



Campbell Chapel

Sermon by Bob Bradley



Sin and its Leaders

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Bob Bradley

Tonight, I want to read one verse then we are going to go back to the book of Ezra. I am going to read one verse here in the gospel of Mark, chapter 4. You know this verse.

Mark 4:21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

Jesus made that statement.

Ezra 9:1 Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, *even* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

Ezra 9:2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

Ezra 9:3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.

Ezra 9:4 Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

Ezra 9:5 And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God,

Ezra 9:6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

Ezra 9:7 Since the days of our fathers *have we been* in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, *and* our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as *it is* this day.

Ezra 9:8 And now for a little space grace hath been *shewed* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

- Ezra 9:9 For we *were* bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.
- Ezra 9:10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments,
- Ezra 9:11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness.
- Ezra 9:12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* for an inheritance to your children for ever.
- Ezra 9:13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and hast given us *such* deliverance as this;
- Ezra 9:14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed *us*, so that *there should be* no remnant nor escaping?
- Ezra 9:15 O LORD God of Israel, thou *art* righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as *it is* this day: behold, we *are* before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

When you read the books of Nehemiah and Ezra, many times they tell the same story. Their books about the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. It is a story about Nehemiah. He comes and builds a wall...Ezra. We know that he is a priest. He did some things here.

Keep this in mind. I never think too much about this today but there is a good point here.

Nebuchadnezzar came 606 to Jerusalem. The first deportations came shortly after that. We know that in 586, twenty years later; he totally destroyed Jerusalem. He tore down the temple that was there, one stone at a time. As you read history, just secular history, it will tell you that there was a rumor that had started that there was gold between the humongous stones that this temple was built out of and that there was gold between the stones. They tore the temple down one rock at a time. They burned all the cedar and all that was there that God has blessed Solomon to build the temple with. It was a beautiful place, but they tore it down.

We also know that they killed and put out the eyes of the king Zedekiah. We understand that. In 536, which would be 70 years after they first went to Babylon, we know God spoke unto a Persian king. Do you remember him? He allows that Jews that wants to come back into the land. That is in 536. That is 70 years from the time that they left home, until they were going to get to come back. Why that is significant is that is exactly what God told Jeremiah to tell the people. That is how long you are going to be in captivity. You are going to be there 70 years. That is where you are going to be. You can cry. You can pray. You can do whatever you want to but you are going to be there for 70 years. That is what they were. They were there for 70 years.

In 536, they come back. In 535, they start building the temple. We know they lay the foundation and a few things happened. The enemies raised up and they quit. For the next 15 or 20 years they do nothing on the temple. They build their own homes. We can read about Zachariah and Haggai and these guys, these other prophets; they talk about what goes on there. However, for the next 15 years, they do nothing. We know that God sends a revival through Haggai and wakes him up a little bit. We know that in 515, they build the temple. They get it done. They have a revival. Things go good for a while. It was not a big revival but things start going pretty good.

Time goes on. The story I read to you tonight happens in 458 BC. That is...460...that is some 50, 60, 70 years after the temple was rebuilt. Haggai preaches the message. They have a revival. This is some 70 years later when Ezra is coming. We know that Ezra and Nehemiah lead a small band of people back to the land. As I read the story, you will find out that Ezra comes back into the land and again, under Zerubbabel and Joshua there were about 50,000 Jews that came back from the Babylonian captivity in the first group that came back. Here this group was a lot smaller bunch.

Here is the thing I want you to think about, one of the things. They had left home. Many had died. Many had been killed and slaughtered and their houses and everything taken away from them. Now they have an opportunity to come back and do you know what most of them do not do? Most of them do not come back. Most of them stay in Babylon. We know that Daniel did. Daniel stayed there until he was an old man. Daniel, no doubt, died there.

However, here is the lesson. Here is what I want you to think about. It is 60 or 70 years after they have rebuilt the temple. They had started worshiping again, God. Then things start to turn downhill. Ezra gets here. If my reading is right and I understand things that is right; four months after he gets here; something happens. Something—he gets some information—Ezra is a scribe. Ezra is somebody that teaches the law. Ezra is somebody that knows the Word of God. Ezra was somebody that knew the Old Testament. He knew the Law that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai. He knew what God expected. He knew what God said not to do. Ezra knew that. He gets some information. I read it to you here.

