

A CALL TO ARMS

INTRODUCTION

We've been having a good conference. Once again, our God has been good to us, He has blessed us with His word and with good fellowship. On Friday night, we were reminded of God's call for us to serve, and how each of us has a part to play as we work together to build God's kingdom.

Yesterday, we were reminded that Elijah was a man just like us, and yet, he moved powerfully as a servant of the Lord. We learned that even he went through times of just wanting to give up, but the Lord strengthened him and sent him, once again to be His messenger.

Today I will remind us of our theme verse for this conference, **Ephesians 2:10** (NKJV) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. We will focus on how to remain motivated as we respond to God's "Call to Arms"

MESSAGE

Ezra 1:1-6 (NKJV) Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 2 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. 3 Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. 5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. 6 And all those who were around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

A CALL TO ARMS

What does the phrase call to arms mean?

1. a summons to engage in active hostilities.
2. a summons, invitation, or appeal to undertake a particular course of action a political call to arms.

As I prayed about the theme for this conference, it was instantly, "a call to arms". God wants us to engage in a specific set of activities which the enemy will see as hostile! This conference is not about the armour of God. The

armour is something a soldier already has. This conference is God calling us, His soldiers to attention. It's time to move out. We are going to leave the safety of our base and move into enemy territory to gain ground for God's Kingdom!

When God spoke to king Cyrus and told Him to build a house for Him in Jerusalem, Cyrus said this: "Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem"

- This was a call to arms!
- This call was for people to willingly get up and do something for God.
- ...It was also a call to give to the cause.

Do you know who responded to the call? **Ezra 1:5** Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.

- The leaders, the priests and the Levites.
- And all those whose spirits God had moved.

Church, have you felt it? Have you been sensing God's call to arms? Has God been challenging you in your spirit? We have a work to do here. There is a house that needs to be rebuilt!

THE WORK BEGAN!

The very first thing that was rebuilt was the altar of worship. They rebuilt the altar and began to make offerings to God on it.

Ezra 3:10-11(NKJV) When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel." Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

The Lord would remind us today that responding to His call to arms, begins with a ready heart and is immediately followed by worship!

In September 2015 with our first conference. We responded to God's call and we laid a foundation and started to worship in a way we had not done before. Bit is it possible that we have slowed down in our worship and slipped back in our worshipping our God?

Today let us come to a place of renewed commitment to worship the Lord! It's time to respond in every form of worship!

IT MAY NOT LOOK THE SAME AS IN THE PAST

Ezra 3:12-13 (NKJV) But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.

The repaired temple was not as majestic and beautiful as the previous one. The people who could remember wept instead of rejoicing. Their weeping was loud and heard afar off.

- ***We cannot duplicate what was done in the past!***
- ***A new move may not be as spectacular as what happened in the past.***
- ***It may not look the same or feel the same.***
- ***But it's what God is calling us to do! It's time to get up and say, I'm more interested in being obedient to God's call than what I'm concerned about what things in the secular realm look like.***
- ***It's time to say. I will stop looking to the past. I'm going to do what God has called me to do now!***

DON'T BE AFRAID OR DISCOURAGED

Ezra 4:1 (NKJV) Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, **Ezra 4:4-5** (NKJV) Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, ⁵and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

They did their best to discourage the people from building and eventually even wrote letters to the new king Artaxerxes accusing the Jews of rebellion. They lied about them, and eventually got it right to stop the work.

Ezra 4:24 (NKJV) Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Discouragement, frustration, accusation, opposition. These are the tools of the enemy! The rebuilding work was stopped for many years. Eventually God raised up prophets Haggai and Zechariah to come and lead the completion of the work.

Over the past months, we have seen irregular Sunday attendance, sometimes, our worship is not as hungry and desperate as it was before, and we have seen a slowing down in giving.

Have you become discouraged, despondent or frustrated? Are life's challenges and the enemy's constant attacks holding you back. Has the enemy been successful in stopping you?

Don't allow the devil to bring your walk with God to a standstill. In the face of the storm, worship more, attend more, be more involved and even give more. We have been called to action!

THERE'S A WORK THAT REQUIRES COMPLETION!

Ezra 6:14-16 (NKJV) So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. 15 Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. 16 Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

- They built and completed the work.
- They built under God's command.
- God even gave them favour from those who had kept them in captivity.
- When the work was done it was time for celebration and great joy.

Church, God has called us to be a church of irresistible influence. There is work to be done here in Krugersdorp and further afield. We are building God's kingdom. We have a church to rebuild too. There are still too many empty seats. We must pray and work hard so that there will be no more empty seats! We are called to action and we need to compete the work.

- ***It will be hard.***
- ***It will take sacrifice.***
- ***It may not be quick.***
- ***But it will result in great joy!***

THE LATTER GLORY

I read earlier about how the people cried when they remembered how majestic the earlier temple had looked versus the repaired version.

Haggai 2:2-9 (NKJV) In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying: 2 "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: 3

'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing? 4 Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the Lord; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the Lord, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the Lord of hosts. 5 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

6 "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord of hosts. 8 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts. 9 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the Lord of hosts."

We received a prophecy a number of years ago about this very thing! "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,"

Church, it's not about looks or perceptions, it's all about God, it's about His presence, it's about what's happening in the spiritual realm. We need to ask the Lord to open our eyes to see the majesty of what He is doing through His eyes. We need to respond to God's "Call to Arms". So that the Lord can send His glory into this house, and we can experience the promised "Latter Glory".

CONCLUSION

God has spoken to us this weekend. We have begun a good work but have faced some challenges on the way which have slowed some of us down and have even stopped some of us. But there is a work to be completed at Christian Heritage Church and we are "Called to action".

- The work must begin, and it begins with a restoration of worship.
- Don't worry if it doesn't look the same as it did before!
- We must not allow ourselves to become discouraged or distracted.
- We must develop a mentality of, "I'm going to finish this work".
- We must seek the greater latter glory.

God told Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people: "Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the Lord; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the Lord, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the Lord of hosts. 5 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

He is with us, His Spirit remains among us and we need not fear. It's time to respond to God's "Call to arms".