

Persistent Adversaries

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Date: 10 November 2024

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- [0 : 0 0] But we're going to turn now to our Bibles and we're going to read together in the Old Testament in the book of Ezra, after the Kings and the Chronicles, Ezra and then before Nehemiah. If you don't have a Bible, there's some at the side, at the back, at the front.
- Don't be shy, go and grab one and make sure you can follow along. And Paul has been leading us through these early chapters of Ezra. We come today to Ezra chapter 4 and I'm going to read the whole of the chapter.
- And you need to pay close attention because there are lots of different kings mentioned here and it can be a little bit confusing because at verse 6 he interjects to look ahead to future times before coming back to the present really in the very last verse at verse 24 because he's wanting to show us just how consistent was the opposition to the task of God's people in rebuilding the temple and the kingdom of God on earth.
- So Ezra chapter 4 verse 1. 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 Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' 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 Ezahadon, king of Assyria, who brought us here. But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of the fathers' 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.
- [1 : 4 7] 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.
- And, in the reign of Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. In the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, and Mithradath, and Tabeel, and the rest of their associates wrote to Artaxerxes, king of Persia.
- The letter was written in Aramaic and translated. Rahim, the commander, and Shimshai, the scribe, wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes, the king, as follows.
- Rahim, the commander, Shimshai, the scribe, and the rest of their associates, the judges, the governors, the officials, the Persians, the men of Erech, the Babylonians, the men of Susa, that is, the Elamites, and the rest of the nations, whom the great and noble Onsapur deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and in the rest of the province beyond the river.
- This is a copy of the letter that they sent. To Artaxerxes, the king, you were servants, the men of the province beyond the river sent greeting. And now, be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from us, from you to us, have gone to Jerusalem.
- [3 : 2 1] They're rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They're finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. Now, be it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom or toll, and the royal revenue will be impaired.

Now, because we eat the salt of the palace, and it's not fitting for us to witness the king's dishonor, therefore, we send and inform the king, in order that search may be made in the books of the records of your fathers.

You'll find in the books of the records, and learn that this city is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and that sedition was stirred up in it from of old.

That was why this city was laid waste. We make it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then have no position in the province beyond the river.

The king sent an answer. To Rehim, the commander, and Shimshai, the scribe, and the rest of the associates who live in Samaria, and in the rest of the province beyond the river, greeting.

[4 : 27] And now, the letter that you sent us has been plainly read before me. And I made a decree, and search has been made, and it's been found that this city from old has risen against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made in it.

And mighty kings have been over Jerusalem, who ruled over the whole province beyond the river, to whom tribute, custom, and toll were paid. Therefore, make a decree, that these men be made to cease, and that this city be not rebuilt, until a decree is made by me.

And take care not to be slack in this matter. Why should damage grow to hurt the king? And when the copy of King Artesert's letter was read, before Rehim and Shimshai, the scribe, and their associates, they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem, and by force and power, made them cease.

And then, the work on the house of God, that is in Jerusalem, stopped. And it ceased, until the second year, of the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Well, good evening, and please have Ezra chapter 4, open in front of you.

[5 : 55] We'll spend a few minutes, considering this chapter together. The Apostle John, in his first letter, writes these words.

Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. Do not be surprised, if the world hates you. Saber words.

And the Bible never hides reality from us. And because the Bible never hides reality, it is able to give us the right perspective, especially when it comes to understanding opposition to the gospel, and opposition to ourselves, the church.

Ezra chapter 4, as we've read earlier, recounts for us, the persistent opposition, that the returners faced, over many decades. But as we step back, and see the wider story, we also see that the opposition, didn't ultimately thwart, the building of God's kingdom.

Opposition, should never be the final discouragement for us. That was to prove, to be the case, in the end, for Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the returners.

[7 : 15] Because, in the end, the temple was built. In the end, the walls were rebuilt. But the opposition, was the reality they faced.

It was the reality, in the days of the early church as well. Listen to how the apostle Paul, viewed opposition, as recorded in the first letter, to the Corinthian church.

