

Stepping Out In Faith

Sometimes we come to a situation in life when our faith leads us in a different direction than conventional wisdom would. This disparity produces a dilemma, “Do we trust our faith or our wisdom?” Ezra faced such a situation and chose to trust his faith by stepping out in faith.

Ezra was about to lead a large group of Israelites from Babylon to Jerusalem. The journey could be dangerous and conventional wisdom demanded an armed escort but, his faith assured him they would be safe without one. Ezra explained the lack of an escort to the people as they worshiped God and prayed for traveling mercies for the journey as they prepared to step out in faith.

For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, “The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who abandon Him.”

Ezra 8:22 (NASB 2020)

Ezra was a priest and a scribe living in Babylon during the exile of Israel. He could trace his lineage all the way back to the Aaron who was the first priest under the Law given to Moses. He dedicated himself to the study of the Law of the Lord and practicing it in his life. His faith was an integral part of his everyday life. His heart’s desire was to teach God’s statutes and ordinances in Israel. This was his purpose in going to Israel.¹

He managed to get king Artaxerxes’ permission for himself and other Jews to go to Jerusalem. The king had given silver and gold to God for them to take with them to Jerusalem. King Artaxerxes also allowed for voluntary offerings from people and priests in Babylon to be taken with them to the temple. Ezra’s group was responsible for the safe transportation of this donation of considerable wealth.

The journey to Jerusalem would take months to complete. It could be dangerous with thieves lurking about to ambush them. It was common for a person to claim their god was powerful and able to provide protection, but Ezra went a step further and said God’s anger would even be against all those who abandon God.² He had spoken in faith before the king saying God would protect them, and so no military escort would be provided.

Knowing these dangers existed, it is surprising Artaxerxes king of Persia even allowed the Israelites to travel unescorted. Later Nehemiah would make the same journey but with “officers of the army and horsemen”³ provided by the same king. How powerful Ezra’s faith must have been for the king to send him without military support. Ezra had spoken boldly before the king, confident of God, “My God will protect.” Perhaps God had emboldened Ezra’s speech as a testimony to the king. Making a journey while carrying provisions and many valuables without

¹ Ezra 7:10

² Joshua 22:16, 2 Chronicles 15:2

³ New American Standard Bible (Nehemiah 2:9). (2020). The Lockman Foundation.

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military protection just was not done. Once the realization that he was making such a journey finally settled in, Ezra's actions remained consistent with his faith.

The verse above does not show a wavering faith but a consistent faith. The Hall of Faith⁴ could have easily included Ezra. Some people consider Ezra the second Moses because he took the Law to the Israelites and taught them to live by it. Ezra knew God was behind the returning of the Israelites to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple there. God would protect them from the enemy. He and those with him humbled themselves before God and sought a safe journey and proceeded in faith.

When we live a godly life, as Ezra did, with the word of God instilled in our hearts we allow God to use us. We may find God prompting us to step out in faith against all wisdom and we will see God's purpose prevail.

⁴ Hebrews 11