

Exile and Return: God **STRENGTHENS** Us Through Adversity Ezra 4:1-6

I. Opposition. (Ezra 4:1-7)

John 15:18 - "Jesus said, 'If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.'"

Mark 16:15 - "And He said..., 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel...'"

2 Kings 17:34 - "To this day they do according to the former manner. They do not fear the Lord..."

2 Corinthians 6:14 - "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers... what fellowship has light with darkness?"

Galatians 1:8 - "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed."

7 common characteristics of opposition:

1. Deception
2. Discouragement
3. Fear
4. Hindrance
5. Accusations
6. Persuasion
7. Tenacity

William Wilberforce - "Our motto must continue to be 'perseverance'; and ultimately I trust the Almighty will crown our efforts with success."

II. Celebration. (Ezra 6:13-19)

Deuteronomy 12:7 - "And there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the Lord your God has blessed you."

Deuteronomy 12:12 - "And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters..."

Deuteronomy 12:18 - "...you shall eat...in the place that the Lord your God will choose, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant...And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all that you undertake."

Deuteronomy 16:11 - "And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant...the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you..."

Deuteronomy 16:14 - "You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter..."

~ What role does celebration have in building up your family?

~ What role does celebration have in your witness of Christ?

Reviewing this Past Sunday with Family and Friends
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1. What kind of opposition or adversity comes against obedient Christians today?
2. What strengthens you to face opposition?
3. How can we be ambassadors of peace when our faith is viewed with hostility?
4. How have you sought to integrate your Christian faith into life's celebrations? (sports, holidays, etc.)
5. What role does celebration and remembrance have in building up your family to live on mission? (Joshua 4:21-24)
6. What role can celebration have in your evangelism? (Matthew 5:10-14, Luke 10:20, Acts 5:27-42, Romans 12:9-21, Philippians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18)