

## **"A Remnant" Part 2 (Ezra 9)(9.5.21)**

Ezra 9 (NIV84)

**9** After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. <sup>2</sup> They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness."

<sup>3</sup> When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. <sup>4</sup> Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.

<sup>5</sup> Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the Lord my God <sup>6</sup> and prayed:

"O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens. <sup>7</sup> From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and

captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today.

<sup>8</sup> “But now, for a brief moment, the Lord our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage. <sup>9</sup> Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup> “But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands <sup>11</sup> you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: ‘The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.’

<sup>13</sup> “What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this. <sup>14</sup> Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor?

<sup>15</sup> O Lord, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence.”

## **The word of God for the people of God.**

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“A Remnant” part 2**

INTRODUCTION:

How can we know God and then explain the Lord of all Creation? To answer that question fully would take volumes and it would still be incomplete. When Moses, who had a very intimate relationship with Yahweh, asked to see God’s glory, God said He would show Moses His goodness. And even then, Moses needed to be protected in the cleft of a rock and only God’s back would be seen. Why? Because no one can look fully into God’s face and live.

God’s ways are higher than our ways. With God a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day. Romans 11:34 (NIV84) “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”

1 Corinthians 2:9 (NIV84)

<sup>9</sup> However, as it is written:

“No eye has seen,

no ear has heard,

no mind has conceived

what God has prepared for those who love him”—

But we try to describe and define God. Our vocabulary is totally inadequate. The biggest words, the omni words, are insufficient. We use metaphors to explain what God is like. Because we only know things from our human experience, we ascribe human attributes to God in order to attain some level of understanding. The mistake we make is that God's love and mercy; God's anger and wrath; cannot be compared or comprehended fully by comparing them to the human versions. So, how are we to learn about God?

First and foremost, Hebrews 1:3 (NIV84) The Son [the Lord Jesus] is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. God the Holy Spirit guides us in our interpretation of the Scriptures and gives us some insight. Then the historical record of what God has done gives witness to the character and essence of God. Also, the promises given in scripture add a layer of comprehension. This is why we study these Old Testament accounts of Almighty God's calling a faithful remnant from among the masses of rebellious people.

BODY:

- The judgment of God is something that few people want to rightly consider. Throughout scripture we find God threatening judgment and bringing judgment. It starts early in Genesis: Adam and Eve exiled from the Garden of Eve; Cain banished for killing Abel; and of course the great flood where only Noah and his family were saved. We will just look at in Ezra 9:

- For generations the people had sinned against God's will. They were led astray by the leadership and officials. To whom much is given much is expected. This is a conundrum for us. We are supposed to be obedient to those in authority over us; but, too often they do not represent the will of God or the ways of Jesus Christ.
  - Texas passed legislation this week banning abortion after six weeks of life.
  - Some on social media made angry rants; Eventually devolving into linking it to politics.
  - One of my seminary classmates, a UMC female pastor, quoted a prayer for abortion: "Remind me that you care much more about me than whether my womb is full or empty." Ironically, the book from which she took the quote is called *Speaking Truth*.
  - You can see that sin warps our thinking. We tend to link intelligence to reasonable thinking; but, that simply isn't true.
- Of course, the 70-year exile was punishment. If there is no judgment for wrongdoing, there would be no need to fear God or tremble at His word. Over and over again scripture makes clear that disobedience leads to God's wrath.
- That judgment came in the form of death by the sword. It came by captivity. Judgment came as the loss of their possessions. It came as humiliation.

- Note the mention of the evening sacrifice. The sacrifice of lamb happened every morning and evening. The day was bracketed by the sacrifice to deal with man's sin. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for once and for all to end the need for the Temple sacrificial system.
- The Lexham Theological Wordbook has this to say about God's wrath:

"At one level, the frequent reminder of the punishment of God if his people transgress could simply be an attempt to hold sinful acts in check. **But more profoundly, the wrath of God serves to remind people that God wishes their best and is willing to take physical action to inhibit the self-destructiveness of human rebellion.**

Said another way, God's wrath is the twin of God's mercy. **Mercy without correction is mere permission, and mere permission never has the best interests of the person in mind.** God's wrath, then, is God's mercy. And God's mercy is, because of the nature of God's love, sometimes made known in God's punishment of wrongdoing and wrongdoers."

- It has often been said that God hates sin but loves the sinner. In one sense that is true. John 3:16 (NIV84) "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." In another

sense it is very dangerous saying because it is the sinner that spends eternity in hell.

- God's goodness and mercy
  - God had brought the people back to His holy city of Jerusalem to work on rebuilding the Temple.
  - God had provided exacting guidelines for living.
  - The sinfulness of Israel seemed to have no limits when they were supposed to be the Chosen People of a most holy God.
  - the Lord our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage.
  - Though we are slaves, our God has **not** deserted us in our bondage (to sin).
  - He has shown us kindness **in the sight of the kings of Persia** (God active in this world)
  - and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this.
  - O Lord, God of Israel, you are righteous! This is our safety net – God always does what is right.
- The proper realization of our place before God
  - Dr. Mark Partin in his book *Praying with Fire – Seeking His Presence through the Revival Passages of Scripture*, argues that this is a key element in Revival. Ezra comes before the Lord our

God in abject humility – the description given here in chapter 9 emphasizes that point. He does this on behalf of his people. He confesses. He takes responsibility.

- When we realize what we truly are in comparison to God; how we continually fail to attain the life He has established for us; then we see ourselves as we actually are - Not by human standards, but by divine standards.
- James 4:8–10 (NIV84) Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

## CONCLUSION:

There is an easily missed jewel in the 9<sup>th</sup> verse. He [Almighty God] has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.

- Figuratively
- Metaphorically
- Prophetically

1 Peter 2:4–5 (NIV84) *The Living Stone and a Chosen People* <sup>4</sup> As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual



house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:1–17 (NIV84) *Rules for Holy Living*

**3** Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. <sup>8</sup> But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.

### **Scriptural Prayer for Revival from Praying with Fire**

Oh Lord, Your people need revival; revive us again. Father, show me what it means to separate myself from the world and its ways. Teach me true surrender to You (Ezra9:1). Show me the last time I was moved to astonishment over sin, my sin, and over my church's sin. Teach me, Lord, how to give You control of my life, my time, my thoughts, my finances, my money, my family. Lord, tomorrow teach me to do it again, afresh. May I be broken; let remorse and sorrow be evident in my life, just as it was in Ezra's life (v. 3). Father, let me tremble at Your Word. Let conviction flow forth (v. 4). Capture me for Your glory, just as You did with Ezra. Let me know purity—purity of speech, thoughts, and lifestyle. Let me take every thought captive unto Your glory. Teach me to fall on my knees before You, and to raise my hands in honor and out of my emptiness before You. Oh, Lord, I need You (vv. 5–6). Show me my sin. Burden me over it. Let brokenness manifest itself in me. Break down the strongholds of pride, greed, and lust. Wash me, Lord. Let me see my own humiliation (v. 6). Burden me for the condition of the church, Your bride. Oh, Lord, she is to be

without spot or blemish. Purify Your church; send revival to Your church. Father, enlighten my eyes so I can know Your way and have discernment, so Your church can see (v. 8). Oh God, give us revival at any cost. Do not forsake us in our bondage. I surrender to You. Break me unto Your glory. Revive me, and extend mercy to me. As we rebuild out of the ruins, give us a wall of strong understanding, a wall of doctrinal purity, a wall of refuge (v. 9). Revive us, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.