

## Pursuing God's Glory in the Midst of Discouragement and Fear

Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23  
Sunday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
By Ryan Perry

### Scripture:

#### Haggai 2:1–9, 20-23

*[1] In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: [2] “Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, [3] ‘Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? [4] Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, [5] according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. [6] For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. [7] And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. [8] The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. [9] The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.’”*

*[20] The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, [21] “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, [22] and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. [23] On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts.”*

### Let's Pray

#### Introduction:

It was mid-April of 1999 and in roughly a month and a half I was getting ready to graduate from high school. I was excited because I had auditioned for a music school and they were ready to give me a pretty sizable music scholarship to go there.

So of course, I assumed that this meant that I would get accepted despite barely being a C average student who only got a 21 on their ACT. I still remember the day I got that rejection letter. I was so devastated and discouraged, not to mention the fact that I hadn't applied to any other schools. Not one.

I felt lost and didn't know what to do. So instead of applying to other schools I decided I would take a year off and work full-time. Now, there were so many blessings to that year off, but the biggest one was that was the year that God open my eyes to him, and I put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

But I wasn't excited about moving forward with the school thing, and frankly I didn't even know how to move forward. Finally, my mom found a smallish school in southern Minnesota which at that time was called Mankato State. Now, I really had no desire to go there, but eventually she convinced me to apply and by God's grace I got in.

It is now almost 13 years since I took my last college course. **But the blessings that have come from that one decision to follow my mom's advice of been immense.**

The blessings of my wife, my two music degrees, my first job in southern Illinois which led us to a local church and pastor that God used in our lives to prepare us for the call to full-time ministry first in Cleveland, OH and now here.

As we looked at Haggai 2 this morning, we will encounter a people who are also discouraged and afraid. If you were here last week you may remember that God through the prophet Haggai called out these Jews because when they came back from captivity, they started to rebuild the temple, but stopped when persecution and hardship came.

**And they become consumed with their own physical safety instead of God's glory and presence among them in the temple.**

He even told them that their current struggles to provide for themselves were punishments from God because they had neglected the rebuilding of the temple. From there he called them to repent and to take up the work of rebuilding the temple and restoring God's presence and glory among them. As he says in Haggai 1:8:

***[8] Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD.***

And the amazing thing is that they actually responded and obeyed the voice of the Lord. As Haggai writes in Haggai 1:12, 14b-15:

***[12] Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.***

***And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, [15] on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.***

But now, let's fast forward almost one month later. It's the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month and the people are finishing up the feast of booths where for seven days they are to live in temporary houses and are supposed to bring in the harvest and give the first fruits of that harvest along with other food offerings to the LORD. **But instead of this being a joyous occasion, for many it was a time of discouragement.**

Look with me at Haggai 2:1-3:

*[1] In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: [2] "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, [3] 'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?'*

God, speaking through Haggai brings this message to these Jews and identifies their discouragement. It is the realization that this new temple structure was going to be so pitiful in comparison with the previous temple **that it is like nothing in their eyes.** And they would be asking, "how will God dwell in this thing?", "how will his glory and presence actually be with us when this structure seems so small and weak?"

Not to mention the fact that they are required to celebrate a festival centered around the harvest and food offerings when they are struggling to harvest enough food for themselves. **So their discouragement and fear during this time would have been at an all time high when they had just started rebuilding the temple, and I can imagine that they wanted to quit.**

**But God has a message for them that will not only encourage them in their discouragement, but it will give them the necessary energy and confidence to persevere in pursuing God's glory in the temple despite their discouragement and fear.**

And realizing that we all either have or are experiencing discouragement and fear in our lives I believe message still has great application today. This message has three parts to it, and they are as follows:

- 1. Fully pursue and work for God's glory because he is with us (V. 4-5).*
- 2. Fully pursue and work for God's glory because God himself will complete the work (V. 6-9).*
- 3. Fully pursue and work for God's glory with the hope of his forever kingdom (V. 20-23).*

So let's jump right in to looking at our first point.

