To Dr. Rick Griffith Homiletics 1 Student: Tjen Ie Hoa Speaker#11 Mb:147

**Avoid Paganism**

**Ezra 9:1-15**

Cyclical Inductive Outline Manuscript

**Topic** : Paganism

**Subject** : You are willing to separate yourself from paganism

**Complement** : rather than risking your faith

**Purpose** : The listeners will separate themselves from paganism

**Introduction**

1. Arouse interest: Do you know that child abortion can be associated as child sacrifices as in

Canaanite practise? Abortion rate worldwide in 2010 to 2014 were 56.3 million.[[1]](#footnote-1)

A survey found out the reason for abortion that only 7% abortions for the reason for

health of the babies or the mothers but the most reason was because they did not want

the babies.[[2]](#footnote-2)

2. Need: Are you aware that there still many pagan practises around you? Can you identify

one more? for example worship false idols. If you are aiming for good grades forsaking

your health, forsaking your daily devotion, even violating your faith by plagiarism. The

good grade has been your false idol.

3. Subject: Why should you and I avoid pagan practise?

4. Background: Israel was in exile to Babylon for 70 years because of their disobedience to God. Although Israel was not faithful to God, God showed His faithfulness to them. Through King Cyrus of Persian kingdom, who overthrown Babylon, Israel was allowed to return to their land and to build their temple. The building of temple was led by Zerubbabel, while the building of the wall was lead by Nehemiah and the renewal of the people was done by Ezra.[[3]](#footnote-3) There was a 58 year gap between Ezra chapter 1- 6 and chapter 7 - 10.[[4]](#footnote-4) In chapter 1-6 the event was the rebuilding of the temple but stopped due to the opposition. In chapter 7 the second return under Ezra. In chapter 8 they gave offering for God's temple.

5. Preview: Today's text brings out two reasons we should separate ourselves from paganism. Restatement: Ezra reminds us that God's people cannot do pagan practise in Ezra 9:1-15. We will read verse 1 and 2 "After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring people with their detestable practises, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabiates, Egyptians and Amorites. They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled with the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness." (NIV)

**I. Pagan practises ruin our faith (1-2)**

Doing ungodly things which the non believers do will make us away from God.

A. Notice in verse 1-2 Israel's intermarriage was serious problem because intermarriage

would risk the lineage of Messiah (1-2)

1. The leader told Ezra that the people of Israel including the priests and the Levites

had involved with the pagans practises, these things that God forbids.

2. The pagan detestable practises were child sacrifices, seeing the sign through

animal's internal organs, consulting the dead, temple prostitution, worship idols.

3. Their intermarriage with the pagans around them was disobedience to God's

commands in Deuteronomy 7:3-4 which says:

3 "Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your

daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. 4 For they

will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods,"

6. Israel's intermarriage with pagans would risk their identity as God's people.

This was a threat to Messianic line. Therefore their problem of intermarriage was

serious.

B. We should not do pagans practises because pagan practises ruin our faith

1. Through intermarriage with pagans, Israel turned away from their God. Even a

person with such wisdom like king Solomon turned away from God because of his

pagans wives. King Ahab married Jezebel, a pagan and made the whole nation

turned away from God.

2. Maybe there is question in our mind whether we as Christians can marry the nonbelievers? Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:14 also says that we should not be an unequally yoke. For the single should not seek unbeliever for spouse. For the married couple with unbeliever spouse do not seek to divorce but to pray that through your witness your spouse may also become believer.

3. Other example the idolatry. We may be saying that we do not statue to worship. But everything that we love more than our God, is the practise of idolatry. Is it our possessions, or our hobby or person that we love more than God.

4. It also could be our being worry too much, until we find it difficult to trust God. During my first year staying in Singapore, I was very much worry about not being able to pay the house rental. Until God reminded me through a cell group

that I had worshiped idol, which was my being worry too much and put aside my faith in Him. God does help my family and me, we have been here for 10 years.

(The second reason we should separate from paganism is...)

**II. Pagan practising will effect whole community (3-15)**

Doing the ungodly things which the non believers do will influence others around us

A. Notice in verse 3 to 15 Ezra lamented and confessed in public prayer (3-15)

1. Ezra lamented as if there was death (3-5)

a. Ezra was tearing his outer clothes and also his inner clothes as sign of intensification of lament.

b. Ezra was pulling his hair.

c. Ezra sat there until evening. Ezra did not force the leaders but he encouraged them to see the problem themselves and respond to it

d. Ezra lamented as if there was someone dead.

e. We may feel that Ezra lamentation was extremely weird, but this is the culture

in the Jews when they were in lamentation they would do such things like Ezra did. We can remember how Mordecai also did almost the same thing with Ezra when the Jews were threaten with abolishment.

2. Ezra confessed in public prayer (6-15)

a. God has been faithful, Israel not faithful by punishing them less than they

deserve. God is faithful by preserving the remnant of Israel instead of abolish the whole nation for their disobedience. God is faithful by remembering His promise to Abraham and brought them back from exile. God is faithful that through the Davidic line, the Messiah came for salvation of God's people.

b. Ezra admitted that God is righteous but Israel is guilty.

B. We need to separate ourselves from paganism.

Here is the story about a dropbox in South Korea. It is a depository place not for books or other things but for babies. People come to put the unwanted babies in the box. The babies or children who become a burden to the parents because of their down syndrome or disable are given to the dropbox. In the world that many people adore beauty and handsome, even people are willing to have surgery to be beautiful and handsome. Therefore these disable children are bringing shame to their family. Many leaves their unwanted babies on the street but these babies could be died and attacked by dogs. Contrary from them, Pastor Lee Jong Rak made a dropbox that people may bring their unwanted babies there. He and his wife takes care of these babies with love. Pastor Lee and his wife has 3 dozen of children in 2011. They are children with down syndrome, celebral palsy, blind, deaf and paralyzed. How Pastor Lee can develop his love and kindness? He also has a handicapped son who born with deformity. His son was in intensive care and he spent the first fourteen years in hospital. Pastor Lee blamed God for his son illness but he repented. God help him to cope with his problem. Through his son, his faith become stronger. He also encourages other people who have disabled children.[[5]](#footnote-5)

(The whole passage basically say..)

**Conclusion**

1. Separate yourself from paganism rather than risking your faith

2. We do not follow what nonbelievers do but do things according to the teaching of Christ to grow stronger in faith.

3. Application: Separate yourself from pagan practise. Be discerning of the practises that

may not appropriate to your faith, do not follow of such practises.

* How do you pursue you study in SBC? When people in another place like to have a short cut, for example: plagiarism, do we Christians tempted to follow their practises?
* And how do you do your ministry? People like to be praised in doing their good deeds, but do you still do your ministry when people do not appreciate or even against you? Do you forgive people who hates you? Remember that our calling is to follow Christ and to carry the cross. Do you dare to be different with the world?

4. Prayer

1. http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)30380-4/abstract, accessed on 15 Apr 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.abort73.com/abortion\_facts/us\_abortion\_statistics/, accessed on 15 Apr 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Internetseminary.org [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Rick Griffith, Old Testament Survey: Ezra (SBC Lecture Note, 2015), 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jun/19/world/la-fg-south-korea-orphans-20110620, accessed on 16 apr 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)