He says this, I will stay at Ephesus, until Pentecost. He's laying out his plans. I'll stay at Ephesus, for a wide door for effective work, has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

And it's the case for us today. It was the case for Ezra's day, the apostle Paul's day, and for us. Opposition is the reality we can expect.

But, we must not let it derail us, from the task at hand, the task of building, an eternal gospel kingdom. James Philip, in his excellent notes, on Ezra, says this, moral, and spiritual renewal, will never come about, without hard, and costly work, done, in a spirit, that refuses, to be discouraged, by oppositions, difficulties, and setbacks.

[8 : 39] There's an attitude, that refuses, to be discouraged. And Ezra chapter 4, teaches us, about the fact, of opposition to the gospel, and, that it can be effective, at least temporarily.

Remember how we left things last week. End of chapter 3, very encouraging, as a scene of great joy, just cast your eyes back, over the end of that chapter. The temple foundations, have been laid. There was great rejoicing.

Look at verse 11, they sing, for he is good, his steadfast love, endures forever. End of verse 13, the people shouted, with a great shout, and the sound, was heard far away.

Great rejoicing. It's quite jarring, then isn't it, to read, chapter 4, the very next verse. We read here, of adversaries, opposition, and ultimately, by the end of the chapter, the building work, has stopped.

15 years, of frustration, and waiting, until the temple, was actually finished. We'll see that next week. But it took 15 years, nothing happened.

[9 : 53] This chapter, is the cold water, of reality, the reality, of opposition, to God, and his people. They returned, with great rejoicing, but from the very beginning, early on, trouble, and opposition, dogged their progress.

As we'll see, they're accused, of being a threat, to the empire. They're accused, of being seditious, and a dangerous people, and the powers that be, are persuaded, to penalize, and hinder their work.

The rebuilding, of the temple, and the city, they've been told to stop. And as you read, these early chapters, of Ezra, we seem to be, in the frustrating world, of stop, start.

The Jews, attempts to rebuild, their national life, were repeatedly met, with on the one hand, encouragement, but then frustration. Progress, but then obstacle, to progress.

Official permission, but then on the other hand, official prohibition. Stop, start, frustrating. What on earth is going on? Must have been a great test, of their faith.

[11 : 02] It's easy, isn't it, to believe, to be encouraged, when things are going well. When we see, answers to prayer, quickly. But faith is tested, isn't it, by the delays, of life.

By life's reverses. By dead ends. That tests our faith, doesn't it? And I think we need, sometimes, the perspective, that Ezra chapter 4, gives us.

To think, not just, of now, but also, in terms of decades, and generations, and of course, eternity. We need, a Bible perspective, as we think about opposition.

Now, before we get into the detail, a quick comment, about the structure, of the chapter, Willie alluded to this, as we're reading, there's a bit of a mixing, of chronologies. There are multiple kings, mentioned here, begins with the reign of Cyrus, verse 3, but then we have, King Darius, verse 5, then Ahasuerus, verse 6, and Arxerxes, verse 7.

And then by the end, verse 24, flashes back, to Darius, verse 24. Now, you could basically, put verses 6, to 23, in brackets.

[12 : 17] And those verses, a bit of a flash forward, over the decades. So, verses 6, to 23, is a flash forward, a quick overview, of the opposition, over many decades, but then we come back, verse 24, and pick up, where verse 5 leaves off.

Okay, so that's a quick, orientation for us, in case we get confused. We'll think about that later. But verses 6, to 23, are a flash forward, in time. Well, let's come back, to the start, and see what this chapter, has to teach us, about opposition, to gospel building.

Number 1, verses 1, to 3, we see the subtle seduction, that seeks compromise. The subtle seduction, that seeks compromise. The initial approach, seems on the surface, innocuous enough.

Verse 2, let us build with you, for we worship your God, as you do. And we've been brought, sacrificing to him, ever since the days, of Esrodon, king of Assyria, who brought us here.

Now, as you read those, opening two verses, we might gain, the impression, of friendly, well-meaning settlers, offering the hand of friendship, to the returning exiles.

[13 : 29] They can see, they're building this temple, they've come to offer, assistance. How nice. How nice. But, to see it only, in those terms, would be very naive, as the rest of the chapter, will show us.

