

Time to Rebuild
Part 5: Opposition
January 29, 2017

I Laying the Foundation

A) Last Sunday

- 1) Last Sunday was Sanctity of Life Sunday - a result of the abortion issue in this nation
- 2) One pastor wrote he disliked Sanctity of Life Sunday because it grieved him that in this nation we had to have such a Sunday
- 3) With the advent of Roe vs. Wade in 1973, we have elevated abortion to a right, redefined life according to what man wants, and equated abortion with women's health. In short, we have removed God, the Creator and Author of life, from any discussion of life
- 4) Well, President Trump (these messages are not about Trump. They are about Jesus) has already signed one executive order to reinstate the so-called "Mexico City Policy" - a ban on federal funds to international groups that perform abortions or lobby to legalize or promote abortion.
- 5) I believe that is another "stone" in relaying the spiritual foundation of this nation
- 6) That is a reason to lift up our praise, just as the Israelites did

B) **SLIDE Ezra 3:11 (NIV)** ¹¹ With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

- 1) However, that shout of praise stirred up the opposition
- 2) As long as we remain inside these four walls, the world will leave us alone
- 3) But when we take our praise into the world, opposition rises up
- 4) This should not surprise us because God's word warns us and equips

- 5) That executive order on abortion brought ridicule, opposition, and pronouncements of doom from everywhere
- C) So, let's look at what we might expect

II **SLIDE** Opposition

A) **Ezra 4:1-2 (NIV)** ¹ When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, ² they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families

- 1) Almost immediately, we see that the restoration of God's temple stirred up the opposition
- 2) The world will leave the church alone if we "stay in our place"
- 3) Jesus tells us that if the world opposes Him, it will certainly oppose us
- 4) Looking to Ezra, we get an idea as to the types of opposition that we will encounter

B) **SLIDE** First, Distractions

- 1) How many times have we made up our minds to clean the house or to make a minor repair
- 2) We start out with a specific focus
- 3) However, before long, we notice something else that needs attention, and this leads to another, which leads to another
- 4) We do not stop working but at the end of the day we have little to show for it because we were distracted by these other issues
- 5) **SLIDE** One way the enemy can stop us from rebuilding the spiritual foundation of our lives and of this nation is to keep us busy doing other things - even good things
- 6) We are surrounded by accusations, church differences, cries from the world that we are doing more harm than good
- 7) In our personal lives, we all have important issues facing us that can take us away from Jesus
- 8) These distractions tend to take our attention away from the one issue that truly matters: what is Jesus telling us to do?

C) **SLIDE** Solution

- 1) **Luke 9:62 (NIV)** Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."
- 2) Solution: keep our hands on the plow and trust that God will take care of everything else
- 3) We need each other to help keep our eyes on Jesus
- 4) No matter what opposition rose up against them, Ezra kept the people focused on one task: laying that foundation

III Second Attack

A) **SLIDE** Second Attack: Cooperation that leads to Compromise

- 1) **Ezra 4:1-2 (NIV)** ¹ When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, ² they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, "Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."
- 2) **SLIDE** The enemies of Israel were upset because the rebuilding of the temple interfered with their way of life
- 3) They wanted to serve God in their own way so they took offense at these people who dared to restore the temple
- 4) As with many of the traps of the enemy, there is a grain of truth to this statement
- 5) When Israel was taken into captivity, people from Babylon came to take their places
- 6) These Assyrians intermarried with the Israelite women who remained in Israel and were known as Samaritans
- 7) So, it was true they had been taught about God, but they worshipped Him in their own way
- 8) They worshipped God along with every other idol they fancied
- 9) They claimed to worship the same God so it seemed logical they should be allowed to help

- 10) **SLIDE** On the surface, they seemed to be sincere, but, in reality, their intentions were dangerous
 - 11) Cooperating with these people would require the Jews to make compromises that would undermine their true purpose
 - 12) Instead of building a temple to the LORD, they would be building a temple to a representation of the LORD
 - 13) Cooperation that requires compromise is dangerous because **we will be the ones who will have to compromise our faith**
 - 14) Now, this would look good and get good press in the newspapers: "Jews work alongside others in unity."
 - 15) But they would no longer be building a solid foundation
 - 16) Sign of compromise: the world praises us when we make compromises
- B) **SLIDE** Joseph Mattera is overseeing bishop of Resurrection Church and Christ Covenant Coalition, in Brooklyn, New York. - 8 signs of a compromising church
- 1) **SLIDE** In the confessing church/person, Christ is over culture. The compromising church/person accommodates Christ to culture.
 - 2) **SLIDE** The confessing church holds fast to the Word of God in spite of opposition. The compromising church alters the Word of God because of opposition.
 - 3) **SLIDE** The confessing church puts the kingdom of God above their culture and ethnicity. The compromising church puts their ethnicity before the kingdom of God.
 - 4) **SLIDE** The confessing church alters their methods of preaching. The compromising church alters the message they preach.
 - 5) **SLIDE** The confessing church is a remnant in the minority of church and state. The compromising church wants to be in the mainstream of both church and state.
 - 6) **SLIDE** The confessing church is penalized by the state government. The compromising church is applauded by the state government.

- 7) **SLIDE** The confessing church prophetically speaks truth to power. The compromising church conforms to those in power.
 - 8) **SLIDE** The confessing church desires the praise of God. The compromising church desires the praise of men.
- C) **SLIDE** In his book *Reckless Faith*, John F MacArthur states that "Many Christians have the misconception that to win the world to Christ, we must first win the world's favour. If we can get the world to like us, they will embrace our Saviour".
- 1) The opposition offered to help Ezra rebuild the foundation
 - 2) Actually, they wanted to build A foundation, not THE foundation
 - 3) The conventional wisdom says that if we are truly Christians, they we will make compromises to include others
 - 4) We will not pray in the name of Jesus
 - 5) We will depart from the parts of the gospel that offends
 - 6) If we make these compromises, what type of foundation would we be laying?
 - 7) **SLIDE:** wall
 - 8) **Cooperation with compromise is not cooperation; it is giving in**
 - 9) This can happen to us as individuals, as a church, and as a nation
- D) **SLIDE** Solution: Say, "No thanks."
- 1) **Ezra 4:3 (NIV)** ³ But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, "You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us."
 - 2) First of all, this is not the politically correct answer
 - 3) In some cases, it is not even the correct religious answer
 - 4) For a long time, the church has been labeled offensive, mean-spirited, closeminded, divisive, self-righteous
 - 5) To combat this, we have entered an era of outreach, which, in many cases, has led to compromise
 - 6) **SLIDE** Ezra teaches us how to combat cooperation that leads to compromise: reject it

- 7) Ezra point blank tells these people who offer to help that they can have no part in building a temple to God because they do not truly serve God.
 - 8) Now, to the world, the church is rejecting an offer of peace and help
 - 9) In reality, the church is rejecting an attempt to derail the building of God's temple
 - 10) Only the children of God can build a house for God
 - 11) Ezra says that they will build the house alone
 - 12) How can anyone lay the true foundation if he or she does not personally know Jesus and love His word?
- E) **SLIDE** Remember
- 1) **Distraction: Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)** ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
 - 2) **Compromise: Matthew 12:30 (NIV)** [Jesus said,] **"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."**