

Ezra 5-6 – 21 February 2016

Introduction –

**In a new phase of life (Ezra 1-3), they've learned to

- 1) Step out in faith
- 2) Overcome sin and excel even after the ideal situation is lost
- 3) Choose to rejoice and be content

**Then they learned (Ezra 4) to guard against the enemies tricks while spiritually building.

- 1) Guard against their involvement in your spiritual things.
- 2) Guard against their persistent hampering and hassling.
- 3) Guard against their lies about your plans and your character.
 - a. Focus, not on people, but on God.
- 4) Guard against your enemy bringing up your past sin and shame. Remind Satan of his future.

****But at the end of chapter 4 the enemy seemed to prevail and the temple building was halted.**

- 1) God was less concerned with the people's building plan and more concerned with His plan to build the people.
- 2) Now the TIPPING POINT – Would the people give up and turn toward selfish efforts or still keep their efforts focused on God's Work.
- 3) What if you were “Joe or Mary” that gave up and set forward only to selfish pursuits?
 - a. They would be feeling good about themselves.
 - b. We'll get back to “Joe and Mary” later in this message.
- 4) Read Haggai 1:1-2:9
 - a. What if you were “Zeke or Rachel” that returned to the work of the Lord?
 - b. It's hard work, but it will pay off in the end.

There are 3 keys to be able to pass the tipping point

Read Chapter 5

1. **The 1st key to passing the tipping point: Stay involved in the hard spiritual work. (Vs 1-2)**
 - a. Before any part of the task got easier, they choose to get back up and continue building.
 - i. Acts 2-4 – Peter mocked, threatened then beaten, but he chose to continue thru it.
 1. They clung to each other thru hardship.
 2. They clung to God in prayer.
 - ii. If God's mercies endure forever at least we can endure hardship as a good soldier.
 - b. Read Matt 10:16-22
 - i. Those that endure til the end shall be saved.
 - ii. Remember we stepped out in faith? (Ezra 1-3) Having begun in the Spirit, by faith, continue this way to the reward at the end.

c. So we need to stay involved in the hard spiritual work for our own sake, but even greater, we stay involved for the benefit and edification of others.

2. The 2nd key to passing the tipping point: Strengthen your brothers/sisters to be courageous and to do good...they need it. (Ezra 5: 1-2)

a. Strengthen them by exhorting them

i. Heb 3:12-13

ii. Haggai wouldn't let them slip back into selfish pursuits.

b. Strengthen them by helping in the work.

i. Gal 6:2, 7-10

ii. Heb 10:23-24

iii. Examples: Some people here are...

1. working w/ Joy Club. Do you know if they need any help?

2. trying to witness at the bowling alley. Do you know if they need any help?

3. wanting to go on a mission's trip.

Do you know if they need any help?

4. raising a young family. Do you know how they're doing?

c. No one person is the Bible was an island unto themselves.

i. Paul in Romans 16 thanked many that helped him. (Rom 16:3-4)

ii. Acts 15:24 – Paul speaks of “Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

3. The 3rd key to passing the tipping point: Stay focused on God's work and not your own name. (Ezra 5:3, 10-12)

a. If we stripped away all the personal ambition and just ask, what does God want for me to do?

b. God's work will last for eternity; our work will fly away as dust. (Read Prov 27:24)

- c. Jesus Christ has paid for our redemption, let that love for Christ constrain us to serve and work for Him. (Read II Tim 2:3-4)

Read Chapter 6:1-12

- 4. Vs 8 – Previously accusation was made that if the work was allowed to continue, then the Jews wouldn't pay tribute.
 - a. Now the Lord works it out so that they get some of the tribute money.
- 5. Vs 11 – Remember Joe and Mary from earlier, that when persecution came they turned to building their own house, instead of the work of the Lord.
 - a. Living for the Lord will be consistent and pay off in the end.
 - b. Living for your own pursuits leaves us always chasing passions in different directions and it ends very empty.

Get ready to rejoice and read Chapter 6:13-22

6. Remember “Zeke and Rachel” who were faithful to continue working for the Lord even though all people wanted them to stop.
7. Imagine the rejoicing they are having now.

Conclusion –

In your spiritual pursuits; raising a godly family, witnessing with your lifestyle, witnessing with your words, encouraging other believers;

when you don't know if it's gonna work or not

when you need to get pass the tipping point from failure and into success, just remember to

1) **Stay involved in the hard spiritual work.**

a. It's a walk of faith

2) **Strengthen your brothers/sisters to be courageous and to do good.**

a. Encourage them w/ words and deeds

3) **Stay focused on God's work and not your own name.**

a. We're bought, serve Him.