The fundamental attitude, of these people, in verse 1 and 2, is, in reality, a hostile one. And, their first attempt, to derail, the work, of these returners, is, to infiltrate, to assimilate, to be friendly.

How do we know, that's what's going on? Well, the writer very clearly, tells us, doesn't he? He flags up for us, in verse 1, these were adversaries, of Judah and Benjamin. And then we're told, verse 2, they were brought to the land, by Esrodon, king of Assyria.

Now, you can read about that, in 2 Kings 17, of various peoples, being moved, from Babylon, and other places, into Samaria, in order to replace, the people that have been, removed, in exile, to Babylon.

It's a sort of, exile replacement policy. You take people out, and then you replace it, with others coming in. And we're told, about those people, as they come, into Israel, in the land, vacated by God's people.

[14 : 51] We are told, in 2 Kings, that when they first lived there, they did not worship Yahweh. They did not worship the Lord. But things happen, and they begin, to worship the Lord.

But, they serve their own gods, at the same time. So these people, in verses 1 and 2, they were basically, pagan imports, living in the land of Israel, and they were essentially, employing syncretism.

They were worshipping, all the gods under the sun, as well as the Lord of Israel. And so, what they say in verse 2, about worshipping your gods, is true in one sense.

But it's not the whole story. They worship the one true God, as well as all the rest. So they don't really, worship the Lord at all. It's just ticking the box. Theirs is a hybrid religion, pluralism.

And one that they had, seeing God's people, exiled in the first place. It was, syncretism that sent God's people, into exile in the first place.

[16 : 00] And so this approach, was despite a seeming friendliness, was an attempt, to destroy by assimilation. Here were the adversaries, of Judah and Benjamin, approaching God's people, saying, we want to join you.

We're extending the hand of friendship. And Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest, rightly, are having none of it. Look at their response, verse 3, to this offer of help.

But Zerubbabel, and the rest of the, heads of the father's houses, and 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.

Now you hear that, you read that, and you think, maybe that's narrow-minded, and harsh. And in the eyes of our culture, it is.

This goes, totally against the grain, of pluralism, and multi-faith endeavours, much loved by our politicians. But God's people, had learned the lesson of exile.

[17 : 12] They learned the lesson, of pluralism. The God of Israel, is the only God. He, and he alone, is the one to be worshipped. Zerubbabel, and the others, they knew, they could not entertain, the possibility, of these people joining with them, because these people, did not actually worship, the God of Israel.

Despite the claim, that they did. There are times, when narrowness, and intolerance, is the way to faithfulness. Sometimes we need to be narrow.

And that is uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable for us, I'm sure it's uncomfortable, for Zerubbabel and Jeshua, having that conversation. Not an easy conversation.

And our culture, with its pluralistic outlook, so embedded, proclaims that no religion, can ever be viewed, as superior to the others. They're all the same. All are equal and true.

Which in itself, is an incredibly contradictory statement. They can't all be true, can they? But we need to say no, to that worldview. We need to say no, to pluralism.

[18 : 27] Don Carson wrote a book, quite a number of years ago now, called The Gagging of God. And that has a chapter, entitled, On Drawing Lines, When Drawing Lines is Rude.

I think it's a good chapter title, isn't it? And we need to be prepared, to draw lines, as they did in Zerubbabel, and Jeshua's day. They drew the line, and they did it, in spite of the fact, that in their pagan world, as well as our postmodern one, drawing lines was rude.

They drew a line, with those who pleaded friendship. And we too, must stand firm, and loyal to the truth, that is in Christ Jesus, even, when it seems rude, to do so.

The world will not like, the drawing of lines like this. Fundamentalist, will be the charge. Now that is one aspect, of the opposition.

Subtle seduction, they're trying to compromise, the faith of the, returning Israelites. But that fails, and the opposition ramps up. So we see secondly, verses four to five, overt opposition, that engenders fear.

[19 : 42] Verse four, the people of the land, discouraged, the people of Judah, and made them afraid, to build, and bribe counselors, against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

There's nothing subtle, about the opposition here. One, could almost imagine, some of the Israelites, wondering, if it would not, have perhaps been better, to go down, the syncretism route.

