You’ve Got What It Takes - Part 2

# Looking Ahead

# (Haggai 1:9–2:9)

Welcome, I’m so glad to have all of you with us here today. This morning we’re in part two of our series “You’ve got what it takes” and we’ve been looking at the Old Testament book of Haggai if you’d like to find your place in your Bible. This little book sandwiched between Zephaniah and Zechariah near the end of the Old Testament contains just two chapters with a simple theme: complete the work that you have begun. You see, they had begun well, they had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, they had rebuilt the altar, they were offering sacrifices again, and had laid the foundation for the temple. But it didn’t take long for their enthusiasm to fade and for the people to grow discouraged, especially when they encountered some opposition from their neighbors. And so, the work slowed until it finally stopped and the temple remained only a foundation for many years until God raised up the prophet Haggai to get them back on task. The Word that Haggai proclaimed to the people of God no doubt applies to each one of us at some point or another in our lives. Through the prophet, we’re going to discover how to break through discouragement, especially when things just aren’t working out like we expect and he’s going to tell us “You’ve got what it takes.”

This morning, if you find yourself discouraged, if you’ve been planting much, but harvesting little, eating and drinking, but never feeling satisfied, working all the time, making money, but never having enough, week by week just scraping by, be assured this was exactly what was happening to the people of God. You see, when they’d become discouraged with the progress rebuilding the Temple they redirected their attention to themselves and their own houses. They allowed themselves to become distracted from God’s purpose for their lives and put their own desires before God’s. They’d purposefully pulled back from that place where God was blessing them and sought to bless themselves. And so, their priorities were all out of whack, things weren’t going well, and they were living in a physical and spiritual deficit. Through the prophet Haggai, God said to his people in verse nine,

“You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands” (Haggai 1:9-11).

God withheld his blessing because they hadn’t given him the place in their lives that was rightfully his. And the same thing applies to our lives today, we can’t live with one foot in the world and one foot in God’s kingdom. We can’t straddle the fence, living for ourselves, seeking to satisfy ourselves on one side, while on the other proclaiming to serve God and do his will. It just doesn’t work that way. As a matter of fact, in the book of Revelation, Jesus spoke to the church in Laodicea saying...

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you that you were either one or the other!" (Revelation 3:15).

You see, the truth is for us as followers of Christ, it's all or nothing. You can’t straddle the fence because it makes you lukewarm, it makes you ineffective, and it closes the hand of God. God cannot bless you when you’re living a self-centered life, serving yourself and investing in your own house, your own future, and your own kingdom. And so, today, if you find yourself discouraged, stuck in a cycle of hopelessness, never having enough, because your pockets have holes in them, never enough food on the table, never enough money to pay the bills, just maybe it’s time to consider your ways.

Haggai proclaimed the Word of the Lord to the people of God and they looked at their priorities, their motives, the things that they’d done and they repented. The Bible says they changed their ways. Verse 12 tells us,

“Then Zerubbabel… Joshua… and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord” (Haggai 1:12).

God, seeing that the people had responded to his Word, gave them a message of encouragement saying in verse 13,

“I am with you” (Haggai 1:13).

And this was so important for them and it’s important for us today, because we need to understand that God isn’t way off in the distance waiting for you at the finish line, but he’s with you right now. God’s with you every moment of every day. This is the promise that Jesus gives those who follow him in Matthew chapter 28,

"I’m with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

If you’re a follower of Christ, you’re born again, and you’re indwelt with the Holy Spirit, he’s right there beside you, he’s working with you, he’s serving with you. He’s not just waiting for you at the end of your life, but he’s walking with you, and helping you along the way. Long ago, God gave his people this promise, and he stirred up his people because they had stopped looking ahead. Number one, they had become discouraged and self-seeking, so God stirred up his people.

## 1. God Stirred Up His People

This is so important, because when God wants something done he stirs up his people. God stirred them and boosted their faith because the awareness of his presence in their lives would motivate them, inspire them, and energize them like never before. Watch what God does next, verse 14 says,

“So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel… and the spirit of Joshua… and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people…” (Haggai 1:14).

