

THE RELEVANCY OF EZRA'S PRAYER TODAY  
EZRA 9:5-15

Introduction:

1. The Book of Ezra is a continuation of the Books of Chronicles and is evident from the fact that the last verses of "Chronicles" are repeated as the first verses of Ezra.
2. Ezra was a priest and was taken to Babylon after the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and his army.
3. When Artaxerxes assumed the throne he granted Ezra to lead a second body of Jews back to Jerusalem to tackle the social abuses that occurred from the first group.
4. It is in light of these abuses that Ezra offers up this prayer to God, so let us learn from it.

I. FIRST, WE SEE SORROW AND SHAME ON ACCOUNT OF THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE. **vv. 5-7** *At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God. And I said: "O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day.*

- A. Ezra showed a symbolic attitude in preparation for pouring out his heart to God.
  1. He fasted.
  2. He tore his robe.
- B. He also showed a godly posture in addressing the Father.
  1. He fell upon his knees.
  2. He spread out his hands.
- C. Both of these actions showed deep humiliation, so much so, in fact, that he tells us he was ashamed and humiliated to even lift up his face because of their sins and iniquities.
- D. Notice, like we saw in Daniel's prayer, Ezra included himself in the sins.
- E. Do you feel a deep, personal shame and sorrow of your sins and the sins of others?

II. SECONDLY, HUMBLE CONFESSION LEADS TO GREAT FORGIVENESS. **vv. 8-9** *And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.*

- A. Ezra confessed that there had been a long continuance of sins since the days of their forefathers.
- B. Because of those sins in the past and in the present, the Jews faced the divine judgment of God.
- C. Yet, throughout their history, God has always left a remnant of believers because of His amazing grace and mercy.
- D. After 70 years in captivity God allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and begin to rebuild the Temple, which to those Jews was a crown of blessing.

E. But as with most people of God, they did not remember God's favor and soon began to fall back in to their sinful lives. **vv. 10-11** *And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments, which You commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity.*

### III. FINALLY, WE SEE THE ANTICIPATION OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR

SINS. **vv. 12-15** *Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.' And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us such deliverance as this, should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people committing these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there would be no remnant or survivor? O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!"*

- A. Many times, in the Word of God, we see the forbiddance of marrying those who are unbelievers.
- B. The Jews were warned that if they did marry unbelievers, the unbeliever would turn them away from the true worship of God and bring about an utter end as a community.
- C. Ezra acknowledges that in spite of God's chastisement, they deserved much greater punishment.
- D. Ezra was certain that if the Jews continued in breaking God's commandments, God's anger would be justified and that there would be no remnant left, and there would be an utter end to the Jewish nation.

### IV. WHAT ARE WE TO LEARN FROM EZRA'S PRAYER?

A. That unrepentant and continual sin will eventually bring severe consequences from God. **James 1:14-15** *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

B. That God is a merciful God and is willing to forgive us if we truly repent. **1 John 1:8-10** *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

C. That we should abhor sin in our lives and the lives of others, and be ashamed of what we have done. **Jeremiah 6:15** *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD.*

D. That we should truly humble ourselves before God in prayer, tearing our hearts and not our garments. **Joel 2:13** *So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.*

Conclusion:

1. Every sin is a violation of God's perfect law.
2. Confession is a necessary basis of forgiveness, and the wonderful part of that forgiveness is that God will remember them no more.
3. So I invite you today to come confessing your sins, seeking forgiveness and being cleansed by the blood of Jesus. **Psalm 95:6** *Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.*