

# The Book of Ezra

## Part 3

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| Speaker        | Allan Retallick   |
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*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:01] Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra, the son of Seraia, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, the son of Shanum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahithob, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meirathoth, the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Buki, the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the chief priest, this Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was already a scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given. And the king granted him all his requests, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethanim, unto Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the [00:01:04] first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. Then we have the letter that the king wrote, in verse 21. We read, And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, is to be done speedily, and to a hundred talents of silver, and to a hundred measures of wheat, and to a hundred baths of wine, and to a hundred baths of oil, and salt, without prescribing how much. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we certify you, that touching any of the [00:02:02] priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethanim, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God, and teach ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment. Then we have the message of Ezra himself, 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 all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me. [00:03:05] And just in the next chapter, verse 15, chapter 8, verse 15, And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahavah, and there abode we in tents three days. And I viewed the people and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. And sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Michelam, chief men, also for Joirib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding. And I sent them with commandment unto Ido the

chief at the place Cassiphia. And I told them what they should say unto Ido, and to his brethren that live in him, at the place Cassiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God. And by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mali, the son of Levi, the son of Israel, and Sheribiah, with his son and his brethren, eighteen, and Hashabiah, and with him, Jeshiah, and the sons of Merari, his brethren, [00:04:06] and their sons, twenty. Also of the Nethanim whom David and the princesses appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethanim, all of them were expressed by name. Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahavah, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him, but his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted, and besought our God for this, and he was entreated of us. Shall we sing another hymn, 115? [00:05:02] 115, Head of the church, thy body, O Christ, the great salvation, sweet to the saints it is to think of all thine exaltation. All power is to thee committed, all power on earth, in heaven, to thee a name of whitest fame above all glory is given. 115. All power is to thee committed, all power on earth, in heaven, to thee a name of whitest fame [00:06:03] above all glory is given.

All power is to thee committed, all power on earth, in heaven, to thee a name of whitest fame above all glory is given. [00:07:04] A day of final freedom, no round or end possessing, when heaven and earth, God all in all, shall live with our yet blessing.

O rules of evil banished, no breath of sin to rid us, of love, of heart, of death, but joy and bliss for each forever.

If you have dates in your Bible, you'll probably notice that between chapters 6 and 7, there's a period of about 56 years.

[00:08:21] It's quite a long time. Two generations have passed since the building of the temple in Jerusalem, since those went up with Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, and set up the foundations, and finally we noticed when the work had ceased with the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, the work was completed. They were obedient to these prophets and the temple was rebuilt. The offerings were recommenced and the people were keeping the feasts of the Lord [00:09:04] according to the words of the law of Moses, which God had entrusted to him. They were carrying on. They've been carrying on now for two generations.

Now a third generation comes up and we begin to wonder.

We just think of many meetings we've been talking today about some of us oldens, remember things that happened years ago. It was much better years ago. Things were always much more beautiful and perfect 50 years ago and we like to dwell on those things. But two more generations have come since then and we may sometimes compare, as the preacher does, the things of now with the things of then and begin to say, well, things are not what they used to be. Yet there's no reason why things should be different. The world, it's true, round about us, [00:10:06] is getting darker than ever and things are getting worse and worse.

We must expect that because it's given us in the scripture as a sign of the last days. But yet it's very precious to come into a meeting and see a third generation of believers still faithful to the Lord, still

seeking to be obedient to the principles of New Testament doctrine. It's good to see that, that after so many years of gathering together, and this hall is one of those that's seen some generations pass, it's good to see that there are those that seek the mind of the Lord, that seek to be obedient to that mind of the Lord. That's why we're introduced here to the pedigree. That's why I read all those early verses with some difficulty, with strange names. [00:11:01] The pedigree of Ezra the priest. He was of the sons of the priest. He could trace his genealogy right back to Aaron.

