

# (Rebuilding the House of the Lord) 4. a New Phase as Ezra Appears

by Roy Hession

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*Ezra's story is a picture of revival in both personal and corporate ways, highlighting the importance of separation from the world and the need for revival to be revived.*

**Duration:** 53:01

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:1-2, Exodus 20:3, Ezra 7:27, Ezra 8:21-23, Ezra 9:1, Matthew 6:33, James 4:4

**Topics:** "Ezra"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the journey of the Israelites from Babylon to Jerusalem, which took them four months on foot. Despite the risks of being robbed or ambushed, they successfully completed the journey and delivered their wealth to the priests in Jerusalem. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having confidence in God, as exemplified by the river Ahava, which is named after a brother who finds his confidence in God. The sermon also highlights the need for repentance and not presuming on past blessings, as demonstrated by the speaker's own experience of panicking and realizing the depth of study required for the scriptures. The overall theme of the sermon is the restoration of the temple and Jerusalem, seen as a symbol of personal and corporate revival.

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## Transcript

I would like to begin by saying that the Lord has shown me the sin of self-confidence. I felt yesterday that I knew what the next phase of our study was going to be. I felt God had helped us, both in speaking and hearing, to receive His truth.

And I was happy to do this and that yesterday, and didn't spend any time looking again at the scriptures we were going to study, thinking that, well, it's been, the Lord's helped in the past, and that's just it, it'll be just quite simple, get up in good time the next morning, and there we are. I was trusting and presuming on the past, how easy it is to do that, because God has blessed before, no need to have great exercise of heart, He will bless automatically again. And when this morning I did get up and got to my little place where I have a little quiet room to think and pray in, and I looked at the passage, the phase of the scriptures we've got before us, I saw immediately, it required a depth of study and a length of time on it, which I just hadn't allowed.

And I got all panicky, and the Lord said, you know what you've got to do? You've said it to others, you'd better do it again, you'd better repent. Don't struggle, don't get panicky, just admit, you've done it again. Because this is why I'm afraid of the thing that's happened before with me, this presuming on the past.

And He said, I can take over the mess, the lack of time that you have owing to your own folly, and I can be gracious to you. And so I've been to Jesus this morning, and repented of presuming on the past, and I praise the Lord, He's given me peace. And may He Himself open up the sacred page to us.

Now we come now in our study of the restoration of the Temple and ruined Jerusalem, which we look upon as a picture of revival, both personal and in corporate ways. We come now to a new phase. It's only at chapter 7 that Ezra, the writer of the book, appears at all.

And in chapter 7 onwards, you have the coming of Ezra, and the deep purpose for which he came. In this whole story of the rebuilding of the Temple and city, there are several phases. There's first of all the first phase, which we've looked at, in the return of the exiles under Zerubbabel, back to their ruined city, and the completion of the Temple itself.

Sixty years later, God sends another one, another exile, a unique man, Ezra. And he now comes on the scene. And later still, I haven't worked out how later it was, Nehemiah comes from Babylon.

And each of these men move the work of revival on a further stage. First Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. Sixty years later, Ezra, and then later still, Nehemiah.

Oh, that we had more than these five mornings to look at it. And so we have the story of Ezra's coming. He was one of the captives, like the rest.

And I suppose if the first exiles had returned sixty years before, well then he wasn't old enough to have been amongst them. But God was working in his heart in faraway Babylon, fashioning a wonderful tool. And in chapter seven, verse six, you have this phrase.

He's trying to be objective, he gives this genealogy, and from that we read that he came from the priestly house, could trace his ancestry back to Aaron, and then in verse six it says, this Ezra. And as I've read the story again, I've said this. This Ezra, what a man.

He's one of the great men of God. He's one of the great revival leaders of the whole Bible. And he hasn't been given the attention that perhaps he should be given.

This Ezra. And then I read it this morning, I said, this Ezra. It is thought that it was Ezra, after they had returned, who was responsible for the production of the books of Kings and Chronicles.

And quite sure, the Kings and Chronicles were not just a copying out of the court archives. No court scribe would dare to say about current kings what is there recorded. He doubtless had recourse to the court archives of the kings of Israel and Judah.

But only a man as deep as Ezra was, could have looked at everything in these men's reign from the divine point of view, and could pronounce about this man, he did evil in the sight of the Lord. And about others, he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Only a man as deep as Ezra could interpret history in the light of God.

