

## God's hand was upon Me

*"Because the hand of the Lord my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me" (Ezra 7:28)*

The Bible is filled with stories of people who lived their lives under the influence and guidance of God's mighty hand. Through deep faith and a willingness to serve, God used them to fulfil His purposes. Ezra is one such example of what can happen when a person determines to seek God and then allows the Lord to use him. What speaks to my heart from this verse isn't the fact that God's hand was upon Ezra, but rather, that Ezra knew God intimately.

Ezra declared, *"The Lord my God's hand was on me."* It's Valentines Day tomorrow and many of the cards distributed will simply ask this question, *"Will you be my Valentine?"* We all want to have someone of our own to love! Yet, even with this desire already established in the human psyche, most people don't seek to love God in this way. What's evident when examining Ezra's life is that he genuinely loved God this way. He said, "the Lord MY God!".

In 457 B.C., Ezra led a group of Jews from Babylonian captivity back to Jerusalem. The theme of Ezra's life could be summarised in one statement... ***"The hand of the Lord my God was upon me."*** Six times in just two chapters he attributes his success to this one fact. I don't know about you, but I would love my life to be summed up in the same way. But how exactly was the hand of the Lord upon Ezra? What was present in Ezra's life because God's hand was on him?

1. **He received favour.** He received great favour from the King. **Ezra 7:6** says, *"This Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him."*
2. **He found helpmates.** As we walk down the road toward our destiny, we all need assistance along the way. This assistance is usually provided by people that God has connected us to. **Ezra 8:18-20** confirms this, *"Because the gracious hand of our God was on us, they brought us Sherebiah, a capable man, from the descendants of Mahli son of Levi, the son of Israel, and Sherebiah's sons and brothers, 18 in all; and Hashabiah, together with Jeshaiiah from the descendants of Merari, and his brothers and nephews, 20 in all. They also brought 220 of the temple servants—a body that David and the officials had established to assist the Levites. All were registered by name."*
3. **He was provided with safety.** One of the most vital aspects of God's blessings is the promise of complete safety. Psalm 91 defines with clarity this facet of God's divine character. We see it displayed in Ezra's life in verses 31 and 32, *"On the twelfth day of the first month we set out from the Ahava Canal to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he protected us from enemies and bandits along the way. So we arrived in Jerusalem, where we rested three days."*

Why did Ezra enjoy the blessing of God's provision and safety in his life? Is there anything we can glean from Ezra's story that might help us to secure the hand of God in our own lives?

I believe there is! Here are some reasons...

- a. **Ezra had prepared himself.** **Ezra 7:9,10** says. *"He had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel."* God was with him because Ezra had prepared his heart - to learn what God wanted him to do. Then after he had done it, he taught others to do it.

- b. **Ezra had sought the Lord.** He believed that God would be with those who seek him. *"The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him"* (**Ezra 8:22**). Ezra believed that God rewarded those who diligently seek Him, and this attitude pleased God.
- c. **Ezra was willing to step out in faith.** Trusting that the Lord would protect them, they began their perilous journey - **Ezra 8:31**. Note, it wasn't easy, for there were enemies and a potential ambush along the way! But Ezra illustrated that he had a living, working faith! He did not waiver because of any threats by the enemy. He did not waiver because he believed that God's mighty hand was upon him. And most of all, he trusted in God's faithfulness!
- d. **Ezra was ready to face difficult situations.** Upon his arrival, Ezra found a difficult situation (**Ezra 9:1-2**). Many of the Israelites had intermarried with Gentile women, and the rulers and leaders of Israel were the worst violators. However, Ezra did not let these emotionally charged issues deter him from doing God's will!

## CONCLUSION

- 1. The hand of the Lord was upon Ezra because he...
  - a. Had prepared himself
  - b. Sought the Lord
  - c. Was willing to step out in faith
  - d. Was ready to face difficult situations

So how can the hand of the Lord be upon us also? I suggest we emulate Ezra by...

- a. **Preparing** ourselves to be useful to the Lord.
- b. **Seeking** the Lord with diligence and zeal.
- c. **Stepping out** in faith against the odds.
- d. **Confronting** difficult issues and situations head on.

Let the example of Ezra's life encourage us, so that we can look back at the events in our lives and say:

***"The Hand Of The Lord My God Was Upon Me!"***