Ezra 9:1 Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, *even* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

I don't whether Ezra is teaching. I don't know where he is at. However, one of the leaders that is there comes and tells Ezra, "Ezra, we have a major problem here in the land. I know we have been here 50 or 60 years. I know we have a temple built. I know that looking around that everything seems to be going okay. However, we have a major problem here. We know and I know that it is not going to work. I know that God is going to judge us because of what we are doing, what we are allowing and what people are doing. He says, "I know that is going to happen. We have an issue." This prince begins to tell Ezra what is going on. It disturbs him. What the message was—is this. Ezra, this is what is happening. I know and you know that God told us that when we come to our land, when we got to this promised land that we were not allowed to marry any of the Canaanites. I had read to you the whole tribes here. They were all Canaanites. He says so not only that but we were not allowed to give our daughters unto their sons or their sons could not come and marry into our families. We could not marry. God said we could not do that. It is wrong. He says if you do that—they are going to lead you astray. They will lead you into their worship of their god. They will lead your children, grandchildren astray. They will forsake the God of heaven. They will go and live sinful lives. They will worship the gods of the Canaanites. You have to stay away from them. That was the command.

If you read the Bible do you know what you will find out in Exodus 34? It will tell you that. In Deuteronomy and other places; it will tell you that. You have to stay away from them. God knew what He was doing. God knew, God knows what He is doing. God knows what happens when His people socialize with the world—God knows what is coming. Amen!

It is good to have friends. I love people that are not Christian people. I have all kinds of friends that are not saved. I love them. I have family that are not saved. I love them. Do you know what I can't do with a lot of them? I don't go where they go. I do not participate in what they want to participate in. I do not partake in what they partake in. You cannot do that. Do you know why? Because that will defile us before the God of heaven. God said do not do it. We cannot do that. When I do that, I teach my children that it is okay to loaf in bars. No amen on that one. Is there? It is okay to do all of this evil, wicked, uncleanness. When I do it then I say it is okay for my children to do it. you do not have to tell them that because they will follow in your footsteps. They will follow closely in your footsteps. They will use the language that you use.

Do you know where most kids learn how to cuss from? Their dad and mom. They learn that at home. That is where they learn it from.

Years ago, I had a friend of mine. Went to school...my best friend in school. He gets married and had a little boy. A pretty little boy. As pretty as a little boy you had ever seen. As soon as he starts to talk, they teach him how to cuss. Just a little baby. He had no idea what he was doing and no idea what he was saying. Amen! It was funny to them when the baby was a year old or two years old, or three years old. However, it was not so funny when he was twelve. It was a different story then. Dad is dead now. He has been gone for years. Mom is in jail. Amen! I don't know where the little guy had got to. Do you know why? Loafing with and socializing with the wrong crowd. Listen. You cannot do it.

God says, "You cannot do it. If you do it then you are going to be judged."

The Bible tells us here that Ezra heard this. He heard what was going on.

If you read the book of Malachi, you will find out that not only were the sons and daughters marrying Canaanite people but some of the Jewish men and probably some of the spiritual leaders... Do you know what you will find out? They had divorced their Hebrew wives and were marrying Canaanite women. That is true.

If we would have been there do you know what we would have said? Do you know what we would have heard? If you would have mentioned it—you can't do that. God said that you cannot do that. Do you know what some of the things would have been that you would have heard? These women are prettier than our women. All the pretty Jewish girls stayed in Babylon. Since they did not come back then I will just go over and get me one. It is not going to hurt anything. We are living in different times. It is all okay. The captivity is over. What Moses said years ago...that has been hundreds of years ago. God surely is not going to hold us to that. You heard all of that.

God does not change His mind. God does not change His mind about sin.

The reason—when we read that and look at that; do you know what we think? ...some people think it. I do not think it but some people do. God must be a harsh God. God must be a God that really does not love people because He said, "Thou shalt not..." God says, "Thou shalt not..." because he knows the best for me. He knows the best for you. He knows what is going to destroy my life if I do it. He knows what will bless my life if I do it. God knows those things. That is why God says, "Thou shalt..." and "Thou shalt not..." amen!

Ezra gets the news.

Do you know what he did not do? He did not say, "Oh hum." He is not like a lot of us today. It will get better. It will go away. We don't want to rock the boat. We do not want to say anything. We do not want to do anything. We will just stick our heads in the sand and hope it goes away.

Ezra was not that kind of a guy. Do you know what he did? He is astonished, when you read what I read to you. He is absolutely appalled. He hears what is happening.

He knows how serious this sin is. He knows what is going to happen in a generation or two when these kids grow up and have kids and inner marry with the Canaanites. They are going to forget about the God of heaven. When he understands that, he is appalled. He is absolutely, tee totally, amazed that people who just got back from captivity that God had put in captivity for disobeying Him—are on the same path again. He sits down and pulls the hair out of his face and out of his head. He rips his clothes.

Do you know why? Because he was grieving. He knew what was coming. He knew if something did not change that these people were in trouble. This nation was in trouble. These little kids were in trouble. It grieved him. He was appalled that people that God had done so much for now are forsaking Him. They are turning their backs on Him. He pulls the hair out of his face and off of his head. The Bible tells us that he sits down. He is astonished.

