us. [00:34:02] If we would come together. If we would come together. Every time we're going to open the word. Whether for a reading or for ministry or for gospel. We're going to hear God speaking to us. Through his word. My. I'm sure we would gain much more from the meetings. These people. They had looked forward to this. And then we read in verse 8. And to me verse 8 is a very key verse.

That we can associate with reading God's word anytime.

Anytime where we would read to others. So they read in the book in the law of God. Distinctly.

Commentaries are good.

When it comes to. Children.

Bible storybooks may be good. [00:35:03] There are many good things. But the best thing of all, if we want to hear God's word. Is to read the Bible, isn't it? They read in the book in the law of God. Distinctly.

And the apostle Paul. Says that if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound. How are people to know? What is being signaled?

It's important.

To read God's word. And to read God's word.

Distinctly.

Other things. Whether Bible storybooks or commentaries or. Expositions, whatever it may be. Can be a help. But God's word is the important thing. And it says, and they gave the sense. They explained it.

[00:36:04] I'm sure for people who didn't have personal copies of the word. And who might hear it once in seven years. And evidently these people hadn't heard it. I would say for much longer than that. It doesn't seem that. It was habitual for them to obey God. And get the people all together. Every seven years and read the word to them. This seems to have been a very outstanding occasion. And to have God's word read.

And then explained. This is important. They gave the sense. Some of the contemporary translations. Render that phrase and they translated it. When God's word. When God's word. The law was written. In the days of Moses. That was about 900 years before this time. [00:37:08] We were in Canterbury. A little over a week ago and I had to think of. Geoffrey Chaucer. When that April with his show is so to the drought of March of person to the road. And so we had to learn that at one time. It doesn't seem like English does it. And Chaucer lived what in the 1300s I believe. Something like that. I have a.

Book at home. A handbook of. Middle English. Which goes back to. The. Or it goes over a thousand years back. Even to be a wolf and some of the. Things in the English literature. And it's interesting English at one time had letters in it that we don't even have anymore. I think Icelandic. [00:38:02] Still can has some of those letters. And one sees the Germanic roots of the language and one sees the French coming in. If one looks at some of this very old. These very old English things. Well. Beautiful weather. In these past weeks. To do what.

Chaucer wrote about to go on on pilgrimages. Go on pilgrimages to travel. People then went to Canterbury. Well we went to Canterbury too. But they're a little different object. Hebrew had changed. The spoken language in. At this time was. Pretty much Aramaic. And probably. Some of the very ancient.

Hebrew.

Had to be.

Explained the sense had to be given.

[00:39:03] Perhaps not everybody understood the. Hebrew in which. The law had been written. And you know we find that. Even with a 400 year old translation almost 400 year old translation. At least in America where we don't. Where we don't speak English properly you know we speak American. And we find that the authorized version. Becomes more and more difficult for the current generation to understand. And. Certainly a lot of explanation has to be given oftentimes. Brethren say in the meeting. Well for example first Thessalonians 4. 13 we that are alive shall not prevent. Those well prevent. Had a different meaning 400 years ago than it does now. And there are many things that have to be explained the sense has to be given. Oftentimes.

And it's good to do that. [00:40:03] The word God's word is living and powerful. But when it is explained. It certainly comes across. In a much more useful manner. And then.

To read it it's not a magic charm that one simply repeats. And we have something else and they caused them. To understand the reading. When one sees. These men who are reading. By name and the Levites. Among the people I can just picture. Ezra has the copy of. God's law and he's up in front. And he may read. A portion.

And perhaps he gives some explanation. Perhaps the Levites and these. Named individuals in the crowd. Each says to. Group of people. I can just picture. Named individuals in the crowd. Each says to. Group of people standing. [00:41:01] Nearby.

Tries to give them some explanation. And then maybe ask some questions. You know this is supposed to be an address. But. If I were teaching Sunday school. For example.

I would ask questions. I would not only read the word. I would explain. And then.

All right.

Chris what did you understand from this? What do you think this means? Or Kevin what do you think this means? Or whatever.

You know this. This may have gone on. For a number of hours. They caused them to understand. The reading.

That is the important part. Ultimately.

I mean it's important to begin with. The word of God. It's important to explain the word of God. But if it's not understood. It doesn't help. You know you can go to a conference. On the continent. Say go to a conference in Poland. [00:42:02] And hear the word read. And hear the word explained. And if you don't understand Polish. You won't understand it. And they've done. They've done well they've read the word. They've explained the word. But if you understand only English. And not Polish. It doesn't do much good. So here they caused them. To understand the reading. And I think it's important for us. If we're going to. Gain from God's word. What he would have us. To gain from it. We need to pay attention to verse eight. You read the word. And you understand. You read the word. Give the sense. And. Cause them.

To understand the reading. And this.

We need to do in our homes. [00:43:01] This we need to do in our meetings. Because.

