

EZRA: STARTING OVER WELL AFTER GROUP FAILURE
Part VIII: Thriving As A Group Through Our Human Leaders' Abhorrence Of Sin
(Ezra 9:1-10:1)

I. Introduction

- A. It is a fact that sin exists in every mortal, meaning when people gather together, they can easily augment the expression of each other's sin nature so that the whole group can more readily turn apostate.
- B. However, God can counter this tendency toward apostasy by sending people godly leaders who have a sense of deep revulsion of sin both in themselves and in others. Ezra 9:1-15 illustrates this as follows:

II. Thriving As A Group Through Our Human Leaders' Abhorrence Of Sin, Ezra 9:1-10:1.

- A. After the dedicated Scribe, Ezra had arrived at Jerusalem, some of the officials of the people informed him about unbiblical mixed marriages in the people. They reported that some of the people who had returned from the Babylonian exile had married Canaanites in the land, Ezra 9:1-2a.
- B. This news would have been troubling for Ezra for several reasons as follows:
 - 1. First, such a sin had initially caused Israel to go into captivity, making it inexcusable for Ezra's era:
 - a. Through Moses, God had forbidden Israel from marrying Canaanites lest the idolatry of these pagan people spread among the Hebrews through the vehicle of these marriages, Deuteronomy 7:1-4.
 - b. Well, it was specifically because Israel had adopted the idols of the Canaanites that God had sent the nation into the Babylonian Captivity from which Israel had just returned, cf. 2 Chronicles 36:14-21.
 - c. Thus, news of such mixed marriages would have caused the Scribe, Ezra to be very upset!
 - 2. Second, and what was **worse**, Ezra learned some of the **officials** had **led** the people into this sin, 9:2b! Thus, more than mere blindness in the people was involved -- **rebellion** existed in Israel's **leaders**!
- C. Upset at such blatant rebellion in light of their recent history of divine discipline for this very kind of wickedness, Ezra **visibly** exhibited **severe grief** before the whole assembly, Ezra 9:3-4:
 - 1. In a sign of strong grief, Ezra tore his clothes, plucked off the hair of his head and beard, and sat down in utter abhorrence of the news he had just heard of these mixed marriages, Ezra 9:3.
 - 2. Such extreme grief by their spiritual leader came to the attention of the people in Israel, Ezra 9:4:
 - a. First, everyone who respected the Scriptures and knew of the wrath of God against Israel due to the nation's recent history of punishment for such sin gathered together with Ezra to grieve, Ezra 9:4a.
 - b. There, they were deeply influenced by Ezra's visible expressions of grief as he sat appalled for hours at Israel's sin until the evening sacrifice at three o'clock in the afternoon, Ezra 9:4b.
- D. Then, at the time of the evening sacrifice, Ezra poured out his heart of remorse for sin unto God, 9:5-15.
 - 1. At the time of worship, at the evening sacrifice, Ezra rose from his sitting position to kneel and spread his hands before the Lord to address Him with a deeply apologetic prayer, Ezra 9:5.
 - 2. He told the Lord he was ashamed even to pray to Him due to the depth of Israel's iniquity, Ezra 9:6.
 - 3. Then, Ezra verbally reviewed the nation's recent history of punishment for its idolatry, and of God's gracious work to restore the people to the land following that punishment, Ezra 9:7-9.
 - 4. Hence, Ezra told the Lord how hard it was for him to face Israel's current sin of mixed marriages with the Canaanites that would lead to the idolatry for which Israel had just been punished, Ezra 9:10-15.
- E. Ezra accompanied this prayer with the dramatic act of casting himself down flat and weeping, Ezra 10:1a!
- F. As a result of this public expression of deep contrition by such a godly leader, the people assembled in great numbers and identified with Ezra's remorse, a wonderful grounds for their restoration, Ezra 10:1b.

Lesson: For the spiritual **WELFARE** of the returned exiles, they **NEEDED** a leader in **EZRA** who would be **INTOLERANT** of **BLATANT DISOBEDIENCE** to Scripture to **INFLUENCE** the nation for **HOLINESS** and **PROTECT ITSELF** from its **OWN** wickedness and from God's discipline.

Application: (1) If we are a **LEADER** of God's people, and we are **APPALLED** at some **SIN** we see in the people, **THOUGH** we must be **KIND** to our subordinates, for the sake of their blessing by God, we must **LET** our **ABHORRENCE** of the sin be **SEEN** in our **PERSONAL REACTION** to it! The people **NEED** such leaders, so we must let our **INTOLERANCE** be **EVIDENT**! (2) If we are of the "laity" of God's people, be **HAPPY** if our leaders are **DEEPLY APPALLED** at Scripture disobedience they see -- we **NEED** them to be **HOLY**, or **SEPARATE** from sin to influence **OUR** spiritual welfare! Nepaug