Well, I don't know that anybody can be quite sure. But that may well be so, this Ezra. And now this is another interesting thing.

I'm quite sure that these next chapters were the main purpose for which he gave us the book. It's autobiographical, biographical. But of course we wouldn't understand what Ezra's part was until we saw the former chapters.

And therefore I think perhaps these next chapters is the real reason why he wrote it at all. There was a message for coming generations as a result of what Ezra did, and of what God accomplished through him. He was a man with a passion for holiness.

And revival is nothing more than a revival of holiness. And so all the rest we've had, wonderful as it's been, it's only been the backdrop for what now comes. He wouldn't have written it, perhaps, but for this man.

Well, we're not going to read the whole chapters, but we're going to look at just... You're looking at chapter 7, aren't you? Well, this tells the story of how Ezra was, his state of heart, and how that extraordinary favor that God had given to this little people from the court at Babylon continued. Indeed, mounted. And Ezra was permitted to leave Babylon.

And he went back to Babylon loaded with gold and silver and vessels, and a letter of authority to the satraps and governors beyond the river, to give every assistance and every bit of money that was needed. Indeed, this king, Artaxerxes, he had such a vision, he said, I want you to get them right morally too. You have to look after, see how they're getting on with regard to the law of your God.

And this, of course, was Ezra's passion. And he and some other companions make the long journey, loaded with this fortune of stuff, all to beautify the house of God. And at the end of chapter 7, he says, when he recounts and gives you a copy of the letter once again, he kept his files intact, Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem, and hath extended mercy unto me before the king and his counsellors, and before the king's mighty princes, and so on.

Then in chapter 8, you have the actual journey. First of all, there's enumeration, a careful enumeration of the actual men and their genealogies who came up with him. And then there's that very touching story of the prayer meeting they had at the river Ahava, verses 21 to 23.

Why, there's a whole message in that which we can't touch upon. You know, this journey from Babylon to Jerusalem took them no less than four months. They did it on their own two feet.

And they were carrying with them a fortune. And they would have been easy prey for robbers and ambushes, but they proclaimed that fast at the river Ahava. A dear brother here has called the name of his house Ahava.

And I know why. That's where his confidence is. Well, how we'd like to spend time.

Wonderful words there. And so, in chapter 8, God sees them through. They make that four-month journey prosperously.

Not a bit of the wealth is lost, and is delivered to the priests in Jerusalem. Now we come to chapter 9. This we must read. Now and then I will... Oh dear, I haven't got my revised standard version.

I was going to make some alterations, but I forgot to bring it down. Thank you so much. Here and there I will read from the revised standard version, because the way of putting it is helpful and illuminating in several parts.

Now when these things were done, the princes came to me saying, the people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abomination, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. And they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons, so that the holy race has mixed itself with the people of these lands. Yea, the hand of the princes and rulers has been chief in this trespass.

When I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off my beard, and sat down astonished. Revised version says, I sat down appalled. Appalled! What do you make so much trouble about? Don't you understand? He sat down appalled.

They'd been intermarried with the people of the land, and they'd been doing according to their abominations, and nobody thought a thing about it, until Ezra, hearing of it, ripped up his garment, he pulled forcibly the beard from his cheek, and he sat down appalled. Then were assembled unto me, every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of this transgression, of those that had been carried away. And I sat down appalled, until the evening sacrifice.

And at the evening sacrifice, I arose up from my heaviness, and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and I spread out my hands, unto the Lord my God, and said, Oh my God! I am ashamed and blushed to lift up my face to thee, my God, for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespasses grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers, have we been in a great trespass unto this day, and for our iniquities have we, our kings and our priests, been delivered into the hands of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now, for a little space, this grace has been showed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

For we are bondmen, yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us, in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken thy commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, here he quotes from Moses, The land into which ye go to possess is an unclean land, polluted with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. Vile things were current among those nations.

Now therefore, this is still quoting from the command, Now therefore, says God, give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever, that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that our God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and has given such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments, and intermarry with the people who practice these abominations? Wouldst thou not be angry with us, till thou hast consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous, for we remain yet escaped as it is this day. Behold, we

are before thee in our trespass, for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children, for the people, O praise the Lord, for the people wept very sore. Hello! The revival is going to be revived again, I think. Revival does need to be revived.