## 1. Fully pursue and work for God's glory because he is with us (V. 4-5).

### Haggai 2:4-5:

*[4] Yet now **be strong**, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. **Be strong**, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. **Be strong**, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. **Work, for I am with you**, declares the LORD of hosts, [5] according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. **My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.***

Do you remember learning to ride a bike as a kid? For most of us our experiences are very similar in this area. We would get on the bike and start to peddle it forward. But instead of having to figure out how to stay up on our own, there was usually a parent there who was holding onto the bike. **And every time we got scared, they would say, don't worry, I got you and I am with you.**

When the Israelites saw this less than grand version of the temple they were building, they became discouraged, fearful, and they probably wanted to quit. Why? Because they would be thinking that God's presence would never be with them again.

**Meaning, they were doing this work with very little hope that God would actually be their God and would once again dwell with them and bless them as his people.**

Can you fathom how hard and disheartening that would be? Especially in light of the fact that they were just a small remnant of Jews in the midst of the vast Persian empire. And they lived among adversaries who didn't really like them and would enjoy nothing more than destroying their little group.

Yet, God doesn't let them sit in their fear and discouragement. Instead he calls them to action. In the first half of verse 4 he calls them to **be strong (Be courageous)**. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of verse 4 he calls them to **work (to do and accomplish)**. And finally, at the end of verse 5 he calls them to **fear not (not be frightened)**.

But he doesn't just call them to action based on their own ability to work or to have courage. Instead he calls them to these actions as a response to or in-light of the fact that he is with them.

As he say in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of verse 4 and 5:

***Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, [5] according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst.***

Do you get how encouraging and invigorating this must have been? They were worried that God's presence wouldn't be with them and that he was never going to bless them again, and he reminds them, **“despite what you see right now, I am with you and my Spirit remains with you, and I am going to be your God and bless you.”**

And to encourage them even further he says that he is with them not because of what they have done, but because of the covenant he made with them when they came out of Egypt.

The covenant that he is specifically bringing to mind the covenant that God made with Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 34 after the golden calf incident. **Which would have been a reminder, of God's promised faithfulness and presence with them despite their past sins and failures.**

Now I know that many of us have experienced or are experiencing discouragement and fear. Maybe it's the discouragement of the marginalization of Christianity in our western culture. Maybe it's the seemingly fast move away from morality within our country.

Maybe it's the discouragement and fear associated with health issues (mental or physical) that seem like they aren't getting any better. It might be the discouragement that comes from loneliness or broken relationships in your life, or even the fear of loved ones perishing apart from knowing Christ. Since this is Mother's Day, maybe it's the discouragement of wanting to be a mom, but either never having the opportunity or the ability.

And it is these fears and discouragements that can make you want to give up or to believe the lie that God isn't with you or for you. But take heart this morning, because of the blood of Jesus Christ poured out on the cross we are apart of his new covenant. As the author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 8:10:

*[10] For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

And based on this New Covenant we have a promise from God that he is with us, he is our God, and we are his people. Which means that we can be strong, we can put away fear, and we can do the hard work of following hard after Christ and his glory knowing that he will never leave us, he will never forsake us.

**He will and does protect us. And he will work in us and through us and for our good so that we can persevere and endure even the hardest of times, the heaviest discouragements, and through our greatest fears until the day he takes us home.**

**2. Fully pursue and work for God's glory because God himself will complete the work (V. 6-9).**

**Haggai 2:6-9:**

*[6] For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. [7] And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. [8] The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. [9] The latter*

*glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.’”*

This Jewish remnant have now been bolstered in their confidence with the promise that God will be with them and that he will be their God and they will be his people.

But there is still this task of rebuilding the temple. How will the work get finished? How will it become a place that is worthy of God’s presence? How will they get all the materials we need? Can this small group of Israelites really accomplish this task?

