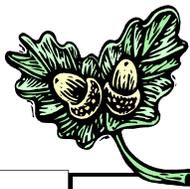


May 22, 2011



Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks
Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

Lesson Leader:
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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	5:1-17
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

Hope For The Blues

Lord, give us strength to trust You when Life's burdens seem too much to bear; Dispel the darkness with new hope And help us rise above despair. You won't stumble in the dark if you walk in the light of God's Word.

Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.
(Ps 62:8 NASB)

(From "Our Daily Bread", Aug 07, 2006)

OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT

Ezra 5:1-17

KEY THEME:

To overcome discouragement, we need a fresh encounter with God's Word, we need to get back to work for Him and to persevere, trusting Him to accomplish His will through us.

COMMENTARY:

Why do we become discouraged? Sometimes discouragement stems from a physical cause. We are simply tired and worn out from working too long and too hard without a break. Or perhaps a bodily illness inclines us toward depression and discouragement. Discouragement can also come when people disappoint us. Disappointment with God is another cause of discouragement. You prayed and worked for something, but it did not happen. How can these dismal situations be reversed? How could the Lord's people put their discouragement behind them so that they could finish the task of rebuilding the temple? To turn things around, the Lord raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, who spoke to the people in the name of the God of Israel (Ezra 5:1). The Old Testament prophets did not so much expound on God's already written word; rather, they received new revelation directly from God for His people. We no longer have prophets to give direct revelation from God. But in this case, we have the heart of the prophets' messages preserved for us in the Old Testament canon. There are a number of ways that you can have a fresh encounter with God's Word, but in every case, you must have exposure to that Word.

God speaks to us through His Word, and so we must take the time and effort to expose ourselves to it. When we do, God's Word will do at least four things: (1) God's Word confronts our sin. That is the main thrust of Haggai. He directly confronted the people with their sin of building their own houses while neglecting God's house. (2) God's Word confirms His grace if we will repent. While Haggai confronted the people's sin, Zechariah gave them hope that God would remember them and keep His covenant promises to send the Messiah. (3) God's Word reorients our priorities under His lordship. Haggai exhorted them to get their priorities in order by putting God's house first. (4) God's Word shows us how to live in a manner pleasing to Him. The prophets spoke and the people realized that to please God, they needed to commit themselves to rebuild His temple. Thus the first thing we need to overcome discouragement is a fresh encounter with God's Word. If our discouragement has caused us to quit, we need to get back to work for Him. And, we need to persevere when opposition hits, as it will, knowing that His eye is upon us.

Behind the events of the renewal of God's people, God is sovereignly at work. The Jews saw God's sovereign dealings with them in history, and this knowledge enabled them to put the current opposition in proper perspective. We can know that as we work for the Lord, we are working in harmony with the sovereign God who is working out His purposes in history through His people.

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

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

To overcome discouragement we need a fresh encounter with God's Word

An encounter that learns God's word will always accomplish God's desires (Isa 55:11)

An encounter that learns God's word will never pass away (Matt 24:35)

An encounter that learns God's word gives life (John 6:63)

An encounter that learns God's word is the actual words of God (1 Thess 2:13)

An encounter that learns God's word when received in good spiritual soil produces a good crop (Luke 8:15)

An encounter that learns God's word makes one rich (2 Cor 9:10-11)

To overcome discouragement we need to get back to work for the Lord

Get back to work with sincerity of heart and with all the ability that God provides (Eph 6:5-8)

Get back to work because God is the one who supplies the strength and ability to work (Deut 8:18)

Get back to work because God created us to work (Eph 2:10)

Get back to work so that we can share with those in need (Eph 4:28)

Get back to work so we won't depend on others (1 Thess 4:11-12)

Get back to work so that everyone does their part (Eph 4:16)

To overcome discouragement we must persevere in the face of opposition

Perseverance through persecutions and trials (2 Thess 1:3-5)

Perseverance in hardships (2 Tim 2:3)

Perseverance that proves one is a child of God (Heb 12:7-9)

Perseverance to forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead (Phil 3:9-14)

Perseverance that combats depression (James 1:2-4)

Perseverance by throwing off all hindrances (Heb 12:1)

To overcome discouragement we need to trust the sovereign God to accomplish His will through us

Trust God because God never forsakes those who seek Him (Ps 9:10)

Trust God because He is our God (Ps 31:14-15)

Trust God because He guides us in the straight ways (Prov 3:5-6)

Trust God to lead us in His perfect plan for us (Ps 143:8)

Trust God because He has always delivered us (2 Cor 1:8-10)

Trust God because our competence is only in Him (2 Cor 3:5)