God stirred them. The New Living Translation says it this way, "The Lord sparked their enthusiasm" and this happens to followers of Jesus. God will often stir up your spirit, giving you great faith, and giving you the inspiration to do something that God puts on your heart. And so, look at what happens, verse 14 continues saying,

“They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God” (Haggai 1:14).

It had been many years that they’d been distracted, unmotivated, and self-centered, but now the Lord had sparked their enthusiasm. They turned back to God, realizing that he was with them, they’re fired up, they’re excited again; until one day they’re gathered around the construction site, they’re reminiscing about Solomon’s Temple because this was the anniversary of when King Solomon had dedicated the original Temple (1 Kings 8:2). And so, they’re looking at the foundation and the older men who remember the original Temple were disappointed because it’s as nothing compared to the former glory of the Temple. And suddenly everybody’s discouraged again.

Isn’t that the way we are? How often does this happen in our own lives? You know, we get stirred up, we’re going to get out of debt, we’re going to go on a diet, we’re going to build this whatever, and then we don’t make the progress that we think we should, we expected so much more, and we get discouraged and quit.

That’s what happened to the people of God, the Lord stirred their enthusiasm, they were pumped up, they’d been working on it for weeks, and when it didn’t go as they were expecting they got discouraged. And so, God asked them a question to try to get them to recognize the cause of their discouragement. In chapter 2, the Word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai in verse three, he asked them,

"Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?” (Haggai 2:3).

And God asked this because he’s trying to get them to consider their perspective, to look ahead and move beyond discouragement. You see, the problem was that they were stuck comparing their start with someone else’s finish. Solomon’s Temple was amazing, but this one is smaller, it’s just the foundation, it doesn’t look very good, and so there’s this sense of comparison.

I don’t know about you, but it’s something that I battle with all the time. You know, when I’m comparing my pathetic attempt to build something with something that’s already been built and it’s just so amazing. I’m looking at my work compared to Solomon’s temple, I’ve been working hard, I’m doing the best that I can, but my best just isn’t good enough. And so, God gives them these words of encouragement in verse four,

“Be strong, O Zerubbabel... Be strong, O Joshua… Be strong, all you people of the land… and work. For I am with you” (Haggai 2:4).

Now this wasn’t a denial that the new Temple was as nothing in comparison to what Solomon had built, but it was a reminder that this was the work that God had called them to and that they could depend on him to help them finish it. And so, number two, God enabled and accompanied them

## 2. God Enabled and Accompanied Them

He said, “Be strong” and these words are very significant, because they’re an important part of their Jewish history. At this particular time, they’d been celebrating the feast of Tabernacles, the book of Deuteronomy had been read to the people and three times they heard Moses tell Joshua and the people to be strong. In the same way, when King David commissioned Solomon with the task of building the original Temple, three times he told his son to be strong. But we all know it’s one thing to tell someone to be strong and quite another to give them the ability and the courage to apply those words. That’s why the Lord said, “Be strong and work, for I am with you.”

Just as the presence of God was an encouragement to Moses, Joshua, and Solomon; it’s the presence of God that’s an encouragement to us today. And so, God promises us in Hebrews chapter 13,

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

And so, when you’re discouraged, when you want to give up, God says, “Be strong and work; for I am with you.” And that’s such great news, because we don’t have the strength, but the Bible actually teaches us that God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. God said in second Corinthians,

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. (And that’s why Paul said) Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

And so, we don’t have to be strong in our own strength, because we have God’s supernatural strength dwelling within us. He’s with us, and the Bible tells us that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is living within those who believe (Romans 8:11). And that’s such good news, because when you’re discouraged and can't do anymore, you’re a perfect candidate for God's strength to be displayed in you.

God tells his people, “Be strong and work. Put down another stone. Keep building the foundation. Do what I told you to do.” And then he says in verse five,

“This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear” (Haggai 2:5).

