

Ezra: A Congregational Reading Service

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daley preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living.

We're delighted to share this sermon with you. I hope good morning, everyone. It's really great to be here with you. Today, we're going to do a congregational public reading of the book of Ezra.

This is an opportunity for us as the body of Christ, as believers, to come together in unity, and to become familiarized.

Maybe it's been a while since you've read Ezra, or maybe you haven't read Ezra before. It's to become familiar with the book, this specific book in the Bible. We're going to be reading selected passages from the book of Ezra, and you are invited to follow along with your sheets.

If you've picked one up already, you are invited to follow along here, or you can follow along in your mobile device, your Pew Bible, or Bible of choice that's entirely up to you.

[1 : 1 6] You know, the public reading of Scripture, it has a biblical foundation. It's found in Nehemiah. It's found where Ezra is reading the law before the assembly.

It's also found in 1 Timothy, where the Apostle Paul encourages Timothy to devote his time to publicly reading Scripture. And even in Revelation, there's a call for reading aloud.

So there's this wonderful connection that we find in Scripture. And you know, as Christians, we believe that the Word of God is living and active. Amen.

It has power. And when we gather together in Jesus' name and we read His Word, remarkable things can happen. Perhaps God wants you to be here this morning to reveal something to you.

Perhaps God wants you to read this book and to be together with your brothers and sisters in Christ. This practice of congregational reading, of the public reading of Scripture, it also aligns with who we are as Ontario Community Church.

[2 : 2 5] We encourage, equip, and engage lives for Christ. This helps people to come to know the Lord in faith, to grow in Him through discipleship, and to be moved to do good in the name of Jesus Christ.

By reading the Word together, we arm ourselves, right? We know biblical truth, we learn biblical truth, and there's strength that comes against the evil one.

What a wonderful way for us to be equipped when it comes to spiritual warfare. And it's like iron-sharpening iron, or it's like rallying the troops for God, so to speak.

We are stronger in Christ when we are together. And this is a practice that is both found in Scripture, like I was mentioning with Nehemiah, and also with 1 Timothy and in Revelation.

But it's also been a practice that's been done throughout history. By having many people read Scripture together, we are growing together. We are being familiarized, and being empowered, and continuing this remarkable biblical practice established by those before us.

[3 : 38] There is such power in the Word of God. There is such power when we read personally the Word of God. And there is such power when we read the Word of God together. So let's pray together before we begin.

Will you pray with me? Let's bow our heads. And Father God, we ask that you send down your Holy Spirit to move in and through our lives, and through this church today.

Let lives be changed and transformed. Let minds be changed. Our souls are saved by faith. Where believers grow in discipleships.

And disciples are moved to do good in what they say and what they do. We ask, Father, that you are with us as we read together this book of Ezra.

We ask that you're here with us. We pray for those who may be hurting, let there be healing. We pray for those who may not believe in you yet.

[4 : 36] Maybe they're new to Christianity, or they're new to the Bible. We ask for that call. There will be a response to your calling, to believe in you, to trust in you, and to have you, to have Jesus Christ as the firm foundation.

And we pray for those of us as well, that we will be moved to live out this faith that we hold here. We say all of this in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen? Amen. So we're going to go ahead and get started with our first reader. I'm not sure where that's going to be.

Can you hold on? No. I just wanted to. Thank you. Ezra, chapter 1, verses 1 through 4, the decree of Cyrus.

In the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia, so that he made a proclamation to all of his kingdom and also put it in writing.

[6 : 06] Thus says Cyrus, King of Persia, the Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel.

He is the God who is in Jerusalem, and that every survivor in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place, with silver and gold, with goods and with beads, besides free will offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

The congregational response. Prayers, the Lord for his faithfulness, his plans for us are good. Good morning, folks.

My name is Sandra Boxdale, and I'm here visiting with you. As for chapter 1, verses 5 to 11, the return of Shesh Bazar.

[7 : 38] Then rose up the heads of Father's houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.

And all who were about them, aided them, with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beads, and with costly wares. Besides all that was freely offered, Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the Lord that, I know who's me, never came as a, had carried away from Jerusalem, and placed in the house of his gods.

Cyrus came in pleasure, brought these out in the charge of Meredith, the treasurer, who counted them out to Shesh Bazar, the prince of Judah.

