

EZRA'S CHALLENGE
(Ezra 9:1-15)

- I. Israel's CONTAMINATION (Ezra 9:1-5)
 - A. "The princes" reported to Ezra widespread INTERMARRIAGE with the HEATHEN (9:1-2; cf. Ex. 34:12-16; Deut. 7:1-4)
 - 1. Those guilty included the PEOPLE of Israel, the PRIESTS, and the LEVITES
 - 2. The issue was not ETHNIC but RELIGIOUS
 - 3. Foremost in this UNFAITHFULNESS were the PRINCES and RULERS
 - B. Ezra responded with a display of EXTREME GRIEF (9:3-5)
 - 1. He tore both his OUTER and UNDER garments
 - 2. He pulled some of the HAIR from his HEAD and BEARD
 - 3. He sat APPALLED until the evening offering
 - 4. He was JOINED by those who REVERED God's Word and were ready to OBEY
 - 5. He turned to the LORD in PRAYER
- II. Ezra's CONFESSION (Ezra 9:6-15)
 - A. He confessed the GREATNESS of Israel's SIN (9:6-7a)
 - 1. He IDENTIFIED with their SIN
 - 2. He described it as OVERWHELMING

3. He describe it as PERSISTENT
- B. He summarized previous PUNISHMENTS (9:7b)
 - C. He acknowledged God's current GRACE toward them (9:8-9)
 1. God had brought an ESCAPED REMNANT home
 2. God had brought them REVIVAL in their BONDAGE
 3. God had caused the KINGS OF PERSIA to favor them
 - D. He confessed the NATURE of Israel's SIN (9:10-12)
 1. They had married HEATHEN WIVES
 2. They had FORFEITED God's BLESSING
 - E. He confessed the DEPTH of Israel's GUILT (9:13-14)
 1. God had PUNISHED them LESS than they deserved
 2. It would be JUST for God to DESTROY them all
 - F. He proclaimed God's RIGHTEOUSNESS (9:15)

III. Lessons

- A. Christians must not MARRY an UNBELIEVER (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14)
- B. Christians must BEWARE the influence of CORRUPTION in the culture (James 1:27)
- C. Faithfully teaching the Word can produce CONVICTION of SIN and DESIRE for RIGHTEOUSNESS
- D. We are not ENTITLED to FORGIVENESS, but God promises to forgive if we CONFESS our sins (1 John 1:9)