

The Book of Ezra

Part 4

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[00:00:01] We've come now to the last two chapters of Ezra, so I'd like to read from Ezra chapter 9 in verse 1.

Ezra chapter 9 verse 1, Now when these things were done, the princes came to me saying, The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands. [00:01:01] Yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down and astoned. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that were being carried away. And I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. And at the evening sacrifice I rose up from my heaviness, and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God, I am ashamed and blushed to lift up my face to Thee, my God.

For our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens.

Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day. And for our iniquities have we, our kings and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day.

[00:02:10] And now, for a little space, grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we were bondmen, yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken thy commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land unto which ye go to possess it is an unclean land, with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. [00:03:02] Now,

therefore, give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever, that ye may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it for inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us through our evil deeds, and through our great trespass, seeing that thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this, shall we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? Where is not thou angry with us, till thou hast consumed us, that there should be no remnant, nor escaping? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous, for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day. Behold, we are before thee in our trespasses, for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children, for the people wept very sore. [00:04:11] And Jeconiah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and taken strange wives of the people of the land. Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God, to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my Lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the law. Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee. We also will be with thee. Be of good courage, and do it. Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel to swear that they should do according to this word. And they swore.

As we read the rest presently, shall we sing another hymn? Ninety-four. Ninety-four. A pilgrim through this lonely world, the blessed Saviour passed. A mourner through his life was he, the dying Lamb at last. Ninety-four.

[00:05:27] A pilgrim through this lonely world, the blessed Saviour passed. A mourner through his life was he, the dying Lamb at last.

The tender heart which hath borne him, for all his life of years, he hath not, hath no resting place, save only in the grave.

[00:06:10] Such was the Lord, and shall be his, the cross with all his foes, O Lord, the faithless, feeble world, that we did draw it home.

No place in all its boundless love, like it only doth give, we of good rest restore, for come, to yon celestial hill.

[00:07:05] There's no love with him who dies, to be a part of us, we return with our soul and head, his spirit dwell above.

We notice at the end of chapter eight that they furthered the people and the house of God.

Very good note to end up with, wasn't it? They furthered the people and the house of God.

[00:08:04] But now we find in chapter nine, that when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of thence.

Have not separated themselves. Some people blame us, because we are separate.

They say, you separate yourselves. We don't. God has separated those that are his from the world.

On the very first page of the Bible, we find that there was darkness. God said, let there be light. And God made a distinction between the light and the darkness. The darkness he called night, the light he called day.

When in Egypt, the people of Israel were under bondage to Pharaoh, God said, I have made a difference between my people and thy people.

[00:09:06] God had made the difference. God distinguished this in a very special way, by redeeming them from the power of Egypt, as we know, under the shelter of the blood of the Lamb, and they were to keep the Passover feast ever after, to remind them that they were a separated people. Separated from Egypt. Separated too, from the people of the land to which God was going to bring them.

We had here a whole list of the peoples of the land, there a whole list, and we find that these people were one and all idolaters.

They had different gods, but all these gods were false gods. All these gods were gods of wood and stone and the sun and the moon and the stars.

Nature gods, fertility gods, abominations, God says a whole lot, abominations. They were no gods at all.

[00:10:08] They were worshipping creatures instead of the true God, the Creator. And so God said, you are not to mingle with them.

And in Deuteronomy especially we find Moses warning the people, when they came into the land, they were not to give their sons to the daughters of that land, nor to give their daughters to the sons of the people there. There was not to be intermarriage. They were not to ask even how these people worshipped their gods. Not even to ask questions about their worship. He said, the less you know about that the better, because you are the people of the Lord your God. How much more today, for those who are purchased with the precious blood of Christ, the truth of Passover land, how important it is for us to be separate.

We are separate from the world that crucified our Lord. We have been singing about it, haven't we, what the world did to our blessed Lord. [00:11:05] He was a stranger here. He went about doing good, but they didn't appreciate that. They cast him out and crucified him.