To join with the people, in verses one and two, that would have been easier. Because now, they turn up the heat, with an unrelenting campaign, of hostility, against the people of Judah.

Life gets much more, uncomfortable, for God's people now. You can imagine, some dissenting voices, saying, told you so, we should have gone, with the syncretists.

We would have maintained, loyalty to the Lord, if we'd done that. Our children, would not have been, carried away. They would have understood, what we were doing. They would not have bowed down, to the false gods. I'm sure of it.

[20 : 46] Why did you have to draw, those lines are available. Life is so much, more difficult now. Why do you do it? And if those dissenting voices, weren't heard initially, they certainly would have been, years down the line.

We are told, this went on, all the days, of Cyrus, king of Persia, even, until the reign, of Darius, king of Persia. That was a long time.

Years, and years. Almost 20 years, of constant, opposition. And notice the details. verse 4, they discouraged them.

They made them afraid, to build. They bribed, counselors. Verbal opposition, physical opposition, political. And the verbs, they use here, indicate, this was ongoing, and persistent.

This wasn't one off. This was constant. These opponents were, it seems, on the ground, at the building site itself, perhaps. I've got a fly in my face, go away.

[21 : 57] They were on the ground, right there, at the building site. They were making them afraid, to keep building. They also worked, the corridors of power, seeking to influence, the officials, trying to frustrate, the building works, with red tape, and bureaucracy, delayed building warrants, planning permission, complications, all that kind of stuff.

And the opposition, to God's work, looks very similar today, doesn't it? The kind of things we face. Our opponents, seek to discourage, to make us afraid, to speak the truth.

Seeking to turn, the screws politically. All with the aim, of seeking to stop, God's people, going about the task, of building, his gospel kingdom today. And there's nothing new, under the sun.

And whilst facing opposition, will always be hard, knowing the nature, of that opposition, can help us, to stand firm, and be able to withstand it. Behind the enemies, we can see, there is an enemy, we can't see.

But he's got no new tricks. His tactics, are unchanged. And so we can learn, to spot, how he goes about his work. The patterns we see here, and as before, are repeated, all through history, and today.

[23 : 18] So don't be surprised, by the reality, of opposition, whether subtle, or overt. But here's the thing, it's often effective.

And part of its effectiveness, is its persistence. It is this persistent, unrelenting nature, that the writer, is drawing our attention to. Verse 24, tells us, the work stopped, and didn't restart, until the second year, of the reign of Darius.

But between those verses, verses 5 to 24, we have a long section, which could almost be in brackets. It's a fast forward in time. And it charts, the ongoing, and persistent opposition, over many, many decades.

This is the third thing, we see, about the nature of opposition here. Persistent accusations, that grind down. So this is verses 6, through to 23.

And to give you a sense, of the time periods covered here, a quick recap of the history. Cyrus, he's the first king, we encounter. He reigned, from about 539, for about 10 years.

[24 : 33] He was then followed, by a king called Cambyses. He reigned for 8 years. Darius then reigned for 40. Followed by Ahasuerus, who reigned for 20. And then Artaxerxes, who reigned for another 40.

So that gives you, a bit of a time period. Ezra and Nehemiah, in total, covers 90 years. So we're talking a period, of decades here. From Cyrus, to Artaxerxes.

And all through that time, the writer is noting, the persisting opposition, that God's people experienced, as they sought to rebuild the temple, and then the city walls. The writer wants to overwhelm us, with a sense of the unceasing nature, of his opposition, that Judah faced, all these years.

It's as if he's saying, I've begun to talk about the opposition, so I might as well give you the whole lot. Here's the whole thing, sketched out over decades. And the way this chapter set out, is intended to reinforce this point.

Opposition, is, relentless. And it may be, all that we experience, for long periods of time.

[25 : 47] We may experience, nothing but opposition, for decades. And we have a sense, the enemy might have the upper hand, if we're in that situation. Imagine, you are there, in Ezra 4.

Fifteen years, of nothing but, foundations in the earth. That might be our experience. Let's just run through these verses.

