

Ezra 9:1-15 “Sin and Confession”

For the Children: How do you react when you get caught doing something wrong? How do you think your parents would react if, after they told you you'd done something very bad, you replied, “Oh yeah, true. Sorry. Hey, what's for dinner?” Your parents would conclude that you weren't very sorry, because you hardly reacted at all. It is true that our sins are forgiven because of the Lord Jesus. But knowing that, we ought to be all the more sorry when we sin yet again. We ought to show we're sorry by the way we pray to God about it. **Questions:** How did Ezra show how sorry he was about Israel's sin? Do we need to tear our clothes and hair to show how sorry we are about our sins? How does knowing about God's mercy help us to be more sorry about our sins?

Introduction:

First Point: Ezra Grieves Over Israel's Sin

- 1) The Sin of Mixed Marriage: Ezra learned from some of the leaders that the people of Israel were marrying the peoples of the land. Some of the priests and Levites were foremost in this sin. The sin is a violation of covenant-law (Ex. 34:4-6; Dt. 7:3-4; 20:10-18; 23:1-6), unfaithfulness/treachery. God's people were not even to seek the peace or prosperity of those committed to abominations (v. 12). The addition of Egyptians and Moabites to the older list shows that the principle was not just to avoid Canaanites. 2 Cor. 6:14 shows that the principle still applies: believers should marry only believers
- 2) Appalled & Ashamed: Ezra is appalled, ashamed, embarrassed and humiliated. He expresses his extreme grief by tearing his clothes and hair and by sitting in silence until the evening offering. This shows how much we should hate sin – including the sin of mixed marriage
- 3) Corporate Sin: Ezra's reaction also shows that he identified with the sin of others in the OT church. He refers to “our iniquity and guilt.” That corporate responsibility for sin especially applies if we ignore sin in the community (1 Cor. 5)
- 4) Pointing to Christ's Grief: Ezra's reaction points to Christ. He identified with the sin of His people. He wept over Jerusalem's sin (Lk. 19:41). His identification also resulted in the grief of the cross and hell's agony. Ezra's reaction was effective for reminding Israel of God's Law; Christ's reaction was infinitely powerful, unto salvation

Second Point: Ezra Prays Over Israel's Sin

- 1) Sin Piled High: Ezra's prayer was also effective. In it, he confessed Israel's sin and the extent of it, as great evil and guilt. The sin was piled high, over their heads and as high as the heavens
- 2) Punishment Deserved: Ezra also acknowledged that Israel deserved punishment from the Lord. Past sin of this kind had led to Exile, death and loss. Despite that, Israel was doing the same things again. They deserved total destruction, to have no remnant left – as we deserve hell for our sins
- 3) Grace Ignored: However, God is confessed to be gracious. He gave Israel less than their sins deserved (v. v. 13). He enabled a remnant to escape Exile. He showed His covenant-lovingkindness to them and revived them. But ongoing sin snubs the grace of God. They deserved punishment even more for that! As do we, for ignoring the grace of God in Christ
- 4) The Blessings of Obedience: Ezra is interceding for the grace of God to enable more than a partial revival. If God will show that grace, leading the people to obey His Word, then the Lord will make them strong, they and their descendants can enjoy the Promised Land
- 5) Pointing to Christ's Intercession: Ezra's intercession for his people points us to Christ, Whose heavenly intercession secures God's ongoing mercy despite our repeated sins. This truth ought to move us all the more to repent, not to “easy-believism”

Conclusion: