

Opposition to Restoration

This summer we are considering ways that God may want to do a work of restoration in our lives (for some of us it is more of a new thing that we sense God may want to do). As we move towards restoration we need to understand that getting there might not be easy. Through the first three chapters of Ezra God has brought His people back to the land; they have rebuilt the altar and begun offering sacrifices and observing the festivals and they have laid the foundation of the temple. But in chapter four enemies show up. Opposition to restoration comes. In a similar way, we should expect that there may be opposition to what God is doing in our lives as well. Our enemy constantly opposes the work of God in our lives (John 10:10). Hopefully, this study will help us think about the kinds of opposition we may face as well as how we can respond as we journey towards restoration.

Persian Kings

539-530 BC – Cyrus
530-522 BC – Cambyses
522-486 BC – Darius
486-464 BC – Ahasuerus (Xerxes)
464-423 BC – Artaxerxes

Key Dates

538 BC – Return of exiles
537 BC – Rebuilding of Temple begins
520 BC – Temple building resumed
516 BC – Temple completed
458 BC – Ezra goes to Jerusalem

Read Ezra 4:1-5

1. Why might it have been dangerous to have them join in the work of helping to build the temple?
2. How would you describe the opposition expressed in verses 4-5?

Brian said:

Initially the opposition was subtle. But when subtle didn't work, they turned to more aggressive means. . . . And so here's the second principle: **Sometimes we will experience strong opposition** as we pursue restoration in an area of our lives or as we trust God to do a new thing in us. Strong opposition may come in the form of a person who opposes what God is seeking to do in your life. Or it simply may be your tough circumstances or the deep ruts in your life of living independent of God. Or it may be the enemy who comes to you and whispers in your ear that you aren't good enough; that you will fail; that God doesn't care about you.

3. Have you experienced any forms of subtle or strong opposition to what God is seeking to do in your life? If so, explain.

Read Ezra 4:6-24

4. The events recorded here (except v. 24) come from a different period of time. Why do you think the author of Ezra included this here? What point is he seeking to make with this material?

5. Ultimately, what was the effect of the opposition?

Brian said:

Subtle opposition is difficult to discern. Strong opposition can cause discouragement and fear. But sustained opposition can just wear on you and cause you to want to give up. It can be so draining to keep slogging away over long periods of time in the face of it. Some of you as you think about restoration and the thing that you believe that God really wants to do in your life are tempted to give up hope that it will ever come to fruition because of the sustained opposition that you have faced. In your mind you believe God wants to do this thing because it is clearly biblical. But in your heart as you've continued to face opposition, you are losing hope.

6. In what ways have you experienced sustained opposition against the things that you believe God wants to do in you? How has this challenged you?

7. Do you sense that what you need most in your struggle with opposition is wisdom, strength/courage, endurance or something else? Explain.