It did here. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have transgressed against our God and have taken strange wives, foreign women of the people of the land. Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God, to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my Lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God. And let it be done according to the law. Arise! For this matter belongeth unto thee.

We also will be with thee. Be of good courage. Then Ezra arose, and made the leading priests and Levites and all Israel take oath that they would do as had been said.

So they took the oath. Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan, the son of Eliashib, where he spent the night neither eating bread nor drinking water. For he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles.

And they made a proclamation throughout all Judah and to all the children of captivity that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem, and that whoever would not come within three days according to the counsel of the princes and elders all his substance should be forfeited and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away. Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month on the twentieth day of the month, and all the people sat in the street of the house of God in the square, trembling because of this matter and because of the great rain.

And Ezra the priest stood up and said, Ye have transgressed and have married foreign women to increase the trespass of Israel. Now, therefore, make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers and do his pleasure, and separate yourself from the people of the land and from the foreign women. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do.

But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without. Neither is this the work of one day or two, for we are many that have transgressed this thing. Let now our rulers stand, and let them all which have taken foreign women in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned again.

Isn't that important? Isn't that the main reason why Ezra wrote his book at all? Well, he got there, very happy to have brought all this wealth to beautify the house of God, only to be told when he got there that the people have not separated themselves, that the people have begun to do of the abominations and commit the same sins and slip in the little same bits of idolatry that all the nations round about them had been doing. And it was all traced to the fact that they had permitted themselves to intermarry. They had married foreign women, which was something absolutely forbidden in the law of Moses.

The one thing that Ezra was not to do when they got into the land was to marry those women, because the land into which they were going was a filthy land, and they were to be a separated people. And if they started marrying those women, it wouldn't be very long before they adopted all the ways and customs of that people. But alas, that's what they did to them.

And if there was one reason more than another for which God had to bring those calamities upon them, if there was one reason more than another which accounted for the destruction of Jerusalem, the breaking down of the temple, and of their captivity, it was because of this one thing. And now they've gone back to it. And the whole revival was being prejudiced.

They were playing with the very thing which had caused the declension, which had caused the destruction. And the whole revival was in jeopardy. And what was needed was the revival to be revived.

And that's always the case. Any new life that we've received, included, it's got to be, so often it needs to be revived. Again and again.

Not because you must keep it fresh. Oh, that's not the reason. When revival needs to be revived, it's for one reason.

Because of sin. And you and I can begin to play a game with the same sins that brought us so low, that made us so empty. The Church can begin to play a game with the things that have brought her to her parlour state, even after grace has been shown her, even after the river of blessing has come her way.

What a story we've got here. Would you like to turn to Psalm 85? Psalm 85, verse 6. Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? There's an extraordinary phrase for you. Because revival means give life again.

He's repeating it. Will you not give life again, again? I don't know if you see the point. I can understand it.

Would you not give Bible again? And then Bible, when it's given again, becomes revival. But he's not saying will you give Bible again, but will you give revival again? Will you do the again thing, please, again? Because, Lord, we've lost it. Because, Lord, we've begun to find the old deadness coming back again.

And that happens so often. It's happened in the history of every revival. Every spiritual movement.

And it happens in the life of us individuals who've been so blessed. God has to do the work again. The again work, which he did do, he needs to do again.

And if it needs to be done again, listen, it's not because we're so apt to forget and we get so busy and we don't have enough fellowship. No, no. Here it was because of sin.

And will you notice the sin? The people have not separated themselves from the peoples of the land. And so easily you and I can begin to compromise on the matter of separation from the world. And we begin to practice again the things of the world which caused our downfall.

We begin to compromise our principles and commit, in the early stages at least, the same sins from which grace has rescued us. Will you turn to 1 John 2.15, epistle of John, chapter 2.15. Let's think about the world for a moment and separation from the world. It's a little deeper than we thought.

It isn't only abstaining from certain pleasures that the world go in for. It probably will include that. But you'll have to make your own decisions where the lines will be drawn and do so in the light of God.

It isn't only abstaining from certain alcohol, abstaining from alcohol, it might mean that. Almost certainly. Since this is the cause of so much trouble in our world, I would have thought the bare minimum.

That man hasn't begun hardly. But he says, I don't want to play with that, that's ruined our family. As it has so many.

