

Will rising faithfulness
sustain?

(Ezra 8 – 9:4)

“Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god.”

Ezra 1:7 (NIV)

“And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.”

Ezra 3:11 (NIV)

“Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.”

Ezra 4:4–5 (NIV)

“The king should know...the
people...rebuilding that rebellious
and wicked city...”

Ezra 4:12 (NIV)

...the king should know that if this city is built...

no more **taxes, tribute** or **duty**...

eventually the royal revenues will suffer.

... a search ... in the archives of your predecessors...

you will find... a **rebellious city, troublesome** to kings and provinces...a long history of **sedition**.

...if this city is built... **you** will be **left with nothing** in Trans-Euphrates.

Ezra 4:12–16 (NIV)

“But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.”

Ezra 5:5 (NIV)

“We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that a great king of Israel built and finished.

But because **our ancestors angered the God of heaven**, he **gave them** into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, **king of Babylon**, who **destroyed this temple** and **deported** the people to Babylon.

Ezra 5:11 (NIV)

“Now then... officials of that province... **stay away** from there.

Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God...

Moreover, I hereby decree...**Their expenses** are to be **fully paid** out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop.

Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and...

must be given them **daily without fail**,

so that **they** may offer sacrifices **pleasing** to the **God of heaven** and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.

— **Darius**

Ezra 6:6–10 (NIV)

“Now I, King Artaxerxes, **decree...**

that all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates are to provide with diligence whatever Ezra the priest, the teacher of the Law of the God of heaven, may ask of you—

Whatever the God of heaven has prescribed, let it be **done** with **diligence** for the temple of the God of heaven.

Why should his wrath fall on the realm of the king
and of his sons?”

— **Artaxerxes**

Ezra 7:21, 23 (NIV)

“There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might **humble ourselves** before our God and ask him for a **safe journey** for us and our children, with all our possessions.

I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, ‘The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him.’ **So we fasted and petitioned our God** about this, and he answered our prayer.”

— Ezra

Ezra 8:21–23 (NIV)

“On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. The **hand of our God was on us**, and he **protected us** from **enemies** and **bandits** along the way. So we arrived in Jerusalem, where we rested three days.

On the fourth day, in the house of our God, we **weighed out the silver and gold** and the **sacred articles**... **Everything was accounted for** by number and weight, and the entire weight was recorded at that time.”

— **Ezra**

Ezra 8:31–34 (NIV)

“After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said,

‘The **people** of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have **not kept** themselves **separate** from the **neighboring peoples** with their **detestable practices**, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites.

They have taken some of their **daughters as wives** for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the **leaders and officials** have **led the way** in this **unfaithfulness.**’”

Ezra 9:1–2 (NIV)

— **Ezra**

“Make **no treaty** with them, and show them no mercy. **Do not intermarry** with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will **turn your children away** from **following me** to **serve other gods**, and the LORD’S anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones... For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”

— **Moses**

Deut 7:2–6 (NIV)

Mounting faithfulness
ends in failure...

In the midst of YHWH's miraculous provision,
faithfulness diminishes?

Is there any **hope** for the human **heart**?

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“The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.” (Gen. 6:5 NIV)

The flood didn't fix it,
The Exodus didn't fix it,
Goliath's defeat didn't fix it,
The Exile didn't fix it,
YHWH's provision out of exile didn't fix it!

What more must YHWH do?

“But when the **set time** had **fully come**,
God sent his **Son**,
born of a woman, born under the law,
to **redeem** those under the law,
that **we** might **receive**
adoption to sonship.”

Gal. 4:4–5 (NIV)

“But now **apart** from the law the **righteousness** of God
has been made **known**...

This **righteousness** is **given** through **faith** in Jesus Christ
to all who **believe**...

all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...
and **all** are justified **freely** by his **grace** through the
redemption that came by Christ **Jesus**...

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement...
to be **received** by **faith**.”

Romans 3:21–25 (NIV)