And it tells us here, this Ezra went up from Babylon and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given. He was a ready scribe. He took the trouble to copy out the scriptures and I'm sure he did this very conscientiously. It's a wonderful thing that the scriptures have been preserved in a remarkable way through the centuries. Not only by the printed word, but before there was any printing, these were carefully copied and copied and checked and copied again and checked again. It's remarkable. It's one of the miracles that God has preserved the scriptures intact. And here this priest of the tribe of Levi, but also of the house of Aaron, he could trace his genealogy right back [00:12:05] to those well-known priests of old time, was a ready scribe in the law of God. It means to say he was one that probably copied out himself as a young man, copied out this scripture, but he took it to heart. He was obedient to what he read there. And so, although he was in Babylon, a strange country, he didn't forsake the law of God.

It tells us here that he went up from Babylon and he decided to go up there. He asked for the king to be able to leave that place in Babylon, as Nehemiah later did, to go up, and it says here, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. It's an expression that comes on many times in this book, and I'd like to trace it through the hand of God. The hand of the Lord his God was with him. And we know that the hand of the Lord will be with those that seek to do his will. [00:13:03] And he wants to get to this place because, although there had been a start made, many of the vessels were still left in Babylon.

Many of these precious things had been collected together, been made specially in the time of Solomon and later kings, when there was restitution of the worship of God, these were still back in Babylon. And so he determined to go up to Jerusalem and take these precious things with him. And that's what it says here, it's very important, to do this, he had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel, statutes and judgments.

Very good example, isn't it? A young man, I take it he was still young here, he prepared his heart, first to seek the law of God, the law of the Lord, then to do it, and then to teach others the way. That's the right order of things.

[00:14:02] Not only to read and to teach, as is often said about universities, universities that the subject comes from the notebook of the professor to the notebook of the students, without touching the minds of either. It shouldn't be so, certainly with spiritual things. It says here, he sought the law of the Lord and he did it.

He carried out what he read in the law of God, and then he was able to teach others. Think of the apostle Paul, he said, what you've seen in me and heard from me, do. What you've seen as well, not just what you've heard, but what you've seen in me and heard, do. I'm afraid not many of us would dare use those words to others, but it's important, even when we're young, to seek the law of God and to do it, and then as we get older we can teach others the way that we ourselves have trodden. [00:15:02] That's what he did, he prepared his heart. He prepared his heart.

It's good to have a prepared heart, isn't it? We know that out of the heart come the issues of life. We love with all our heart, do we?

I hope we do love the law of God, the 119th Psalm is full of that. The psalmist can't talk enough about the word of God and the words of God, the commandments and the precepts and the statutes of God. They were his delight. He loved that word. Oh, how love I thy law.

It is my meditation day and night.

And then he goes on to say that he knew more than his teachers. And then he goes on to teach others. He may teach sinners thy ways.

And it's good to be able to do that, isn't it? This man could because he had done it. He'd carried it out and he was able to teach. And then we find this letter that the king gave him instructing him and preparing him for this long journey he had to make. [00:16:02] It took him a long time. He'd been on the first day of the first month and he got there on the first day of the fifth month, four months on the way through difficult, dangerous country, through enemy country.

And we read there that he didn't presume to ask God to go with him because he told the king that God would protect him. There's faith for you.

We often pray to God to protect us, but we still think we ought to take all protection and all precautions and ensure ourselves against disaster.

Well, that's good. We ought not to be slovenly about our businesses or our homes or anything else. But he was a man who trusted God to such an extent that he was going to gather together all these things, a list of all that he took with him. He saw the things he was going to take with him.

And anybody could have fallen upon this little company of people [00:17:01] and taken away these precious things on the way. But he trusted in the Lord, his God. He said to the king, I don't need soldiers to guard me. I'm trusting in the Lord. That's faith, isn't it?

Real faith.

It's good to see examples of real faith in exercise of this man.

He said he would go up of his own free will.

Those, again, of their own free will would go with him. He should go up to Jerusalem. It took them four months to get there. And so they came up there.

And we find this interesting piece.

That's why I read it as part of the letter. It says here, I out-exercise the king to make a decree to all the treasures which are beyond the river that whatever he requires, it be done speedily.