Verse 6, we're told, that the opponents, wrote an accusation, against the inhabitants of Judah, and Jerusalem. That took place, during the reign of Ahasuerus. We don't know more than that, but, things continued, with his successor.

Artaxerxes, verse 7, an alliance of gospel enemies, pulled together, and write a letter to the king. And then we have a letter, a copy of that letter, in verse 11. Now note some features, of the opposition, that the right is drawing our attention to.

There is first, the intimidation tactic, the long list of names, in the complainant's letter, verses 9 and 10. That is intended to leave, an impression of power, and prestige.

[26 : 51] The long list, Rahim the commander, Shimshai the scribe, the rest of the associates, the judges, the governors, the officials, the Persians, so on, so on, so on. Long list. The opponents, are puffing themselves up, making themselves, perhaps look more impressive, than they really are.

It's striking, just how much sway, a noisy minority, can have in our world today. A twitter mob, organised by a handful, can ruin many a career.

A small number of, loud voices, can silence, and intimidate God's people, if we're not wise, to the tactics. But here, they go to the top, with their complaints, they write to the king.

And their letter, flatters and deceives. They throw in, incendiary words, designed to inflame, the king's passion.

Words like, verse 12, wicked, and rebellious. Trigger words, that would prejudice, the king against God's people. Modern day equivalents, would be accusations, of hate speech.

[28 : 01] Words that today, end in the letters, IC. Homophobic, transphobic. No context, needs to be given, just throw out the word, and the mud sticks.

Intimidation, through unfounded accusation. Next, they make utterly, unfounded allegations, about yet to be committed, offences. Look at verse 13. Now be it known, to the king, that if this city, if this city is rebuilt, and the wall's finished, they will not, pay tribute, custom or toll.

And the royal revenue, will be impaired. No evidence supplied, just an accusation, thrown out there. Similar tactics, were used, not many years before this, by Haman.

Think about the book of Esther. He threw out these, accusations, about an unseen people group, and the enemy of the Jews, you can read about that, and Esther. Very similar tactics. Untrue, unfounded, as such allegations were, it must have been, pretty unpleasant, for God's people, to read about this letter.

Not least, because the king responds, in the way, that the complainants, hoped he would. There's a quick, and selective search, of the archives, and they've turned up, some material, that seemed to back up, the allegations, by the complainants.

[29 : 22] Look at verses 19 and 20. This is the king's response. The search has been made. They found, some details, from the old days, that seemed to, confirm the allegations.

And the result was, verse 21, the following proclamation. Therefore, make a decree, that these men, be made to cease, and the city, be not rebuilt, until the decree, is made by me.

And take care, not to be slack, in this matter. Why should damage, grow to hurt, the king. And as a result, of the king's proclamation, the enemies of God's people, end of verse 23, went in haste, and by force and power, made them cease.

Now that moment, in verse 23, is decades down the line, from verse 24. Remember, this is a flash forward, and then suddenly, in verse 24, we're back, to the present day, of Ezra 4, under Cyrus.

The point is, the opposition, to gospel kingdom building, is relentless. It is persistent. Opponents, will seek to grind you down, bit by bit.

- [30 : 39] Rather than being, a knockout blow, a one-off account, rather it's a death, by a thousand small cuts. That seems to be the sense here. It's ongoing, relentless. Someone put it this way, the great causes of God, and humanity, are not defeated, by the hot assaults, of the devil, but by the slow, crushing, glacier-like, mass, of thousands, and thousands, of indifferent, nobodies.

Just relentless, bit by bit, opposition. And it's often effective. That's the final thing, we see tonight.

Effective schemes, that work. But only temporarily. Verse 24. We read that verse, and our hearts sinks, doesn't it?

Then the work, on the house of God, that is in Jerusalem, stopped. And it ceased. Until the second year, of the reign of Darius, king of Persia. The work, on the temple building, stopped.

Hard to comprehend, comprehend, isn't it? After all we read about, in chapter 3, and chapter 2, and chapter 1, here are the people, stirred up by God, to return from exile, to go back to Jerusalem, to build again, the altar and the temple.

- [32 : 08] We were thrilled last week, to read about the beginning, of the work. And yet, by the end of chapter 4, almost two decades, have gone by, and there's nothing to show. Just some foundations, in the ground.

