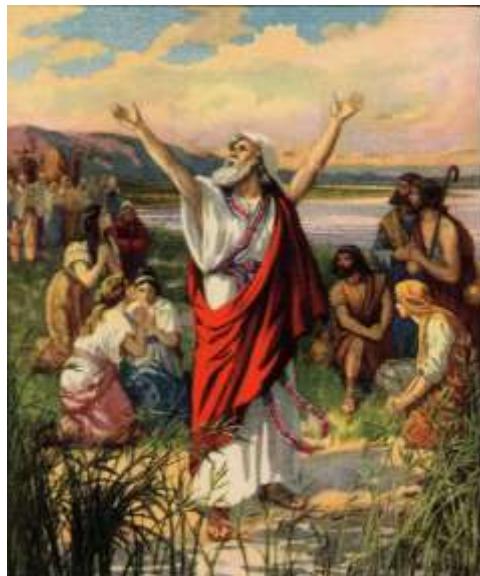


Meditation on Ezra 8-10

By Chantel Bink

When I read Ezra chapters eight through ten my human, fleshly brain took over. The Israelites were returning to Jerusalem after their exile and many of the men, including the Levites, had intermarried with foreign women during that time. My first thought upon reading this was "Well, of course they did! What did Ezra expect?". My next thought was "What the heck am I thinking? He expected them to follow God's law, to be faithful no matter where they were sent!" Oh my human mind. There was probably a shortage of Jewish women in exile, but that did not change the rules. Is it okay worship cobras because I go to India? Umm...no.

Ezra had been too ashamed to ask for human protection on their way back to Jerusalem because he was afraid it would make it seem that he had too little faith in the protection of his awesome God. Imagine then how ashamed he must have been for the remnant he was leading to have strayed so far from God's direct word. No wonder he tore his clothes and just sat "appalled" all day. My human brain though, went straight to where their brains had gone. My worldly thoughts also went to another wrong way of thinking in chapter 10 after reading that Ezra had told the Israelites to separate themselves from their foreign wives and children. How could these people be asked to give up their loved ones, to send them away? Their wives? Their CHILDREN? Well, I was appalled with myself; I should have torn my clothes and pulled out my hair.



God was asking his people to repent. They were not being told to say sorry and keep on doing the wrong thing. Giving up a sin means turning away from it...and not going back. Those sacrifices meant nothing if they hadn't repented.

After my worldly thoughts about Ezra's situation and my sympathy with Israel, I got to thinking: Would I struggle with my faith if asked to give up something that has my heart? Would I willingly give up that person or thing like so many of the Israelites did? It showed me something I need to pray about and have God bring me toward. There are so many things I would struggle to give up: my family, of course, my health, my job, my work with the church, my home...just to name a few. These may not go against a direct order from God, but what if I was asked to give one of them up or what if he took one of those blessings from me?

My respect for Ezra also grew. He was ashamed for the Israelites, not sympathetic like I was. He recognized the problem and let them figure out for themselves how to fix it. I'm not talking about empathy; I know I would be empathetic. It is important to recognize the reason behind sin and understand why it happened. It is not okay to justify it and accept it no matter what the reasons.

If a loved one struggled through loneliness, divorce, and a loss of a child you may understand why they turn to drugs and alcohol, but that still wouldn't make it okay. It would just help up to understand the reason behind it so that you can help them get the assistance they need.

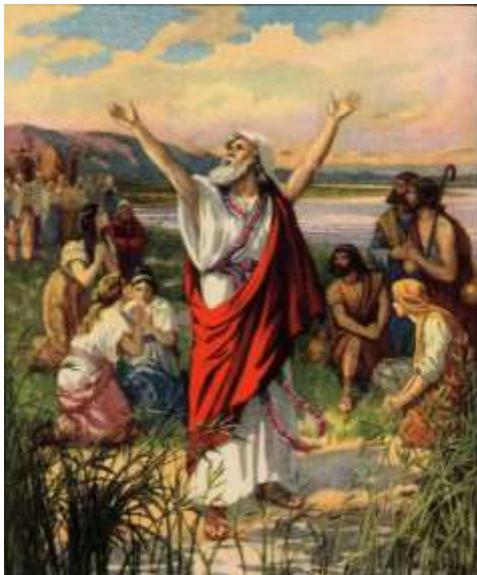
Ahh, what a busy morning with many good lessons to think about. Obey not conform. Repent not justify. Empathy not sympathy. Lots to pray about, thanks Ezra!

Meditation on Ezra 8-10

By Chantel Bink

When I read Ezra chapters eight through ten my human, fleshly brain took over. The Israelites were returning to Jerusalem after their exile and many of the men, including the Levites, had intermarried with foreign women during that time. My first thought upon reading this was "Well, of course they did! What did Ezra expect?". My next thought was "What the heck am I thinking? He expected them to follow God's law, to be faithful no matter where they were sent!" Oh my human mind. There was probably a shortage of Jewish women in exile, but that did not change the rules. Is it okay worship cobras because I go to India? Umm...no.

Ezra had been too ashamed to ask for human protection on their way back to Jerusalem because he was afraid it would make it seem that he had too little faith in the protection of his awesome God. Imagine then how ashamed he must have been for the remnant he was leading to have strayed so far from God's direct word. No wonder he tore his clothes and just sat "appalled" all day. My human brain though, went straight to where their brains had gone. My worldly thoughts also went to another wrong way of thinking in chapter 10 after reading that Ezra had told the Israelites to separate themselves from their foreign wives and children. How could these people be asked to give up their loved ones, to send them away? Their wives? Their CHILDREN? Well, I was appalled with myself; I should have torn my clothes and pulled out my hair.



God was asking his people to repent. They were not being told to say sorry and keep on doing the wrong thing. Giving up a sin means turning away from it...and not going back. Those sacrifices meant nothing if they hadn't repented.

After my worldly thoughts about Ezra's situation and my sympathy with Israel, I got to thinking: Would I struggle with my faith if asked to give up something that has my heart? Would I willingly give up that person or thing like so many of the Israelites did? It showed me something I need to pray about and have God bring me toward. There are so many things I would struggle to give up: my family, of course, my health, my job, my work with the church, my home...just to name a few. These may not go against a direct order from God, but what if I was asked to give one of them up or what if he took one of those blessings from me?

My respect for Ezra also grew. He was ashamed for the Israelites, not sympathetic like I was. He recognized the problem and let them figure out for themselves how to fix it. I'm not talking about empathy; I know I would be empathetic. It is important to recognize the reason behind sin and understand why it happened. It is not okay to justify it and accept it no matter what the reasons.

If a loved one struggled through loneliness, divorce, and a loss of a child you may understand why they turn to drugs and alcohol, but that still wouldn't make it okay. It would just help up to understand the reason behind it so that you can help them get the assistance they need.

Ahh, what a busy morning with many good lessons to think about. Obey not conform. Repent not justify. Empathy not sympathy. Lots to pray about, thanks Ezra!