Oh no, but it's deeper than that. It's deeper than that. 1 John 2.15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Quite obviously the world is not things, it's people. It's that great mass and majority of people who are content to live their lives without reference to the will of God, and that is the state of the majority.

And the world and God are in two mutually antagonistic camps. There's no antagonism on the part of God to the world, none at all. He loved it and gave his son for it.

But there's a mighty antagonism of the world toward God and his Christ, isn't there? You start talking about Jesus in certain company on that night out, and a chill comes over the whole proceedings, and it's soon clear that you're not welcome there. Yes, we've got to love and yet not love. I repeat what I said in some other meeting.

I read somewhere that the church, rightly understood, has a lover's quarrel with the world. We cannot approve, we cannot be identified with a world that has no place for our Christ and builds its life individually and corporately on a basis completely other than the will of God. And yet there are people for whom Christ died, and therefore we love them in that sense.

But the sense in which we're not to love them is of the other sense. A lover's quarrel with the world is something we're not one of. There are things we cannot join them with, and we cannot be identified with them.

Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast-wind it in either direction. There are things we cannot join them with, and we cannot be identified with them.

A Christian isn't a better person, he's a different person. If any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. I remember years ago Hudson Pope giving a talk to boys in which he tried to describe this new creature.

He said, well, the new creature is a sheep. But he's been changed into a sheep from what? Well, he said in the Bible, the man who doesn't know Christ is a scribe is a swine. The sow that was washed has returned to his wallowing in the mire.

And I shall never remember him sort of having a dialogue in our presence with God. He says, God's saying to me, he says, Pope, do you see those boys in front of you? Yes, Lord. Tell them they're swine.

But, Lord, they're so nice boys. I tell you, they're swine. And they need to be made new creatures so that the swine that grovel in the mud naturally become the Lord's sheep who follow his lead.

Oh, the vast difference. The gulf. We're another creation.

If we've been born of God at all, if the Lord Jesus, we have disagreed with them on the most basic thing. He came unto his own, we read. Jesus came unto his own.

In his own received him not. That's the majority verdict. But there's a minority who insist on disagreeing.

But, in opposition to the world's attitude, as many as received him, they become the children of God. And the world doesn't like it. When you've got to have a young person go home to their unconverted home, having found the Lord Jesus.

Mum and Dad, I found the Lord Jesus. And so, likely they'd say this, so you mean to say your mum and dad have been wrong all these years? Well, I didn't say that. I just said, except the Lord Jesus.

But it implied that. That's what happened with Noah. He built an ark to the saving of this house, we read in Hebrews 11.

And he not only built it, he got into it. By which, it says, he condemned the world. He didn't condemn the world in that act, say that the act implied that if he was right, they were wrong.

And the world went lovely for that. But you know, it's easy to blur the distinctions. And in subtle ways, we begin to love the world.

Look at the three things here. For all that's in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. This is worldliness, three things.

First, the lust of the flesh. The desire to indulge. And that, irrespective of the commandments of God, the desires are to indulge the lust of the flesh.

Secondly, the lust of the eyes. You know, eyeing a thing. The desire to possess.

Because everybody else has this and that. Why shouldn't I? The lust of the eyes. That's the world all over.

Lust of the eyes the whole time. That's for the world. The desire to indulge, regardless of the will of God.

The desire to possess the lust of the flesh. And then the third is the pride of life. The desire to excel.

To keep up with the Joneses and even one ahead. And you know the only reason why the world does a lot of things is they want to excel and not be left out. The only reason why some people, in fact I say all people, start smoking.

There's no desire for smoking. But you don't want to leave the one man out. You don't want to leave him with your hands.

Everybody else is doing it. The medical warnings have reduced that a little bit, but it's still the desire to conform and even to excel. But of course smoking is a very surface thing compared with these deeper things.

And oh, we can begin to slip into the world's ways. Being blessed as we have been, and a group where they've known a reviving, it can begin to come in. The people have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations.

And you know God calls the ways of the world, even these things that may not be outwardly disruptible, they're the invariable lead to that, He calls them abominations. Will you look to Luke 16, verse 5? Luke 16, verse 15? Halfway through that verse, that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. One of the Psalms says, Men praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.

When you make a fortune you go up, you're really something. God says, I call that an abomination. That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Well, now we mustn't expand further on that, but this is the situation which Ezra found. Only God could interpret this to us. To what extent and along locked lines it's possible.

