

Ezra Confesses the People's Sins

Key Verse: *“O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!”*

—*Ezra 9:15, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Ezra 9:1-15; 10:1-17

him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.”—vs. 13, *NKJV*

Now the burden of standing up for the sake of righteousness fell upon Ezra. The people of Israel had intermarried with pagans. Worse still, many of the Levites, entrusted with teaching the Word of God, had committed the same act of disobedience. Well might Ezra have gotten on his pulpit and shouted, “Shame on you! You should have known better. I have not sinned like you have.” However, Ezra did not take this course of action. As he

THE KEY VERSE MAGNIFIES the power of two small words, “we” and “our.” Ezra was a priest of Israel, of the Levite tribe, and a direct descendant of Levi through Phinehas. The heritage Ezra received from his ancestor was quite impressive. Phinehas had turned back the hand of the Lord from consuming the children of Israel as punishment for their tolerance of idolatry and immorality. (Num. 25:1-11) God then promised to give the priestly line to Phinehas: “It shall be to him and his descendants after

prayed to God for help in this dilemma, he humbly included himself with his people Israel. “We” are before you, in “our” guilt.

His words are noble and instructive—ones that we should take to heart as we bear witness to the Gospel. Reflect on the parable Jesus spoke in addressing this theme. “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner! I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”—Luke 18:10-14, *NKJV*

Ezra realized his own sinful nature and acknowledged the fact that his fortunes were interwoven with those of his countrymen. May we recognize that we are also sinners by nature. We are forgiven, but not perfect. Our fortunes are entwined with our brethren, members of the “body of Christ.” We should “have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”—I Cor. 12:25-27, *NKJV*

“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:7-9, *NKJV*) May we bear in mind Ezra’s example of humility and sympathy as we labor on behalf of our brethren in Christ. ■