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Memory Text: "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12, 13, NKJV).

1. DEALING WITH BAD DECISIONS Lesson 12 for December 21, 2019 Adapted from www.fustero.es www.gmahktanjungpinang.org "And I said: 'O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens'" Ezra 9:6 2. Ezra: Reaction. Ezra 9 Action. Ezra 10 Nehemiah: Reaction. Nehemiah 13:23-25 Action. Nehemiah 13:26-27 The problem today After returning to Jerusalem, the people of the remnant defiled themselves by marrying idolatrous people. Both Ezra and Nehemiah confronted this situation. Let's study how they acted, so we can learn how to confront this kind of problems today. 3. EZRA'S REACTION "So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished." (Ezra 9:3) Between Zerubbabel's time and Ezra's coming, the people of Israel married Canaanite people. The civil leaders reported this. Even the priests and Levites took part in these intermarriages which the law forbade. Ezra understood that this was one of the reasons why idolatry and moral decay had poured into the people. He got extremely sad. He remained prostrated until the evening sacrifice. Then, he prayed and acknowledge before God that they had sinned because they had not separated from the pagan nations. 4. EZRA'S ACTION "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." (Ezra 10:3) The expression "put away" is not used as divorce, but as a marriage annulment. Those marriages were illegal because they had been forbidden by law. God wants us to surrender our human nature to Him. Our commitment to God must be firm and steady, always putting Him first. The investigation of this issue took several months, although only some of the families were involved (about four out of every one thousand marriages) Which foreign women should be considered "pagan"? What were they teaching their children? Which was their influence in the family? The expelled women were not separated from their children or left abandoned. 5. "With infinite patience and tact, and with a careful consideration for the rights and welfare of every individual concerned, Ezra and his associates strove to lead the penitent of Israel into the right way. Above all else, Ezra was a teacher of the law; and as he gave personal attention to the examination of every case, he sought to impress the people with the holiness of this law and the blessings to be gained through obedience." E.G.W. (Prophets and Kings, cp. 51, p. 622) 6. NEHEMIAH'S REACTION "And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people." (Nehemiah 13:24) The people had committed to stop marrying foreign women (Nehemiah 10:30). However, they did not do so when Nehemiah left. They probably married those women as their second wives. That's why half of their children spoke one language, and the other half spoke another. The Word of God was written in Hebrew (the language of Judah), so those not speaking Hebrew were prone to abandon the faith. Nehemiah showed his indignation by using his civil power to punish some of them. 7. NEHEMIAH'S ACTION "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin." (Nehemiah 13:26) Nehemiah explained why they shouldn't marry foreign women. Some Israelites had married foreign women before, without considering it a sin. Moses married Zipporah, Midianite Salmon married Rahab, Canaanite Boaz married Ruth, Moabite This was not nationalism, but a religious issue. The problem or sin was to marry a person who has a different faith or does not believe in God. If we are committed to God, we should seek a partner who encourages a mutual devotion for God. 8. THE PROBLEM TODAY "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15) We must love God above all things and seek first the Kingdom of God (Mark 12:30; Matthew 6:33). We should consult Him before making a decision as important as marriage. His advice is crystal clear: a non-believing partner will not help us grow spiritually but will tend to move us away from our faith. However, Paul advised us to remain faithful to our non-believing partner, and not to break our marriage (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). We can be sure that God's grace is always available for everyone, no matter which wrong decisions we make. 9. "No one who fears God can without danger connect himself with one who fears Him not. 'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?' Amos 3:3. The happiness and prosperity of the marriage relation depends upon the unity of the parties; but between the believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of tastes, E.G.W. (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 