

Haggai 2:1-9

I am sure that you have heard of the 18th century preacher, John Wesley...the father of the Methodist Church. He was really a remarkable individual...he was definitely persevering. Listen to the following notes from his diary.

Sunday, A.M., May 5 Preached in St. Anne's. Was asked not to come back anymore.
Sunday, P.M., May 5 Preached in St. John's. Deacons said "Get out and stay out."
Sunday, A.M., May 12 Preached in St. Jude's. Can't go back there, either.
Sunday, A.M., May 19 Preached in St. Somebody Else's. Deacons called special meeting and said I couldn't return.
Sunday, P.M., May 19 Preached on street. Kicked off street.
Sunday, A.M., May 26 Preached in meadow. Chased out of meadow as bull was turned loose during service.
Sunday, A.M., June 2 Preached out at the edge of town. Kicked off the highway.
Sunday, P.M., June 2 Afternoon, preached in a pasture. Ten thousand people came out to hear me.

Wesley was a man of perseverance...and if we are to be prepared for the Presence of God in our lives and in our church, we will need to learn the art of persevering. We see it in Haggai. The foundation of the temple was laid, but things stalled for 16 years until Haggai came challenging them to finish the work.

This task of rebuilding the temple was vitally important. The temple was where the manifest presence of God resided. So, when God instructed the people to build, or prepare, the temple, He was in essence instructing them to prepare for the presence of God. There are several things that must be in place if they were to adequately prepare themselves and the temple, for the presence of God.

Last week, we saw that the first thing that had to be put in order was their priorities. They had turned inward. Now, we see that not only did their priorities need to be re-ordered, but now their perseverance needed to be addressed.

READ/PRAY

In Haggai's 3rd message, he calls the people to persevere. Perseverance is absolutely necessary if we are to experience the presence of God. If we are to persevere we must learn to deal with some challenges.

I. Discouragement

v1-3

This expression calls attention to the fact that this building and nothingness amounted to the same thing.

1. In spite of all their effort, the appearance of the temple under construction gave little evidence of being a worthy successor to the Solomonic temple.
2. There was NO comparison between the 2 buildings.
3. The high hopes they had entertained at the beginning of their work could quickly turn to disappointment, so Haggai delivers a message to encourage them persevere in the face of discouragement.

How can you deal with discouragement? We see some hints here in Haggai.

1. Be Strong v4a

- a. God said be strong 3 times
- b. If we are going to persevere in the face of discouragement, we must be strong
- c. Nahum 2:1 *The scatterer has come up against you. Man the ramparts; watch the road; dress for battle; collect all your strength.*
- d. 1 Corinthians 16:13 *Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.*

2. Keep Working v 4b

- a. Often the minute discouragement comes, we throw in the towel
- b. This must be God shutting a door.
- c. It is important that you keep working. Keep doing the last thing....the basics...even when life and circumstances discourage you. These are the people that God uses.
 1. Moses was tending the flocks of Jethro when he encountered a burning bush
 2. Gideon was threshing wheat when the Angel of the Lord came to him
 3. Elisha was plowing when he was called of God
 4. James and John were mending their nets
 5. Matthew was collecting taxes
- d. Keep working through the discouragement

3. Trust God v4c-5

- a. Be confident in the promises of God
- b. What had God promised them in Haggai 1:13?
- c. Here he reiterates it in the final part of verse 4
- d. Zech 4:10 *For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.*
- e. If God is with you, you can be confident
- f. Romans 8:31-39
- g. If you are sure that God is with you, you can persevere in spite of any discouragement

II. Doubt

Some of the people were likely beginning to wonder, are we going to build this temple?

1. We are already in a financial crunch.
2. What we have gotten put together thus far doesn't even compare with the old one
3. And there seems to be no hope in the future.
4. They were struggling with doubt: is this really what God wants from us?

Haggai gives them direction on how to deal with the doubt that challenged their perseverance.

1. God has a Plan to Make His Will Happen v6-7

- a. Haggai informed them that God would so move among the nations that they would provide for the temple rebuilding.
- b. If God calls you to do something, you may not understand it, but God has a plan
- c. If God calls this church to do something, God's got a plan
- d. It is not our job to figure it all out! It is our job to follow Him step by step.

2. God has the Prosperity to Make His Will Happen v8

- a. The money didn't belong to the nations. It belonged to God.
- b. There are some of you who hesitate to persevere in the plan of God, because it's not in the budget!
- c. You just can't see how it lines up on paper....so you doubt.
- d. If God reveals the plan, he has the prosperity!
- e. Ps 24:1 *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,*
- f. Ps 50:10-12 *every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.*
- g. Either we believe that or we don't.

3. God has the Power to Make His Will Happen

- a. Many were surely thinking....How is he going to make this happen?
- b. God has the power to make it happen
- c. Ezra 6:1-5
- d. Ezra 6:8-9 *Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River. And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail*

In order to really persevere, we must learn to deal with, not only discouragement, but doubt.

III. Delays v9

If you know how the Lord operates, you know that sometimes he doesn't move as fast as we would like.

1. I am sure when the remnant heard the Lord say that the glory of this house would be greater than the previous one, they thought when? It is nothing in our eyes.
2. This temple may get built, but it can't be as good
3. The value of the gold used in the holy of holies in the previous temple would be about \$4 billion today.
4. It took 183,300 workmen approximately seven years to build Solomon's temple.
5. Now the whole nation consisted of only a little group of 50,000.
6. There was no ark of the covenant
7. Where is the glory that you speak of God!?!

Wait!

1. Press through the Persian rule, through the reign of the Greeks, to the Romans and King Herod... who enlarged and improved upon the temple until he considered it to be the most glorious of all of his actions.
2. Press through the seeming delays until... Galatians 4:4 *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law*
3. Luke 2:22-38
4. Luke 2:41-49
5. And then of course he cleansed the temple and taught in the temple after he began his earthly ministry.

This temple had a glory that Solomon's temple never knew! It had Christ.

1. The first temple had the manifest glory of God, but this temple had the King of Glory
2. The first temple had the sacred fire to light it, but this temple had the light of the world.
3. The first temple had the blood of many lambs shed in it, but this temple had the Lamb of God
4. The first temple had a piece of the bread that came down out of heaven in it, but this temple had the bread of life!
5. The first temple had a costly cornerstone no doubt, but this temple had the chief cornerstone
6. In the first temple, the written word was heard, but in this temple the living word was seen.
7. In the first temple, the truth was taught, but in this temple The Truth Himself taught.
8. In the first temple peace was prayed for, but in this temple the Prince of peace prayed.

THE GOSPEL

There were 500 years of seeming delays, but wasn't it worth the wait!

1. If we could only learn to persevere in spite of the discouragements, in spite of the doubts, and in spite of the delays!
2. We might just be prepared for the presence of God.

We get our priorities in order, and that is necessary, but only part of the battle. We must persevere through the discouragement, doubt, and delays trusting God to be faithful to finish the work in and through us that He began.