

City of God Part 11 - “**Genuine Repentance**” (7-5-26)

Introduction: Review where we are in the Series so far, then introduce today’s topic.

Today’s Text: Ezra chapter 9

• **Renewal** - 2 week exploration on Brokenness, Repentance, and Reform. **Today:** Personal Brokenness

1) Facing the Facts

Ezra 9:1a-2 (ESV)

[1] After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, “The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations . . . [2] For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands. And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost.”

Note: They arrive and get to work, and find the people have been faithless and compromising. They have not remained set apart to God.

Leviticus 18:24-28 (ESV)

[24] “Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, [25] and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. [26] But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you [27] (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), [28] lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.

Note: They were to be different than the people of the land. Here’s an example of the wickedness . . .

Deuteronomy 12:31 (ESV)

You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.

Note: Now this doesn’t mean there was no place for the foreigner among them. it was mentioned in Leviticus and been practiced properly earlier in Ezra . . .

Ezra 6:21 (ESV)

It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel.

Note: They started out right, but had gotten off track . . .

Ezra 9:14a (ESV)

shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations?

Note: They had compromised and taken on the behaviors of those around them.

Application: Before we can move forward with reforms and renewal, we must start by facing the facts. only then can we find the right posture.

2) Ezra's Posture

Ezra 9:3-4 (ESV)

[3] As soon as I heard this, I tore my garment and my cloak and pulled hair from my head and beard and **sat appalled**. [4] Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I **sat appalled** until the evening sacrifice.

Note: Ezra's posture involved both the inner and outer man - Sat Appalled and Tore His Garment

- **Sat appalled:** 1) Desolated or Destroyed 2) Appalled or Astonished

These two meanings are both used with great frequency. When this verb is used in the second meaning, it often describes a person's reaction on seeing desolation and destruction.

- **Tore my garment . . .**

This occurs throughout the Bible: Devastating news, great loss, national tragedy, also a sign of humility and repentance. This posture is essential. The previous generations had ignored this . . .

Lack of humility and a refusal to listen . . .

Jeremiah 36:1-3 (ESV)

[1] In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: [2] "Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. [3] It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

Jeremiah 36:23-25 (ESV)

[23] As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a knife and throw them into the fire in the fire pot, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the fire pot. [24] Yet neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid, nor did they tear their garments. [25] Even when Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them.

A necessary heart posture . . .

Joel 2:12-13 (ESV)

[12] "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; [13] and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

Application: We prefer to move through this phase quickly, but in reality it is necessary to posture ourselves in heart, mind, and body to reflect on the reality of our brokenness. This should drive us to approach the Lord in true humility . . .

3) Ezra's Prayer

4 key points from Ezra's Prayer . . .

- **Understood their guilt**

Ezra 9:5-6 (ESV)

[5] And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God, [6] saying: "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens.

Note: Acknowledgment of guilt, no blame shifting. Ezra owns his people's sin and condition as his own.

- **Understood their past and present circumstances** (Their ongoing sin, and God's Mercy & Love)

Ezra 9:7-9 (ESV)

[7] From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt. And for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today. [8] But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery. [9] For we are slaves. Yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us protection in Judea and Jerusalem.

Note: Historical Understanding of both their ongoing sin, and the Love and Mercy of God in their current day.

We often try to justify our position, and even be upset with God at our difficulties. Ezra knows they are slaves, and yet views this season as God's mercy upon them!

- **Understood the Law and how they had broken it**

Ezra 9:10-12 (ESV)

[10] "And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, [11] which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land that you are entering, to take possession of it, is a land impure with the impurity of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness. [12] Therefore do not give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.'

Note: This is quoting from Deut 7, and applying it to their own sin now. (we already read Lev. 18, Deut 12)

We need to know and reflect on God's Word and what it may say about our present reality. Not just an emotional vague feeling of guilt. But a right view of ourselves through God's standard of holiness.

- **Understood God's punishment is just, and they deserve worse.**

Ezra 9:13-15 (ESV)

[13] And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and have given us such a remnant as this, [14] shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape? [15] O LORD, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this."

Note: No softening of their sin or their position. In fact, Ezra is in awe that they remain a remnant. What can they say other than humble confession of the reality of their sin and it's consequences.

Romans 3:19-20 (ESV)

[19] Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. [20] For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Conclusion: We cannot and should not by-pass the need for genuine, humble, confession of sin. Any true repentance that follows first has an honest look at our own condition and the heart of God.

A symbol of Hope (God's Representative) . . .

Leviticus 21:10 (ESV)

The priest who is chief among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil is poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not let the hair of his head hang loose nor tear his clothes.

Note: The high priest (which Ezra was not), was not allowed to rend his garment. This was the one who stood before God on our behalf. He is a symbol of Hope in the Mercy of God.

We have a priest, more sufficient than Ezra . . .

Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV)

[14] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Note: The great High Priest, who has been torn so we can be forgiven. Praise God we can come to him boldly in our time of need!