

THE LEADER'S "RENEWAL"

(TRUTH THAT REKINDLES THE HEART FOR LIFE-GIVING MINISTRY)



RENEWED ENTHUSIASM IS BIBLICAL

- ◆ TO KEEP US FAITHFUL
- ◆ TO LEAD US FORWARD
- ◆ TO MAKE US FRUITFUL

"So the Lord sparked the enthusiasm of Zurabbabel and the whole remnant of God's people." (Haggai 1:14)

Bill Kirk

“THE LEADER’S RENEWAL”

Text: Ezra 4:1-6/ Haggai 2:1-9

Subject: What Rekindles Life-Giving Ministry

INTRODUCTION

So it’s Monday, January 18, 2016. Snow is coming down outside, it’s Martin Luther King Jr. day, I’m reading the scriptures and the following leaps off the pages into my heart;

“So the Lord sparked the enthusiasm of Zurabbabel and the whole remnant of God’s people.” (Haggai 1:14)

Question: How did the Lord rekindle the enthusiasm?

Answer: The prophet Haggai announced that “The Lord is with you as you do His will.” (Haggai 1:13)

Question: Why did Haggai say this?

Answer: Because the Lord saw the heart of the workers and the work that was before them:

- ◆ (V. 6) **“You’ve planted much but harvested little.”** (And)
- ◆ (V. 9) **“You hoped for great harvests but they were poor.”**

In Other Words

In 605 B.C.; the first Jewish exiles were deported to Babylon.

In 597 B.C.; the second deportation to Babylon took place.

In 586 B.C.; Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the third deportation to Babylon occurred.

In 539 B.C.; Cyrus (King of Persia) conquers Babylon.

In 538 B.C.; Cyrus issues a decree to the Jewish exiles.

In 537 B.C.; 50,000 Jews return home to Jerusalem.

In 536 B.C.; the temple foundation is laid.

In 536 B.C.; the progress is interrupted because of opposition.

In 520 B.C.; the work resumes again under the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah (after a 16 year delay).

In 515 B.C.; the temple restoration is completed.

In 458 B.C.; Ezra arrives in Jerusalem.

In 444 B.C.; Nehemiah arrives, rebuilds the walls, and gates and a great Bible Conference soon follows.

In A Nut Shell

- ◆ 70 years of captivity are over for God’s people.
- ◆ The people return home to rebuild the city and restore the temple.
- ◆ The workers would encounter rejection, opposition and frustration.
- ◆ It was the perfect storm, to be distracted, detoured and discouraged.
- ◆ And God raises up Haggai and Zechariah to prophesy and speak a word to every worker.

Question: Why is this text (and context) such a big deal?

Answer: Because the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple meant two things:

1. The restoring of pure worship back in Jerusalem (and)
2. The witness to the unbelieving nations who were observing God's people nearby.

In Other Words

- ◆ It was a word to make God's name famous #1, among the faithful, and #2, among the unbelievers.

(And that's why God has put all of us where we are)

#1. To make His name famous **in the church** (and)

#2. To make His name famous to the **world of unbelievers**.

Question: So how does God take us from Ezra 4 (which says)

- ◆ **"The hands of Judah were weakened and troubled and frustrated in service (4-6) and,**
- ◆ **"Then ceased the work of the house of God at Jerusalem." (V. 24)**

To Ezra 6:14, 16

"And the Jews built, prospered and finished the work...and kept the dedication of God's house with joy."

Question: What did the process look like?

Question: Why did God record it for us today?

Question: How does it relate to where you live and serve?

Question: How did God (in Haggai 1:14) **"Spark the enthusiasm in the remnant of God's people?"**

Two Things Clearly Stand Out

I. The Challenge To Leadership Renewal

- ◆ In Ezra 1:3, the question is asked, **"Who will go and build the house of God?"**
- ◆ In Ezra 2:1, many say **"Yes"** and return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city.
- ◆ In Ezra 3:12, the people shout and weep for joy as the temple foundations are laid.
- ◆ In Ezra 4, the enemy comes in like a flood to stop the work of God. (Notice)

"The people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose...and wrote accusations against Judah and Jerusalem." (Ezra 4:5-6)

Question: How did the enemy try to discourage and sidetrack the workers?

1. Temptation to compromise (Ezra 4:1-3)

- ◆ The invitation was pleasurable; **"Let us build with you." (4:2)**

- ◆ The response; **“You will have no part in the work, for we have nothing in common.”**

Fact: This first enemy attack was very subtle.

Fact: The Samaritans (the former Northern Kingdom) offered to work with the Jews.

Fact: These Samaritans were a mixture of many races and didn’t worship the true God.