And this was the number of them. 30 basins of gold, 1,000 basins of silver, 29 censors, 30 bowls of gold, 410 bowls of silver, and 1,000 other vessels.

All the vessels of gold and of silver were 5,400. All these dig ships of gold bring up when the exiles were brought out from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

[8 : 59] Congregational response, God provides for all our needs with trust in His presence. Ezra 3, verses 1 through 6, the offering to the altar.

When the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in the town, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. Then arose Jeshew, the son of Joseph, with his fellow priests and Zerubel, the son of Sheveth.

With his kingsmen, and they built the altar of God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it. As it is written in the Laws of Moses, the man of God, they set the altar in his place.

For fear was on them because of the peoples of the land. And they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening.

And they kept the feast of booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the rule, as each day required. And after that regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and all the appointed feasts of the Lord, and the offerings of everyone who made a free will offering to the Lord.

[10 : 21] From the first day of the seventh month, he began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

Congregation, in response? We worship together immunity, God's presence and promise.

As we're chapter 3, verse 7 to 13, the foundation of the temple. So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters and food and drink and oil to the Sidonians and the Tirans to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Jobah, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus King of Persia, now in the second year, after they're coming to the house of God at Jerusalem in the second month, Zubedel, the son of Shiteo, and Jesuo, the son of Joseph that made a beginning, together with the rest of their kingsmen, the priests, and the Levites, and all who acclaimed to Jerusalem from their captivity.

They appointed the Levites, from 20 years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the Lord. And Jesuo and his sons and his brothers, and Caidemiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Hennadah and the Levites, their sons and brothers.

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests and their vestments came forward with trumpets and the Levites, their sons of Asif, with the symbols to praise the Lord, according to the direction of the king, David King of Israel.

[12 : 01] And they sang responsibly, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

But many of the priests and Levites and head of father's houses, old men, who had seen the first house wept, with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of his houses being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away, congressional response, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Ezra, chapter 4 and 1 through 6, the rejection of the Samaritans and the consequence of the rejection. Now, when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, they approached the realm of love and the heads of the father's houses and said to them, let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do.

And we've been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Sir Hathedon, king of Assyria, who brought us here, but it's the realm of love. Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the father's houses in Israel said to them, you have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God.

But we alone will build to the Lord the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, has commanded us. Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

[14 : 04] And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

Congressional response. The Lord of the times is evil. God is our refuge and our strength. Ezra chapter 5, verse 1 through 2, the voice of the prophets.

Now the prophets Hegai and Zachariah, the son of Edo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem. In the name of the God of Israel, who is over them, Ben Israel the above, the son of Sheetel and Jeshua, the son of Joseph the Act rose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

And the prophets of God were with them supporting them. Congressional response. Justice of God is totally the end of the firm in God's word.

Ezra chapter 5, verse 3, and 5, the governor's inquiry. At the same time, Tatanai, the governor of the providence beyond the river, and Shealtesarboz and I, and their Shealt'es associates, came to them and spoke to them thus.

[15 : 13] Who gave you a decree to build this house and to furnish this structure? They also asked them this, where the names of the men who are building this building. But the eye of their God was on the elder of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by David concerning it.

I'm reading Ezra chapter 6, verse 1 through 12. Then Darius, the king, made a decree, and search was made in Babylonia in the house of the archives where the documents were stored.

In Ekvatana, the citadel that is in the province of media, a scroll was found on which was written a record in the first year of Cyrus the king.

Cyrus the king issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, that the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained.

Its height shall be 60 cubits and its breadth 60 cubits, with three layers of gravestones and one layer of timber. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury, and also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored, and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place.

[16 : 40] You shall put them in the house of God. Therefore, Tantanai, governor of the province beyond the river, Shathar, Bosanai, and your associates, the governors who are in the province beyond the river, keep away.

Let the work on this house of God alone, let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site. Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews, for the rebuilding of this house of God.

The cost is to be paid by these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue. The tribute of the province from beyond the river, and whatever is needed, bulls, rams, or sheep for their offerings to the God of heaven.

