

A Call for Courage

Haggai 2:1-9

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Introduction: It has been said that it is one thing to get people to work, it is another to keep them working. Here in Haggai 2, the people are encouraged to keep working to see the Temple completed. Haggai's second message comes one month later, "*In the seventh month, in the one & twentieth day of the month*" = September 26th, 520 B.C. This date would correspond to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the feast of ingathering (harvest festival). In chapter one we considered the sin of procrastination; the secret of prioritization, & the success of participation. "The greatest ability is dependability" (Bob Jones, Sr.). Haggai's message could be called "a call for courage." Note with me tonight a comparison, a challenge, & a confidence as Haggai encourages the people of Israel to "keep on keeping on."

I. There is a **comparison** (:1-3)

A. The discouraging comparison (:3)

1. When compared to the glory of the Temple of Solomon.
2. When considering the size & area of the present Temple.

B. The disparaging comments (:3)

1. The present building is almost "*nothing*" (when compared to Solomon's Temple).
2. The present building seems small, inferior, & inadequate.

Summary: "They were critical, & God was not impressed with their comments. He was pleased with this new beginning. The enemy always attempts to minimize any genuine work for God" (Phillips).

II. There is a **challenge** (:4-5)

A. "Be strong" (3 times in verse 4):

1. Consider the reading of Deuteronomy at the Feast of Tabernacles (see 31:9-13).
2. Compare the recording of Moses exhorting Joshua & the people to be strong > 31:6, 7, & 23.
 - a. Note also the threefold command to Joshua in Joshua 1:6, 7, & 9.
 - b. Note as well the threefold command of David to Solomon in I Chronicles 22:13; 28:10 & 20.

Summary: These are not just words here, but a reason to be strong is given: "*for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts.*"

B. "Be fearless" ("*fear ye not*" in verse 5):

1. Because of the promise of God's Word ("*covenant*").
2. Because of the promise of God's Spirit (& compare Zechariah 4:6, "*...Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.*"

Summary: Yet, A. W. Tozer once said, "If God were to take the Holy Spirit out of this world, much of what we're doing in our churches would go right on, & nobody would know the difference." To which Wiersbe adds, "What an indictment!"

III. There is a **confidence** (:6-9)

A. In the Lord's power (:6-7a):

1. In the past > Exodus 19:16-25, at the giving of the law.
2. In the future > Hebrews 12:26-27 & Matthew 24:29-30.
3. In the present > Hebrews 12:28, "*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence & godly fear.*"

B. In the Lord's presence (:7b, c):

1. "*The desire of all nations shall come*"?
 - a. Some suggest it refers to "desirable things" – treasures of the nations being brought to God.
 - b. Probably best interpreted to refer to the coming of Christ. "The nations of the world inwardly desire what Christ alone can give, whether they recognize this spiritual yearning or not" (Wiersbe).
2. "*Fill this house with glory*"?
 - a. The glory Christ brought with Him into the Temple of His day.
 - b. "The second temple had a glory that was denied Solomon's. It had Christ. It was to the second temple the He was brought as a baby to be offered to God. It was there that as a boy He sat in the midst of the doctors. It was there that He sat & taught & revealed things hidden from the foundation of the world. It was that temple that the money-changers defiled & Jesus cleansed, claiming that it was *His* Father's house" (Phillips).

C. In the Lord's possessions (:8):

1. This speaks of God's ownership of all.
2. This infers man's stewardship with the things of God.

Summary: Solomon's Temple was encased, covered with gold. "But what need did God have for gold? All the gold on earth was His. The presence or absence of gold was wholly immaterial to God. Its value was determined by the sacrifice & devotion of those who gave it. Those who did not have gold but gave what they had out of love & gratitude pleased God just as much as the wealthy who gave their gold" (Phillips).

D. In the Lord's peace (:9):

1. Greater glory of "*this latter house*"? The Temple of Christ's day? The Millennial Temple?
2. Greater peace?
 - a. In the past > Christ's day? See John 16:33.
 - b. In the present > See Romans 5:1.
 - c. In the future > Millennium – world-wide peace?

Conclusion: "In the first chapter of this prophecy the nation needed a word directed to their consciences because of their coldness & indifference; now (in chapter 2) they stood in need of a word of cheer & comfort to strengthen their hands & purposes as they pursued the task in obedience to the Lord" (Feinberg). What lessons are there for us to learn from this passage? Are we guilty of living in the past, reminiscing of the "good ole days" rather than being busy in the Lord's work today? For the day in which we live, we need to be strong & fearless. We too have God's Word & now also have His indwelling Spirit. We are assured of His presence, even as Christ promised, "*...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (Matthew 28:20). We do not have the physical token of His presence as did the Israelites in the wilderness, but "the absence of the visible token of His presence was a step along the road to a more spiritual faith" (Phillip). And today we can experience not only peace with God (Romans 5:1), but the peace of God that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Might we hear & heed the exhortation of Paul to the Ephesians, "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, & in the power of His might*" (6:10).