That it may be true of me, I've not separated myself from the world. I'm still identified or I'm becoming identified again and I am doing according to their abominations. It could be along the line of sex.

And we're bombarded with the rationale why permissiveness is all right, that it can even begin to get among the sex. And we've been crossing the white line in one degree or another. It could be in the matter of honesty.

And we've been crossing the white line of honesty. It could be in the matter of charity. Consider quite a reasonable thing to go to law against another brother.

You're doing according to the abominations. The Bible says, why don't you take it? Why don't you suffer the loss? The world doesn't, it exacts the trouble, the world doesn't, but the saints are going to act differently. Only God can interpret where you and I, and I'm as much in this as anybody, have not separated ourselves from the peoples of the land and are doing, in perhaps small matters, according to their abominations.

That's what God calls it. Kingdom of Heaven is on exactly an opposite foundation to that on which the world builds its life. Well, now, going back to Ezra, chapter 9. What happened? Verse 3, When I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and my beard, and I sat down appalled.

Appalled! They couldn't understand it. I haven't done very much. She was a nice girl, I know.

She was a foreigner and she had a different... I know her family had some idols there, but sat down appalled. And then you've got one of the great prayers of penitents, national penitents. There are three of them in the Old Testament.

They would repay careful study. Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, Daniel 9. Moving documents. And this one is.

Doubtless you felt the power of it as we read it through. They couldn't see what was so wrong. But as they listened to Ezra, as we listen to, we see that he looked at their sin in the light of three things.

He looked at it, firstly, in the light of the revival. They'd already been granted. Verse 8, And now for a little space, we've been in captivity for so long, and now for a little space, grace has been showed us from the Lord our God to leave us a remnant to escape and to give us a nail in his holy place that our God may lighten our eyes and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

And you're wrecking the whole thing. You're prejudicing this precious thing. We didn't deserve it.

We thought we were finished, and grace has reached us, and a remnant has come back, and we've seen the beginnings of this revival of our national life. And this is going to cause the hand of our God to come down upon us again. And I believe the saints must look upon sin in the light of whatever reviving they've experienced, either individually or corporately.

And I do thank God where God has gone on continually in revival, as he has in East Africa and doubtless other places. It's because he's given them leaders who've been sharp on sin, sometimes have travelled hundreds of miles to challenge another brother. Why are they so careful? Man, don't you see the whole thing's at risk.

And friend, whatever blessing you've got, if you start compromising and playing with sin, all that blessing is at risk. And after all, it's only a little reviving that we've experienced. God knows it's little enough.

It was little enough there. And this little reviving that grace had given them was at risk, and so it is with us. Oh, in our team fellowship, we want to be sharp on the little jealousies that come into us.

And we are, we seek to be. Maybe we ought to be sharper, more willing to break. The whole conference is at risk.

And then he looked at their sin in the light of the chastening they'd already endured for similar sins. Verse 7, Since the days of our fathers have we been in great distress unto this day, and for our iniquities have we, our kings and priests, been delivered into the hands of the kings of other lands to sword, to captivity, and to confusion face us at this day. Dear ones, this was the reason why we were so barren and defeated before.

This was what was wrong. There was only one thing wrong with a lot of us. It wasn't we didn't know our Bibles well enough, or we hadn't got faith to pray, pray.

It was sin of one sort or another. And you and I can begin to play with the very sins that caused God's hand to be heavy upon us, so that day and night our bones waxed old through our groaning all the day long. But as we repented, grace reached us, and Jesus became all we need.

And yet we begin to play with the very things that have put us into captivity for so long. And thirdly, he looked at their sin in the light of further possible chastening that might come to them. He not only saw the revival in jeopardy, but if God had had to chase them that way in the past for those sins, what might not there be in the future? He says in verse 14, Should we again break thy commandments and intermarry with the people who practice these abominations? Would thou not be angry with us, to which thou hast consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? If God had to put his hand on heavy upon you, and your bones waxed old, and the spiritual life went, and perhaps troubles came in the home or elsewhere, and with relationships, and he's helped you to repent, should you again do those things? If it meant all that in the past, what heavy chastening to restore us might he not need to bring upon us? He talks about the wrath of God.

