

Sunday Sermon - Haggai 1:12-15
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9/10/17
Series: God First
Week 2: Consider your Obedience

Introduction:

Point out space for note taking
What did we learn about last week?

In Haggai we see that a remnant of God's people have returned to their land after years of exile. In exile they struggled with feeling abandoned by God, separated from him – his power, his love. In the return to the land of promise their was great rejoicing but reality quickly set in that life was still going to be demanding, challenging. Was this going to be their new reality? Were they now destined to live in their own power without the presence of God? God wants his people to know that the years of abandonment are over. Take heart people of God! God's judgment, the years of exile, they are in the past, they are over, and you should prepare yourselves for the Lord's return to his people once again. "Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may appear in my glory." God says to us, "Man, what are you sitting around for? Don't you know that our years of separation are past?! Don't you know that it's time for God's glory to be revealed?! Don't you know that it's time for flourishing once again!?" This is the message of Haggai.

Two truths:

Truth #1: The people of God had a problem positioning their own priorities over God's priorities.

Truth #2: A life lived without God is a life of diminishing returns

Haggai is clear that a disregarding of God leads to a lack of flourishing in life.

God told his people to rebuild his temple because it was a:

Testimony to his honor and glory

Witness to the nations of God's redemptive work

Symbol of God's covenant and his love relationship with people

Sign of the coming Kingdom of God – of God's messiah, Jesus Christ, and the new covenant he would bring – ushering in a new reality where people would be set free from the bondage of sin and death and live in freedom having full access to God because God's wrath had been satisfied and their sins washed clean.

And we should prioritize God in our lives, investing time into building our relationship with God, because now we are the temple: the testimony, witness, symbol, sign and foretaste of God's Kingdom here on this earth.

Remember that no one in Israel would have said that the building of the temple wasn't important. They were just saying that it wasn't the right time. But it wasn't like the people didn't have a good excuse – the reality of life was apparent. Persian economic demands were heavy as they were preparing to go to war with Egypt, there was economic hardship with the people, there was spiritual discouragement in that living a life of obedience would have required sacrifice. People in essence were being practical, saying, ***“Why worry about the presence of God when reality is dictated by famine and fate and foreign power?...Better to spend one's energies trying to stay alive than to bother with religious dreams!”***

Anyone here ever feel that way? “Man! I'm just trying to survive here. I'm not going to waste time on religion.” “

This is where this question of priorities comes directly against the self-idolizing mindset that plagues so many American churches today, and we are not exempt from this – where we sit in the pews week after week and we hear God's call on our lives to build his church, and build his kingdom, and serve and love others, and be missionally minded, to reorient our lives around making God and spiritual things the priority and we say, “Yeah, I am pro that, evangelism is important, advancing God's kingdom is important, my own spiritual relationship with the Lord is important, but I just got a lot going on right now. I just have other priorities. I've been pulling 60 hours a week at my job, I have kids and a family, I have bills to pay and money is tight so I'm not going to tithe until it gets better.”

And we might be tempted to make room for such pragmatism except for the fact that God says, “I want to make it better! Seek first my kingdom and righteousness and everything else will be added to you.”

It's good news! And it should be motivating and inspiring news. Perhaps even convicting news. God says “consider your ways.” SO last week I challenged us to **“consider our priorities.”** This week I'd like to challenge us to **“consider our obedience.”**

You see, too often do we come to church, and we hear God's Word God's voice, and we cognitively agree with whatever's being proclaimed, but then we get on with our lives and we don't allow it to affect any sort of meaningful change in us.

There's a disconnect between our hearing God's Word and our response to it.

There's a disconnect between our hearing and our obedience.

Illustration: Parent of a 4 year old/14 year old – God is the parent we are the kid

Application:

Is that right? As a parent you expect obedience from your kid, should God not expect obedience from us?

So let's look at the text this morning and see how God's people would respond to his Word:

V. 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."

If you are taking notes this morning write this down

1) The Fear of the Lord Motivates Complete and Total Repentance (12)

Last week we talked about the concept that repentance is stopping what you are doing and going a different direction.

Exposition: Some things stand out that are worth noting here in this verse.

1) Power of God's Word: God's word came to Haggai. The people of God heard the Word of God and obeyed his voice. We are blessed to have the full Word of God available to us today. The bible is clear about what it says concerning itself.

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. – Heb. 4:12

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. – 2 Tim. 3:16-17

***Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path. Psalm 119:105***

But where the Israelites often went wrong and where we often go wrong today is that we aren't properly positioned when it comes to receiving God's Word into of our own lives and hearts. I believe that is why we have so many churches today that unashamedly compromise on the teachings of scripture. We read it and we interpret it as to what we think it should say instead of letting it define who we are and how we should live.

I have three prepositions that are essential for us as God's people to adopt when it comes to engaging with the Word of God.

1) Under - We must be a people under the authority of God's Word. Not positioned above the Word picking and choosing what we like and don't like. There is an authority and wisdom higher than our own and a Word higher than our own which we should approach with proper and due respect.

2) In - We should be a people who read the scriptures and know all that God has said to us. Too often we rely simply on what other people tell us God says but we never study and go after it ourselves. That's being naive and it opens us up to the possibility of being led astray by false teaching and sinful agendas.

3) Of - We should be a people who act according to the mark left on us by God's Word. We should be living according to its wisdom and allowing it to shape both us and the fabric of our lives.

Why did the people in Haggai obey? Why did they not respond like they normally did by ignoring God's Word? Because I believe that in spite of their misplaced priorities they were positioned correctly to be able to accept God's Word when it came.

