

# Avoiding Spiritual Compromise

Chris Patton

Ezra 7-10

September 10, 2023

**Sermon Theme:** God's Word, proclaimed through God's servants is a divine means of grace to root out spiritual compromise.

A summary of chapters 7-10 was given.

## Key Lessons:

### I. Pastoral Ministry Matters

- While the ministry of Ezra is not exactly analogous to that of the New Testament pastor, there are definite parallels.
- Ezra, unlike Zerubbabab and Zechariah who we were introduced to earlier in the book, was not a prophet. Instead, he was a scribe.
- He was a scribe who "had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel (7:10)."
- Ezra traveled the long distance from Babylon to Jerusalem with this singular mission in mind -- to shepherd the people in the ways of the Lord -- to lead them, to protect them from the harmful effects of sinful compromise with the surrounding culture.
- Not only that, but Ezra was wholeheartedly committed as well to do and to practice the law of the LORD -- that is to obey it Himself.
- In both Ezra and Nehemiah we see Ezra faithfully doing this—faithfully preaching against spiritual compromise, and faithfully living out the Word of God.
- The Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” He also tells Timothy, “set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”
- Biblically, the job description of the pastor is very "Ezra like." It is to both preach the word and live the Word out, or practice it.
- A healthy biblical ecclesiology or doctrine of the church emphasizes this.
- The dangers of unbiblical ecclesiology and understanding of the role of the pastor were discussed.
- When pastors fulfill their call to proclaim God's Word and the people respond with humility and joy and repentance when necessary --- well that is a healthy church that brings great glory to God and is a powerful witness to the world around us!
- A healthy church is where people gather around the Word on every Lord's Day -- eager to hear, eager to apply, eager to obey.

## II. Repentance Matters

- In chapter 9, upon hearing the news of the unfaithfulness of the people in the matter of inter-marriage, Ezra's heart was filled with grief and sorrow.
- In chapter 9, verse 3, he says, "As soon as I heard this, I tore my garment and my cloak and pulled hair from my head and beard and sat appalled."
- In the hearing of many, he then prayed a prayer of deep lament.
- In his prayer, he not only prays, he instructs-- he teaches the people what a heartfelt repentant response looks like.
- When the Word of God is proclaimed, and we are convicted of sin and compromise with the world-- the proper response is mourning for sin and then repenting from it and turning from it.

### Questions for Discussion/Application

- Having listened to the sermon, what stands out to you the most about chapters 7-10 of the book of Ezra?
- How does the narrative of chapters 7-10 help us to better see and grasp the danger of spiritual compromise?
- In what ways are believers today vulnerable to spiritual compromise ?
- How does compromise damage the witness of the church?
- How does the Word of God preached and applied help us stay on course spiritually?
- How have you benefited from Care Group discussions, where we seek to apply God's Word together?
- Re-read the Re-cap under lesson #1, "*Pastoral Ministry Matters.*" During the week, how can we cultivate a greater eagerness and hunger to hear the Word of God proclaimed on the Lord's Day? On Saturday and Sunday morning, how can we prepare our hearts to hear God speak to us through His Word at church?
- What role should repentance play in the life of the believer?
- Consider taking time to pray, asking God to help us cultivate even deeper hunger to hear the Word of God proclaimed and to apply it.