And then he gives an account. And then he says, in verse 23, Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven. For why should there be wrath

against the realm of the king and his sons? [00:18:01] It's interesting, isn't it? The earlier king had said he was depending on prayers for himself and his sons. And this king out-exercises one or two kings later on. He again recognizes if there are people in Jerusalem praying to the God of heaven, they'll pray too for him and his sons. And so, far from his kingdom being damaged by taking away all these precious things, he finds he's advantaged. And he says, you do it by all means. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king? He recognizes, he's a heathen king that recognizes the power of the God of heaven.

This title we notice comes in very often here, the God of heaven.

And that was the title he used here. And we recognize that this, he said, Ezra the priest, he calls him again, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven. A scribe of the law of the God of heaven. [00:19:01] And so he could recognize these people in Jerusalem were going to pray for him. So gladly, he let these people go.

And then we notice how he came to Jerusalem safely.

And at the end of that chapter we saw there how he was able to give thanks. It's very good to see in the following book, in Nehemiah, I think there are 13 times we read of prayers of Nehemiah. Some very short prayers, just remember me, oh God, just like that. Very short prayers. Others, as in chapter 9, very long prayer.

But it's good to see that Ezra too was a man of prayer. And here we find his giving of thanks. So often our prayers are give, give, give, aren't they? Somebody says shopping lists. And yes, we have many petitions to offer.

But here, it's all thanksgiving.

Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, [00:20:02] 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 all the king's mighty princes. And so he says, I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me. And I gather together these people. With thankful prayer, he can begin his journey. It's good, isn't it, every time we make a journey, we all do this, we commit the journey to the Lord.

It's very important, isn't it? Do we give thanks at the end? Sometimes we forget, don't we? We ask him to keep us safe, but here he says, oh, I'm grateful. Grateful for this hand of the God of heaven upon me.

This hand of God is upon me.

And then in the next chapter we find a whole list again of names. Did you notice we read those names there, how several names are repeated? El Nathan, for example there, El Nathan comes in three times. [00:21:01] But it's not the same El Nathan. It's three men with the same name. But it's interesting to see that this is recorded here. We are used to having surnames. They didn't always have surnames in that time. And so it's just El Nathan. And the other one is El Nathan.

I mentioned the other day when Eric was going through the chronicles, he said, oh, I can't make head

or tail of all these lists of names. I said, yes, they are just lists of names to us, but to God they were real people. He knew them all. He knew which El Nathan was there and which El Nathan was there. And the other El Nathan was around the corner. El Nathan, El Nathan, El Nathan. And when I pray for Mr. Smith or Mrs. Smith, God knows which Mrs. Smith or Mr. Smith I'm praying for. He knows whom we mean because they're all known to God. It's like the list at the end of Paul's epistles.

Interesting to see all these names there, but he knew them.

[00:22:01] And he could give greetings according to their particular needs. And he would remind them of things that only he would know because he knew them personally. They were real people.

Not just names, they were real people. And to God as well, they were real people there that came together. And we have a whole list here of all these people that went up with him.

They went of their free will. They weren't forced to go up to Jerusalem, but they went of their free will. They wanted to go up.

It's like in the first book of Chronicles, the end of that lovely last chapter, when David, he prepared everything for the temple, but he wasn't allowed to build it. But he got everything ready. Then that wonderful prayer of thanksgiving to God there, and he rejoiced that the people had brought so willingly of their substance.

They brought willingly of their substance. It's wonderful to see willingness, isn't it? [00:23:01] Willing hearts.

Not a drudgery of, I've got to go to the meeting again. Oh dear, I went last week. Is it like that? I hope not. It doesn't look like it this evening. It looks nice to see so many willingly come out another evening in the week. And it's very nice to see sometimes in a very small meeting two or three nights after each other, and they were willing to come.

Willing to come under the sound of the word of God. It's good, isn't it, to be willing. These people are willing, their own free will. They went up to the place where prayer was wont to be made, the temple of the God of heaven. But in chapter 8, verse 15, he gathered them together and he found there was something missing. Yes, there were priests there. It mentions the priests there, but no Levites. No one to do the work of the Lord in the sanctuary. That was a very sad thing, wasn't it? [00:24:01] No Levites.