And it’s almost as if God anticipates these questions in verses 6-9 when he answers them with this phrase in verse 6, **“Yet once more, in a little while, I WILL...”**

**God is the one who is going to complete it.** As he says through Haggai, *“I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and dry lands and the nations. I will be the one who will fill this house with glory, which means that I will bring in all the necessary treasures from the surrounding nations so that his temple, my dwelling place, can be finished. And I will fill this house with my presence and glory and will make this temple greater than the previous one.”*

And if there was any doubt in the people’s minds as to why God was able to do this, he answers them by reminding them that he is the **LORD of hosts and in verse 8** that all the silver and all the gold of all the nations belongs to him.

Meaning, that he is the sovereign and powerful God who created all treasure and all things. And everything belongs to him and everything is under his powerful and sovereign control.

**This is an amazing truth that is such a mystery to us.** God calls us to work heartily unto him for his glory in everything that we do, but he is also the one who says that he ultimately brings all of our good works to completion.

Look with me at the following verses that highlight this reality:

**Philippians 2:12-13:**

*[12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

God calls us to obey him and to work and yet he says he is the one who is doing it in us and through us.

**Ephesians 2:10:**

*[10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

God created us for good works and prepared them for us, and yet he calls us to walk in them or do them.

Finally, 1 Peter 2:2 says:

*[2] Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*

This is God's call through Peter for us to pursue spiritual milk. But then in verse 5 he says:

*[5] you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

It is God who, through Christ, is causing us to grow.

All of this points to the reality that for these Israelites in Haggai's day and for us today that we serve a God who calls us to work, and to work heartily for his glory and purposes. But we do it knowing that the real outcome of our work is in God's hands. He is the one who will bring it to completion and he is the one who will use all our work to bring about his eternal purposes.

But here is the problem. We often live as if our lives are dependent on us and so we grow weary and lose heart in the things God has given us to do or the trials that we endure. Or we go to the other extreme which is not doing anything because we say "God's in control, he's gotta do it." And we just sit on our hands become complacent.

**And the truth is that both extremes are not only unbiblical, but they will lead to discouragement, worry, weariness as we sit and wonder whether we have done enough or if God is going to show up and do something in the midst of our trials and hardships.**

Instead we must live in the knowledge that we are to work with all of our might for the glory of God, in every area of our lives. Is it going to be hard? Yes. Will discouragement and disappointments come? Yes.

But instead of trying to live this life on our own, we overcome the hard, discouragement, and fear by living in the knowledge and with the hope that God, through Christ, is working in us and through us, and in all situations that that we face so that his purposes will be accomplished and his glory will shine brightest. **He will show up, he will work, and he will bring all things to the perfect completion that he has planned for them.**

**3. Fully pursue and work for God's glory with the hope of his forever kingdom (V. 20-23).**

*[20] The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, [21] "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the*

*heavens and the earth, [22] and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. [23] On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts.”*

Now, I always tend to do this where I spend a lot of time on the first two points, and then I don't have a lot of time for the last one, and this will be no different. But the last truth that God has for us this morning is really the one that gives significance and weight to the other two.

God through Haggai is letting the Israelites know that what they are working towards in this earthly temple is a foreshadowing of a greater heavenly temple and kingdom to come. That one day he will overthrow the nations, he will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of nations, and he will make the line of David (or in this passage he uses Zerubbabel) like a signet ring (**which is a sign of kingly authority**).

And though this can have an application in their day, it points to a greater truth that one day the lion of Judah, the one from David's line, will return and will destroy all earthly kingdoms and will set up his forever rule and reign. And even today we live in the anticipation of that day because we know that this person is Christ who one day will return, he will destroy his enemies, and we will reign with him in his forever kingdom.

Meaning, that we can work for God's glory knowing that yes he is with us, and yes he will accomplish his purposes in all the situations that we face. But all of this is working towards and preparing us for that day when he will return and setup his forever kingdom here on earth. **We live and work knowing that every day we are moving closer to the realization of the future hope of an eternity with him.**

So this morning, if you are living in fear, if you are facing crippling discouragement, and you feel like giving up hope, don't lose heart, work heartily unto the Lord and for his glory knowing that as you work, he is with you and he loves you as his people, and that he is working towards and will accomplish his great purposes in you and through you, as you await that glorious day when you and I and all of us will be in his glorious kingdom forever.

**Let's pray.**