

Ezra 8:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

Analysis

For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy—בָּשְׁתִּי (boshti, I was ashamed) reveals Ezra's ethical dilemma. Requesting חַיִל וְפָרָשִׁים (chayil u'farashim, force and horsemen—military escort) would have been diplomatically appropriate and prudent, but Ezra felt it would contradict his testimony. The כוֹשׁ (shame) isn't embarrassment but moral inconsistency—how could he request human protection after declaring divine protection sufficient?

Because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him—כִּי-אָמַרְנוּ לְפָלָג—(ki-amarnu lamelekh, for we had said to the king) references Ezra's earlier testimony to Artaxerxes (7:27-28). The יָד-אֱלֹהֵינוּ (yad-Eloheinu, hand of our God) on מְבַקְשִׁים (mevaqshav, those seeking Him) promises protection. **But his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him**—לְעִזָּתוֹ וְאַפּוֹ—(uzzo v'appo, His power and His anger) threatens לְעוֹזֵבָיו (l'ozevav, those forsaking Him). Ezra had made God's faithfulness a testimony to the pagan king; now he must live consistently with that witness, however risky. Faith's public confession creates accountability to trust God in crisis.

Historical Context

Artaxerxes' decree (7:11-26) authorized Ezra's journey and provided lavish funding but didn't mandate military escort—that was Ezra's decision to refuse. Ancient Near Eastern roads were dangerous; Persian royal roads had guard posts, but caravan attacks were common. Ezra's theological conviction that requesting military escort would dishonor his testimony to the king put him in extraordinary position: he'd publicly staked God's reputation on protecting them, then had to trust that claim with 1,500+ lives and vast treasure.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Ezra's refusal of military escort challenge modern Christian pragmatism that neglects faith-risk for security?
2. In what ways does public testimony about God's faithfulness create accountability to trust Him when crisis tests that claim?
3. What is the difference between wise stewardship (planning) and faithless self-reliance (refusing to trust God's provision)?

Interlinear Text

כִּי לִפְנֵי לְמַלְכֵי מְנֻלָּה וְלִשְׁאָה כִּי
H3588 For I was ashamed H954 to require H4480 of the king H4428 a band of soldiers H2428

וּמִפְּרַשׁ יְמִינֵינוּ בְּמִצְחָה אֹנוֹ בְּעֵצֶם כִּי
and horsemen H6571 to help H5826 us against the enemy H341 in the way H1870 H3588

לְאַמְתָּה רַבְתָּה לְמַלְכֵי לְאַמְתָּה רַבְתָּה יְדֵי אֱלֹהִים
because we had spoken H559 of the king H4428 because we had spoken H559 The hand H3027 of our God H430

וְאֶפְרַיִם עַל כָּל מִבְּקָשָׁיו לְטוֹב הַמְּלָאָקֵחַ וְאֶפְרַיִם
H5921 H3605 that seek H1245 is upon all them for good H2896 him but his power H5797 and his wrath H639

כָּל עַל אֶזְרָחִים
H5921 H3605 is against all them that forsake H5800

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 3:12 (Parallel theme): For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

2 Chronicles 16:9 (Parallel theme): For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

Lamentations 3:25 (Good): The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

2 Chronicles 15:2 (Parallel theme): And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye

be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

Psalms 34:22 (Parallel theme): The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

Romans 8:28 (Good): And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

1 Chronicles 28:9 (References God): And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

Hebrews 10:38 (Parallel theme): Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Ezra 7:6 (Kingdom): This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

Ezra 7:28 (Kingdom): And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.