Where were the Levites then? Weren't they willing to come up? Well, he had to send for them. He sent for all these people, the Levites. And I sent them with commandment, in verse 17, and I told them what they should say unto Ido, and to his brethren, and Nephilim, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God. And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding of the sons of Mali. He could trace his pedigree too, back to Levi. He was one of those that could trace his pedigree back to Levi. And he was a man of understanding. That's what we want, isn't it? Men of understanding.

It's good to have people that understand. It's nice to be understood. Some people misunderstand us. So many people fail to grasp what we say.

It's good to find a man of understanding. Here's someone that can be trusted. He's a man of understanding. He's well-hearted, but he's also a man of understanding.

[00:25:01] So he brings him along, and he says here, he's the one that was able to instruct there, instruct the others, and to help them. And they had appointed these Levites to help the Nethenim. The Nethenim were the people that, you remember the Gibeonites who had come in by trickery.

I take it that's the same people. They were hewers of wood and thawers of water.

They were content to do just that. Just the menial jobs.

Just the ordinary work.

But the Levites had a special task. Their task was in the sanctuary of God. In the courts of the temple and in the sanctuary where the priests were ready, there were Levites that had to attend to all the supplies and to preparing the sacrifices. These were very necessary people. We need Levites, don't we?

We need those that attend to the Lord's business. Oh, we have them. We're grateful [00:26:01] for them. It's good to have those of understanding that know what they're doing. I remember a brother who was along with the Lord. He said on the mission field there's a great deal of faith but sometimes a great deal of folly. Perhaps it's not only on the mission field. Sometimes I'm afraid it happens on the home front that we don't always work in a way of understanding.

There's not always a wisdom in the way we work. We need to be obedient to the word of God but also in wisdom.

We find, don't we, some people that are extremely zealous protect this. We find people that are very well instructed in the scriptures but it's never occurred to them that they have to speak in a way that people can understand. And I know several people that have wonderful knowledge of the scriptures but they can keep it to themselves. [00:27:01] They can't tell anybody else about it. But here's a man of understanding who could give the Nethynms their tasks and he knew what each man could do. He understood that that man was an expert at cleaning windows.

That man was an expert at sweeping the floor. And that was a strong man that could bring the coal in. I know it wasn't in the temple but the sort of jobs that have to be done today is need someone that can understand what his own task is but also to set other people to work. I'm speaking from experience because our own son, our oldest son is a marvel at that way. Every time there was some particular campaign or what it was, you never saw him doing anything but he could always set everybody else to work. It is quite a gift I know to do that.

What are you doing, Hans? Well, I'm telling them what to do. And he could, he could get them going and he sort of has a [00:28:01] wonderful way of convincing people it's their idea that they took up that job. And it's very nice to have people like that but again this is a man who is of the sons of Levi. This is a man who can trace his pedigree right back to the beginning. And I'm afraid sometimes a brother has a position of trust just because he has a big business. Or just because he has a good head for figures. That isn't the most important thing. It is important. It's important that we don't waste those money. It's important that we don't waste the brethren's time. But on the other hand it isn't everything

that a man is good at his own business or has a good head for figures. It's also very important that those in the service of God should know they're in the place where God wants them to be. And that means that they should be spiritual people.

You've sometimes seen [00:29:01] that people have positions of trust in the Church of God who run their businesses, it's true, in a wonderful way but they're not spiritually minded. And consequently they want to run the Church of God as a business project. It isn't the way of the Lord.

And so we need clear minds and it's good that God gives to those that are in positions of trust, a sound mind, but also we need spiritual leaders, spiritual workers too.

And this man here was one who was a man of understanding who was able to see that every man had the right task. On the mission field you know there are many people Elsie Cole said once to us, on the mission field we're all cranks otherwise we shouldn't be on the mission field. What she means is that everyone is quite sure that he or she is there [00:30:01] to do a particular job.

But because they're all so convinced that they're in the right place, you get clashes on the mission field even more than at home. At home there are so many ordinary sober people to keep the balance but on the mission field we're all equally sure that we're in the place the Lord wants us to be.

So sure that we sometimes turn on each other's toes and cause trouble.

It's a prayer that we need to pray constantly for our brethren and sisters on the mission field they may be kept in happy fellowship with each other and with the people whom they serve.

