

The Best is Yet to Come: Haggai 2:1-9

Scriptures for Today:

Haggai 2:1-9 *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? 4 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. 6 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. 8 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.*

Introduction

Have you ever started working on something, and then about halfway through you completely lost your motivation to finish it?

Maybe you decided you were going to remodel a room in your house. At the beginning you're excited. You start tearing things apart. You buy the materials. You have this picture in your mind of what everything is going to look like when you're finished.

But then you're halfway through the project, the room is a disaster, you're tired of working on it, and suddenly you don't feel nearly as motivated as you did when you started.

Maybe you've decided to start exercising. You make a schedule, set some goals, and you're excited about getting into shape. The first week goes great. Then a few weeks later you're sore, you're tired, you don't see much of a difference yet, and that motivation begins to disappear.

It could be something as simple as cleaning out the garage. You start with all kinds of energy. Then two hours later you've pulled everything out, somehow the garage looks worse than when you started, and now you're wondering why you ever began. That happens with all kinds of things.

We start out excited because we're thinking about the **finished product**. But somewhere between starting and finishing, we have to deal with the actual work.

And there are a lot of reasons we can lose motivation along the way. Sometimes the work is **harder than we expected**. Sometimes we don't have all the **resources** we thought we would have.

Sometimes we look at how much we've accomplished and realize how much work is **still left to do**.

And sometimes we put a lot of time and effort into something, stand back and look at what we've accomplished, and think: "**That's it?**" "**That's all I have to show for all this work?**"

When that happens, it's very easy to become discouraged and quit.

And that brings us to Haggai chapter 2. When we studied chapter 1, the people had a completely different problem. **They weren't working at all.**

The Jews had returned to Jerusalem after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. They had begun rebuilding the temple, but eventually the work stopped.

For years the house of God remained unfinished while the people turned their attention toward their own houses and their own lives. So God sent Haggai with a very direct message:

Haggai 1:5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

God confronted them about their priorities and commanded them to get back to work. And thankfully, **they listened.**

Haggai 1:14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; **and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,**

Notice the date in the next verse:

Haggai 1:15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

They returned to the work on the **twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.**

Now look at the date when God gives them the message we're going to study today:

Haggai 2:1 In the seventh *month*, in the one and twentieth *day* of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying,

Only about **twenty-seven days** had passed. Less than one month earlier, God had stirred up their spirits and they had returned to the work. But now God sends Haggai to speak to them again. This time, God isn't rebuking them for refusing to work. **He's encouraging them not to become discouraged while they're working.**

And I think that's an important distinction. Sometimes we need someone to tell us: **You need to get to work.**

But other times we're already working. We're already trying to do what's right. We're already putting forth the effort. The problem is that somewhere along the way, **we've lost our motivation to keep going.**

So what do you do when you're trying to do the right thing, but you're becoming discouraged with the results? What do you do when the work in front of you doesn't look like you expected it to look?

What do you do when you start wondering whether all of your effort is even worth it? That's what God is going to address in these verses. And by the end of this passage, God is going to give these people a reason to keep working:

The Best Is Yet to Come. Let's look at point number 1:

1. They Compared It to the Past (vv. 1-3)

Haggai 2:1-3 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?*

As we already saw in the introduction, the people had only been back to work for about twenty-seven days when God sent Haggai with this message.

But notice that God wasn't just speaking to one group of people. He told Haggai to speak to **Zerubbabel**, the governor of Judah, **Joshua**, the high priest, and **"the residue of the people."**

The leaders needed to hear this message, and the people needed to hear it.

And in verse 3, God identifies what was beginning to discourage them:
"Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?"

There were still older people among the remnant who could remember what the temple looked like before Jerusalem was destroyed. They had seen Solomon's temple.

And Solomon's temple was an incredible building. It had been constructed with expensive materials and beautiful craftsmanship. Gold was overlaid throughout the house. This was a magnificent structure that had stood in Jerusalem for hundreds of years.

But eventually, because of Judah's continued rebellion against God, the Babylonians came and destroyed it.

2 Kings 25:9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

Imagine being one of those older people.

As a child or young person, you had walked through Jerusalem and seen this beautiful temple standing in the city. Then you watched your nation fall apart. The city was destroyed. The temple was burned. You were carried away into captivity.

Now decades later, you have returned. And you're standing in that same place watching another temple being built. You know exactly what used to be there.

The Bible actually records their reaction when the foundation of this second temple was originally laid.

Ezra 3:12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, *who were* ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, **wept with a loud voice**; and many shouted aloud for joy:

There were two completely different reactions happening at the same time. Many shouted aloud for joy. But the ancient men of the city, those who were old enough to remember what used to stand there were weeping.

They weren't just looking at what was being built. **They were comparing it to what had been there before.** That's exactly what God addresses in Haggai:

Haggai 2:3 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?

Notice the phrase **"in comparison."**

That's where their discouragement was coming from. What they were building wasn't nothing. They were rebuilding the house of the LORD. They were obeying God. After years of neglect, progress was finally being made.