And so, he says, “I’m with you. Don’t be afraid.” When you want to give up, be strong and keep praying even when you don’t see the results. Be strong and keep reading God’s word, keep seeking him daily, keep doing the right thing, even when it seems like you’re not getting anywhere. Be strong and continue to show up. Be strong and do the work, stone after stone, layer after layer, line upon line. Be strong in the Lord and work, not becoming discouraged, not becoming weary in doing good, because the Bible tells us,

“At the proper time we’ll reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

And so, God says, “Don’t be afraid. I’m with you. My Spirit remains among you.” And that’s the key to success, he’s enabling you, and he’s accompanying you. It's not that you’re doing it on your own, it's that you’re doing it with God. You’re working alongside of him. That’s what Jesus invites us to do in Matthew chapter 11,

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

And so, God encourages us to continue in his presence, trusting in him, and working with him, taking his yoke upon ourselves. And as we do, as the people of God do, God’s about to tell them something that’s so amazing. God said in verse six,

"In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory” (Haggai 2:6-7).

Haggai was speaking prophetically, looking ahead to the time when the Son of God would minister in the Temple. And yet, unknowingly he was looking even further into the future, to the end of the age. As a matter of fact, this verse is quoted in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 26, where it’s applied to the return of Christ at the end of the age. And so, number three, Haggai was looking ahead, he was pointing the people to a greater glory.

## 3. God Promised A Greater Glory

God promised a greater glory, as he had shaken Mount Sinai when he gave the law, he will shake the nations before he sends his Son Jesus Christ a second time, but today you and I who believe belong to a Kingdom that cannot be shaken. You and I have been given a glimpse of Christ’s glory and one day we’ll share the fullness of his glory when he establishes his Kingdom on earth. In fact, in verse nine God said,

“The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house…” (Haggai 2:9a).

And the people were looking at the foundation and they’re like, “How could that be?” Not realizing that all through the Old Testament, what was happening in the physical, was often a foreshadowing what was happening in the spiritual. It’s pointing to the things that we have in Christ as God shows physically what he’s about to do spiritually; as God shows naturally what he will do supernaturally. And so, as God was talking to his people about his Temple in Jerusalem, prophetically he was referring to a greater glory, not just in eternity, not just in the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, but in us today as Peter tells us,

“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5).

God was going to do something that the people in Haggai’s day couldn’t even imagine. You see, in that day, people had to go to the temple and make a sacrifice in hopes of being right with God. But in the New Testament, God says something really amazing, he says,

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

This is amazing and today God says, "If you’ll receive the work of my Son Jesus Christ on the cross, if you’ll trust him for the forgiveness of your sins, repenting of your wicked ways and following him, my Spirit will actually dwell within you." This is so amazing because in the Old Testament you had to go to the temple and make sacrifices over and over again in hopes of being made right with God; but in the New Testament, God comes to you and makes one sacrifice for all time so that you can be right with him and the Holy Spirit of God dwells within you. It’s for that reason, God says in verse nine,

"In this place I will grant peace” (Haggai 2:9b).

Jesus is that peace because he is the greater glory. The storms and turmoil of life, the opposition and discouragement you have endured will pass. God will grant you peace, because now you don’t have to be strong and work on your own. You can do it because he is with you, he’s in you, and the Bible says,

“The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

And so, you need to understand that you're a temple of the Holy Spirit. Jesus dwells within you. The glory of this temple will be greater than the glory of the former temple. Jesus is that greater glory who dwells within you. Today, if you’ve fallen from where you used to be and your spiritual life has suffered some damage, if you’re ready to get back on track with God, I can assure you that God will move heaven and earth for you, and the glory of your present will be greater than the glory of the past. Jesus said it this way in John chapter 14,

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these…” (John 14:12).

And so, when you serve someone, love someone, or forgive someone in his name, he's being glorified. And that's why you never have to be discouraged. You're not alone, he's with you, and you’ve got what it takes. Therefore, the Bible promises us,

“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

If you’re discouraged today, remember that God came to you, he paid the price for your sin so you could be right with him, and he’s not just with you but he’s in you. This morning he is prepared to restore all that is broken in your life. And so, you don’t need to be discouraged, you’ve got what it takes, you can do everything He calls you to do, just keep looking ahead.

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