We know many of the things have been happening recently but it struck me here as we read this that we find people of spiritual understanding that are able to keep the peace between people that are all convinced that they're going the right way. It's a gift from God to have this understanding.

Then what did he do? Well he proclaimed a fast there at this very place. Very place.

[00:31:01] They got to the river now. They're on their way to serve God. Verse 21 I proclaimed a fast there at the river that we might afflict ourselves before our God to seek of him a right way for us and for our little ones and for all our substance. Oh wonderful prayer meeting. They fasted and they besought God for the right way. Not only for themselves but for their little ones and for their substance.

Very important isn't it? That we seek the right way for ourselves. It's very important for young people as well as older ones to be sure that if we change our employment we're changing that in the will of the Lord. Very important. But not only ourselves but our little ones as well. They besought the Lord for their little ones.

And it's wonderful. We were talking [00:32:01] about it the other day and had our children and grandchildren with us. What a privilege it is to be entrusted with these little ones. What a privilege. What a responsibility too. To seek the right way for them.

To besought the right way for ourselves but also for our little ones. And even a right way for our substance. Now we are much better off than most people in this world but how difficult it is



sometimes to know how to have a right way for our substance. To use the things that God has given us. The things, the money, the time, the talents, whatever it may be that God has entrusted to us. Let us beseech the Lord that we may have the right way for our substance as well. And that's why he tells us we fasted and besought our God for this. And he was entreated of us. God heard their prayer and he gave them the wisdom they needed to tread the right way.

And then we find how he separated [00:33:01] these people.

Twelve of the chief of the priests and he gives their names as well. In verse 25, we didn't read that just now but I'd like to refer to it. We weighed unto them the silver and the gold and the vessels even the offering of the house of our God which the king and his counselors and his lords and all Israel their present had offered. I weighed them unto their hand. And then he gives a list of what it all was. It's very wonderful that what they took out of Babylon was brought in to the temple.

They hadn't lost anything on the way. They weighed it when they came out of Babylon. They weighed it again when they came in. And they could write it all up and say we've got the lot. We've got it all.

Nothing is missing.

That's faithfulness.

It reminds me too of the faithfulness of our God. Isn't it wonderful to think all the souls that have been [00:34:01] saved, all the people that have come to know the Lord since the day of Antichrist. And not one will be missing on that day of glory we were singing about just now. The day of glory when all the redeemed will be there. Not one vessel missing. It's as though we're weighed out of this world. Weighed into the glory.

Not one missing. There's a wonderful picture here I believe of that.

They brought into Jerusalem the whole lot. All that came out of captivity. Babylon speaks of the captivity.

Everything came into Jerusalem. It was all there. Nothing was missing.

The faithfulness. He speaks of the faithfulness of God.

God was faithful to them. And so he brings the whole lot in there with the good hand of our God upon us. Can't we say that too?

The faithful God has preserved us hitherto. This faithful God will bring us in. He'll bring us into the land. He'll bring us into the glory. Not one will be missing.

[00:35:01] And we see of the faithfulness of Ezra, the picture of the faithfulness of our blessed Lord.

And then we find here how he said to these priests and Levites who were entrusted with it.

In verse 28.

I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord. The vessels are holy also.

And the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers. Watch ye and keep them until ye weigh them in the chambers of the house of the Lord. This little interval of receiving the goods and putting them into the house of the Lord. He reminds these people they're holy. They're holy.

And the vessels are holy. They've been brought as a freewill offering to God. He said I want you now to take this trust and make sure that it gets now into the temple. I've brought it all this way. I've brought it through all these countries on the way to Jerusalem.

[00:36:01] God's preserved us.

Now you are holy.

You have a holy task. A sacred task. To see that all these are used for the service of God.

And here again is a lesson for us. We are holy. A holy people. A holy nation.

Those that love the Lord Jesus are holy people.

And God's entrusted various things to us. He's entrusted a precious word to us.

We need to preserve that word intact.

He's entrusted various gifts to his church and there again in holiness and obedience those gifts must be used in his service. And then again he speaks here of the gifts the freewill offerings that were brought to the Lord God. One of the most difficult things is how to use our money for the Lord.