But when they placed what they had in front of them beside what they remembered from the past, suddenly it felt insignificant. Comparison can do the same thing to us...

You can be perfectly thankful for your house until you visit someone whose house is twice the size. You can be happy with your vehicle until somebody you know pulls up in a brand-new one.

Maybe you've lost twenty pounds and you're making great progress. Then you compare yourself with someone who has been exercising for five years and suddenly the progress you've made doesn't seem very impressive.

The thing you were thankful for five minutes ago didn't change.

Your perspective changed because you started comparing it to something else.

And today comparison is easier than ever. You can pull out your phone and spend hours looking at other people's houses, vacations, families, accomplishments, and possessions. But what you're actually doing is comparing the ordinary reality of your life with the carefully selected parts of somebody else's.

You're looking at your construction zone and comparing it with somebody else's finished product. (What someone else wants you to think is their finished product. It's all smoke and mirrors.)

Comparing yourself to those things will make you miserable. The same thing can happen in our service for God.

Maybe you see another person who knows the Bible better than you. Someone who is more effective at preaching the gospel and soul winning. Someone who teaches better. Someone who seems to have accomplished much more.

You can look at those things and allow that comparison to make what **you're** doing seem worthless. You can lose your motivation because you think, "I'll never be like that person. At that level." But God did not tell you to be somebody else. He gave you work to do.

Notice this phrase in verse 3: *"is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?"*
The people saw the new temple that they were building as nothing.

From their perspective, the greatest days of the temple were behind them. They could remember the former glory, but they could not see what God was going to do in the future.

There is nothing wrong with appreciating the past. These people weren't wrong that Solomon's temple had been glorious. The problem comes when you allow former things to discourage you from what God has placed in front of you right now.

Ecclesiastes 7:10 Say not thou, What is *the cause* that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

Maybe there are things in your life that appeared to be better in the past. Maybe you had more money. Maybe you had better health. Maybe you had more free time...

We can have thoughts like "Church isn't like it used to be. We have less people" "Our country isn't like it used to be.", "My family isn't like it used to be."

Don't allow the past to make you despise what God has given you to work with right now in the present.

These people in Jerusalem had work sitting directly in front of them. And so do we.

The people looked at this temple and saw something that they thought could never compare to what they had already seen.

But God wasn't finished with it.

Before He tells them what this house will eventually become, He tells them what they need to do while the work is still unfinished.

2. God Told Them to Keep Working (vv. 4–5)

Haggai 2:4-5 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.

The people were looking at the work in front of them and thinking it was nothing compared to the past. But notice that God does not tell them to stop and wait until they feel more motivated. He tells them to **be strong and work**.

Three times God says, "**be strong**." He says it to Zerubbabel, He says it to Joshua, and then He says it to all the people of the land. Everyone involved in the work needed encouragement, including the leaders.

That's a good reminder that the people in your life that give you encouragement also need encouragement themselves. That's something we should always be striving to do better at. Encouraging one another to continue to do good.

God said to "be strong". Then He gives them a simple command: "and work".

Remember, these people had already allowed the work to stop once. For years the temple sat unfinished. Now they were finally doing what God wanted them to do, and God was not going to allow their discouragement to become another excuse to quit.

That's something we need to remember. You are not always going to feel motivated to do the things you need to do.

There are mornings when you don't feel like going to work. There are days when you don't feel like taking care of your responsibilities. You don't feel like exercising. You don't feel like cleaning. But important responsibilities cannot be based entirely upon how you feel at the moment.

If they were then nothing would ever get done. Because I would rather sit back and relax and do things for myself. That's how your flesh feels a lot of the time.

Things cannot be based on feelings. The same is true when serving God. There will be weeks when you don't feel like going soul winning. There will be mornings when you don't feel like reading your Bible. Parents can spend years teaching their children the same things and wonder, "is anything getting through to them?"

If we only work and serve God when we feel motivated and immediately see results, we're not going to remain faithful very long.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

This verse acknowledges that we can become weary while doing good. You can be doing the right thing and still become tired. You can be obeying God and still become discouraged. But the command is not to quit. It says, "**in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.**"

You might not see the end, but that doesn't mean the work is accomplishing nothing. So what reason does God give these people to keep working?

Haggai 2:4 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:**

God doesn't say, "Be strong because this temple already looks impressive." He doesn't promise that the work is suddenly going to become easy. Their confidence was not supposed to come from what they could see. Their confidence came from knowing that **God was with them.**

Then in verse 5 God reminds them how long He had been faithful:

Haggai 2:5 *According to* the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

Think about how much had changed since Israel came out of Egypt. Moses was gone. Joshua was gone. David and Solomon were gone. Their kingdom had fallen. Jerusalem had been destroyed. The first temple was gone. But God says: "**My spirit remaineth among you.**"

A lot of times we forget where we've already been and what God has already gotten us through. God has never left us. We become so focused on the problem in front of us that we forget how faithful God has already been.

