

May 15, 2011



Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Restoration & Reformation A Study of Ezra

Date	Lesson	Text
04/10	Introduction	
04/17	God's Way Of Renewal	1:1-11
04/24	Evidences of the Resurrection	
05/01	Lessons From A List	2:1-70
05/08	New Beginning With God	3:1-13
05/15	Spiritual Setbacks	4:1-24
05/22	Discouragement	5:1-39
05/29	God the Cause of our Joy	6:1-22
06/05	The Life that God Blesses	7:1-28
06/12	Work that God Blesses	8:1-36
06/19	Godly Reaction to Sin	9:1-15
06/26	Genuine Repentance	10:1-44
07/03	Summary and Review	

Food for Thought

Steadfast Service

To survive the storms of life, be anchored to the Rock of Ages. We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

(1 Cor 15:58 NKJV)

(From "Our Daily Bread", Jan 24, 2004)

SPIRITUAL SETBACKS

Ezra 4:1-24

KEY THEME:

Whenever you make a commitment to the Lord, be prepared to face the enemy's unrelenting attempt to set you back.

COMMENTARY:

Ezra 4:1 says that the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that they were building a temple to the God of Israel. New beginnings are exciting and filled with hope and by God's abundant grace, we can turn back to the Lord and start afresh. But no sooner have we turned back than the enemy hits and we suffer a spiritual setback. The spiritual high that we have enjoyed is followed by a deep spiritual low, and we tend to settle into spiritual mediocrity. We naively assume that since we have now turned to the Lord, everything will go well.

These people had been brought from Babylon and its surrounding areas into the Northern Kingdom after its fall in 722 B.C. At the beginning of their living there, they did not fear the Lord, and He sent lions that killed some of them. They assumed that their problems stemmed from not knowing the custom of the god of the land. So they called in a priest from Israel who taught them about the Lord. They began sacrificing to the Lord, but they also continued worshipping their own gods from Babylon. The problem of these people was syncretism. They blended false religions with the worship of the one true God. They added God to their pantheon, but they never dropped their idols. The danger of the appeal of these enemies was that their words were not absolute lies. They were partially true. **There are great pressures today to compromise the gospel by joining with those who claim to believe it, but who add things to it that totally destroy the grace of God.**

Satan has a number of tricks or tools in his bag: (1) The enemy's most dangerous trick is to lure us into compromise under the guise of cooperation. If we resist the enemy's subtle approach, he will show his true colors by a more aggressive opposition. (2) The enemy often uses the tool of discouragement. (3) The enemy often uses fear to follow discouragement. (4) The enemy uses misinformation and false accusations to oppose and undermine godly leaders. Satan always uses half-truths and misinformation. Satan uses the same trick to smear God's servants today. He takes a partial truth and paints it with broad strokes to make a man of God look extreme or unstable. (5) If need be, the enemy will form coalitions to overwhelm the godly by sheer force of numbers. (6) At times, the enemy will use government edicts and sheer force to block our spiritual advance. (7) Finally, The enemy does not give up in his opposition to our spiritual progress. Satan keeps on countering whatever the Lord's people try to do to move ahead spiritually. If he can get you to kick back and give up, he has achieved his objective. We need to keep in mind that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the unseen spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). When things go wrong at church or in your relationships with other Christians, it's easy to grumble against God or against the leaders God has put over you. Instead of working together, praying together, and moving ahead with what the Lord wants done, the church can fragment into angry factions, each blaming the other for problems that really are coming from the enemy.

We don't have to memorize seven steps or special prayers to overcome the devil. Just say no! From the Garden of Eden on, the Bible shows us how craftily Satan works to tempt and deceive God's people. To **know his schemes** arms you to stand and fight when he strikes. **Put your spiritual armor in place (Eph. 6:10-20) and resist!** If God allows the enemy to cause you trials, your responsibility is to **submit to God**, knowing that He can lift the trials the minute He sees that it is for your good. Rather than pull away from God in the trial, **draw near to Him**, knowing that He cares for you (1 Pet. 5:7-11). You may encounter numerous setbacks as you commit yourself to the Lord and try to follow Him. Be prepared for the enemy's attacks and **don't give up!**

(Adapted from "Sermons on Ezra" by Steven Cole)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Our spiritual enemy will vigorously oppose every attempt at spiritual advance

Opposition by scoffers (2 Peter 3:3-5)

Opposition by those who use their cunning and craftiness (Eph 4:14)

Opposition through making laws to deter believers (Esther 3:8-9)

Opposition through promoting fear and discouragement (Acts 5:27-30)

There are many wrong ways to respond to the enemy's attacks

We give up on our spiritual goals and go back to our old way of life (2 Peter 2:20-22)

We settle for second best spiritually (Gal 1:6-8)

We blame God or God's leaders for not doing what we think they should have done (Job 2:7-10)

We conclude that it must not be God's time and that when He wants it done, it will get done. (2 Peter 3:3-8)

There are some biblical strategies for overcoming the enemy's tactics

Know the enemy (2 Corinthians 2:11)

Resist the enemy (James 4:7)

Submit and draw near to God (Heb 10:19-22)

Persevere in the face of opposition (James 5:11)