

“Finish The Work”
Bible Sermon notes by Pastor Cary Rodgers, Jr.

We must finish what God commanded us to do. “Incomplete” is not pleasing to God. Let’s look at God’s response to Israel after they returned to Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity.

Who are the key persons who returned to Jerusalem from 70 years of Babylon captivity to rebuild the temple of God?

Zerubbabel – governor/captain of Judah

Haggai – Prophet

Zechariah – Prophet... famous Zech 4:6 “not by might” encouragement for Zerubbabel

Joshua (son of Josedech) – High Priest

Ezra – the scribe or historian for Israel (his book is found among the history of book of Israel in the OT)

Haggai & Zechariah books grouped the minor prophets, but the scene take places a few years after 70 years of captivity in Babylon. (show books of Bible by order and categories)

Those who returned to Jerusalem did they began to do as God commanded them to do in rebuilding the temple?

Ezra 3:8 – 11 (note a few returned... the “faithful”)

Ezra 3:8-11

- 8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.
- 9 Then stood Jeshua *with* his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, *with* their sons and their brethren the Levites.
- 10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.
- 11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because *he is* good, for his mercy *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

Did Satan set forth opposition to try to stop the work of rebuilding the house of God?

Ezra 4:1, 4 -6, 24

Ezra 4:1

- 1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;

Ezra 4:4-6

- 4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,
- 5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.
- 6 And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they *unto him* an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

Ezra 4:24

- 24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

When opposition comes our way to try to stop us from finishing the work that God has called us to do we must complete it despite the enemies of God's work.

What did the people do after they stopped rebuilding the temple because of opposition?

Ezra 5:1

- 1 Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them.

For details go to Haggai 1:1 – 11; Haggai 2:10 – 17; 'Consider Your Ways'; Zechariah 1:1 - 6

Haggai 1:1-11

- 1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,
- 2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, **This people say**, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.
- 3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,
- 4 *Is it* time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house *lie* waste?
- 5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.
- 6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes.
- 7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.
- 8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.
- 9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, *it came* to little; and when ye brought *it* home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that *is* waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.
- 10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed *from* her fruit.
- 11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that* which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

Haggai 2:10-17

- 10 In the four and twentieth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,
- 11 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests *concerning* the law, saying,

- 12 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? And the priests answered and said, No.
- 13 Then said Haggai, If *one that is* unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.
- 14 Then answered Haggai, and said, So *is* this people, and so *is* this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so *is* every work of their hands; and that which they offer there *is* unclean.
- 15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:
- 16 Since those *days* were, when *one* came to an heap of twenty *measures*, there were *but* ten: when *one* came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty *vessels* out of the press, there were *but* twenty.
- 17 I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye *turned* not to me, saith the LORD.

Zechariah 1:1-6

- 1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,
- 2 The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.
- 3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.
- 4 Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and *from* your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.
- 5 Your fathers, where *are* they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?
- 6 But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

Stopped building of God, instead they start building for themselves. They forsook the command of God.

Powerful Commentary (Ellen G. White)

The expression, "This people say," is significant. In the hour of their opportunity, the Israelites had not shown themselves willing. Prompt obedience is expected of those whom the Lord chooses and leads. **Pleas for delay are a dishonor to God.** And yet those who choose to follow their own way, often frame ingenious excuses in self-justification. **Thus the Israelites declared that they had begun to rebuild, but that they were broken off in their work because of the hindrances devised by their enemies. These hindrances, they reasoned, were an indication that it was not the proper time to rebuild.** They declared that the Lord had interposed difficulties to reprove their hot haste. **This is why, in a communication through his prophet, he referred to them not as "my people," but as "this people. (Hag. 1:2) "** {RH, December 5, 1907 par. 12}

The Israelites had no real excuse for leaving their work on the temple. The time when the most serious objections were raised, was the time for them to persevere in building. But they were actuated by a selfish dislike to encounter danger by arousing the opposition of their enemies. They did not possess the faith that is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. They hesitated to move forward by faith in the opening providences of God, because they could not see the end from the beginning. When difficulties arose, they were easily turned from the work. {Review and Herald December 5, 1907 par. 13}

What was their response?

Haggai 1:12

12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.

What was God's encouraging message?**Haggai 1:13**

13 Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, **I am with you**, saith the LORD.

Haggai 2:4

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:

Zechariah 4:6

6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

Zechariah 4:9

9 The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.

What work does God command us to do and what is His encouraging message with each command?

Matthew 28:19-20

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, **I am with you always**, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Isaiah 58:6-11

6 *Is* not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

7 *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward.

9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I *am*. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

10 And *if* thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness *be* as the noonday:

11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Does God accept excuses “you know God understands” “I am not there yet.”?

Luke 9:58-62

- 58 And Jesus said unto him, **Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.**
- 59 And he said unto another, **Follow me.** But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.
- 60 Jesus said unto him, **Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.**
- 61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.
- 62 And Jesus said unto him, **No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**

Appeal: Consider your ways.... Get in, let's get it done for the master.... NO MORE EXCUSES!!!

To those who profess to believe in him, God says, "Go forth to all parts of the world, and diffuse the light of my truth, that men and women may be led to Christ." Let us awake to our duty. Let us do all that we can to help forward the Lord's work. Let superficial excuses be blown to the winds of heaven. No longer grieve the Spirit of God by delaying. Forget not the words, "We are laborers together with God." Cooperate with the angels sent down from the heavenly courts to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. {RH, April 28, 1903 par. 8}

Time is passing; the end is near. While you are unconsecrated, golden opportunities for helping souls to see Jesus as he is--full of grace and truth--are passing by, never to return. That which you have not done as a devoted Christian in the past, you can not now do. But through the grace of Christ you may redeem the time by redoubling your efforts. Let your interest in the souls for whom Christ has died deepen and broaden. Inquire not, "What shall this man do?" for then Christ would say to you, as he said to Peter, "What is that to thee?" Keep your own soul in the love of the truth, and work with untiring endeavor to win souls to the Saviour. {RH, April 28, 1903 par. 9}

Earnest, self-sacrificing workers are needed, workers who will go to God, and with strong crying and tears plead for the precious souls who are going to ruin. There can be no harvest without seedsowing, no result without effort." {RH, April 28, 1903 par. 10}

As labors for Jesus Christ we must finish the work that God has called us to do for the glory of God!