Wheat, salt, wine, or oil as the priests of Jews whom require, let that be given to them day by day without fail. That they may be offered pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

Also, I make a decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of his house, and he shall be impaled on it, and his house shall be made a dung hill.

[17 : 54] May the God whose cost is made to dwell, therefore, overthrow any king or people who should put out a hand to alter this or destroy this house of God that is injurious to him.

I, Darius, make a decree, let it be done with all diligence. In the congregational response, may God's will be done in our church and community.

I'm not complaining. I'm just asking for your patience. Patrick seems to find the verses. We have kings who, parents, were very creatively named them.

So I'm reading, as we're 6, 13, to 22, the temple completed and dedicated the Passover celebrated.

Then according to the word sent by Darius the king, Patrick and I, the governor of the province beyond the river, and Sheethar, Boz and I, and their associates, did with all diligence what Darius the king had ordered.

[19 : 01] And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophecy of Haggai, the prophet and Zachariah, the son of Bani. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes, of Persia.

And this house was finished, and on the 30th of the month of Adar, in the sixth year reign of Darius the king, and the people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.

They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel, 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their divisions, for the service they've got at Jerusalem, as it was written in the book of Moses.

On the 14th day of the first month, the returned exiles kept the Passover. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together, all of them were clean, so they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the returning exiles, for their fellow priests and for themselves.

[20 : 15] It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by everyone who had joined them, and separated himself from the emptiness of the people of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel.

And they kept the feast of the unleavened bread seven days with joy, where the Lord had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that heeded them in the work of the house of the God, the God of Israel.

Confession response, we celebrate the God of the goodness, he does our hearts with joy. This is Ezra 7, 1 through 10, Ezra's genealogy and arrival at Jerusalem.

Now for this, in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Helikiah, son of Shalom, son of Zedek, son of Atib, son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Marimuth, son of Zarahiah, son of Uzi, son of Buki, son of Abishua, son of Phineas, son of Eliezer, son of Aaron, the chief priest.

This Ezraia went up from Babylonia. He was ascribed, skilled in the law of Moses, that of the Lord, the God of Israel had given, and the king granted him all that he asked for the hand of the Lord, his God was on him.

- [21 : 53] And there he went up to Jerusalem for the seventh year of King Arthaserses, seventh year of Arthaserses the king, some of the people of Israel and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants.

And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was the seventh year of the king. For on the first day of the first month, he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month, he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him, for Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

Congregational response? God's word guides us, and we follow his direction. Ezra 7, 11 through 13, which is Ezra's commission from Arthaserses.

This is a copy of the letter that King Arthaserses gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel.

Arthaserses, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of God of heaven, peace. Now I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom who freely offers to go to Jerusalem may go with you.

- [23 : 24] Congregational response? We are grateful for God's favor, His grace, His promise. Diana should have an applause after all those names.

Bye. OK, I'm reading Ezra chapter 7, verses 25 to 28. Commission and Thanksgiving.

And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God, that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all of the people and the providence beyond the river, all such as we know the laws of your God, and those who do not know them, you shall teach.

Whoever will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, that judgment be strictly executed on you, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment.

Blessed be the Lord the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem, and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors.

- [24 : 49] And before all the king's mighty officers, I took courage for the hand of the Lord my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

Congregational response? Blessed be the Lord, his love sustains us. Ezra chapter 9, verses 1 through 5, addressing the sin of intermarriage.

After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, the people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Parasites, the Gemusites, the Amunites, the Mohambites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites, for they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons so that the holy race is mixed itself with the peoples of the lands.

And in this faithfulness, the hand of the officials and the chief men has been slimmers. As soon as I heard this, I tore my garment and my cloak and pulled my hair from my head and beard and set appalled.

Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithfulness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I set appalled until the evening sacrifice.

- [26 : 28] And at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my fasting with my garment and my cloak torn and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God.

Converterational response, we repent and believe in Christ, your grace is sufficient. I'm reading from Ezra chapter 9 verses 6 through 15, the sorrow and prayer of Ezra.

Oh my God, I am ashamed and blushed to lift my face to you, my God, for our inequities have risen higher than our heads and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens.

From the days of our fathers to this day, we have been in great guilt. And for our inequities, we, our kings and our priests, have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame as it is today.