If we are faithful, we too shall be cast out. And we wonder sometimes why we are allowed so much freedom in these wonderfully privileged countries in which we live, in Western Europe especially, we wonder why we are allowed to carry on.

And perhaps one of the reasons may be that we can hardly be seen to be different from the people around about us. But God has distinguished his people. They are purchased people. Whether it were the Canaanites, or the Hittites, or the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, or the Amorites, all those nations, God had said, you are not to look at their idols, you are to destroy them.

Destroy the people and their idols. Get rid of the whole lot. [00:12:06] And now they have come back to the land, they have come back to Jerusalem. God has been kind to them and freed them from the bondage of Babylon.

And what do we find? Corruption here. Corruption. They have corrupted themselves. They have gone after the gods of the people around about.

So the first thing I gave a heading for this chapter 9 is the conviction. Conviction on the part of these people.

They had to be convicted of the wrong position in which they were found.

Many of the priests and the princes were chief in this trespass.

Those that should have been an example to the people were the worst culprits. It often has been so in the history of Israel that the kings gave a very poor example and the people followed them. [00:13:01] When there was a good king on the throne, they didn't all follow the good example. It's much easier to follow a bad example than a good one. And here we find that the priests and the princes, the rulers, have been the chief in this trespass. Even the priests and the Levites. It says here, they mingled themselves. They married wives. They had children that couldn't even speak. We find in Nehemiah they couldn't even speak the language in which God's law was read to them. It's terrible, isn't it? They couldn't even listen to the reading of God's word because they had a mixed language, partly Hebrew and partly of the countries from which these wives, these strange wives came.

So it was a very solemn thing. They had to be convicted of their evil.

Conviction is one thing, but we find here that they had to confess what they'd done.

Confession is the next step. We may be convicted that the thing is wrong, but we have to confess it, don't we? [00:14:05] That's what they're doing here. And this man was so full of the sense, what was due to God.

We read that he was a ready scribe in the law of his God. His God. And we read in verse 3, When I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down and stoned it. Here was a man who was concerned about God's honor.

He was concerned about what had happened to the people who were dishonoring the God of his fathers and their fathers. Are we concerned about these things? The other day we were looking at the ninth of Ezekiel where the judgment was set out over Jerusalem again.

The remnant was there, and the man with the inkhorn was told to see if there was anyone that was concerned, one that sighed or grieved.

[00:15:10] What was happening? The abominations going after these very gods. If you look at the eighth chapter of Ezekiel, you'll find these very gods of these nations mentioned. It's not a pretty subject to look into, but they're mentioned there as a warning. And it shows us plainly that all these people that should have been leaders, even at that time, had turned away. And later, as they go back again, we find the same picture.

The priests and the Levites, those that were separated for the service of God, they too have sunk so low.

They married heathen wives and had children that didn't even know the words of the Lord.

They couldn't listen to the reading of the law. How solemn, isn't it? How solemn when we think of the application to ourselves. [00:16:04] How easy it is to compromise, being not unequally yoked with unbelievers. Plain enough, isn't it? Unequally yoked. Whether it is in marriage, whether it is in business, whether it is in friendships, we have to be so careful, don't we?

Can we indulge in these things and not damage our own souls and damage the testimony?

No, it's plainly taught us in the scripture, be not unequally yoked. And so these people had done this, and there were those, as he sat down before the temple, before the house of God, he mentions it, before the house of God, this was the place to be, then were assembled unto me, everyone that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgressions of those that had been carried away. There were people, happily, who assembled to him because they had the same concern.

[00:17:07] Oh, isn't that good? It makes us think, doesn't it, of what happened 150 years ago in Jamaica and in Ireland, when people were concerned about the state of things in Christendom. They came together to weep and to pray and to confess the weakness and the things that were going on. And God raised up wonderful men of God, as we know, at that period. And we are pleased even to be able to read their writings, even if their voices have been still for a long time. It's good to know there were those who were concerned. They assembled together to a center. This was the place of the house of God, it was the center where God had chosen to put his name. That was the place to which they gathered because they were concerned about this. And at the time of the evening sacrifice, he said, I rose up from my heaviness, [00:18:02] laid out my hands unto the Lord my God. They kept the sacrifices, the priests were there to do their duty, they brought the sacrifices, the smoke ascended from this evening sacrifice. That was all obedient to the word of God. But it's quite easy, isn't it, to sing the hymns. It's quite easy to come together and to use pious words even.

