



Refresh – Perseverance Ezra 3-6

Solomon built the temple in 957 BC. Kings Joash, Josiah and Hezekiah renovated the temple in the years 815, 715 and 622 BC. to restore worship after years of neglect. Eventually God judged the people for their false worship by allowing the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, to destroy Jerusalem and the temple in 587 BC and send the people into exile for 70 years. When the exile ended, the Persian King Cyrus allowed the people to return to Jerusalem. They returned with the intent to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:5). Soon after arriving, they built an altar for sacrifices (3:1-7). The next year they built the foundation of the temple (3:8-11). But then the renewal stopped. Why didn't the people persevere?

Paralysis of Nostalgia

When the foundation was finished, the younger people rejoiced. The older folks who remembered the former temple wept. They probably compared the glory of the past to the experience of the present. Years later when the work on the temple resumed, this certainly was the sentiment (Haggai 2:1-9). We usually think of the good ole days as easy, fun, prosperous and peaceful while the present is hard, joyless, and chaotic. The truth is the past was never as good as we remember and the present isn't as bad as we think. We should remember the past to recall the faithfulness of God and to avoid previous mistakes. But, if we believe nothing will ever be as good as the past, we will never do anything in the present to make the future better. To persevere focus forward not behind!

Pain of Resistance

When one lifts weights, the more the resistance, the more painful the lift. If one gives up when it's hard, one doesn't see the results of weight training. Once the people began to rebuild the temple, their enemies tried to stop them. They first tried to infiltrate the community to destroy from the inside by offering to help with the building. Zerubbabel and the leaders saw through the deception (4:1-3). Then the enemy used threats and bribes to discourage and instill fear (4:4,5). As a result, the people stopped working on the temple for 16 years (4:24). Resistance doesn't mean God isn't with us. It often means we are doing exactly what he wants us to do and Satan is trying to stop us! Look at Jesus who endured the cross (Heb 12:2).

Pleasure of Comfort

Instead of building the temple, the people built their homes and enjoyed the comfort of a nice house with no enemies threatening them. God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to confront the people and call them to repentance and obedience. The people listened to the prophets and began the work again. Four and a half years later (21 years after the work started), the temple was complete. The people then dedicated the temple and celebrated the Passover. Comfort can lead to disobedience in two ways. One, we are too comfortable to be bothered to do any work for God. Two, we are too comfortable doing the same things we have always done for God so that we don't listen to the new thing He wants us to do.