

Haggai 2:1-9

Repairing Perspectives

The second message from the Lord through Haggai was a message of encouragement. As the temple was beginning to take shape, some were reminded that this second temple was not going to be nearly as grand as the one Solomon built. They lost sight of what was important and were tempted to complain and despair. When it seems to us that life is not as good as it once was, that things have not turned out as we expected or that the glory days will never come again, we must remember to be grateful for what God is doing now and hopeful about what God will do in the future.

I. An _____ Assessment (vv. 1-3)

- _____ difficulties could be an attempt to cope with a negative situation by denying reality instead of trusting God with it. (1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6)
- The one who humbly and honestly assesses himself and his situation is the one to whom God gives _____. (Luke 18:11-14)
- The command to “rejoice evermore” is a command to _____ sorrow and hardships and find joy in the Lord in spite of them. (Philippians 4:4)

II. God’s Enduring _____ (vv. 4-5)

- Remembering God’s enduring presence anchors our perspective in the middle of an _____ world. (Hebrews 13:5)
- So much of our life changes, but not God. You can depend on Him to always be the _____. (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8)
- We can have the _____ to continue in the face of uncertainty, disappointment, or opposition because God is with us. (Joshua 1:9)

III. An _____ Promise (vv. 6-7)

- Jesus is the one that all the world is looking for. He’s what the world _____, whether they know it or not. (Isaiah 26:8)
- The same glory which filled the temple, the glory of _____, now resides in you. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- God will fulfill every promise He’s made. This is a perspective that you cannot afford to lose. It allows you to be hopeful though your situation may seem _____. (Numbers 23:19)

IV. An Excellent _____ (vv. 8-9)

- Since material things are of little _____ to God, material things should be of little consequence to us. (Matthew 6:19)
- We must choose the better perspective and focus on spiritual things because those are the _____ things. (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)
- We must allow the image of Christ to be formed in us by the Holy Spirit and display that image to the world around us in our _____ living. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Conclusion: What should we do when our life seems like it has gotten worse and not better? We should choose to focus on those things which are most important. God’s presence is always with you. God’s promises cannot be broken. Keep your _____ on God. That is the right perspective.

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Repairing Perspectives

The Jews that returned from exile to the land of Judah to rebuild the temple had begun well. Unfortunately, they allowed opposition to stop them from completing the work God called them to do. After years of stagnation, God sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to deliver messages of rebuke and encouragement.

The first message from the Lord through Haggai was one of rebuke. God's people had left off the work of God's house and had instead focused on their comfort and luxury. God had withheld His blessings as a result of their misplaced priorities, and He urged them to "consider their ways." The people responded with repentance and began the work of rebuilding again.

The second message from the Lord through Haggai was a message of encouragement. Almost a month has elapsed since the temple restoration was restarted (Haggai 1:15). As the temple was beginning to take shape, some were reminded that this second temple was not going to be nearly as grand as the one Solomon built. We read in Ezra 3:12-13 that some wept when the foundation was laid years before because they mistakenly compared it to the first temple. It could be that those same people and others had lost sight of what was important and were tempted to complain and despair. Haggai 2:1-9 is a message intended to repair their wrong perspectives by encouraging them to focus on things that matter instead.

When it seems to us that life is not as good as it once was, that things have not turned out as we expected or that the glory days will never come again, we must remember to be grateful for what God is doing now and hopeful about what God will do in the future.

I. An Honest Assessment (vv. 1-3)

Haggai 1:1-3 In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, [2] Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, [3] Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

The Lord's message to His people begins with an honest assessment of the situation. He asks and answers the question, "How do you see it now?" The new temple was undoubtedly smaller and less ornate as the first temple, and it was okay to acknowledge that! Pretending otherwise would have been to deny reality.

People tend to be either optimists or pessimists, though everyone likes to think of themselves as a realist. Whether you prefer to call the glass half full or half empty doesn't matter as long as you acknowledge the fact that the glass is at 50% capacity. You must be willing to honestly assess situations if you are ever going to have the right perspective.

Christians should not be gloomy or despondent, but neither should they be foolish and ignorant of harsh realities. Hard times are hard, and we don't do ourselves any favors by denying it. Downplaying difficulties could be an attempt to cope with a negative situation by denying reality instead of trusting God with it. 1 Peter 5:7 commands us, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." To cast a care, you must acknowledge the care. We cannot "let our requests be made known unto" God (Philippians 4:6) if we deny that we have needs that only God can meet.

Let's illustrate this truth with a parable that Jesus told in Luke 18.

Luke 18:11-14 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. [12] I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. [13] And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [14] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

What was the Pharisee's problem? His pride caused him to have an inaccurate assessment of himself. The publican, however, was humble and saw himself for what he really was, a sinner who needed God's mercy. The one who humbly and honestly assesses himself and his situation is the one to whom God gives grace.