And yet our heart can be far from God.

We think of the Pharisees who quote the scriptures at length. They knew the scriptures by heart. And yet the Lord had to say, their hearts were far from God. They drew nigh with their lips. There's a great danger for us to be so easily drawn nigh with our lips. There's some beautiful hymns that we sing together, scriptures that we read together. And it comes so lightly off our tongue.

And yet it's possible that in our heart we're not even really thinking what these words mean. I'm sure if we did take notice of what we were singing or what we were reading, [00:19:03] it would have much more effect on our lives. It had an effect on these people's lives. They had to put things right. Before we find this confession, at the time of the evening sacrifice, he fell upon his knees and he spread out his hands unto the Lord his God.

And he said, I'm ashamed. And I blushed, lift up my face to thee, my God. Our iniquities are increased over our head. Our trespasses have grown up unto the heavens. He recognized that they deserved all that had happened to them. They deserved to be taken away into captivity. But now God

had given them a little respite. As for a little space, he said, grace has been showed from the Lord. To leave us a remnant to escape. We were bondmen. But now we've been brought here and we've come here to repair the house of God. We've been able to build this wall of Jerusalem. Now, verse 10, what shall we say after this?

[00:20:03] For we have forsaken thy commandment which thou hast commanded. But I serve as the prophets. God had been good to them.

If you read the similar chapter in Nehemiah, it's a wonderful chapter. The ninth of Nehemiah. It's interesting, these are easy to remember. Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel nine are wonderful prayers.

In Nehemiah, there's a lengthy prayer there. When they confessed that God all through the centuries had been faithful, had been faithful, had been faithful. And they had been unfaithful all the way through. And even in the wilderness they had to confess. God never withheld the manna from them. Forty years long, in spite of their murmuring, God never withheld the manna. He never took away the pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night.

He gave them water in their thirst. Their feet didn't even get weary. Their clothes didn't wear out. [00:21:02] All the wilderness journey. God was faithful. And they were unfaithful. What a confession that was. And often we need to come together, don't we, for confession. It's good to have these meetings. We've had many, as I can remember, times when in individual meetings, sometimes groups of meetings, felt the weight of things, saw the flippancy and the irreverence that was coming among us.

We came together to pray, to fall upon our knees before God and pray and confess our weakness.

God can raise us up if only we're ready to confess. Convicted of the failure, we confess our sins to him.

We don't like using that word sometimes, sins.

But they recognize it here as being sins. They were sins of omission, sometimes worse than sins of commission. We sometimes think, oh, we haven't done anything very wrong. [00:22:04] No, we haven't done anything at all. We haven't been obedient. Then we've been disobedient. Very often God has to speak very sharply to us, to recall us.

We've been lazy. Slothful.

We've missed many opportunities of serving the Lord. He's given to us in his wonderful mercy. These are sins of omission that we also have to confess before him. And now grace has been showed. He says, we're bondsmen.

And now what shall we say? What shall we say? We've forsaken thy commandments. What shall we say? We've forsaken thy commandments. And God says, they were not to mix with these people.

We've plainly given them this commandment. All the way through he reads back from the book of Moses. He's still got these books there, and he could read it to these people there. The Bible tells us plainly, he says, how we should have behaved. [00:23:01] We've done just the opposite.

As good as it is to have confession. When we come to the next chapter, we find there's correction. They start putting the matter right. It's never very easy. There's a terrible lot to clear up. I think of Nehemiah again, where he went to view the walls. He went by night, just on his own, to go around and see what the state of things was. And he couldn't even get through. There was so much rubbish. Can't we say that about many of our lives? My daughter was telling us, after 20 years away from the Lord, I couldn't believe it when she phoned me up on Sunday evening. She said, Dad, you've been praying for me. I said, I always pray for you, Corrie. She said, I've been to church today. I started reading my Bible and praying.