God had not abandoned His people. That is why He ends verse 5 by saying: **"fear ye not."**

They did not know exactly how everything was going to turn out. They could not see what this temple would eventually become. But they knew God was with them, and that was enough reason to keep working.

That same encouragement is given to us in the New Testament:

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Notice why we can remain steadfast and keep abounding in the work of the Lord: **our labour is not in vain**. Sometimes it feels like it is. But if you are faithfully doing what God has commanded you to do, don't quit simply because you cannot see the finished product.

That was exactly where these people were. They needed encouragement, they needed a reminder that God was with them in the work they were doing. All they could see was an unfinished temple that was not comparable to the first. But God could see what was still coming. He's going to show them that He had something much greater planned.

3. God Reminded Them Who Was in Control (vv. 6–8)

Haggai 2:6-8 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. **8** The silver *is* mine, and the gold *is* mine, saith the LORD of hosts.

God is reminding the people that He was still in control, and that His plans far exceed our understanding and our foresight. We can't see far ahead. But God can.

Notice how quickly the scale changes. These people are worried about one building in Jerusalem, and God starts talking shaking the heavens, the earth, the sea, the dry land, and all nations. The focus is no longer on what these people are capable of doing. God is telling them what **He** is going to do.

Sometimes we get discouraged because we take responsibility for things that were never completely within our control in the first place.

You can raise your children according to the Word of God, but you cannot make every decision for them once they grow up.

You can preach the gospel clearly to somebody, but you cannot force that person to believe.

You can work hard, prepare, plan, and make wise decisions, but you cannot control every circumstance that is going to happen tomorrow.

Our responsibility is to faithfully do the work God has placed in front of us.

God is responsible for what only God can do. We cannot shake the earth. We cannot shake nations.

But God can use us to accomplish His purposes.

This passage is actually quoted in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 12:26-28 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. **27** And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. **28** Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Hebrews helps us understand that God was talking about something much bigger than this one temple.

27 And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

The things men build are temporary. Kingdoms rise and fall. Nations come and go. Even this temple they were rebuilding would not stand forever. It doesn't exist anymore. But Hebrews says that we have received **"a kingdom which cannot be moved."**

These people were discouraged because they were focused on something they could see with their eyes. God was pointing them toward something much greater that could never be shaken or removed.

And I believe that is why right in the middle of this prophecy God says:

Haggai 2:7 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.

I believe **"the desire of all nations"** is pointing forward to Jesus Christ.
Long before Haggai, God had promised Abraham:

Genesis 22:18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

That promise pointed to Jesus. God's plan was never limited to one small nation or one building in Jerusalem. Through Jesus Christ, the blessing of salvation would go out to **all nations**.

So while these people were looking backward at Solomon and thinking about the glory they had lost, God was looking forward toward Christ and a kingdom that could never be moved. Then God says:

Haggai 2:8 The silver *is* mine, and the gold *is* mine, saith the LORD of hosts.

They may not have had Solomon's wealth, but God was not lacking anything. They were looking at their limited resources. God reminds them that everything already belongs to Him.

That's one of the main messages here. Do your part, trust God and know He is working something much bigger than what you can understand.

These people were about to learn that the temple they considered inferior was going to have a glory they never could have produced with silver and gold.

4. The Latter Glory Would Be Greater (v. 9)

Haggai 2:9 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.

Think about how different God's perspective was from theirs. Back in verse 3, they looked at this temple and said it was **"in comparison...as nothing."** But God looks at the same house and says:

"The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former."

They thought the best days were behind them. God knew what was still coming. This greater glory was not about building another physical temple that contained silver and gold.

The greater glory would come because one day **Jesus Christ Himself would enter this temple.**

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Solomon had built an incredible temple, but Jesus said: **...behold, a greater than Solomon is here.**

The gold wasn't what made this latter house greater. **Jesus did.**

These people could not have understood everything God was going to accomplish. They were simply looking at an unfinished building and wondering how it could ever compare to the past.

But God could see hundreds of years ahead. He could see Christ coming. He could see a kingdom that could not be moved. And notice how the verse ends:

Haggai 2:9 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.

Ultimately, the greatest peace God would provide would come through Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

It's important to understand how amazing that is. We have peace with God. Through Jesus. Without Him, we are at war with the Creator.

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Ephesians 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace;

Closing Thoughts

That brings us back to where we started. Sometimes halfway through the work, you lose motivation because all you can see is what is unfinished.

These people looked at what was in front of them and saw **nothing**. God saw what was coming and said it would be **greater**.

Don't constantly compare the present with the past. Don't quit doing right because you haven't seen the results yet. Be strong. Keep working. Remember that God is with you, and trust Him with the things you cannot control.

You may only be able to see the work that is sitting in front of you today. **God can see the finished product.**

And for everyone who has believed on Jesus Christ, we know that no matter what happens in this life, **the best really is yet to come.**

The work for our salvation is already finished by Jesus. But there is still work for us to do while we are here. Let's keep working until Jesus comes. Let's Pray.