But now for a brief moment, favor has been shown by the Lord our God. To leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within His holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery, for we are slaves.

[27 : 47] Yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us His steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving, to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us protection in Judea and Jerusalem.

And now, oh our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, which you commanded by your servants, the prophets, saying, the land that you are entering, to take possession of it, is a land impure with the impurity of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness.

Therefore, do not give your daughters to their sons. Neither take their daughters for your sons, and never ask, and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good food of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.

And after all that has come upon us, for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our inequities deserved, and have given us such a remnant as this, shall we break your commandments again, and intermarry with the people who practice the abominations?

Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape? Oh Lord, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped as it is today.

[29 : 24] Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this. Congregational response, through belief in Christ, you give us, may we be restored into your presence.

I'll be reading Ezra 10, 1 through 6, the repentance of the people. While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly.

And Shekinah, the son of Jahil, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra. We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land.

But even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. Therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children.

According to the counsel of my Lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the law. Arise for it is your task and we are with you.

[30 : 50] Be strong and do it. Then Ezra arose and made the leading priests and Levites and all Israel, taken oath that they would do as they had been said.

So they took the oath. Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehoonam, the son of Elia Shim, where he spent the night neither eating bread nor drinking water, for he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles.

Congregational response. We make sure our system may turn back to the Lord. Chapter 10, 7 through 17, the assembling and the ending of intermarriage.

An approximation was made throughout Judah and Jordan, and the end of the year, and the end of the year, and the end of the year, an approximation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the returned exiles that they should assemble at Jerusalem.

And that if anyone did not come within three days by order of the officials and the elders, all his property should be forfeited and he himself banned from the congregation of the exiles.

[32 : 26] Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within the three days. It was the ninth month on the 12th day of the month, and all the people sat in the open square before the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of the heavy rain.

And Esra, the priest, stood up and said to them, you have broken faith and married foreign women, and so increase the guilt of Israel.

Now then, make confession to the Lord, the God of your fathers, and do his will. Separate yourself from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.

Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, it is so we must do as you have said, but the people are many and it is a time of heavy rain.

We cannot stand in the open, nor is this a task for one day or for two, for we have greatly transgressed in this matter.

[33 : 44] Let our official stand for the whole assembly. Let all in our cities who have taken foreign wives come at appointed times and with them the elders and judges of every city, until the fierce wrath of our God over this matter is turned away from us.

Only Johnathan, the son of Asahel, and Jacch, Jossia, the son of Tikva, opposed this and the Shalom and Sabbath High, the Levites supported them.

Then the returned exiles did so. Ezra, the priest, selected men, heads of fathers' houses, according to their fathers' houses, each of them designated by name.

On the first day of the tenth month, they sat down to examine the matter and by the first day of the first month, they had come to the end of all the men who had married foreign women.

Convergational response, we seek to do your will, O Lord, guide us in your ways. All right, well, let's give a round of applause to all of our readers.

[35 : 10] Thank you so much. Well, we have just completed reading the book of Ezra together and you'll see in your little note, it's a little bit smaller, there were some sections that we, for time sakes, did have to skip over chapter two and then chapter eight and the ending of chapter 10.

A lot of that has to do with the list of names. And if we wanted to talk about having an entire chapter designated to listing of the names, that not only would take more time, but I wanna give some grace here.

But it's very good, this is your outline for you to keep and to just consider when we are going through the book of Ezra. And in the coming weeks here, we're going to be doing an exposition.

We're gonna be going through line by line, verse by verse of this book, of this Old Testament book and discovering truths in it, finding the connections, the context and the connections with scripture.

You know, the story of Ezra is about the return of the Jewish people from Babylon and God's call to rebuild the temple.

[36 : 30] God provided the mission, the people and the resources, to accomplish this. How many of you have tried building something, let alone a house?

When's the last time you tried building a temple? Right? The amount of resources it takes to construct anything, let alone rebuild something. It takes a lot.

It takes a great deal of people. It takes a mission. It takes vision, so to speak. And despite sin that was happening, despite adversity, this mission was completed.

And this story is a wonderful story of seeing how all of these people came together in the rebuilding of the temple. But it's also applicable for us today.

When we are considering the building of the church, or in some cases, the rebuilding of the church. We are given the great commandment by Jesus Christ to love God and to love others.