We've been praying for her for years. 20 years we've been praying for her. We couldn't take it in when she said, what a mess I've made of my life. What a mess to clear up. [00:24:02] What a terrible mess I've made of it. Confession.

Putting it right is going to be a hard job. A very hard job. There are things that have been done that can't be undone. And this is so in assemblies.

It's so in our personal lives. And I bet every one of us can look at something that says, yes, that must be confessed.

That must be confessed. It will be put away. Bad habits.

The critical spirit.

Oh, it's so easy to criticize each other. The chattering, slandering spirit that comes into things.

People used to have to write letters in the old days. Now they can grab the telephone. And somebody's character can be ruined in one evening with a few telephone calls. Friends and brethren can be separated by a slanderous tongue.

[00:25:04] These are things that need to be confessed and put away. It's very hard to put the things right. These people were determined to do it. They were determined to put it right. So they came together, these people, when Ezra had prayed and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, then assembled unto him out of all Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children.

These are whole families coming to put it right. It's a good thing when we become as families to put things right. We sometimes blame the young people, but many of us that are older haven't given a good example and don't give a good example.

We don't give a good example. It's very sad when we see people like Solomon, who began so well, such a promising life.

[00:26:01] At the end of his life, he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. It appeared to him twice. He turned to all the prods and the bribes that he'd married.

If he'd only been obedient to the word of God, he would have made a copy at the end of Deuteronomy 17 every day from that copy. He couldn't have done that or he wouldn't have multiplied wives. He wouldn't have multiplied horses. He wouldn't have gone down to Egypt. He wouldn't have

multiplied gold and silver so that it was like sawdust in the city of Jerusalem. He did all the things he shouldn't have done. That was a man to whom God had revealed himself twice and spoken personally to him. A man who was wiser. It was the very end of Nehemiah, wiser than all the other kings of the earth. Yet he, through these heathen wives, his heart was turned away from the Lord.

It may not be our wife that turns us away from the Lord or our husband. There are other things. [00:27:02] Sometimes our children. Sometimes our friendships that turn us away from the heart of the Lord. Sometimes our hobbies, even, that may take up too much of our time. All sorts of things can come between us and the Lord. And these have to be put right. Confessed.

And put away.

They are interfering with our service of God. Cut it out.

Get rid of it.

That's the word of God, isn't it? So it says here, We'll be with thee. We'll be with thee. It's good, isn't it? We'll be with thee. Be of good courage and do it. It's going to be done according to the law. Not according to their own ideas. It's according to the law. And so we read in verse 5 of chapter 10, Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan, the son of Eliashib, a priest. [00:28:02] And when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water, for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. He mourned.

He meant it.

It wasn't just words. He didn't eat bread. He didn't drink any water. He was so concerned for the honor of God. He wanted to see God's worship restored. And everything that would interfere with that, put away. Because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. And so they made this proclamation, Throughout Judah and Jerusalem, unto all the children of the captivity, they shall gather themselves together unto Jerusalem, and whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance shall be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that have been carried away. That's drastic, isn't it? You've got three days to appear before the temple of God, [00:29:03] and put this matter right. If you don't come within three days, you lose your substance, you'll be separated from the congregation of God's people.

It's very sad when a person has to be put out of fellowship.

It's a terrible thing. It's a very solemn occasion when these things have been allowed and have to be put right.

It's very difficult sometimes to know where to begin. These people were drastic. They said, we've got three days to do all this business. I wonder what would happen if we had an ultimatum like that. My wife had a very good solution to some of the problems we've been coming up against in Holland. She said those two brothers ought to be put into a room, and not to come out, given no food, no water, no drink, and not to come out until they put it right. [00:30:02] It's not a bad idea, I think. Sometimes we're a bit too easy, aren't we? Sometimes.