As Christians, we should have hope and joy, but God does not want us to deny reality either way. The command to "rejoice evermore" is not a command to put a happy face on grief or sugar coat tragedy. It is a command to acknowledge the sorrow and hardships and find joy in the Lord in spite of them.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

II. God's Enduring Presence (vv. 4-5)

Haggai 1:4-5 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: [5] According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

With an honest assessment of the situation, God's people could then be encouraged by the things that are more important than the physical appearance of the temple. The first truth that the Lord brought to their remembrance was that, as God's people, they had God with them at all times. Though they didn't have the kind of building they used to have, they had the same God that they always had. He hadn't left them, and He hasn't changed. Remembering God's enduring presence anchors our perspective in the middle of an ever-changing world. Child of God, remember that God is always with you.

Hebrews 13:5 is an often quoted promise of God's permanent presence. In the context, we are reminded of God's presence so that we can resist the temptation to be discontent with what we don't have. Whatever we may think we lack, the truth is that God is with us, and if we have God, then we have everything we need.

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

We must continually remind ourselves of God's powerful, personal, permanent presence. Keep your perspective right by keeping your focus on God.

In verse five, God reminds His children that He is the same God who covenanted with their fathers hundreds of years before. Though everything had changed about them, God is always the same. God does not change. "For I am the LORD, I change not..." (Malachi 3:6) "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

So much of our life changes from year to year, from day to day, and sometimes, from moment to moment. But not God. You can depend on Him to always be the same.

God's presence gives us encouragement when we are sad and courage when we are scared. God told His people in verse four, "Be strong...and work." He said in verse five, "Fear not." We can have

the courage to continue in the face of uncertainty, disappointment, or opposition because God is with us.

Joshua 1:9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Whatever you face in life, you can at least be grateful for one thing that you have right now. You have God with you.

III. An Exciting Promise (vv. 6-7)

Haggai 1:6-7 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; [7] And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

When Solomon dedicated the first temple, the glory of God filled it. But that glory was temporary. Later it would be “ichabod” and the temple that Solomon built would be destroyed. Verses six and seven are a prophecy that one day God would do something extraordinary that would affect the whole world. The result of that would be God’s house being filled with glory once again. This is an exciting promise given to encourage God’s people.

Verse seven says, “The desire of all nations shall come.” Who is the desire of all nations? It is Jesus, God the Son in human flesh! He’s the one that all the world is looking for. Even though they don’t know it and even though they reject Him, He’s the only one that can fill empty souls and satisfy constant longings. He’s what the world desires, whether they know it or not.

Isaiah 26:8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

This is a promise that one day the Messiah would come. And He would stand in the very place this temple was being constructed. He would perform miracles there, teach the people there, and ultimately give Himself as a sacrifice for them nearby. The glory of God would again fill the house of God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were tempted to fixate on the physical aspects of the building, which paled in comparison to the original. God reminds them that everything else pales in comparison to the glory of the Messiah that was to come.

We look back on Christ’s coming, and it should continue to encourage us that God fulfilled His promise and sent His son. In fact, it should encourage us even more than it did the Old Testament saints because we have a better understanding of what Jesus accomplished. For example, when Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn in half. That veil separated the priests from the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant resided. The ark was symbolic of God’s presence, and the significance of the torn veil is that Jesus opened the way for us to enter into God’s presence freely through His blood. That should make us want to shout, “Glory to God!”

Consider this also, that same glory which filled the temple, the glory of God the Son, now resides in you. You are in Christ, and Christ is in you. God the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in you so that now your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

This promise given to encourage God’s people has been fulfilled by God. It stands as a placeholder for all the promises that God has made to us. God will fulfill every promise He’s made. This is a perspective that you cannot afford to lose. It allows you to be hopeful though your situation may seem hopeless. God keeps His word!

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

IV. An Excellent Perspective (vv. 8-9)

Haggai 1:8-9 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. [9] The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

In the middle of this wonderful prophecy about the future glory of God's house, the Lord makes the statement, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine." God wanted His people to remember that all of creation belongs to Him, so it doesn't make any difference whether the gold is still in the ground or if it is used to decorate the temple. Since material things are of little consequence to God, material things should be of little consequence to us.

We tend to put a lot of emphasis on things that we can see and touch, but focusing on the physical will always lead to disappointment.

Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Sometimes God will remove material things because they have become an obstacle to spiritual improvement. He did that with the Jews in Haggai 1 by withholding His blessings on their harvests. When God does this, it is the best thing that could happen to us because it forces us to reevaluate our lives and refocus on what is most important.

We must choose the better perspective and focus on spiritual things because those are the eternal things. This is particularly important in the face of hardship. When the circumstances of this life are difficult, we must remind ourselves that what matters most is the life to come.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; [18] While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The Lord states in verse nine, "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former." That is another promise connected with the coming of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us make a personal application of this principle of greater glory. We can choose to be consumed with material things, or we can choose the greater glory of Christ. As we have noted, that glory is in us if we are saved. But that doesn't mean that glory is being seen through us. We must then allow the image of Christ to be formed in us by the Holy Spirit and display that image to the world around us in our Christlike living.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

When we do this, God gets the glory that He deserves, and He blesses us with peace and joy.

Conclusion

What should we do when our life seems like it has gotten worse and not better? We should choose to focus on those things which are most important. God's presence is always with you. God's promises cannot be broken. Keep your focus on God. That is the right perspective.