[37 : 44] And we are given the great commission to make disciples, right, and to baptize believers. You see, every single book in the word of God is important.

It may be difficult. There may be names that you're like, who names their kid this? Right, there may be different towns here. Who names their town that?

And the reality is all of the books of the Bible have such significance that there's so many lessons that we can learn. And I'm sure that for many of you in reading this, reading out loud or following along, you might have learned something that you might not have learned before.

And that's why we do this. It's giving us an opportunity to become familiarized or re-familiarize ourself with the text. Some of us, we might have read this five times, well, maybe the sixth time the Lord might have revealed something to you, or the seventh time, or the 20th time, whatever it is.

God will reveal something to you. Truth, wisdom, insight. And there's such powerful lessons that we can learn here. God's word is full of truth.

[38 : 59] As we are called to know the Lord, right? Believe in the Lord. We are called to grow in Him in discipleship. It's just like that analogy that you hear throughout scripture to be a newborn infant, spiritually speaking, right?

Well, when you're a physical infant, it makes sense to have milk. It makes sense to have formula. I mean, if you give a newborn a steak, that's quite an image there.

But as you progress and you get older, you start having other kinds of food. You might say, mom, I don't want milk anymore. I'd like mac and cheese, and then as you get older, I don't want mac and cheese.

I want a nice meal, whatever it is. Chicken and potatoes or whatever, and greens and stuff, right? It's the idea of as you're growing physically, you start, your palate starts changing.

And in the same way, spiritually, we mature. We're on this path of discipleship, right? Knowing the Lord, growing in Him, and in all of this, acting upon this faith, doing good in the name of Christ.

[40 : 13] And that is an equal importance. We're called to build up the church and to build up Christian community. Despite the adversities that may come our way, to be a Christian is to have, to be a new creation is to have new life in Him.

Despite people who may object to your faith. There are people who will say they don't like Christians. Maybe you've ran into one before.

Maybe online, maybe in person. Despite adversaries, despite adversity, we stand firm in the word of God.

We stand firm in the truth of Scripture. We continue to have that relationship with Jesus Christ. And even as we learn in Ezra, there was sin that was happening.

And even though we are not perfect, we are sinners in need of a Savior. We must turn from that sin one way or another, right?

[41 : 20] Whether you're beginning to build, or you're building the temple, or building up the body of Christ, one way or another, you're going to have to deal with sin. Isn't it interesting that at the end of Ezra, that's when they had to deal with it?

You would think they'd have to deal with it first and foremost. But the idea is one way or another, sin will be addressed. And in the same way, we're called to put off the old self, just like I mentioned in Colossians, right?

To set your mind on things that are higher, not things that are lower. To put off the old self, and to put on the new self, leaving behind the sinful life, and to put on the spirit-filled life.

And in our coming exposition of Ezra, we will explore together this wonderful book together, discovering the truths, considering the context and the connections, and how in the world do we apply that to our lives today?

That's a good question, isn't it? We ask God to bless us as we enter into this series, and as we go forth, we're gonna sing this last song together.

[42 : 33] And what I want you to do is, we close in prayer, we sing this last song, we'll do a benediction. Just to think about how, where you are at in your relationship with the Lord.

What have you learned today? And how can you act upon what you have learned? Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you for this wonderful book that is found in Scripture.

Just as you provided a mission to Ezra, you've given us a mission, to build up the body, to equip the saints, to make disciples, and to live and to love like you.

May we together, may we be moved to enter in that relationship with you. May we be moved to follow you in the footsteps of your Son, Jesus Christ.

May we follow in the mission, that you've given to us. We ask that we can remain faithful to you, no matter what adversities, what conflicts may come our way.

[43 : 40] Father, if there's sin in our life, may we turn away from sin. May we turn to you, the light, and not the darkness. May we believe in your Son, Jesus the Christ.

May we grow in Him in faith. And in all of this, may we not just be hearers of the word, but doers. May we be encouraged to do good in the name of Jesus Christ, and we all stay together.

Amen. Thank you for tuning in to the Ontario Community Church sermon podcast. For more about our church and how you can get involved or support our mission, please visit ontariocommunitychurch.org.

May God's blessings be with you.