

God's Work Done God's Way: Lessons from Ezra 5-6

Have you ever felt discouraged when following God's plan? Perhaps you've faced opposition, delays, or even failure. The story of the Jewish people rebuilding the temple after their Babylonian captivity offers powerful insights into how God completes His work despite obstacles.

What Reignites God's Work When It Has Stalled?

In Ezra chapters 5-6, we see the Jewish people who had returned from exile facing opposition to rebuilding the temple. The work had stopped, but God wasn't finished. Four key elements helped reignite this important work:

1. God's Spirit Working Through God's Word

Two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, challenged and encouraged the discouraged people to resume building. Haggai reminded them to prioritize God's temple over their own houses, while Zechariah assured them that "it's not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord."

When we feel stuck or discouraged, we need the oxygen and fuel of God's Spirit and Word to reignite our passion. If God is speaking to you through His Word today, and His Spirit is moving upon your heart, that's your cue to obey and move forward.

2. The Unity of Believers Working Together

The prophets didn't just preach—they helped with the actual building work. They got their hands dirty alongside the people.

There are no lone rangers in Christianity. We're designed to function in community with other believers who encourage us and work alongside us. When God calls you to a task, He doesn't expect you to do it alone. Look around—you have a family of believers ready to help you glorify Jesus in your life.

3. Living in Truth and Trusting the Lord

When questioned by authorities about their building project, the Jewish leaders simply told the truth. They weren't rebellious—they were obedient to God's command and the Persian king's decree.

This reminds us that we can stand confidently before anyone when we're following God's will. Whether you face a boss, government official, or any other authority, you can stand in integrity with nothing to hide. Your part is obedience; the outcome belongs to God.

4. God's Supernatural Intervention

Verse 5 tells us "the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews." God was watching and protecting His work. This is what Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision, called "the God Principle"—leaving room in our plans for divine intervention that can only be attributed to God's hand.

When God moves, He often works in ways we couldn't have orchestrated ourselves. His fingerprints become evident as He turns situations around for His glory.

How Does God Handle Opposition to His Work?

When the local governor questioned the rebuilding project and reported it to King Darius, God worked in remarkable ways:

1. The king ordered officials to "step back and let the work continue"
2. He commanded them to "step up and foot the bill" using tax money from the region
3. He warned them to "step carefully or pay the price" with severe consequences for anyone interfering

In just one letter, God completely reversed the situation. The very nations that opposed the work were now forced to fund it! This demonstrates how God can handle any opposition we face when doing His work.

What Happens When God's Work Is Completed?

After 23 years of starts and stops, the temple was finally completed in 515 BC. The people celebrated with:

- Joyful dedication ceremonies
- Sacrifices representing all twelve tribes of Israel
- Celebration of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

Interestingly, verse 21 mentions that Gentiles who "had separated themselves from the filth of the nations" joined in the celebration. This foreshadows how God's ultimate temple—the church—would include both Jews and Gentiles united in worship.

The completion of the temple also attracted attention from surrounding nations. People watched the Jews' perseverance through opposition and God's favor upon them, leading some to turn to the true God.

How Can We See God's Hand in the Completed Work?

Verse 22 summarizes God's involvement in four ways:

1. "The Lord made them joyful" - true joy comes from God
2. "The Lord turned the heart of the king" - God moved powerful people
3. God strengthened their hands for the work through provision
4. God encouraged them through prophets to finish the work

Life Application

This week, take time to reflect on God's fingerprints in your own life. Ask the Lord to remind you of what He's done since you surrendered your heart to Him. Whether it was a week ago or decades ago, recall specific instances where God has shown His faithfulness.

Remember Hudson Taylor's words: "God's work done God's way will never lack God's supply." Your progress doesn't depend on your own wits, willpower, or strategies. It depends on your surrender and trust in God's faithfulness.

Ask yourself:

- Where have I seen God's fingerprints in my life recently?
- What work has God started in me that I need to trust Him to complete?
- Am I trying to accomplish God's work through my own strength rather than His Spirit?
- Who are the believers God has placed in my life to help me in His work?

Whatever opposition or discouragement you face, remember: "I may face oppositions and trials as I follow the Lord, but God will be faithful to finish His work."