

A Little Space of Grace

Ezra 9: 3-8

These verses record a wonderful time in the lives of God's people. They had been in Babylonian bondage for seventy years and the Lord had provided for their return to Jerusalem. It was a time of jubilation for the remnant that came out of bondage to once again see the homeland.

Sadly, we find that even though they had returned to Jerusalem in body, their hearts were still far from the Lord. He had been faithful to them during their captivity and yet they were not willing to submit to the will of God. They had been led away to bondage because of their sin and rebellion and even as they are returning to Jerusalem, many of them are still rebellious toward the Lord. Many had not separated themselves from the world and were even intermarrying with those whom God had forbidden, [vv.1-2](#). This is the setting for the text that we have read today.

Isn't it amazing what man will do in the sight of God? We too have been blessed beyond measure. God has been faithful to us in spite of the wickedness and rebellion of our day and yet there are those who refuse to separate themselves from this world. Many refuse to submit their lives to the righteousness of God. We have no problem accepting the blessing of God, but many refuse to acknowledge the responsibilities associated with them.

Ezra, the priest, was burdened for their situation and began to seek the Lord on their behalf. He knew their only hope for restoration was repentance. I rejoice that God is faithful to those who will seek Him with a heart of repentance. I want to look at the [aspects](#) of repentance revealed in this passage and the benefits involved as we consider the words of Ezra: [A Little Space of Grace](#). God offers grace to those who seek Him.

I. The Elements of Repentance [\(3-4\)](#) – Here Ezra reveals the basic elements concerning repentance. We need to develop these in our day.

A. A Brokenness over Sin [\(3\)](#) – Clearly Ezra was troubled over the spiritual condition of the people. He was broken over the sin he saw. His brokenness was displayed before the people as he rent his garments and plucked out his hair before them.

- We desperately need those who are broken over sin in our day. It appears that we have grown accustomed to the lives that people live and we are not troubled by the sin of our day. Many have no problem living as they please, never admitting or dealing with their sin. We will never experience the presence and power of the Lord until we get broken over sin.

- How long has it been since you were broken over sin? Are there things in your life that need to be dealt with? We will never reach a place of true repentance until we get broken over our spiritual condition. What about the needs of others around us? We cannot accept the conditions of our day as just the norm. We need those who will get a burden for the lost and seek God on their behalf. Our churches have grown complacent and apathetic to the needs of our day.

B. An Openness about Sin (4a) – [Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away;](#) As the people saw the brokenness of Ezra, those who feared the Lord met him at the Temple. They realized the urgency of repentance and came to do business with God. They were sensitive to the call of God upon their lives. They would not ignore their need, but desired to deal with their sin openly before the Lord.

- It is difficult in our day to get people to admit their spiritual condition. Folks aren't getting saved because they never see themselves lost. Christians can't enjoy victory in their lives because they refuse to admit their need for repentance. The church has lost its power because of sin. Most never admit there is a need in their lives. They will attend services on a regular basis and never deal with the sin in their lives.
- We need an openness about sin. We must get to the place that we will be honest with the Lord and admit our need before Him. We cannot expect to receive forgiveness and obtain victory if we are determined to keep sin concealed. We must bring them before the Lord and be willing to deal with the sin in our lives. God knows the condition of our hearts and until we get honest and sincere about our need we will never experience His blessing!

C. An Awareness of Sin (4b) – [and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.](#) Twice in these verses we find that Ezra was [astonished](#). That is a word that reveals strong emotion and awareness. It means "*to be appalled, devastated, horrified, and fearful of judgment.*" Ezra realized the holiness of God. He sat for hours silent as he pondered the righteousness of God and the sin of the people. He knew repentance was their only hope.

- You will have to agree that we live in a day that lacks fear of the Lord. Few ever consider the holiness of God or the consequences of their sin. They sin at will and continue on as if nothing happened. I fear that many among the church have grown so cold that they are unaffected by the sin in their lives. Oh that God would bring conviction in our day. We must see ourselves as God sees us. I pray that He will turn the searchlight of heaven upon our hearts and allow us to realize just where we stand. [Heb.10:31 - It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.](#)

II. The Expression of Repentance (5-7) – As Ezra became broken and aware of the sins of the people; he began to seek the Lord in repentance. There are some valuable lessons to be learned regarding expressing our repentance to the Lord. It involves:

A. Our Submission (5) – Ezra was a man who walked with God. He was a servant of the Lord and here we find him on his knees, hands lifted toward heaven in submission to the Lord. Ezra knew if they were to be revived and restored he would have to get in touch with Almighty God. He approached the Lord with reverence and submission. He has not come with a heart of arrogance, but with a heart of brokenness and submission. He has surrendered himself unto the Lord.

