

Repentance and Then Revival

A Story of Revival, Ezra 9:1-10:17

Introduction

- Cooking shows come in all kinds. There are instructional shows like the *Barefoot Contessa*, competition shows like *The Great British Baking Show*, and travel food shows like *Parts Unknown*. No matter the format, every cooking show that I've ever seen skips over the actual time it takes to make, bake, fry, or roast the food item that is featured. It always goes from preparation straight to presentation – and no one ever talks about doing the dishes afterwards.
- At its heart, the Old Testament book of Ezra is really a story about revival.
 - It's a story about the Israelites returning from exile, rebuilding their community, and reestablishing their lives around God's promises.
 - As much as we want to skip ahead to the good part as New Testament readers – the part about renewal and revival – we can't do that.
 - We have to read the story in context, from start to finish, because there some somethings that have to happen first before revival can be experienced.
 - A renewed commitment to the things of God – only some Jews returned.
 - A renewed commitment to worship and prayer – they rebuilt the temple and restarted their sacrifices and festivals.
 - A renewed commitment to the Scriptures – Ezra studied it, applied it his own life, and taught it to the people.
 - And a renewed commitment...to repent – in Ezra 9 & 10, it's obvious that **revival will not come without repentance**.
- Repentance isn't a popular topic these days as it requires heavy doses of humility & honesty. We talked about it recently in our Catalyst study. (Read Ezra 9:1-4)
- Before, we talk about the connection between repentance & revival, I think we should talk about the problem of intermarriage – another uncomfortable topic.
 - To be clear, this is a religious issue, not a racial one – a number of prominent “men of faith” were married to Gentiles.
 - But it was condemned in the Mosaic Law in Deut. 7:3-4 and other places because of the danger that it posed to future generations.
 - King Solomon is one of the most infamous examples of this. (1 Ki. 11:1, 4)
 - The context is a little different today, but the principle is the same.
 - Believers shouldn't enter into binding, intimate partnerships - especially marriage - with people who don't share their faith (2 Cor 6:14)
 - We have a hard time with this today for 2 reasons:
 - We tend to have a very broad view of Christianity.
 - We tend to have a very narrow view of our Christian beliefs.
 - But the stories are everywhere – men & women who've been drawn away from their religious convictions by dating and marrying someone with a different set of convictions.
 - Yes, I said dating. Casual dating can become serious before you know it & believers should not date someone they can't marry.

- It may easy early on, but it can become almost impossible to pass your convictions to your kids, if you're not in alignment.

- So, what does the Bible say about repentance?

Body

I. Repentance involves heartfelt sorrow. 9:1-4)

- A. Some of the people came to Ezra about the problem of intermarriage.
 1. This was presumably in response to Eza's teaching ministry.
 2. The NIV adds clarity: it was their “detestable practices” (v. 1)
- B. Ezra wasn't involved with this sin, but he responded with sorrow anyway.
 1. He tore his clothes, pulled out his hair, and sat down in disgust.
 2. These outward acts where a sign of where his heart was.
- C. Repentance means emotion; it's more than that, but it can't be less.

II. Repentance involves renouncing the sin. (9:5-15)

- A. Ezra called out to God in prayer.
 1. He confessed Israel's action as sin. (v. 6-7)
 2. He recognized God's goodness (v. 8-9)
 3. He pleaded with God for mercy. (v. 13-15)
- B. Repentance means distancing yourself from thoughts, attitudes, & actions that violate God's Word.

III. Repentance involves public acknowledgement. (10:1-6)

- A. While Ezra was praying, a large group of people joined him to admit their sin together, out loud. (v. 1-3, 5)
 1. This part can be tricky, because it's not always needed.
 2. Confession should be as wide as the damage and knowledge of that sin.
 3. Private sin can be confessed privately, but public sin should be confessed more widely.
- B. Repentance means disclosure, not blaming others for your mistake.

IV. Repentance involves commitment to obedience. (10:7-17)

- A. The people made a public commitment & called all the offenders to appear before the assembly to be held accountable. (v. 7-8, 11, 14)
- B. In this case, “doing the right thing” is complicated.
 1. There were 2nd families that could not/should not be gotten rid of.
 2. To the positive, each case was investigated individually & the people were focused on following the Law which include care for outsiders. (v. 17)
- C. Repentance means taking action in the right direction – towards God.

Conclusion

- As much as we might want it in our lives, or our church, or even in our nation, **revival will not come without repentance**.
 - So be an example of this kind of spiritual responsiveness.
 - And encourage others to pursue these kinds of actions.
- Billy Graham delivered his final recorded sermon back 2013, but his perspective on spiritual awakening & revival is relevant today. He said, “spiritual awakening is the greatest need that we have” – but we'll never see it without repentance.