It looks like, the opposition has won. And we perhaps, feel that to be the case, in our own lives, our own ministries. We've worked hard, to rebuild, an effective witness to God, but nothing really is happening.

We feel the enemy, is effectively hindering us. We've become discouraged. The folk, and I released the word group, remain uncommitted. They don't seem to be, taking seriously, the great matters of salvation, and eternity.

The children, my junior church group, don't seem to be, taking anything in. Or the ones, I taught 15 years ago, are making no progress. I can't see anything happening. The sin, I fought so hard against, over many years, seems to have the upper hand.

We despair. The opposition, is effective, we conclude. And that might be, the conclusion we come to, if we stop reading, halfway through, verse 24, and we ignore the rest, of Ezra and Nehemiah.

- [33 : 20] Because that gives us, the greater perspective. As we step back, as we see the whole story, as we see the big picture, we realize that in the end, the temple was rebuilt.

The walls were finished. Yes, there was opposition. Significant, and sustained opposition. That was very real. And opposition, and discouragement, may be our reality, for years and years, and decades even.

As it was for those folk, in Ezra 4. But despite that, the temple was rebuilt. The walls were finished. And we should never see opposition, as the final chapter.

Because, there is, a greater story. There is, a greater purpose. God is sovereign. And he, in his wisdom, allows his people, to endure opposition, like this.

Sometimes. These returning exiles, left many, securities behind, back in exile. They had comfortable lives, in many ways. They risked a great deal.

- [34 : 29] But in the end, they were brought through to safety. And they became part, of God's great, ongoing plan. The reconstruction, of Israel, of the temple, of the wall.

And these returners, their descendants, would, be there, centuries later, when Jesus walked, the Galilean road, and came into the temple, at Jerusalem, and onto the cross, at Calvary.

And some would believe. Opposition, like the sort, we see here, in chapter 4, does not take the Lord, by surprise. So, be encouraged, by that.

But heed, the warning as well, to be realistic. To expect, such opposition. The Lord Jesus himself, Son of God, experienced opposition, on a far greater scale, than this.

But even in those moments, of extreme opposition, most clearly seen, in the crucifixion. Even then, God was working his purposes. He was fulfilling his promises. And so we need to learn, to see the bigger picture.

[35 : 42] To keep on going. Even when the attacks, of the enemy mount up, we can become so discouraged, we want to give up. To cease the work.

Year after year, of persistent opposition, we want to give it all in. But see the bigger picture, friends. Bob Fial, in his excellent commenter, in Ezra, writes this.

The situation, in Ezra 4, is a situation, the devil loves. If he can trap us, into believing, we're in a cul-de-sac, we will lose heart, and stop building.

But friends, we're never in a cul-de-sac. We are never, without hope. We know, with absolute certainty, because of the cross, because of the resurrection, of our Lord Jesus, that our future, is sure.

It is secure. The words, the people sung, in chapter 3, verse 11, remain true. Even when we face, hard opposition, our God, he is good. His steadfast love, endures forever.

[36 : 53] That does not change. And so, we keep on going, with eternity in view, with the fact, that we belong, to God forever.

That is our perspective. And he is building, his church. The gates of hell, will not prevail against it. They didn't hear, in Ezra 4, and they never will. And so, we need to remember, those words, I quoted at the start.

Moral, and spiritual renewal, will never come about, without hard, and costly work, done in a spirit, that refuses, to be discouraged, by opposition, difficulty, and setback.

So let us refuse, to be discouraged, when opposition comes. Never give up. We never lose hope. We have gospel work, to do.

And there are many adversaries. So keep going. Let me pray. And then we'll sing together. How thankful we are, Lord, that your word, gives us perspective, of eternity.

[38 : 10] Our lives are so short, our experience, so limited. Our perspective, without your word, is so diminished.

How glad we are, that your word, speaks truth, and reality, and gives us hope, not just for today, but for all eternity. So we ask, please, help us not, merely to walk by sight, but to walk by faith, to trust your promises, to know with absolute certainty, that you are a God, who does what he says.

So help us, we ask in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.