- That is where much of our problem lies today. Folks are aware of their need for repentance, but few are willing to submit themselves unto the Lord. If we are to experience a move of God in our day, one that brings revival and restoration, we must submit ourselves to God. We must come before Him in an attitude of worship and recognition of His person. We have no right to demand anything of Him and if we don't come in submission, we need not expect anything from Him. Let us get beyond our self-righteousness and come before God pleading for mercy and forgiveness.

B. Our Humiliation (6a) – *And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God:* Ezra was literally ashamed and embarrassed at the condition of the people. Sin had brought shame unto the household of faith. He couldn't even lift his head toward the Lord because of his shame and disgust over sin.

- There is little humiliation in our day. Few are broken or embarrassed over sin. Things that used to be done in private are now being carried out in public with no shame or remorse. We need a stirring of God in our day to bring holy conviction for sin and recognition of God's holiness. We will never experience revival and restoration as long as God's people tolerate and embrace sin.

C. Our Admission (6b) – *for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.* Notice that Ezra doesn't just point his finger and accuse others. He says *our iniquities and our trespass*. He was the priest and yet he realized that the sins of the people affected the whole nation. The judgment of God would be felt by all. He wasn't being self-righteous but desired God to remove his sin as well. Their iniquities had covered their heads; they were literally consumed and drowning in a sea of sin. Their trespass had reached the heavens and God was well aware of them.

- The same is true in our day. We are drowning in a sea of sin. The wickedness of men abounds on every hand. Every imaginable sin is carried out in the flesh. The Lord sees and knows

where we are. He is aware of the iniquity of our day. It is time for God's people to step up and assume responsibility. We cannot point our fingers and accuse others. It is time for us to admit our sin and deal with it personally!

D. Our Variation (7) – Ezra was aware that this problem had existed for some time. It was because of sin that they had been led into bondage. Israel had a sin problem that plagued their history. I believe Ezra was weary of sin and wanted a change. He was interested in revival and a people who turned from their wickedness and sought the Lord.

- How is it with you? Do you see a need for change? Is there a desire in your heart to forsake sin and move toward the Lord? We can't continue to live as we always have, indulging the flesh, and expect God to move among us. It is time for God's people to separate themselves from the world and make a move toward God. [II Chron.7:14](#).

III. The Expanse of Repentance (8) – In this last verse Ezra was reminded of the goodness of God. The people may have rebelled and sinned against Him, but hope remained. There are promises to those who will repent and seek the Lord. Life doesn't have to continue as it has in the past. Let's look at what the Lord offers those who repent and seek His forgiveness.

A. Grace (8) – [And now for a little space grace hath been shewed form the LORD our God](#). Things were desperate for Judah, and yet there was hope. In the midst of rebellion, God offered grace.

- Isn't the grace of God amazing? The people had done nothing to deserve it and yet He was faithful in grace. We too have been offered a little space of grace. The Lord has been patient in dealing with America. He is pleading with our generation to turn unto Him. I praise Him for the grace that He has bestowed. We have the opportunity to repent and return to Him.

B. Mercy (8) – God had offered grace [to leave us a remnant to escape](#). He is God and He is sovereign. He could've destroyed them all and He would've still been God, but He offered mercy and allowed a remnant to escape. God was merciful to them in captivity and His mercy followed them home.

- Where grace offers what we could never deserve, mercy withholds what we do deserve. We all deserved judgment and condemnation. We all deserved to be cut off because of our iniquities, but God has been merciful unto us. He has spared us from His judgment in our day. We ought to praise Him for His mercy to our generation.

C. Hope (8) – Ezra also proclaimed that God had given them [a nail in His holy place](#). If we could get a hold of this promise we would never be the same. His holy place is the place of His dwelling, the place where His presence is. God had given them a nail in His holy place. That has the idea of “*a place to hang one’s hat; a place to abide and dwell.*” God has promised us a place of rest and hope by Him if we will come unto Him. I don’t know about you, but that is what I desire in this dark day. I want to hang my hat in the Lord’s holy place!

D. Restoration (8) – [That God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage](#). Judah had suffered captivity and yet remained in sin, but there was hope for a little reviving. Ezra knew that God could touch men’s hearts and allow them to see their spiritual condition. There was hope for restoration even in their day.

- We can claim that as well. God would like nothing more than to send a little reviving in our day. He stands waiting for us to return unto Him, having sensed our need of repentance. God wants to restore our fellowship, but we must meet His conditions.

Conclusion: Where do you stand today? We aren’t enjoying the best that God has to offer because we are unwilling to repent. I rejoice for God’s grace and mercy, but I fear that judgment is coming. The only hope for our generation is heart-felt repentance. Has God spoken to you? If so, why not come to Him?