It's not just. Some magical formula. By going by being exposed. Somehow.

Everything works out. The way it should. No. After a while. These people began to weep. They understood what God said. And they realized they had not. Kept what God said. They had disobeyed. They began to weep. And they're told. Oh. Thank God.

It's hit home. No, they're told. This was a feast day. Go your way.

Verse 10.

Eat the fat.

Drink the sweet. Send portions to them. For whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy unto our Lord. Neither be sorry for the joy of the Lord is your strength. [00:44:01] You know, we might have said differently. But they're they're sent home now. They're told to feast. On the fat.

Which normally was God's part. Eat the fat.

Drink the sweet. Send portions to others. For whom nothing has been prepared. We have so much that we can share with others. The joy of the Lord is your strength. And they're quieted down. And in verse 12. All the people went their way to eat and to drink. And to send portions. And to make great mirth. Because they had understood the words. That were declared unto them. There's real rejoicing. Because they've understood. The words.

Not because they've been at the meeting. But because they've understood. What was read there. And taught there. And then on the second day. The chief fathers come back. [00:45:01] They want to know more. And they find. The feast of tabernacles. And how God intended. That that feast be kept. The children of Israel should dwell in booths. In the feast of the seventh month. It's interesting. We don't find the great day of atonement here. But we find the spontaneous weeping. When people.

Actually mourned. Because of.

Realizing their failure. And now.

When they find how to keep the feast of tabernacles. The people go forth in verse 16. They get these branches. They make for themselves booths. And so everywhere. And it says in verse 17. All the congregation of them. That were come again out of the captivity. Made booths.

And sat under the booths. For since the days of Joshua the son of Nun. Unto that day. Had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. [00:46:02] Since Joshua's day. Almost 900 years prior to this. They had not done things. The way God intended for them. The way God had told them in his word. And none of them said. Well you know. We're used to doing it this way. That's strange to make booths. And well under them. Why would God ask for something like that? No they read it in the word. And they said. Well if the word says it. Let's do it.

And that's the important thing. Not what are we accustomed to. What do others think. And so on.

But if God says it. Let's do it.

And that's what brings joy. Obedience brings joy. And from the first day. To the last day. Of this feast of tabernacles. Eight days long. He reads in the book of the law of God. They kept the feast seven days. On the eighth day. [00:47:02] Was a solemn assembly. According to the manner. And then we find. In the beginning of the next chapter. That after.

All the feast is over. Feasting is over for the year. But a couple days later. On the twenty and fourth day. Of this month. The children of Israel were assembled. With fasting was set close. Earth upon

them. Now they separate themselves. From all strangers. And stood and confessed their sins. The iniquities of their fathers. And. They cry with a loud voice. To the Lord.

So the word has its effect. And here is a long chapter. Of confession. To the Lord.

And a determination. To do what the Lord says. Sad to say.

They didn't realize their own weakness. They sign an agreement. [00:48:02] We're going to do this. And this.

Keep the law. And we'll add a few things to it. And they didn't realize that. In their own strength. They could not. Do all these things.

We sometimes have very good intentions. But we need the Lord's help. And we need to be on our faces. Before him.

But here we see. The effect of understanding. The word of God. The first thing God tells them. The joy of the Lord is your strength. And where there is joy. Where they could feast. Where they experienced. The goodness of the Lord. We have what we. What is told us in Romans. That the goodness of the Lord. Leads the to repentance. And here we see it illustrated. But I see our time is up. I'm sorry.

[00:49:02] I'm told I need to keep time. And. Perhaps.

We can just look to the Lord. Oh our God and our Father. We thank thee for the. Wonderful treasure. That we have in thy word. And we pray that we may value it more. Individually. And as families. And as an assembly. Our father.

Again we thank thee for the liberty. That we have. Owing thy word. Even having different. Translations of it. And being able to read it freely. Being able to. Hear it taught week after week. Not only once in seven years. Our father help us to be like Ezra. Who prepared his heart. [00:50:02] To seek the law of the Lord. And to do it. And to teach. In Israel.

We thank thee that after. Some years.

That it's give him the opportunity. That we were reading of. In the latter part of the meeting. And our father we thank thee for. The encouragement as we see how. Thy word had its effect. On the hearts of those people. That had come together. Wanting to hear it. Our father help us that as we come together. Week after week. It might be with a genuine desire. To hear thy voice. And to learn thy will. In order that we may do it. Help us that when we find things. That we may do it. Help us that when we find things. That. Our lives have. Failed in.

[00:51:01] Areas of inconsistency.

That we may not justify ourselves. But that we may obey thy word. Our father.

We need thy help. We confess our weakness. But we thank thee that thou art willing. And ready and desirous of helping. Those that turn to thee.

So our father we just. Commend ourself to thy grace. For the rest of the day. For all that thou dost have before us. In the name of the Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.