

DANCING WITH THE FORBIDDEN

If you are joining us for the first time, you find us going through a teaching series titled **FROM RUBBLE TO RADIANCE PRT 2**. The thesis of this series is all about the God who is able and willing to turn around our situations – He restores your soul, he gives glory for ashes, He turns your mourning into dancing, your sorrows into joy.

We looked at a Bible story in Ezra, in which God touched the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia, to rebuild God's temple in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:1 And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, so that the Word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also in writing, saying, 2 So says Cyrus king of Persia, Jehovah, the God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

We discovered that there is something significant about God's temple that God had to touch the heart of a pagan king to ensure its rebuilding.

We then took a journey to explore the significance of the temple, and by the end of that message, we had discovered that God wants to dwell among His people and He chose to do so by establishing His temple.

As we talk right now, that temple is not brick and mortar, but rather it is the human body of God's children and the gathering of God's people. In other words, you are the temple of God.

I hope that gives you an idea of what we are dealing with.

- For Cyrus to decide to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem meant that something had happened to the temple – the temple had been destroyed.
- When Babylon invaded Jerusalem, the city was gutted down, the city was in ruins, and what was left was a heap of rubble.
- To appreciate the book of Ezra, you must understand the events that led to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. It is required of us to answer the question as to why the temple was destroyed.
- If something is dead, if something is not working, you need to understand why that is the case. Unless you know the root cause of the problem, you will end up only dealing with symptoms and not the real issue causing the symptoms.
- This is the subject of my message this morning. I want to talk to you about **DANCING WITH THE FORBIDDEN**.
- When you dance with someone, you are friendly, accommodating, and in proximity. You entertain each other and adhere to a certain rhythm and tempo.
- "Forbidden" in scripture refers to divine boundaries set for the spiritual well-being and holiness of God's people.

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- Just as a boundary wall protects what is inside and keeps dangerous things from coming in, so are God's boundaries.
- Divine boundaries are not depriving measures but are rather protective and freedom-enhancing measures.
- As people of the new covenant, we have liberties found in Christ, but there are behaviors that will take away from the quality of our relationship with God.
- So, what led to the destruction of the temple? The simple and yet thought-provoking answer is that Israel danced with the forbidden.
- The destruction of the temple was never an indication of God's weakness and inability to protect His temple.
- Rather, it was because the temple had lost its essence of being a meeting point between God and His people. It had lost its purpose and calling, and as a result, God handed it over to the enemies of the Jews.
- One of the divine boundaries set by God has to do with worship (what and how you worship). *Exodus 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
- Idolatry refers to the worship, reverence, or extreme devotion directed toward anyone or anything other than the one true God.
- It is when allegiance and worship are transferred from God to something else, and when you position something in a supreme position that belongs to God.
- King Solomon was the first king to entertain idols, and that became a cancer among God's people. *1 Kings 11:1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites:...4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.*
- The fish starts rotting from the head, and this was the case with Israel. When Solomon loved pagan women and their gods, the temple worship was defiled.
- Leadership errors multiply faster than leadership successes.
- Israel became the victim of the leaders. But God raised prophets to warn His people against dancing with the forbidden.

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- It is God's nature to warn first before He punishes His people. You and I are in a better place if we pay attention to God's warning to avoid God's chastening.

2 Kings 17:13 The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets." 14 But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in the Lord their God. 15 They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their ancestors and the statutes he had warned them to keep. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the Lord had ordered them, "Do not do as they do."

- I am sure sitting here, we all question the intelligence of these Jews as to why they would bow down to carved images. Surely, they could see that those idols were motionless, powerless, and it was outright foolish to worship them.
- Their idolatry hurt God, and their unfaithfulness separated them from God. Today, we might not bow down to dead images, but we regularly dance with our own modern-day idols
- You are not going up the mountain or high place, but you have a mountain that you climb every day of your life. You might not wrap your body around an Asherah pole, but you have a pole tugged in your heart.
- What are the Modern-day idols (forbidden things)?

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 16 because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

- Dancing with the forbidden begins with having an unhealthy relationship with values and beliefs that oppose God.
- John warns his listeners not to love the world and the things of the world. God warned the Israelites not to love the women of other nations. Nothing has greater influence on a man than the woman he loves.
- When you love the world and what it offers, it is a matter of time before you bow down to it.
- Human beings are prone to dancing with the forbidden in one of three areas:

1. The lust of the flesh – the desire to acquire the luxuries of this life

- It is having an inordinate (excessive, undue) desire for that which satisfies your fleshly appetites.
- Our fallen nature has intense desires that beg for attention – the desire for pleasure, comfort and satisfaction.
- You are in danger of dancing with the forbidden when you prioritize the satisfaction of physical needs at the expense of God's will.

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- These pursuits distract you from true devotion to the Lord, and John warns us to run away from such.

2. The lust of the eye – that which is attractive to the eye

- This is an area that Solomon addresses in Ecclesiastes, which he terms vanity of vanities.
- The sight is gratified by costly clothes, jewelry, a beautiful girl on your side, shiny and expensive cars, and houses in golf estates.
- A person who is gripped by the lust of the eye needs deliverance because it can drive someone into dangerous behavior.
- God wants us to have all these things because they are His creations, which He made available to us.
- You are in danger of dancing with the forbidden when the desire for what satisfies the eye is the ultimate pursuit of your life.
- In other words, you are driven by acquiring the next jewelry, the latest iPhone 17, the latest running shoes – you must always ask yourself this question: “What is the connection between what I am pursuing and my walk with God?”

3. The pride of life – anything that promotes self

- God granted us ambition and a desire to make progress, but when it is overextended, it becomes a hindrance to our walk with God.
- The ambition for honor, for titles and to be better than others can become an idol in your life.
- It leads you to venerate an aspect of your life that gives you a sense of advantage over others.
- If you believe that your skin color puts you in a higher bracket than others, then you find yourself being racist in your outlook on life. If you think that your education makes you better than others, then you look down on the seemingly uneducated.
- Your worth is not premised on what you have but in whom God says you are.
- The apostle John warns us to run away from these idols, he warns us to stop dancing with the forbidden.
- If we do not attend to the warnings, we will experience the same fate as the first temple. After being warned by prophets, the people of God remain stuck in their forbidden lifestyle and look at the result:

Jeremiah 26:6 then I will destroy this Temple as I destroyed Shiloh, the place where the Tabernacle was located. And I will make Jerusalem an object of cursing in every nation on earth.” 7 The priests, the prophets, and all the people listened to Jeremiah as he spoke in front of the LORD 's Temple. 8 But when Jeremiah had finished his message, saying everything the

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LORD had told him to say, the priests and prophets and all the people at the Temple mobbed him. "Kill him!" they shouted. 9 "What right do you have to prophesy in the LORD 's name that this Temple will be destroyed like Shiloh? What do you mean, saying that Jerusalem will be destroyed and left with no inhabitants?" And all the people threatened him as he stood in front of the Temple.

- The temple was destroyed, the glory departed, and the nation of Israel lost its place among other nations – they were taken into captivity, and those who remained in Judah and Israel were under the control of Babylon.
- When we dance with the forbidden, God will come and take away the idols in our lives, and God will demote us from our place of authority. God will come and remove His presence from us.
- Sometimes the absence of God's presence in a church and in certain lives is an indication of idolatry.

Unless you encounter Jesus, it is impossible to stop dancing with the forbidden.

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