They did what they did to clear the matter up that there be not wrath upon them. Don't get the idea that the wrath of God is only for an unsaved world. It's a gentle word.

It's a tender word. It's a domestic word. The anger of the Lord.

I want to make a study one day in the Old Testament. I've been under the anger of the Lord, haven't you? I've been on the mat before him. He's taken me to task, and I would never have listened to him had I not seen things going wrong.

I said, well, what's happened? What's wrong? That's not the blessing of the Lord. It's the anger of the Lord. A sweet word.

How sweet that word is, the wrath of the Lamb. The Lamb is so gentle and loving. He's on the side of the poor and needy as the Lamb.

That's what his name means. But I have not been on the side of the poor and needy. And it's because he loves the poor and needy that he takes me to task when I transgress against him, the wrath of the Lamb.

And it means chastening. It means the diminishing of my spiritual life and, perhaps, things going wrong. And Ezra could see the possibility.

And so he sat down appalled and prayed this prayer. It had a profound effect upon the people. What effect? That which caused the profound effect upon them, I don't think, however, was what Ezra actually said.

It was what he did. What did he do? Well, I've just said. He rent his garment.

He plucked off his beard, painful thing. And he sat down appalled. It wasn't very bad, Ezra.

It made no difference. He sat down appalled. Chapter 10, verse 1. When Ezra had prayed and when he'd confessed, weeping and casting himself down before God.

Weeping? Casting himself down before God? And I tell you, when people in the East weep, they weep! You can hear that man howling all over Jerusalem. And even they said, all right, we'll put it right. Even that wasn't enough.

And he spent the night in the man's house. And through the long hours, he wouldn't leave. He was howling, howling, howling.

That which they didn't think very much. But Ezra howled. I tell you this, Ezra.

Don't you agree with me? This, Ezra. This is a revival leader. I'm not like that.

For my own sins or anybody else's. But he was. And as they saw what their sin was costing him, they began to see it in the same light that Ezra saw it.

Now, it's a very small step to see in Ezra's sorrow for the sins of the people a picture of the Lord Jesus. Oh, Christ. What burdens bowed thy head? Our load was laid on thee.

Oh, what Ezra went through. On behalf of the people's sins is nothing compared to the dark hour of judgment bearing which the Lamb of God went through for us. Oh, ye that pass by.

Is it nothing to you? Behold and see. Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger? Calvary, that cross, was the day of the fierce anger of God against sins like this. But it didn't fall on thee.

It fell on him. Will you turn to Zechariah? That's the third book from the end. Keep your finger in Ezra.

And you've got a wonderful foreshadowing in Zechariah of the cross. Chapter 12, verse 9. Verse 10. Talking of a coming day when Israel's going to look upon their Messiah.

A day which is yet to come for Israel but which has already come for us Gentiles. And I will call upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son. They're not mourning for what sin has cost them.

That's not true repentance. Sin costs us a lot. And it hurts other people.

But true repentance is mourning for what sin has cost him. We look upon him whom we have pierced. I think it was Bishop Chandler and I hope I'm not betraying a confidence I can't remember where I got it.

But he was involved in various strong controversies. He's a dear man of God, a friend of mine. He was in Pakistan, he's now in Singapore.

And he was involved in controversies and got hard and so on. And one day he came into his bungalow to find his wife flat on her face weeping. It's for you! It's the other fellows who did wrong.

No, she said, it's you. And he began to see what was wrong with him in the light of the burden she had for him on her heart as she prayed. That's a pale reflection of what happened on the cross.

Jehovah bade his sword abate. Actually, I have not referred you to the verse I wanted to in Zechariah. Zechariah 12, 9 is one.

But there's another one. Verse 7 of chapter 13, here it is. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.

Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. Who is the man that is my fellow? This verse cannot refer to any other than Messiah. Jehovah bade his sword awake.

O Christ, it fell on thee! It should have awoken against me, but it was sheathed forever against me, but in the breast of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another picture of the Lord Jesus is Moses. You remember his sin? Losing his temper with the people, speaking unadvisedly, smiting the rock twice and all that, you remember it? For which he was excluded from going into the land.

And in Deuteronomy, it's a lovely review of his whole life. He's talking to the people. Lovely book, Deuteronomy.

And when he refers to that incident, this is how he put it. The Lord was angry with me for your sakes. Well, it was for Moses' sake.

