

TROUBLE
Ezra 3-4
9/21/03

Many people believe that if they are doing the right things and walking close with God that things will go well in their lives.

They believe that sickness and problems are the result of sin or a lack of faith.

Zerubbabel and the Jews who returned to rebuild the temple of God in Jerusalem were godly people attempting to do the will of God, but they were plagued with problems.

In our passage this morning we will see that God's work done by God's people on God's timetable is often blessed with problems.

Trouble, opposition, discouragement, and delays

1. The Rebuilding Of The Temple Was God's Plan.

- a. God sovereignly fulfilled His prophecy through Jeremiah. 1:1a cf Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10
 - They were returning on God's timetable.
- b. God sovereignly raised up Cyrus to defeat Babylon. cf Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-6, 12-13
 - Prophesied 200 years ahead of time.
- c. God sovereignly stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to let the Jews return to their land. 1:1b-4

2. They Were God's People.

- a. God sovereignly stirred up the spirits of those who returned. 1:5 cf 2:1-67
 - They were willing to face danger and sacrifice when most stayed with the comforts and conveniences of Persia.
- b. They gave a generous and sacrificial free-will offering. 2:69

c. When they got to the land they set up an altar and worshiped. 3:1-6

- Worship was a priority
 - ♦ burnt offerings
 - ♦ Feast of Booths
 - ♦ daily offerings
 - ♦ daily offerings
 - ♦ Observed Holy days
- Worship was a priority
 - ♦ I am sure that others things could have taken precedence.
 - ♦ Building houses, digging wells, planting crops, etc.
- Contributed freewill offerings
 - ♦ I am sure that there were other things that they could have used that money for.
 - ♦ They hadn't even planted their crops yet.
 - ♦ They had no source of income and could have clung onto their money for security.

d. They laid the foundation of the temple. 3:7-11

3. They Encountered Much Opposition And Discouragement. 3:12-4:24

a. Discouraging Comparisons 3:12-13 cf Haggai 2:3-4; Zechariah 4:10

- Weeping for joy? No!!
 - ♦ Weeping from discouragement.
- The discouragement came from those who had seen the size and glory of Solomon's temple.

- They are still dealing with this problem 15 years later.
 - ♦ **Haggai 2:3-4** 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison? 4 'But now **take courage**, Zerubbabel,' declares the LORD, 'take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land **take courage**,' declares the LORD, 'and work; for **I am with you**,' declares the LORD of hosts.
 - ♦ **Zechariah 4:10** "For who has despised the day of small things? But **these seven will be glad** when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel -- **these are the eyes of the LORD** which range to and fro throughout the earth."
- It only takes one or two people to turn what should have been a time of praise and thanksgiving to God into a negative time where many people are discouraged.
- Negative comparisons often discourage others from even trying
 - ♦ Comparisons with the past
 - ◇ Ecclesiastes 7:10 Do not say, "Why is it that the former days were better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.
 - ◇ Former church
 - ♦ Comparison with what others have done or are doing
 - ◇ Their building
 - ◇ Their music program, youth activities, etc
- Every work of God in the Bible always seemed to have had grumblers and faultfinders around.
 - ♦ Moses had to contend with it for 40 years in the wilderness.

- ◇ Always grumbling, griping, complaining, and murmuring.
- ◇ They blamed Moses for every difficulty that God brought to them.
- ◇ There were neigh-sayers at Kadesh-Barnea
- ◆ The first century churches had problems with women who are call busybodies, gossips, and troublesome meddlers.
- ◆ The apostles address this problem in several NT passages.
 - ◇ **1 Timothy 3:11** Women *must* likewise *be* dignified, not malicious gossips,
 - ◇ **1 Timothy 5:13** At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and **busybodies**, talking about things not proper *to mention*.
 - ◇ **Titus 2:3** Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips
- There are people who specialize in pointing out faults, problems, and shortcomings in others.
- They never seem to be satisfied with a church or a pastor.
 - ◆ Don't like the music- too traditional or too contemporary.
 - ◆ Don't like the pastor- He runs around too much and his sermons are boring or he has great sermons but he doesn't visit enough.
 - ◆ Not emotional enough, not formal enough
 - ◆ Not friendly enough, too friendly
 - ◆ Too serious, not serious enough

- ◇ **Philippians 2:14** Do all things without grumbling or disputing;
- ◇ **Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.
- There has yet to be a work for God that has not produce criticism.
 - ◆ The only way to avoid criticism is to do nothing, say nothing, be nothing

b. Tempting Alliances 4:1-3

- **v. 1 enemies**
- **v. 2 Let us build with you, we worship the same God.**
 - ◆ Religious syncretism
 - ◇ A mixing of the true worship of God with that of other false religions.
 - ◇ Religious syncretism ultimately leads to confusion and a watering down of the truth.
 - ◆ They will neutralize and minimize the difference in the message.
 - ◇ building , evangelism, worship
- How will we look if we refuse their offer?
 - ◆ This attitude of exclusivism is troublesome in our modern society where the highest virtue is tolerance and the willingness to accept and tolerate everyone's beliefs and practices.
 - ◆ unloving
 - ◆ elitist

◇ INKOM

◇ PASTOR'S FELLOWSHIP

◆ **2 Corinthians 6:14** Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

◆ **2 John 7-11**

c. Frightening Enemies 4:4

- It is doubtful that any significant work has ever been attempted for God without arousing opposition.
- Discouragement and fear cf 3:3
 - ◆ “What will they do?”
 - ◆ “We don’t want to stir them up.”
 - ◇ They could make life miserable for us. They are in the majority you know.”
- The Jews feared for their lives.
 - ◆ Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.
 - ◆ Hebrews 13:6 so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"
 - ◇ **Courage is not a lack of fear. It is the will to act in spite of fear.**

d. Legal Opposition 4:5-23

- **5** hired counselors- legal representatives
- **6-23** are a parenthesis.
 - ◆ They give additional examples of later legal opposition

- **6-10** the legal opposition continued on for 77 years.
 - ♦ Ahasuerus (486-465 BC) and Artaxerxes. (464-424 BC)
- **11-16** They wrote letters which maligned their intentions.
- **17-22** The result of their false counsel during the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes. (464-424 BC)

4. They Stopped Doing The Work Of God. 4:24

They didn't stop because of a decree, but because of discouragement and opposition.

- No work on the temple for 15 years (535-520)

They forgot God's presence, promises, power, and goodness in the midst of their problems.

- They gave up!!!

Discouragement comes when we lose hope.

- When we get our eyes on problems and people instead of God.

A Lesson For Living

God's work done by God's people on God's timetable will often be blessed with problems.

Not because of sin

Not because what they are doing is not God's will

We most often don't know why.

- We do know that God's primary concern is building the faith and character His people.
- In Ezra we see that:
 - ♦ **God is building His people in the process of their building His temple.**

The process is as important as the product.

- Sometimes God is teaching us patience, faith, forgiveness, humility, perseverance.
- Sometimes it is to get us to draw near to God.
 - ♦ To help us to recognize our inadequacy and His power.
- One purpose for the delay was to get them to match God's timetable.
 - ♦ 70 years from the destruction of the first temple (586 BC) to the dedication of the new temple. (516/515 BC)
- God planned in the extra 20 years with its problems to help develop build His people.
 - ♦ The process is as important as the product.
 - ♦ **TRUST GOD IN THE PROCESS!!!**
- **Spiritual maturity takes time and troubles.**
 - ♦ Trust God with the process.
 - ♦ Don't fear it.
 - ♦ Heb 13:5
 - ♦ 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - ♦ Romans 8:28

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Gospel