“They feared the Lord, yet served their own gods.” (II Kings 17:33)

Fact: Their sole purpose in offering help was to co-mingle, corrupt and defeat God’s people (as they would inter-marry with the heathen).

In Other Words

- ◆ The enemy’s plan was **“an inside-out job.”**
- ◆ **“If we can corrupt the leaders from the inside out, we’ve got them.”**
- ◆ **“If we tempt them inwardly, we’ll weaken them gradually.”**

What’s The Challenge?

1. To pollute our heart and to rob us of a clear conscience.
2. To compromise the fear of the Lord and to negotiate with the little foxes.
3. To entertain toxic thoughts and attitudes (little compromises in the heart).

2. Intimidation to fear. (V. 4-6)

“The people weakened the hands of the people of Judah and troubled them in building.” (V. 4)

“And hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose.” (V. 5)

“And wrote accusation against the people.” (V. 6)

Fact: The enemy attempted to intimidate God’s people.

Fact: The enemy raised up a following to frustrate the workers.

Fact: The enemy tried to de-motivate and detour the leaders from where they were going.

Question: What’s the enemy strategy?

Answer: Wear them down by criticism, accusation, slander and opposition.

And Nothing Has Changed Today

Question: Do you have any critics? (You’re normal)

Question: Have any opposition (You’re normal)

Question: Someone trying to intimidate or manipulate you? (You’re normal)

How Do We Respond To Intimidators?

- ◆ Exodus 14:14 **“The Lord shall fight for you and you shall hold your peace.”**
- ◆ Psalm 7:10 **“My defense is of God which saveth the upright in heart.”**
- ◆ Proverbs 20:22 **“Say not I will recompense evil, but wait on the Lord and He will save you.”**

And Remember

- ◆ Answer your critics with your life and not your words!
- ◆ No provocation ever justifies an unchristian response!

3. Legislation to suppress (V. 21)

Fact: The enemy caused a special law to be passed to order the Jews to stop rebuilding.

“Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, that this city be not built.” (Ezra 4:21) **“Stop their work”** was the decree!

Fact: Rehum dictated a letter to Shimshai.

Fact: Shimshai sent the letter to the king.

Fact: The king ordered the project to be stopped.

- ◆ And for 16 years (536 B.C. to 520 B.C.) the work of God was put “on hold” **“Then ceased the work of the house of God at Jerusalem.”** (V. 24)

Question: What was the challenge?

Answer: Responding to a 16 year delay on the project, Being put “on hold” for 16 x 365 (or 5,840 days) waiting to move forward, but forced to be still.

Question: What’s the greatest danger between the time we plant seed, and later harvest a crop?

Question: What can happen in our heart when it seems like prayer is going unanswered?

Question: What’s the danger when our vision seems put “on hold”?

Question: How can leadership challenges affect the heart?

Answer: Here’s what the Scripture says in Haggai 2:3:

1. **“Who is left among you that saw this house for her first glory?”**
2. **“And, how do you see it now?”**
3. **“Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?”**

Consider Their Feelings:

- ◆ The temple was in ruins (as was the city).
- ◆ The recovery of the 70 year captivity was slow and painful.
- ◆ The people were remembering the “way it used to be”.
- ◆ The times were hard and the leaders were discouraged.

And The People Question:

- ◆ “Is it really worth it to rebuild all over again?”
- ◆ “Will God do again what He had done before?”
- ◆ “Will the Lord fulfill His promise given to me?”

Ever Ask Yourself These Questions?

- ◆ "Lord, how will you change my heart from discouragement to determination?"
- ◆ "Lord, how will you bring revival after so long a delay?"
- ◆ "Lord, how will you show yourself strong in this low point in the church's history?"
- ◆ "Lord, how will you complete what you started to do?"

Question: What happened when the going got tough?

"Then the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem." (Ezra 5:1)

In Other Words, God Had A Word Then (And Now)

- ◆ What's the word from God to your heart?
- ◆ What's the word that changed a whole congregation?
- ◆ What's the word that speaks to us all today?
- ◆ What's the word that leads to a renewal of faith and optimism?

II. The Solution to The Leader's Renewal

"In the seventh month, on day 21, there came a word of the Lord." (Haggai 2:1)

Fact: It's a word from God (not Haggai)!

Fact: It's a word that's alive and fresh today!

Question: What was God's message that led to a dramatic change?

Question: What's the word that prompted the completion of the rebuilding project?

Question: What is it that enables and renews us to "go on" in God regardless?

1. God Promises us Himself (Haggai 2:4,5)

"Be strong, for I am with you saith the Lord." (V. 4)

"My Spirit remains among you."