No, no, it was also for the people's sake. Why? Losing their tempers with one another. They'd been doing it all the time.

Why should Moses be censured as he was, and deprived of this thing? The Lord was angry with Moses for their sakes. And when they heard their godly, beloved leader was under the divine censure for a thing they'd been doing every day. I wonder if there's a new spirit of repentance.

When they saw what happened to our Moses when he sinned. And oh, who can tell what happened to Jesus, the sinless son of God, the moment he took our sin. God forsook him.

And he wailed, my God, why art thou forsaking me? God wasn't forsaking the son as the son. He was forsaking the son as me. The Lord was angry with him for my sakes, and for these particular things.

Well, it had a deep effect. They began to weep. Praise the Lord.

Oh, Ezra. Go back to Ezra, if you will. He says, there's hope.

Oh, Ezra, don't be so upset. We'll put it right, Ezra. We'll put it right.

We'll put away these foreign women. And he was glad to hear them say it. He said, we'll all promise.

But you know, that night he went on wailing. Well, why is he wailing? Let's see it. Chapter... Yes.

They said, we've trespassed. Verse 2 of Chapter 10. Yet now there's hope.

Let us make a covenant. We'll put it away. Even so, Ezra went to the house of a friend and wouldn't eat that night.

He went on weeping. But we said we'd put it right. Doesn't that assuage his sorrows? Doesn't that put the thing straight? Apparently it doesn't.

And I want to say this. I've learned that my repentance and putting things right doesn't really put it right. All right then.

All right. I'll write a letter. I'll give up that thing.

I'll withdraw. Wait a minute, friend. It's already happened.

And you at this last minute, well, I won't do it again. I'll put it right. But what's already happened? There'll be months of it.

That's quite enough to quench any new revival we've been experiencing. God requires that which is past. The fact you repent now and put it right.

But what's already happened? Even my repentance has no power to cast the past. Sin always leaves a legacy of guilt. And me putting it right, essential as that is, that isn't enough.

Well, then what in the world can wash away my stain if my repentance doesn't do it? You know the answer. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, friend, we have to repent as they did.

But we must see that that's not enough. Nothing but the judgment bearing of the Lord Jesus is enough to put away from God's sight completely what's already happened. And thank God it does.

It's the wrath-appeasing blood of Jesus that does it, as Topperty puts in one of his hymns. And in another hymn he says, The wrath now that I have repented of a sin-hating God with me can have nothing to do. My Saviour's obedience to blood hides all my transgressions from view.

And you tell you what brings revival? We get away by sin. We think we can get away by doing good. You can't.

All right, then I get away by sin, then I come back by repentance. Not even that's enough. You get away by sin, but you come back by the blood.

And new life begins when we see again the value and efficacy of the blood of Jesus and his one offering for us. Then the saints begin to rejoice. And revival is not merely the saints repenting, they must.

It's the saints rejoicing and praising that they're free again. That's revival. And so it was true, of course, there is hope.

Of course it was. Yes, they prepare to repent. There's no hope unless we do.

But even so, the hope. Why, if you'd like to turn to Job, can you find Job quickly before the Psalms? Job 14 has a lovely verse. Just before the Psalms, Job 14.

Verse 7. There is hope of a tree. If it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though its root grow old in the earth, and its stalk appears to die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bring forth boughs like a young flower.

Ah, there is hope. Not only because I've repented. Because you can repent and still go on beating yourself.

You can repent and still go on blaming yourself. You've got to blame yourself, but you didn't go on doing it. You lose it all at the cross.

That fountain open for sin and uncleanness. I lost it on Calvary's hill, says an old chorus. It tumbled and tumbled until it rolled out of sight.

I was happy that night. I lost it on Calvary's hill. That's the new life begun, and the revival has begun to be revived.

But above all, the hope is a person. 2 Timothy 1. 2 Timothy 1. 1 Timothy 1, I'm sorry. 1 Timothy 1. Jesus Christ is our hope.

Oh, hope of every contrite heart. Oh, joy of all men. Yes, they thought there was hope just because it said they put it right.

They needed to, and they did. And by the way, by the way, it took them two months. They said, we can't do it in a day, there are too many of us involved.

Someone said to another, if I had to put everything right that was wrong in my life, it would take me a lifetime in which to do it. And his friend said, you couldn't have a better life work.

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