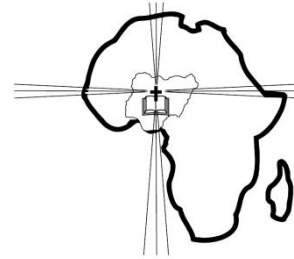


DAILY LINK WITH GOD 2015

A Daily Devotional Guide from the EYN (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria)



EYN leaders in Nigeria believe prayer is one of the most important ways to support the Nigerian people and the Church. These daily devotions were written by EYN members and published by the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria. Reading them daily is a powerful way we can be in solidarity and connect with our brothers and sisters caught in this crisis. EYN's daily devotional for 2015 will be posted a week at a time on the blog site www.brethren.org/nigeriablog, appearing mid-week for the following week. More information about the crisis can be found at www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis.

March

Text: Ezra 1-2

Brief Introduction

In this month, we are reading about the merciful God at work. We can see how He delivered his people from slavery in Babylon. God is merciful; He does not look at your ability. What God requires from us is faithfulness to Him.

March 15th Sunday 2015

Text: Ezra 4:24

Topic: The Effect of Opposition during Cyrus' Reign

Here they recorded later events and simply illustrated the continuing antagonism of Israel's enemies in the years that followed the main event discussed in this chapter. Work on the temple ceased in 536 B.C., as the writer noted here. The workers had only completed the foundation. Construction did not recommence until 520 B.C., 16 years later. Even when they [the restoration Jews] strived to again lay the foundations of that most important symbol of the presence of God, their sanctuary, discouragement took its toll; the whole project came to a complete stop for sixteen long years (Ezra 4:24). Everything was wrong: they lacked the means, then the inclination, and finally even the will to build the temple; for their every attempt met with constant opposition both from within the small group and from the outside (Ezra 3:12-13; 4:1-22). So it would have remained had not God graciously sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1). The enemy will never be victorious over you.

Lesson: Trust in the Lord Jesus.

Prayer: You are the Lord, you never change. Teach us to worship you. Amen.

March 16th Monday 2015

Text: Ezra 5:1-2

Topic: The Resumption of Work

The Book of Haggai contains four messages that Haggai delivered to the returned exiles in 520 B.C. We know from what he said that the people had turned from their commitment to rebuild the temple, to constructing comfortable houses for themselves (Hag. 1:2-11). The prophet Zechariah joined Haggai in encouraging the people to give God's interests priority over their own (v. 1). There is always an effective answer to discouragement in the bold proclamation of the word of God. In response to the ministries of these prophets, the people began to rebuild the temple again (v. 2; Hag. 1:12-14) in 520 B.C. (4:24). Even today, we concentrate on building mansions for ourselves neglecting the house of God.

Lesson: Be committed to building the house of God.

Prayer: Help us to exalt your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

March 17th Tuesday 2015

Text: Ezra 5:3-5

Topic: Tattenai's Question

The text does not say if the Jews' antagonistic neighbors had provoked Tattenai, the governor of the Persian province in which Jerusalem stood, to ask to see the Jews' temple building permit. It simply says he asked to see it. The Jews kept the construction work going while Tattenai determined whether they had authority to build. Tattenai had reason to question the Jews' actions without prodding from the Samaritans. Another reason for Tattenai's concern might very well have been what Zechariah was prophesying. He said that the "Branch," the long-expected descendant of David's line, would soon appear and sit on David's throne (Zech. 3:8; cf. Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5-6). What Zechariah predicted of the Messiah seemed to fit Zerubbabel to a tee (Zech. 6:9-15). Jesus has given us the permission to serve Him wherever we are.

Lesson: Do things that will glorify the Lord.

Prayer: May your deliverance be upon your church. Amen.

March 18th Wednesday 2015

Text: Ezra 5:6-17

Topic: Tattenai's Letter

In contrast to Rehum and Shimshai's letter to Artaxerxes (4:11-16), Tattenai's letter to Darius was fair and objective. He gave no indication of wanting to stop the Jews' project. He only wanted to know if Cyrus had really given permission for the Jews to rebuild the temple and if Darius wanted that edict to stand. The record of this letter in the text shows that high-ranking government officials had observed God's care for His chosen people. This would have encouraged the original readers of Ezra with the assurance that what they had done was honest, and that God was moving governors and kings to accomplish His will (cf. Prov. 21:1). No one will stop us from doing God's work.

Lesson: Diligence is required of us as God's children.

Prayer: Help us as EYN members to be faithful to you. Amen.

March 19th Thursday 2015

Text: Ezra 6:1-2

Topic: Darius' Search

Darius looked for Cyrus' edict in Babylon first. That was where Cyrus stayed for a while following his overthrow of that city in 539 B.C. He found nothing there. However, someone did discover a memorandum in one of Cyrus' files when they searched his summer capital, Ecbatana (modern Hamadan). According to the Greek historian Xenophon, Cyrus lived in Babylon during the winter, in Susa during the spring, and in Ecbatana in the summer. This memorandum was not the same as the edict (cf. 1:2-4). Nonetheless, it confirmed the edict and provided instructions for the royal treasurer, making a way for him to implement the edict. All that we read from the scriptures did happen.

Lesson: God's word dwells forever.

Prayer: Teach us Lord to be committed to you. Amen.

March 20th Friday 2015

Text: Ezra 6:3-5

Topic: Cyrus' Memorandum

The memorandum provided details that the edict did not contain. Among these details were the dimensions of the proposed temple. It was to be twice as high and three times as wide as Solomon's temple (v. 3; cf. 1 Kings 6:2). Obviously, Cyrus intended to sponsor a temple that would exceed Solomon's and therefore bring greater glory to him. The fact that the foundations, when completed, appeared less impressive than Solomon's (3:12- 13), suggests that the Jews did not take full advantage of their opportunity and resources. The Persian government had committed to pay for the building (v. 4). We too often fail to take full advantage of our opportunities and resources to glorify God.

Lesson: Use every opportunity available to glorify God.

Prayer: Lord, deliver your church from the devices of the enemy. Amen.

March 21st Saturday 2015

Text: Ezra 6:6-12

Topic: Darius' Decree

Evidently Darius also saw the Jerusalem temple as a monument to his own success. He instructed Tattenai to allow the Jewish governor, Zerubbabel, and his people to proceed unobstructed. Darius seems to have viewed Zerubbabel as the ruler of the Jews living in the jurisdiction of Tattenai, who governed the whole province that included Palestine and Jerusalem. Darius further specified that the provincial treasury should pay all costs (v. 8), and that the provincial governor should provide the items required for sacrifices in the temple. The king also wanted the Jews to pray for him and his family (v. 10). Although Darius revered Ahuramazda especially, it is understandable that in a world of polytheism he would want to make sure that he was in the favor of every god in his empire. One wonders if stories about Daniel (ca. 605-536 B.C.), who served under Cyrus (Dan. 6:28), might have had some influence on Darius. The Darius that the book of Daniel mentions, however, was Darius the Mede, not this Darius, who was a Persian.

Lesson: God's favor is always upon his children.

Prayer: Help the leadership of EYN to focus on you daily. Amen.