

Rebuild Don't Relax, Part 5

Steve Berger February 19, 2017

Today

continuing our study in Ezra/Nehemiah

As Christians, there are all kinds of tough decisions to be made if you plan on obediently following Jesus!

Tough decisions to be made

- **Matthew 16:24-25**

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

- **deny self** — rule, wants, rights, attitudes, opinions, etc.
- **take up cross** — instrument of death

- **Galatians 2:20**

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

- **follow Me** — denying self — *dying to self is prerequisite to following Jesus!*
- **save your life, lose your life** — **lose your life, find your life!**

IMPORTANT — *the very entry point of your relationship with Jesus was a tough decision — deny, die!*

- **tough decisions don't stop as you rebuild your life** — they become more penetrating, more intimate, and costly — as God conforms you into the image of Jesus.

Continue our story of Rebuild Don't Relax

- about 77 years after King Cyrus gave permission and provision for Jews to return and rebuild Jerusalem
- Ezra is now leading another wave of returning captives from Babylon to Jerusalem
- upon arrival, he's made aware of compromise and sin in people — in leaders
- *time for tough decisions to be made about dealing with sin — in midst of rebuilding*

Making of tough decisions

in order to deal with our sin as we rebuild our lives

this message is going to save some lives today — listen with your hearts

- Ezra 9:1-2 Informed of marriages with forbidden, foreign, pagan women — cannot marry unbelievers
- **Deuteronomy 7:3-4**
Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.
- **1 Kings 11:3-4** (King Solomon the Wise)
And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.
 - built places of pagan worship for his wives
- Ezra 9:3-15 Ezra is heartbroken, violent, astonished, ashamed, humiliated, praying, fasting, confessing, repenting — Ezra calls them out
- Ezra 10:1 Israel responds and weeps over its sin.

Shechaniah's solution- tough decision

- **Ezra 10:2-4**
And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it."

Four things to understand about dealing with sin...

- **acknowledge** — trespassed against God, no soft-peddling it.
- **adjust** — put away these pagan wives, get rid of the sin.
- **arise** — to responsibility, to courage, to doing this!
- **HOPE** — always hope — if we'll do the right thing!
- **Ezra 10:5-6**
Oath is taken to remove pagan wives. More prayer and fasting.
- **Ezra 10:7-12**
Family meeting called in Jerusalem. Come in 3 days, or else. Pouring rain, agree to remove pagan wives.
- **Ezra 10:13-14**
So many guilty, set times to return and stand before judges, so the "fierce wrath of God will be turned away from us in this matter."

- **Ezra 10:15**

Four men oppose this plan. Not sure if they're opposing...

- **delaying** — due to weather, numbers of guilty, or...
- **divorcing** — too tough a decision, we're against something so severe and quick, ***beware of anyone who tells you removing sin is too severe.***

- **Ezra 10:16-17**

Three months of questioning those who had married pagan wives.

- converted wives could stay, unconverted pagan wives would be put out — ***can't successfully rebuild your life and live a double-life at the same time!***

- **Ezra 10:18-44**

114 men with unconverted pagan wives — put them out. Kids too. TOUGH!

**Some of the toughest decisions we'll make
are when we need to obediently deal with our sin
and the painful consequences that go with it.**

How do temptation and sin operate?

- **James 1:13-16**

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

- **drawn away by own desires** — lusts, no denying self, dying to self in the moment
- **enticed** — beguiled, seduced, "once is ok, continuing justified, doesn't hurt anyone, won't get caught, etc."
- **conceived** — seized, captured, clasped
- **sin full-grown**— death
- **DON'T BE DECEIVED MY BELOVED BROTHERS — sensing pushback?**

How does Jesus teach us to deal with sin?

- **Matthew 5:27-30**

You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

- **Matthew 18:8-9**

If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

- **severely and quickly**- pluck it out, cast it away, cut it off, cast it away

**“I’ve never severely and quickly dealt with my sin and regretted it.
I’ve never softly and patiently played with my sin and benefitted from it.”**

Why deal with sin so severely and quickly?

- **Hebrews 3:12-13**

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "TODAY," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

The longer you entertain and participate in sin...

- the more deceived, delusional and hardened you become toward it
- the tougher it becomes to get out
- the consequences get more painful

If you even sniff sin lurking for you, deal with it, run from it, don’t visit it, it’s no friend!

- **Genesis 4:7** (Cain)

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.

- **don’t do well — sin lies at door** — waiting for that crack in door
- **sin’s desire is for you** — you should rule over it

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Do you have any tough decisions to make today about sin in your life?

There’s hope!

- **acknowledge** — sinned against God, confess

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- **adjust** — pluck it out, cut it off, cast it away
- **arise** — take responsibility, take courage, obey God
- **no more deception**, delusion, hardness
- **rule over the sin** that desires to kill you!

Tough decision — right now — choose what’s right!
This is a hospital for the hurting — not a hotel for the holy!

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it so hard for a new believer to understand what they really “signed up for”?
2. What is an example of a tougher “denying self” decision that you have had to make as a more mature Christian?
3. Have you known anyone who has lived a “double-life” as a Christian? What was the result?
4. Give some concrete examples of how temptation and sin operate. How can you keep from being deceived?
5. Do you have any tough decisions to make today about any sin in your life?

Before the Throne: Worship Night

Tuesday, February 28th

6:30 pm

Sanctuary