It's not our table. We gather around the blessed Lord himself. We are called by his name. We are members of his body, and his interests should be our interests.

These people here recognised this matter had to be done at once.

If anybody wasn't ready in three days, you've got three whole days to get ready. If you don't come in three days, you're out. I think if we had something like that, if the Lord told us, I want you to put your matters right in three days, I think we should have something to say or something to do.

But here they took it seriously and said, Judah and Benjamin gather together [00:31:02] unto Jerusalem within three days. They meant business. They weren't going to lose all their property. They weren't going to be cut off from all the blessings of God's people. They said, we'll come. We'll put the matter right straight away. If only that could be done. I think of three very sore spots that I pray about every day. Three meetings where the brothers have quarrelled and will not put it right. And those follow him, and those follow him.

And there are separations, splits in these assemblies that should never have been. And the brothers have forgotten what it was all about. I'm sure it all happened so long ago. They've forgotten what the quarrel was. They still go on saying, I'm right. No, I'm right.

I'm right.

If only they'd come together and kneel before the Lord. A brother was saying to us, one of the Catholic lectures, you remember someone saying, [00:32:01] we should see our brother in Christ, or our sister in Christ, as though the next moment we were going together to be with the Lord.

Do you think we'd be quarrelling then? Of course not.

These people came together, it says here, in the ninth month and twentieth day of the month. They noted it on their calendar. It was an important day. They sat in the street of the house of God. It was pouring with rain. They sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. They meant business. They were content to sit in the rain, to put this matter right. It took a very long time. We find it was right until the first day of the tenth month. They were busy in it. It didn't get clear until the first day of the first month. They were months and months on this business, putting it right. But they did put it right. They did attend to it. [00:33:01] They got it all done. We find this whole list then, of these people. It says here, in verse twelve, all the congregation answered and said as thou hast said, so must we do.

They recognized this was the only thing that could be done. It was a painful situation.

It was going to be a painful process to put these wives away, to get rid of these children that they'd been gotten in heathen land. It's going to cost a great deal for us, every one of us, to put the matters right. But it's worth it because God was waiting to bless them, waiting to open the windows of heaven, as he says later on, to pour out such a blessing there wouldn't be room enough to receive it, if only. They meant business. And so they did mean business. [00:34:01] Now they said, well, let all who have taken strange wives come at the appointed times and with them the elders of every city and the judges thereof were not going to wait any longer.

They were going to see that it was done before the judgment of God fell upon them.

We know the judgment must begin at the house of God. We read that in Ezekiel again. We read of those elders, the Sanhedrin, who turned their back on the temple of God. And the judgment began with those very men, who had been judged. They hadn't mourned about this matter. They were guilty. And so we find here that people took it seriously as it says, so must we do.

But the people are many. This is a time of much rain [00:35:01] and we are not able to stand without. Nor is this a work of one day or two. We are many who have taken strange wives by the first day of the first month. They made an end. They got the matter finished. They completed it all. They put the whole matter right. They weren't content with half measures. They weren't content with compromise. They dealt with the whole lot and it took them all these months to make sure it was done. And they had taken strange wives. Their names are even given here. They gave their hand as they had promised faithfully that they would put away their wives and being guilty they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass. The priests, [00:36:01] those who should have been interceding for the people were themselves guilty. It's very solemn, isn't it? That's why it's very solemn. We walk from the Lord how we need to be careful.

Walk carefully how we need day by day to be before the Lord. Humbly confessing anything that may be out of place, being reminded by the Spirit of God those things that are dishonouring to him how we need to pray.

We have many brethren on the mission field. We have many labourers on the home field. Do we pray for them? They need our prayers. They need our prayers all the time. They're the targets for the enemy. These priests [00:37:01] were the target for the enemy.