And it's something that should exercise us constantly because there are various demands upon our purses to know that these [00:37:01] things are holy too.

People speak of dirty money and so on but money that comes into the Lord's service, we need to pray for our brethren that are seeking to administer the funds that come in.

It needs great wisdom.

They come together from time to time to present these gifts to the various mission stations or works of the Lord. Do we pray that they may have wisdom? It's important, isn't it, that they have wisdom. They're holy. And these gifts are freewill offerings unto the Lord.

How important to see they're used for the Lord's service, not for the service of men.

Watch and keep them and weigh them before the chief of the priests and Levites. And then they were to bring them into the chambers of the house of our God.

The house of our God. Not just the house of the hand, the house of the God of heaven, but the house of our [00:38:01] God. There's a personal interest there. The house of our God.

And then it says we departed from the river of on the twelfth day of the first month. It came on the first day, it's taken eleven more days to go into Jerusalem.

In verse thirty-one, the hand of our God was upon us. And he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem and abode there three days. So they could give thanks at the end of this journey that the hand of the God of Israel was upon them. They could say the hand of our God was upon us. And then they could bring this into the house of God. And then it says they delivered, in the last verse of the chapter, they delivered the king's commission unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side of the river. And they furthered the people in the house of God.

They encouraged them.

[00:39:03] They were the people of God. They were God's own people who'd come back, remnant it's true. We see how few they were really compared with the large number that went away. But here they are, the people of God. And these people of God, it says here, were furthered.

They didn't stand still.

They furthered the people. And they furthered the house of God.

They went on with the work that had been begun. There again we find ourselves in a place of a sacred trust. 150 years ago there were very faithful men of God who gave up good positions, many of them, lucrative positions, positions of responsibility, and sometimes the places where they were highly respected, came together in all simplicity, together in the name of the Lord Jesus. [00:40:01] It cost a great deal for many of them. Their children have entrusted the truth to their generations, and we've received these things. And here again there's a responsibility, isn't there, here to further, to further the people. Not to stand still. It's so easy to rest on our oars and say, well, we're there now. We're not there. Remember an old brother with the Lord some years, but in a conference we had in Brussels, in Belgium, and he said, I used to see those brothers on the first row there, their black suits, I hope they've got there. Now I'm sitting myself on the front row. Oh, haven't started yet.

He realized, although he was getting on for 80, he had hardly started. He said, we haven't got there yet. We haven't got there yet. That's why we need to be on our guard. The enemy wants to [00:41:01] rob us. We read of those who were ready to lie in wait on the way.

The enemy is lying in wait at all times to rob us of our heritage, to make us slack in holding fast to the things that have been entrusted to us. The Apostles Doctrine, read of the early church, they continued steadfastly in the Apostles Doctrine. And fellowship.

Again, very important, isn't it? They continued in fellowship. These people were furthered. There was a fellowship there. The people were furthered in the house of God.

They continued in breaking of bread and in prayers.

And so I think here again we find a little picture of what had been entrusted to them is a picture of what has been entrusted to us, the faithful charge.

We are holy people.

We are people who have been set aside for the service of God.

[00:42:01] He has given us wonderful privileges. The truth that has been entrusted to us is precious.

We need to learn from Ezra himself, not only to hear it but to do it and teach others also.

Remember Timothy?

He was told to learn these things and then he had to train others that were apt to teach. It goes on, generation after generation. He would teach others that they could teach.

And thank God for those young people that are still going on, being furthered.

God wants us to go further. There's no standing still. We either go forward or go backward. So may we take this to heart indeed and I'd love to look at the next chapter but perhaps the Lord may give us the opportunity next week to look at the final chapters of this book where we see how they [00:43:01] were there in the place and how they behaved in the house of God.

But here again we need to take it to heart and think again of what Paul wrote to Timothy and may us know how to behave in the church of the living God, pillar and ground of the truth, the house of God. We need to know how to behave ourselves there. And it's important to go further.

Go on, go on with the Lord. Go on with the truth, holding fast, not denying his word or his name.