

THE GUILT (EZRA 9:6-7)

6. What is significant about the confession of guilt in 6-7?

THE GRACE (EZRA 9:8-9)

☞ **Discuss** The nature of the grace extended in these verses.

- Its Survival - God has left a remnant
- Its Security - God has given a firm place (a 'peg' in the ground)
- It's Hope - Light to our eyes in our slavery (bondage)
- Its Constancy - God has not deserted us
- Its Providence - extended even under the Kings of Persia
- Its Protection - metaphorically, since it encompasses Judah

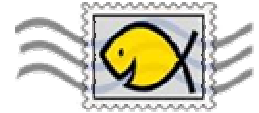


God has every reason to abandon His work with these people. Not one of them can stand before Him without guilt. There are plenty of other Jews still wandering around out there.

God has commanded our allegiance to Him, but we have all loved other things more. We don't tremble, we don't see and quite often we don't care. And we feel very uncomfortable around these Ezra types who do care, who do fall upon their face and tremble. We minimise our sin and hide the fear we feel behind a mask.

But, God will not abandon this rebellious people.

Why not?



EZRA CHAPTER 9



TROUBLE IN COVENANT CITY

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For perhaps the first four and a half months after Ezra's arrival, he travelled around issuing various commissions sent by the King to the surrounding provinces. On his return to Jerusalem he discovers that there are some serious problems which are compromising the people of God.

SAD BAD NEWS (EZRA 9:1-2)

1. Under what biblical category would you put the problem in verse 1-2; Sanctification, Idolatry or Immorality?

The exiles had mixed themselves, [*lit, holy seed*] with the unbelieving nations.

2. What consequences are assumed by this intermarriage?

This is the old, and it would seem, ongoing problem of God's people. When the people of God lose their distinctiveness, they cease to be 'His people', at least in a tangible, visible way.

Therefore,

The church must always keep its distinctives in order to be light. From the family home to the church gathering, God's Covenant people cannot not strive to fit in to this world and still remain pure.

It is never wise to assume we have become untouchable by the world. Where might the battle front for separation be raging in our culture? Is the church a multi cultural society?

THE VIOLENT REACTION (EZRA 9:3-4)

Discuss The two corollaries of this report of faithlessness in verse 1-4.

First, the professing people of God are very disappointing. Never be surprised at how sinful covenant people can be.

Secondly, we usually cannot understand a genuinely holy reaction to sin. Would we describe this response as histrionic? Ezra's response says more about us, sadly, than about anything else.

3. Look at verse 3. What is this revelation from God's word calculated to achieve in the people?

Trembling is precisely what God's word is meant to accomplish in us. Can you recall the last time you trembled at His word? What was the word that caused you to tremble?

CONFESSION (EZRA 9:5-6)

4. What is the significance of Ezra's appearance and the words of his prayer in verse 5-6?

5. Unlike Ezra, we go to great lengths to conceal our joy, grief, frustration and fear. Why?