If only he could make them fail then the people would fail. If the priest brought the hands, these hands that were in the service of God were guilty hands. These feet that trod the courts of God were treading heathen courts. They were defiling the house of God. How solemn it is when we think of the responsibility of any that are given a task however humble, however great it may be in the assembly of God the church of the living God how we do need to watch our step how we need to be before the Lord day by day putting things right straight away if we see anything our attention is drawn to anything that's not in accordance with his word it's got to be done according to his word in obedience to him [00:38:02] not grieving the spirit or quenching the spirit. Oh how sad it is when we look back many very promising believers that we knew that have stranded on the way reminded of the crossing to the crossing of the channel where you see the Goodwin Sands all those masts sticking up out of the water it's an awful sight those were gallant ships that missed their way and landed on the Goodwin Sands a warning to others don't cross the channel don't come here don't come near these sands and how many lives in our experience have been like that promising young men and young women I think one particular two particularly I used to visit sisters that wanted to serve the Lord on the mission field [00:39:02] and how sad the end of those sisters right away from the Lord one was absolutely a slave of bad habits married an unbeliever went down down down and died quite young the other right into the world and yet they were both both candidates for the mission field and serving the Lord with diligence when they were young and yet something went wrong in their life they didn't watch their step one thing went to another and they are wrecks wrecks to warn us how solemn it is if we are desires and I trust we are all desires of serving the living and the true God help us to have clean hands clean hearts [00:40:02] clean feet to walk in his ways these priests pedigree we notice because they were so mixed up with these others it says here they were guilty being guilty they

offered a ram of the flock for the trespass they were guilty but they owned their guilt that's a wonderful thing our God is gracious if we only are ready to confess he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins those who lived here those of the Levites too were there and even of the singers it's sad too isn't it we are looking at the singers that were there those who were ready to sing the praises of God yet even among the singers there were those that had taken strange wives [00:41:02] perhaps they were singing still perhaps they were singing the songs of Zion still somewhere in their thoughts were the gods of the wives they'd married somewhere in their house there was an idol may not have been a visible idol but there was an idol there isn't it solemn to think of the singers it's wonderful to have a voice that we can use for God and I'm very grateful sometimes to listen to some people that God to sing this hymns and to praise God in song it's wonderful that God has given this task to some and we're very grateful for those that can serve God in this way but they too they too can do it in such a way that their heart is not in it just as we say we can sing [00:42:02] the hymns and sometimes hardly know what words we have sung they're a beautiful voice and somebody said aren't you touched when you sing those words no not really I've sung it so often what? he is despised and rejected of men she sang it with such fervour oh it's just one of the things I sang singers these were singers but the only song that reaches the Lord is that from the heart isn't it we were cheering up our saints and Mary said well it sounds awful to me I said well if it comes from the heart the Lord appreciates the best we can do and it's nice to see those saints there gathered and once a month they come together to practice the hymns from the hymn book and try to get the tunes right and God appreciates I think that little witness for himself in that village [00:43:02] everybody knows that just a little group of people listening outside it's far more important than to sing beautifully isn't it these singers had married strange wives and some of them had wives by whom they'd had children there were children of the singers that were heathens children of the singers children of those that there were in the service of the temple and they were strangers yes some of us have to hang our heads in shame don't we don't we have to forgive the sad state of things and we do need to pray for our children our grandchildren we do need to pray for each other we do need to pray that God may even yet be glorified in these last and closing days as we wait for the return of our blessed Lord so we've seen in this [00:44:02] outline I'll just refer again to the little outline we made here we came to the city in the first case because of Cyrus decree we saw the discouragement we saw how the enemy sought to work with them but they couldn't they were separated then we found there was opposition then Haggai and Zechariah prophesied and so they began to build and finally it was finished as we saw and then another generation came up and so it's good to see that there is after sometimes a long period again a revival there is again a consideration of God's interest and that is the key to this particular place and then we found there was conviction there was confession and there was a correction of these things that had gone wrong [00:45:02] and so it's good to know these people gathered together in spite of the rain they were ready to put things right maybe too in their own lives in assembly life too be ready to be obedient to the word of God we expect the Lord any moment don't we how wonderful it would be if he found us in true brotherly love obedient to his word holding fast that which is good may we be found so for his namesake