

The Time is Now – Week 3

Well I am very, very blessed to have heard really a lot of stories about how this little Old Testament book is impacting so many lives, and so today we're actually going to wrap up our study through the book of Haggai. If you missed previous weeks I kind of want to give you a little bit of back story just so it'll make sense to you.

If you missed previous weeks let me kind of tell you the back story. We talked about what happened back in 587 BC, when the Babylonians under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Judah, crushing the temple that Solomon had built and this was more than just a physical blow, this was a spiritual blow to God's people saying not only did you destroy everything that we loved, but you destroyed the house for our God.

For five decades the Jewish people were held in bondage, in captivity, and so when they were allowed to actually go back and start to rebuild you can only imagine the thrill after fifty years of being held captive they were able to go back and to start to rebuild not only their own lives but also to rebuild God's temple, the house, the dwelling place for God.

If you remember in week number one they started strong. They built the foundation, they built the altar, and then when the Samaritans opposed them they panicked... Ahhh, we can't do this, and they quit. Well God raised up the prophet Haggai and said, "The time is now. The time is now to build my temple." So they started again and they became incredibly discouraged.

As we pick up the story this week, kind of reading between the lines. If you look at their attitude you can find that many of them really battle the same battle that many of us feel when we think we're trying to do what you asked us to do God, but things just aren't going well.

We're trying to do what you told us to do, and yet we're not making progress. We're trying to obey you God and yet our life still is not working very well. You can almost feel the cry of their hearts, "God we're obeying you and yet where are you? Where are the results?"... **Is it really worth it to serve and obey God**, and this is a question I believe many people were asking God and quite honestly many people ask today.

"God I'm trying to do life your way. I went to church. I'm trying to do this thing, and yet my life is still not working the way I believe that it should." As a pastor quite honestly I see this oftentimes in dealing with people.

This is what a lot of times people think, "I tried the thing. I said the prayer. I did something good. I went to church, and it's not working." Is it even worth it to try to obey God? This was kind of the context as we wrap up the final week. The Jewish people were trying to build the temple. It wasn't going the way they thought it would be, and they're wondering, "Is it even worth it to obey God?"

This brings about the problem I want to talk about today. It's a problem they battled with. It's a problem that I've battled with. Chances are it's a problem that many of you have battled with. If you're taking notes I call it **The problem: conditional obedience to God.**

Conditional obedience to God. Okay God, I'm in as long as you're delivering. God, I'll obey as long as it doesn't cost me too much. God, I'll do what you want me to do as long as I see the results I want to see.... But if it makes me uncomfortable, is inconvenient, or you're not doing what I think you should do, at this point God I pull back... That's Conditional obedience. I'll obey as long as it doesn't make me uncomfortable or I see the results that I want to see. Conditional obedience.

Jen, my wife, calls it selective listening with our kids. I don't know if your kids are like this, but they hear what they want to hear. "Hey kids, I need you to clean your room! Hey kids, hey kids, kids. Go clean your room." They don't hear anything. She'll say under her breath, "Ice cream," and they come running from every corner of the house. What is that? It's selective listening. It's I'm hearing what I want to hear. I'll obey the commands that I want to hear. It's Conditional obedience!

We can be like this. Our scripture here at Chandler Acres is Jeremiah 29:11 right..., "Many the plans in your heart to bless us and to prosper us, not to harm us, and to give us a hope and a future." I love that verse.... But forgive my enemies? Forget that. You don't know my enemies. I'm not forgiving my enemies. I hate my enemies. Oh, pray for my enemies? Sure God, I'll pray for them. I'll pray they go to hell, that's what I'll pray God.

I'm not doing that... It's selective listening.