174) inclinations, and purposes. They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However pure and correct one's principles may be, the influence of an unbelieving companion will have a tendency to lead away from God." 2023 - 1 & 2 quarter - The Spirit vs the Flesh | The Antediluvian World and Modern Health 2022 - 3 & 4 quarter - Help from the Sanctuary 2022 - 1 & 2 quarter - Jesus in Prophecy and Symbol 2021 - 3 & 4 quarter - As the Apple of His Eye 2021 - 1 & 2 quarter - Heavenly Messages in the Book of Daniel 2020 - 3 & 4 quarter - The Daughters of Sarah and the Events of the Last Days 2020 - 1 & 2 quarter - Conflict and Victory 2019 - 3 & 4 quarter - The Law and the Gospel 2019 - 1 & 2 quarter - Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God 2018 - 3 & 4 quarter - The Fight of Faith & "Come and Follow Me" 2018 - 1 & 2 quarter - Experiences under Kings and Statesmen 2017 - 3 & 4 quarter - Life, Work, and Teachings of Jesus, Part 5 & From Resurrection to Return in Glory 2017 - 1 & 2 quarter - Life, Work, and Teachings of Jesus, Part 4 & Receiving Jesus' Message 2016 - 3 & 4 quarter - God's People in the Last Days 2016 - 1 & 2 quarter - Keep the Truth Faithfully, Part 3 2015 - 3 & 4 quarter - Keep the Truth Faithfully, Parts 1 and 2 2015 - 1 & 2 quarter - Receiving the Holy Spirit 2014 - 4 quarter - Experiences of Faith 2014 - 3 quarter - Revival and Reformation 2014 - 1 & 2 quarter - Revelation of the Great Final Scenes 2013 - 3 & 4 quarter - Life, Work, and Teachings of Jesus, Part 3 & Receiving Jesus' Message 2013 - 1 & 2 quarter - Knowing Jesus Better 2012 - 1 & 2 quarter - The Beatitudes & God's Instruments and Established Teachings 2011 - 3 & 4 quarter - Life, Work, and Teachings of Jesus, Part 2 2011 - 1 & 2 quarter - Heavenly Messages in the Book of Daniel Sabbath School Lessons Print Email Welcome to the Sabbath School Lesson page at Pine Knoll Publications. Please choose the quarter you would like to listen to from the drop-down (or from the links below them). If a quarter is not available in the drop-down, please check our previous Sabbath School lessons page. Pine Knoll audio and written helps are independent from, but follow the topics of the Seventh-day Adventist Adult Sabbath School Lesson. If you would like to subscribe to the lessons via iTunes or some other program that can download files automatically, please click the appropriate graphic: 1. "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13, NKJV), OUR FORGIVING GOD Lesson 7 for November 16, 2019 Adopted from www.fustero.es www.gmahktanjungpinang.org "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." Proverbs 28:13 2. Third reading of the Law (v. 1-3) A prayer of confession: Praising God (v. 4-8) God's faithfulness (v. 9-22) God's kindness (v. 23-31) Praising God and requests (v. 32-38) After celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, Israel continued studying the Word of God. They understood their situation. They had sinned, and they repented. In Nehemiah 9, the people raised a prayer of confession and praise. They acknowledge God's greatness and His work in their lives. 3. THIRD READING OF THE LAW "Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers." (Nehemiah 9:2) The Israelites wanted to meet with God in an intimate setting. Therefore, they didn't invite the foreigners who were living among them. They understood that they were suffering the consequences of their sin against God. Thus, they read the Law for the third time. They didn't try to blame anyone or complain about their oppressors or leaders. They humbly studied the Word of God for three hours, and confessed their sins and praised God for three more hours. 4. "The prophet Daniel was drawing very near to God when he was seeking Him with confession and humiliation of soul. He did not try to excuse himself or his people, but acknowledged the full extent of their transgression. In their behalf he confessed sins of which he himself was not guilty, and besought the mercy of God, that he might bring his brethren to see their sins." E.G.W. (That I May Know Him, August 20) 5. PRAISING GOD "You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You." (Nehemiah 9:6) After the reading, the Levites praised God. Then they encouraged the people to bless God and His name. The name of God is an expression of His character and eternity. They praised God in their prayer because: He's the Creator of everything He's the sustainer of life He chose them as His people He gave them the land of Canaan He's faithful to His promises 6. "But His [God's] energy is still exerted in upholding the objects of His creation. It is not because the mechanism that has once been set in motion continues to act by its own inherent energy that the pulse beats and breath follows breath, but every breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of the all-pervading care of Him in whom 'we live, and move, and have our being.' Acts 17:28" E.G.W. (Patriarchs and Prophets, cp. 9, p. 115) 7. