

STEP INTO SCRIPTURE

WEEK 14: THE FAVOR OF GOD

QUARTER 3: SOUNDS

STEP INTO SCRIPTURE



STEP INTO SCRIPTURE

**30 minutes for arrival, fellowship,
and reading**

30 minutes for teaching

**30 minutes for table discussion and
announcements**

TODAY'S READING:

MALACHI 1-4

DAY 272 IN STEP INTO SCRIPTURE

538 BC — Cyrus's decree; first return begins (Ezra 1).

536 BC — Altar rebuilt; Temple foundation laid (Ezra 3).

520–516 BC — Haggai/Zechariah preach; Darius I orders support; Temple finished (Ezra 5–6).

458 BC — Ezra arrives (7th year of Artaxerxes I) to teach the Law and lead reforms (Ezra 7–10).

445 BC — Nehemiah arrives (20th year of Artaxerxes) to rebuild the walls (Neh 1–6).

c. 460–430 BC — Malachi prophesies after the Temple is rebuilt and likely during/around Nehemiah's era.

EZRA 7:6

This Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him.

EZRA 7:9-10

He had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

**God's favor doesn't fall at random.
Ezra's repeated experience of God's hand
is predicated on posture: he set his heart to
study God's Word, practice it, and teach it.**

EZRA 7:27-28

Praise be to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, who has put It Into the king's heart to bring honor to the house of the Lord In Jerusalem In this way and who has extended his good favor to me before the king and his advisers and all the king's powerful officials. Because the hand of the Lord my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.

EZRA 8:18

**Because the gracious hand of our God was on us,
they brought us Shereblah, a capable man, from the
descendants of Mahli son of Levi, the son of Israel,
and Shereblah's sons and brothers, 18 In all;**

**Favor doesn't replace diligence;
it energizes it.**

“The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to Him, but His great anger is against all who forsake Him” (Ezra 8:22).

EZRA 8:31

On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he protected us from enemies and bandits along the way.

**So how do we posture for God's favor today?
Here's what Ezra shows us:**

- 1. Devotion to the Word: adopt Ezra's pattern—study → practice → teach. Read with intent to obey; share what you live.**
- 2. Humility before God: practice rhythms of fasting and prayer that declare dependence.**
- 3. Commitment to God's work: notice gaps and step in. Favor fuels courage to lead and to give.**

Faith Isn't fearlessness, It's obedience in fear.

NEHEMIAH 2:8B

**Because the gracious hand of my God was on me,
the king granted my requests.**

NEHEMIAH 2:18

I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.

EPHESIANS 4:15-16

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

NEHEMIAH 3:5

The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

How do we walk in favor under fire?

- 1. Favor fuels initiative, not passivity. Pray hard, plan well, ask boldly.**
- 2. Opposition is not a sign of curse. Sometimes it's proof you're building what matters.**
- 3. Watch and work. Spiritual people pray and post a guard; trust does not cancel tactics.**
- 4. Participate, don't spectate. Everyone has a section; don't be a Nehemiah 3:5 noble.**

“The gracious hand of our God is on us.”

NEHEMIAH 5:6-7

When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, “You are charging your own people interest!” So I called together a large meeting to deal with them.

NEHEMIAH 5:12

“We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.” Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised.

When God's people leverage money in ways that hurts the vulnerable—predatory interest, hoarding at others' expense, withholding what supports His house and workers—we step out from under favor and into curse (Deut 23:19–20; Lev 25:35–40; Exod 22:25–27; Mal 3:8–10; Jas 5:1–5).

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

“Remember me with favor, my God, for all I have done for these people” (Nehemiah 5:19).

NEHEMIAH 6:3

So I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?”

NEHEMIAH 6:8-9

I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.” They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.”

**Some meetings you do not take. If
access only multiplies chaos, gossip,
and harm, wisdom says: keep building.
Let fruit, not fighting, answer slander.**

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.**

**Out of reverence for God, we will not act like that.
We will give back, build up, and carry our section
of the wall.**

Nehemiah 5:15—16

**But the earlier governors—those preceding me—
placed a heavy burden on the people and took
forty shekels of silver from them in addition to
food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over
the people. But out of reverence for God I did not
act like that. Instead, I devoted myself to the work
on this wall. All my men were assembled there for
the work; we did not acquire any land.**

NEHEMIAH 8:8

They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.

Romans 3:20 says, “through the law we become conscious of our sin.”

NEHEMIAH 8:17

The whole company that had returned from exile built temporary shelters and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great.

**In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing...” (9:38)
marriage holiness (10:30), Sabbath Integrity (10:31), house of God support—offerings, firstfruits, tithes (10:32–38)—and the banner line:**

**“We will not neglect the house of our God”
(Nehemiah 10:39).**

Worship that Honors vs. Worship that Insults

**Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male
but vows a blemished one (Malachi 1:14).**

**Favor follows first and best; curse
follows cheap and contemptuous.**

Robbing God vs. Resourcing His House

MALACHI 3:7-8

Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings.

MALACHI 3:9-10

You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

Two Groups, Two Outcomes

God's favor rests where His people honor His name with first-and-best worship and storehouse generosity. His curse (discipline) lands where worship is burdensome, leadership compromised, and resources withheld.

COMMITMENT WEEKEND

WEEK 5: NOVEMBER 16