

Ezra 4:6-23: A Statement of Faith

Ezra included the account from **verse 6-23 as a statement of faith** by comparing the rebuilding of the city and its walls with the rebuilding of the temple because he knew how earlier opposition to the temple turned out. **He was confident that if God overcame evil through their weakness in rebuilding the temple that God would do the same in rebuilding the walls.**

In essence, Ezra is telling us that the returnees **refused to compromise**, and it didn't look like God blessed them for it. They **faced opposition** from the time they returned shortly after 539 B.C. until Nehemiah got the wall rebuilt in 445 B.C. Their faithfulness didn't make the opposition go away immediately.

So how do we expect the **world** to act in response to our faithfulness?

- They say, "Look, nothing is happening or becoming of your "faith" so just give up."
- They mock us to make us feel like we are "stupid" or "weak".
- They offer alternatives in an effort to get us to take the "easy" path.

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

Remember, **they hate God!** They may try to "play nice" and offer to help (because they want influence & control) and then if we are faithful, rather than go along with them they will go from veiled opposition to explicit opposition.

We need discernment to recognize treachery.

Verses 8-16: Rehum's Letter

The authors are mentioned in verses 8-10, and the body of the letter is in verses 11-16. **Zerubbabel's response** in verse 3 may have sounded a bit rude but it was because he recognized that the inhabitants of the land operated from a worldview that opposes a biblical one. We can see this in their letter in v. 11-16.

- 1) In v. 12, it shows they view holiness to God as "rebellious and evil". Even though Israel was rebellious and God punished them, they didn't understand the whole story. They didn't see their testimony as being saved by the grace of God despite their sin but rather as evil.
- 2) In v. 13 & 14, they were concerned with the king losing money because they care about the King more than God. They see faithfulness to God as threat to the economy.
- 3) In v. 15, they asked the king to search the archives (our past will be used against us) and find that Jerusalem is a place of "rebellion, harm & revolts". They see faithfulness to God as rebellion & wicked in their eyes.

We have to keep how unbelievers may view us in mind so we do't react in kind and instead view them with compassion & pray for them without anger in our hearts.

The enemy tricks us by taking partial truths & paints it with broad strokes to make us look Extreme or unstable.

Don't let the spin that the wicked put on the truth make you doubt.

- Analyze the insinuations and get to the true nature of things.
- Look past the wicked slants they put on truth and trace the logic to see if it is sound by examining the scriptures. Think!
- Love the truth, be valiant for it, speak truth in love. Follow Jesus.
- Build on the backs of "giants" of the faith by comparing what they say to the scripture to see if what they say is biblical and then use it to further your understanding of God's Word!

Verses 17-23: Results of Not Analyzing the Situation

Artaxerxes didn't do these things. He took a small piece of the situation as well as a piece of history (v. 19-20) and **labeled the situation** as bad. The result? He decreed that the rebuilding should stop until he gave permission to start again. (v. 21) **God's work was halted!**

The enemy will use coalitions to overwhelm the Godly by sheer force as well as government edicts to halt God's work.

- These event's look like nothing is happening, like a seemingly dead acorn in the ground but will grow in time.
- **Remember, God will be glorified as the weak overcome the strong by faith.**

Verse 24: Fear led to defeat

And so, a **mix of fear** on the Jew's part **and mislabeling** on the king's part led to the rebuilding being halted in 530 B.C. until the 2nd year of King Darius's reign in 520 B.C. Instead of resisting this decree they allowed the "force and power" (v. 23) of the messengers to stop them. They were more interested perhaps in their own houses than the house of God (Hag. 1:11) and stopped building.

In John 16:33, Jesus told His disciples they would have suffering in the world but to not fear and be courageous because He has overcome the world.

In the face of opposition, do we:

- 1) Give up on our spiritual goals & go back to old way of life? (backsliding - Matt. 26:41)
- 2) Settle for 2nd best spiritually? Settling for a mediocre spiritual existence? (luke-warmness - Rev. 3:15-16)
- 3) Blame God or the leaders for not doing what you think they should have done? (form factions - Titus 3:9-11)
- 4) Conclude that it must not be God's time & He will get it done when He wants? (excuses - Psalms 141:4)

*What trials/sin/fears are we not allowing Christ to overcome in our life? He's already **overcome** them in the world if we would but **stop looking back** at our old selves and **realize** that the **same power** Christ conquered death with on the cross **resides in us to overcome** our sin nature because **God is dwelling** in those who know Jesus as Lord and Savior!*

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear (our old selves), but of love (Jesus), power (Holy Spirit) and a sound mind (knowledge of God Himself!)” - 1 Timothy 1:7

Let's look at some biblical strategies for overcoming setbacks.

- 1) Know the enemy!
 - 2 Corinthians 2:11
 - Forgive so the enemy can't take advantage of us by using the sin in our hearts.
 - Knowing the enemies schemes arms us to stand and fight!
- 2) Resist the enemy!
 - James 4:7
 - put your spiritual armor into action & resist! (Eph. 6:10-20)
- 3) Submit yourselves & draw near to God!
 - James 4:8
 - If God allows the enemy to cause trials, then it is our responsibility to submit to God, knowing He can lift the trials your life and use them for your betterment!
- 4) Persevere in the face of opposition!
 - It's a lifeline battle (our mindset must be this)
 - If we give up, the enemy wins (for now) and God's kingdom suffers.
 - If we persevere, despite our failures & keep running back to the Gospel every time, God's kingdom advances.

Let's long to hear these comforting and rewarding words from our Savior as we enter His rest.

Matthew 25:21, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”