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS "Yet in Your manifold mercies You did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of the cloud did not depart from them by day, to lead them on the road; nor the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way they should go." (Nehemiah 9:19) After praising God, they recalled how God was faithful to Israel at the desert. God delivered them from Egypt, guided them with a cloud and a pillar of fire, gave them fair laws and the Sabbath, fed them with bread from heaven, gave them water, and protected their clothes and feet. However, they were arrogant, they became stubborn, they didn't obey the Commandments, they wanted to return to Egypt, and they made a golden calf to worship it. God never left them after all. His faithfulness and mercy will never leave us. 8. "The record of God's dealing with the wanderers in all their marchings to and fro, in their exposure to hunger, thirst, and weariness, and in the striking manifestations of His power for their relief, is fraught with warning and instruction for His people in this age. The varied experiences of the Hebrews was a school of preparation for their promised home in Canaan. God would have His people review in these days, with a humble heart and a teachable spirit, the trials through which ancient Israel passed, that they may be instructed in their preparation for the heavenly Canaan." E.G.W. (This Day with God, March 9) 9. GOD'S KINDNESS "So they ate and were filled and grew fat, and delighted themselves in Your great goodness." (Nehemiah 9:25) God is good. He gave the Israelites the land of Canaan, and they could enjoy already built houses, and already planted lands. But they didn't show kindness back. During the sad age of the Judges, Israel moved constantly between repentance and unfaithfulness. Later they even rejected and killed the prophets God sent. God is always willing to listen to our confession, the fruit of repentance. He always justifies us because of His kindness. "Nevertheless in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; for You are God, gracious and merciful." (Nehemiah 9:31). 10. "God requires that we confess our sins, and humble our hearts before Him; but at the same time we should have confidence in Him as a tender Father, who will not forsake those who put their trust in Him... God does not give us up because of our sins. We may make mistakes, and grieve His Spirit, but when we repent, and come to Him with contrite hearts, He will not turn us away." E.G.W. (God's Amazing Grace, May 11) 11. "However You are just in all that has befallen us; for You have dealt faithfully, but we have done wickedly." (Nehemiah 9:33) PRAISING GOD AND REQUESTS The Levites acknowledged the sins of the people against God despite His kindness. They affirmed that they deserved the consequences of their sins. They praised God because He is great, strong, fearsome and faithful. They also told Him about the oppression they were suffering in the land God had given them. They sought shelter in God's undeserved grace and asked Him to act in their favor. They made a promise before Him. 12. "The song of praise ended, the leaders of the congregation related the history of Israel, showing how great had been God's goodness toward them, and how great their ingratitude. Then the whole congregation entered into a covenant to keep all the commandments of God. They had suffered punishment for their sins; now they acknowledged the justice of God's dealings with them and pledged themselves to obey His law. And that this might be 'a sure covenant,' and be preserved in permanent form, as a memorial of the obligation they had taken upon themselves, it was written out, and the priests, Levites, and princes signed it. It was to serve as a reminder of duty and a barrier against temptation." E.G.W. (Prophets and Kings, cp. 56, p. 666) 13. "It would be a scene well-pleasing to God and angels, would His professed followers in this generation unite, as did Israel of old [referring especially to the revival in the days of Nehemiah], in a solemn covenant to 'observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes.'" E.G.W. (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, Nehemiah chapter 9)

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