- ◆ Haggai didn't deny that times were hard!
- ◆ Haggai didn't confess that all was well!
- ◆ Haggai didn't hide the fact that the people had quit for 16 years!
(Instead, Haggai says "be strong". How can we?)

(Hag. 2:4) "For I am with you saith the Lord."

Question: What's the encouraging word? "I am with you saith the Lord."

2. God Promises us that prayer still works. (V. 7)

"I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord."

Question: What does this mean here?

Answer: It was the prophet's design to strengthen the minds of the leadership:

- ◆ God wanted every leader to be infused with faith.
- ◆ God wanted the leaders not to judge by present/outward appearances.
- ◆ God wanted the leaders to be lifted from minds that were depressed.
- ◆ God wanted us to know that He would keep His word and fulfill His promise.

Question: What are you praying for?

Question: What are you believing God for?

3. **God Promises to provide for His work.** (V. 8)

"The silver is mine and the gold is mine saith the Lord. (V. 8)

- ◆ The economy was bad and the resources were low!

Question: How would the temple ever be rebuilt?

Answer: God said He would provide what was needed to see the work get done!

Question: What's so remarkable about this promise?

Answer: The way God provided was abnormal:

- ◆ God caused the Persian Empire to pay the expenses for rearing the massive walls.
- ◆ God even caused a decree so that the adversaries of the Jews had to furnish the priests with the rams and bullocks to offer sacrifices to God.

In Other Words

- ◆ God provided from unseen sources in unplanned ways!
- ◆ God provided through unconventional means!

4. **God promises to deliver us from sin!** (V. 9-23)

"So is every work of their hands; that which they offer there is unclean." (V. 14)

In Other Words

- ◆ Not only were God's people to go back to work, but God's work must come from a heart that is pure and undivided.

"Yet ye turned not to me saith the Lord." (V. 17)

God Paints a Picture

"If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy?" (V. 12)

"If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean?" (V. 13)

What Is Haggai Saying?

- ◆ That it's not only important that we do God's work, but it's equally important that we do God's work from a pure heart!
- ◆ That a good apple in a basket of rotten apples will be corrupted.

And The Good News Is In V. 22

"I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms."

"I will destroy the strength of the heathen."

"I will overthrow the chariots."

In Other Words

1. God will "overthrow" everything that opposes His work in us.
2. God will deliver us from every sin that contaminates His nature in us.
3. God will free us from every defilement that opposes His holiness in our lives.
4. God will purify, sanctify and cleanse us from every besetting sin.

Question: Why is this so important?

Answer: Job 17:9: "He that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

What's The Conclusion to The story?

"And the Jews built, prospered and finished the work; and kept the dedication of God's house with joy." (Ezra 6:14, 16)

Fact: God overcame every frustration and hurdle!

Fact: God made His people joyful once again!

Fact: God revived what was detoured and delayed!

Fact: God completed what He had started! **He did it then and He'll do it now!**

Truth That Saved Us While Planting A Church With Six People (Luke 13:18-21)

(V. 18) "Then said he, unto what is the kingdom of God like, and whereunto shall I resemble it?"

(V. 19) "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden, and it grew and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it."

(V. 20) "And again he said, whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?"

(V.21) "It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, til the whole was leavened."

Fact: Jesus said that the kingdom of God in your (His) church and city is like two things:

1. "A grain of mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds."
2. "A little leaven (yeast) which a woman took."

Fact: Jesus said that the seed was cast into the ground and the leaven was placed into the meal.

Three Words of Truth That Defeat Discouragement

#1. God's work always starts small

- ◆ "A grain of mustard seed which is least of all seeds."
- ◆ "A little leaven which a woman took."

Remember This

"God is not impressed with the **dimension** of your work, but with the **spirit** in which it is done."

#2. At times God's work is **invisible** but God is working even when you cannot **see** Him.

Fact: The mustard seed was cast into the ground (out of sight).

Fact: The woman hid the fermented dough in the meal (out of sight).

Illustration: Ever see a shooting star? It is not falling when you see it, but thousands of light years before. It just takes time for it to manifest itself.

Illustration: Daniel prays for 21 days before the answer is manifested. God sends an angel to tell Daniel, "I heard your prayer on the first day." (Daniel 10)

- ◆ "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews 6:12)
- ◆ "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:4)

#3. God's **word** with your **faithfulness** always brings God's results.

Fact: In V. 19, the little seed grew into a great tree.

Fact: In V. 21, the little leaven multiplied to feed an estimated 162 people.

- ◆ But a man had to sow the seed and a woman had to sow the yeast!

Never Forget This

- ◆ Discouragement is a lie of the devil – to blind you in the present of what God is going to do in the future!

Nuf Sed!
Bill Kirk