



New Perseverance

Ezra 4-6

The foundation of the temple has been laid, and many of God's people are rejoicing about the progress since they returned to the Land. However, any expectation that things would get easier is soon dashed as the people face great opposition. The opposition lies to them about who they are and about their story. But the Lord has some things to say to them as well. Together we will discover how perseverance is possible when we embrace our identity as people of God and have a sense of His great story for us!

Opposition is intentional, irrational, and incriminating! (Ezra 4)

How the enemy sees you: Trouble

This is a rebellious city, troublesome to kings and provides, a place with a long history of sedition. That is why this city was destroyed. (Ezra 4:15)

How the Lord sees you: Treasure

*But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews. (Ezra 5:5)
Whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye. (Zechariah 2:8)*

How do you see yourself?

We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth... (Ezra 5:11)

How well are you seeing the Lord?

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith... (Hebrews 12:1-3)

ACTION STEPS

- DAILY RENEWAL – Pastor Mike has developed a daily guide to help us spend time with the Lord each day this summer. The new guide includes meditations from Jeremiah and specific prayers based on God's Word in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther! You can download it here: <https://www.forcey.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Renewal-Summer-2020.pdf>

- RENEWAL NIGHTS – Considering hosting or attending a small outdoor gathering with a worship guide – you can sign-up here: <https://www.forcey.org/media/blog/renewal-nights-summer-2020/>

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Meditate on Deuteronomy 32:7-12, Psalm 17:6-9, Zechariah 2:8
- Memorize Hebrews 12:1-3
- Read *42 Faith* by Ed Henry. The movie *42* is also excellent though some intense scenes & language.
- Listen to this version of "No Longer Slaves" from a prison - www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDnA_coA168
- Listen to "Promises" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5m09rqOoxE>
- Read this short blog from Tony Evans - <https://tonyevans.org/when-things-dont-get-better/>
- Check out this great resource about our identity in Christ - www.amazon.com/Who-Am-Christ-Rose-Publishing/dp/1596363908/ref=sr_1_3?dchild=1&keywords=identity+in+christ+rose&qid=1595610624&sr=8-3

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What stood out to you most from the message?
2. What has caused you to feel "done" in this season? Anything specific? Or a combination of things?
3. Share about a time when you felt opposition as you sought to follow the Lord? How did the Lord enable you to persevere?
4. What are some false or incomplete identities you have been tempted to embrace at times?
5. We talked about how one's identity comes with a narrative. How might you explain this in your own words or through your own experience?
6. What difference does it make to know that you are "the apple of his eye" as a believer in Christ?
7. Can you think of some verses that teach us about our identity as believers in Christ? What are some things that are true about us because of Jesus? (Consider Ephesians 1, 1 Peter 2:9)
8. Read Hebrews 12:1-3 out loud together. What statement in this passage stands out the most to you today and why?
9. Who is someone you can reach out to and encourage this week? How will you do it?
10. Seriously, though – how are you really doing? How can people really pray for you? Is there anything you specifically need encouragement about right now?