

Ezra 4 - The Faithfulness of God

“He who calls you is faithful, who else will do it?” - 1 Thessalonians 5:24

Chapters 4-6 of Ezra focus on the faithfulness of God. We've studied the providence of God, how He preserved a remnant as He guided them out of exile. Now we look at His faithfulness even when things aren't looking too good. **God glorifies Himself in the weak who overcome the strong by faith.**

“God being who He is, cannot cease to be what He is, He cannot act out of character with Himself. He is at once faithful & immutable. So all His words & acts must be and must remain faithful.” - A.W. Tozer (Mal. 3:6, Deut. 7:9, 2 Tim. 2:11-13)

Context

The exiles who returned to the land **experienced God keeping His promises.**

- The prophets said that God would save His people through judgement after exile.
- They said this restoration to the land would be like the exodus from Egypt, even better than.
 - Now they march onto the land in Ezra 2 & celebrate the Festival of Booths, worshipping God for His faithfulness to their fathers and to them.

Now remember what happened after the **first exodus.**

- Israel conquered the land in the book of Joshua but failed to put all the Canaanites under the ban.
- Then the people became like the Canaanites in Judges and were therefore driven out of the land.

Now that the promised new exodus is being realized & they are returning to the land, **they are facing a new challenge** from the Canaanites.

- Will they compromise and be defiled by the people of the land like their fathers?
- Or will they maintain purity and holiness, even if it is difficult?

Verses 1-3: Cooperation that Would Lead to Compromise

The 1st attacks were subtle: they offered to help build with them.

- They claimed to worship the same God & thought they could share in the work.
- Samaritans were a mixture & not true Jews because Assyrians purposely mixed them.
- According to 2 Kings 17:24-41, the Samaritans didn't worship the true God.

The enemies most dangerous trick is to lure us into compromise under the guise of cooperation

From **Zerubbabel's response**, they evidently think it more important to appease God than to appease their neighbors. We all face choices like this. **How do we respond?**

Do we compromise our principles?

Or do we offend people who could help us?

Do we trust in God and do what he says?

Or do we do what makes sense in the eyes of the world?

The enemy often uses the tool of discouragement to halt the work of God's kingdom.

It was a dangerous offer because they would end up intermarrying which was contrary to the law of Moses (Ex. 34:10-17). Israel was a nation set apart from other nations to perform a special task (Gen. 12:1-3) and if they were to be corrupted their ministry could be corrupted.

- God's people must maintain a separated position & not get involved with anything that could compromise their testimony. (2 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1, 2 Tim. 2:3-5)

Then the enemy often uses fear to follow discouragement in order to keep us from God's work.

Verses 4-5: True Intentions Revealed

We see the peoples true intentions in wanting to help. **They 'discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build. The also bribed officials to act against them to frustrate their plans...'** If they truly wanted to help & worship God they would have wanted to obey the law of Moses in accordance to its commands. They could have helped in other ways instead of building but their offer was because **they wanted influence & control.**

We must remember that Satan wants to influence & control us by shaping the desires of our hearts. Think of our church. Is what is happening in our church about God or about you?

- 1) When you don't get to do what you want to do, do you support the ministry anyway?
- 2) Is a ministry position about a title that doesn't describe your character, or is it simply a recognition of the ways you already care for people?
- 3) If you get an answer you don't like, either you don't understand it or you disagree, do you leave the church or do you seek the Lord in prayer, in study (alone & with others to be sharpened) to learn more before making a judgement?

The enemy uses misinformation & false accusations to undermine Godly leaders.

How can you tell if this is true? - **Check your heart** when someone else gets an opportunity.

- Do you get envious or do you rejoice with them?
- Do you ask, "Why not me?" Or do you say, "Praise God that's going to be done!"

Could it be that the Lord is pushing you to see that what He wants is for you to rejoice in Him and truly love Him and others more than you want influence or control?