First thing that stands out was the power of God's Word

2) It's important to note that the people's **obedience was motivated by their fear of the Lord**. I pray that that would always be our motivation for obedience. What is fear of the Lord? Most people say reverent awe and that's ok, not bad but I think it's more robust than that. There are really four characteristics to describe what it means to biblically fear the Lord

- 1) Love - Reverent love for the work and character of God
- 2) Dread - Holy dread at incurring God's wrath (Holy Wild – Mark Buchannan)
- 3) Submission - Submission to God's authority
- 4) Awe - Sense of awe at God's power and might

And notice the focus in Haggai on both the leaders and people. Both need to be properly positioned when it comes to recognizing the power of God's word and both should have a healthy fear of the Lord motivating their obedience. No one is exempt no one is above it.

Illustration: Missional Talk?

Application: When God's Word comes to us, our only proper response to it is obedience. We don't think about it. We don't make excuses. We don't put it off. We do it. Why? Because God is at work in this world and the story is not about you it's about him. And so we live faithful to his purposes. Period. That's a tough truth for some of us I know because it battles directly against our own selfishness and comforts. But God also promises that this is where life is found. And he demands our obedience.

You say that sounds like a scary and costly thing. It is but the Lord has another word for us:

2) Divine Presence Reassures Us and Empowers Our Success (13)

V. 13 - "Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, "I am with you, declares the Lord."

The Lord's divine reassurance

Up to this point there have been three words delivered by Haggai and each time they have brought conviction – "consider your ways"

But this fourth word brings with it unbelievable comfort

- "I am with you"
- We have seen that this is the heart of the covenant – in Gen 17, Rev. 21 – I will be their God and they will be my people and we will dwell together. It's the Emmanuel principle: God with us. The Lord is saying that whether the temple is built or not "I am with you."
- It's this presence that makes all the difference
 - o Moses and golden calf – He was right to say, "Give us the promised land without your presence, don't want it, kill me instead."

- Moses understood that it was God’s presence that really mattered: That is what made Israel unique, made Israel different, made Israel special, made Israel important to redemptive history.
- And this knowledge that the Lord is with us is what we need in order to overcome our spiritual discouragement and frustration and disillusionment.
- John Wesley’s last words (final words were great evidence to one’s spiritual state) – “The best of all is God with us.” He understood this well and got it absolutely right.
- This is what followed their complete repentance and the Lord reassured them – I am with you – I believe that is was not a conditional statement, he was saying “temple or not I am with you,” and that knowledge will fuel the rebuilding process.
- And church I want you to hear me this morning - Do you know that that is the gospel? - - Whenever the OT is preached we run the danger of preaching a law based message, a law based gospel but that it not the heart of this passage. God wants you to know today that he is with you, he is available to you. And that is not based on anything that you do and don’t do. It’s based on his character and his love for us. And he says because I am with you, you have available to you full and abundant life now, and eternal life to come. These things are of course found in Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us.
 - But he says it’s an act of faith to put me in control. To let my blood cover your sin and to let me purchase your life and make it mine. Would you put your life in the hands of Christ this morning?
- Complete repentance was their response – Devine reassurance was the Lord’s response to them – then what’s the new reality?

3) Those Led by the Spirit Obey the Lord’s Voice (14-15)

V. 14-15 - “And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.”

Exposition:

24 days after God’s Word came to Haggai the first time, they begin to rebuild. Is this delay, why not right away? I think if we think practically about building projects it takes time to get all your ducks in a row.

But additionally one commentary I read suggested this: that it was a strategic delay – time of the harvest – if they built right away then some could build, others would harvest. But if they waited then everyone, everyone, could work together on building the temple.

- If our focus is on the date then we’ve missed it anyway – Here’s the truth: behind the repentance of the governor, the high priest and all the people

is what? The work of the Spirit of the Lord – the spirit stirred up the people, the spirit aroused them from their sleep, and the spirit enabled them to respond to the Lord’s word with repentance, faith, and obedience.

- There was a heart change and from that a decision was made to move forward in a different direction.

Illustration:

Think about it this way – If you are not tithing as much as you should be, as much as you feel the Lord is prompting you to – 5-10% - it doesn’t mean that the Lord expects you to give away 5% of your income that day. That would be foolish in many cases, but if the heart change is there and the commitment to obedience then you will sit down with your finances and you will make a plan to begin moving there and then you will execute that plan.

Application:

That is what’s happening in Haggai. It’s not about the 24 days, it’s about the obedience of God’s people to respond to the Lord’s Word as they are led by his Spirit.

What is the Lord telling us to do this morning? Where have we taken him out of the center? Where do we need to respond to him in obedience?

- Maybe it’s an issue with our finances – spending selfishly or withholding our giving to him.
- Maybe it’s our focus and priorities - reaching out to a neighbor/friend/co-worker – inviting them to dinner, investing in them relationally, making ourselves available for the work of building God’s kingdom.
- Maybe it’s our own relational time with the Lord – spending time with him daily, making him a priority in our lives.

We can do it church. We can live in obedience to the Lord. Why? Because if we are seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness then whatever else we need will be added to us. Then we won’t be trying to do it all in our own strength but in the power of his Spirit for he promises, “I am with you.”

Conclusion:

Do you know whose job temple building really is? It’s the Lord Jesus Christ’s through the Spirit.

- In Mark 8 Peter makes the confession to Jesus “You are the Christ” – Jesus says “You’re right. And on this rock I will build my church.” Ultimately the work of temple building is the Lord’s through his Spirit and he does so by enabling his people to do the work that he has called them to.
- Consider your obedience, let us set out to build the Lord’s temple, to make Lord’s priorities our own and to collect and polish living stones in response to God’s word and dependence on God’s spirit for God’s pleasure and glory.