When you read what happens here...the Bible says here when you go on down through here and read; do you know what you will find out? He sits here all day. I do not know what time he starts this. However, he sits down here. He is astonished. He is thinking. He is praying. Until the time, the Bible says here, down in verse 4...to the evening sacrifice.

Ezra 9:4 Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

If you go down through there and read, it talks about his heaviness. He rents his clothes and his mantle. He falls upon his face and spreads his hands towards God and begins to pray. Do you know what he says?

Get this. This is the thought here that you don't hear much about anymore. The Bible says...

Ezra 9:6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

Ezra is speaking that to the God of heaven. "I am ashamed and do blush." The word blush is a word we used to use a lot of and hear a lot of. You know people used to actually blush. What that means is that you see something that embarrasses you, or something that...it may be a good thing or bad thing. However, your face gets red. Your heart beats. Do you know what Ezra is saying? "Lord, I am ashamed. I have a red face, Lord; when I hear what your people are doing."

If you look at the majority of what people watches on TV's today and watches on their cell phones; it ought to make us blush. Do you know what we have done? We got used to the darkness. We got used to sin. We got used to saying that is okay. It is no big deal.

Listen. When we call that which is evil, good and that which is good, evil; then judgement is on the way. When we look at sin, and it does not make us blush anymore, when we watch people—get this—when we see girls kissing girls and boys kissing boys and that does not make us blush and does not make us feel astonished and ashamed; then I do not know what would. Amen!

I know that sin is sin. Drunkenness and all the other sins that are going to send people to hell, also. I know that. However, listen; nothing makes us blush anymore. Everything is okay. I will let my child do this or that, participate in this or that, and it is okay. We do not blush at anything anymore.

He said, “I am ashamed. I blush...”

Ezra 9:6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

Do you know what he is saying? We are drowning in sin. It is over our heads. What we have done, how we are living, what we are participating in; it is over our head. Lord, we are drowning in sin. This nation is drowning in sin. It is over our heads. Our trespasses have grown up to the heavens. Do you know what that means? Not only is that over our heads, but has already reached into the heavens. Our wickedness. Our sin. Our immorality. If there was ever a time in the world; a time in the history of the church that we need revival; it is today. We need revival. Not this church alone, but every church up and down the road, every church up every holler; we need revival in America. We need revival in America. We need revival in America.

We live in a time—we live in a terrible time when so many people have no hope. They have no hope. They feel alone. They have no purpose. They feel lonely. They are depressed. We can go on and on with that. They think there is nobody to help them. I think because and I think a lot of times because they think like that is because we have failed to let people know that there is help. We can let people know and tell people and live before people in a right way—there is help. When the pressures of life come—there is help. When you feel like you are going to blow up, when you want to kill yourself, when you want to jump off of a bridge, there is help. We need to tell people that. We need to tell everybody that. Whatever color they are, wherever they live at, whatever nation they are, whether they agree with us or disagree with us; we need to let people know there is hope.

A lot of people today—it is everywhere—we need revival.

Ezra 9:6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

Ezra knew, “Lord, we are over our head. Our sins are drowning us. Our sins are killing us, Lord. Not only are they over our head but they have reached into the heavens. They are sucking all the life out of us, Lord.”

He goes on talking here. He begins to talk about what had happened.

Ezra 9:7 Since the days of our fathers *have we been* in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, *and* our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as *it is* this day.

Ezra begins to say, “This thing did not start yesterday, Lord, or the day before yesterday, or the day before that; it has been around for a while and we have sinned. We have sinned, Lord.” I think the thing that disturbed Ezra more than anything was who was leading the charge. When you read down here in verse 2, it says this.

Ezra 9:2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

Get this. “The hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.” Do you know what that is saying? Our spiritual leaders are the ones leading the charge. Our spiritual leaders are the ones saying, “Hey, it is okay. Just go ahead and do it. It will all be fine.” That is the thing, I think; when he heard that it is when he hid his face and pulled the hair out of his face and off of his head was when he heard who was the leading the charge and sinning against God.

Friend, we need revival today. Listen. We need revival. I hope and pray that you will never lead the way, you will never condone people to live wicked lives. That you will never pat your children on the back and say, “Hey, just do the best you can and act like everybody else and do what everybody else is doing and we will deal with that later.” I hope you never do that.

Listen. It may be my grandchildren or your children that never sees 20. Amen! I know some of our people here has lost children. I’m not making light of that at all. I’m just saying it is serious stuff, guys. Everybody says it is okay, go ahead do what they want to do and let them live life and enjoy living and experience all of this stuff. What we don’t get sometimes is that they never get to 25. They never get time to repent. Listen. It is serious stuff.

If you are unsaved...wherever you are at, if you are not a Christian, it would be a great time for you to find a safe place to pray. Get alone with God and ask God to forgive you of your sin. He loves you. He loves you so very much that Jesus died for you. Don’t turn Him away. He loves you. He will save you tonight.

Come and pray—