It's I'll obey as long as I'm comfortable. It's conditional obedience, but what we need to understand and this text is going to get really, really serious here in a moment, is that... **God does not give us options to consider, but commands to obey.** I'm going to say it again, **God does not give us options to consider, but commands to obey.**

We're going to see God show very clearly to his people, I've described it as the corruptive power of sin. This is what Haggai does. If you remember earlier, God's people turned away from God and they worshiped idols. Their hearts were not with God. They put their own houses ahead of God's house, and so God tells Haggai the prophet to ask the priest some questions. Now let me just say these questions sound a little weird at first. I'm going to unweird them for you and they'll make total sense to you.

Haggai 2:12

Stop there, you're probably going now what does that mean? Just so you know, the priest when they were going to sacrifice they would always wear their robes. They would take holy or sanctified meat, and they would take the robes and fold it up into like a little pocket to keep the meat. What Haggai's going to do is ask if your robe, which is now kind of like touching something holy, brushes up against something that is unholy, does the holiness rub off on the unholiness, and the unholiness becomes holy. That's what he's going to ask him.

He says, "If one of you is carrying some meat from a holy sacrifice in his robe, and his robe happens to brush against some bread or stew or wine or olive oil or any other kind of food, will it also become holy?" And what did the priest say? The priests replied and say, "No." In other words, the holiness doesn't rub off.

It's like this, a modern example would be. If I clean my hands, my hands are clean, and I touch a dirty plate full of spaghetti sauce. Do my clean hands make the dirty plate clean? No, the dirty plate might make my clean hands dirty. This is what he was saying, and then he illustrates that principle in verse 13.

Haggai 2:13

What's he doing? He's basically showing that sin is like a disease.

Sin spreads easier than holiness. It's the corruptive power of sin.

Haggai 2:14

Let me say it again, this is challenging. "Because they turned away. Because their hearts are going after idols and not after me." Because of that God says, "Everything that they do, and everything they offer is defiled by their sin."

We could say it this way. **When your heart isn't right with God, everything you do will be wrong.** Let me say it again. This needs to sink in. **When your heart is not right with God, everything you do will be wrong**

So what do we see so often. "Oh God, I'll obey you, I'll obey, I'll obey you, as long as you do what I want you to do." "God, I'll obey you as long as this is working out for me." "I'll obey you as long as it doesn't cost me too much, or isn't inconvenient to me."

This is completely a dead wrong approach to our God. We need to understand that we do not obey God so that he will bless us. We obey God because we love him. It's all about the heart. Let me say it again... We do not obey God for what he's going to do for us, so he'll bless us, so he'll make our lives better. We obey God because of who he is. We obey God because we love him, and we want to honor him with everything in us. This is why getting our hearts right matters so much.

If you think that's challenging, you haven't seen anything yet. **God reminds his people,** he's going to get down to the heart of the issue.

Haggai 2:15

Okay, if you were here at week number one you remember we talked about this. Before they laid the foundation. We looked at the verse (1:6) that so many people identified with. Hey, you're drinking but you're still thirsty. You're eating but you're not full. You're putting your money in pockets with holes in it. In other words, you're doing everything you can to have meaning in this life but you're still empty. You're accumulating as much wealth and things and having as much fun as you can, but you still feel like there's something more.

You're consuming everything that you can and yet there's not enough left over. You're working your tail off, and you're not getting ahead. What's going on with this? "You remember that? Before you build the foundation that's where your were."

Then... [Haggai 2:16](#)

Let's apply this to where we live today. You thought you were going to get paid twenty dollars an hour, but when your paycheck came it was half of that. It's not working like you thought it would be.

Haggai 2:17

God says, "You're working your buns off and I sent blight and hail and mildew, and the reason you didn't get ahead is because I didn't let you," says God.

I have to be honest, I don't like that picture of God.... I'm doing all this. I'm trying my best, and you God, you sent these things to keep me from having my crops? Is it even worth it? Why in the world would a good God stop us from having provision when we're doing everything we can just to survive. What kind of God is that? Is that a God that I want to serve? Is that a God that truly loves me? Why would God do that?

God says, "**Yet you did not turn to me declares the Lord.**"

There is it! There's the reason. You see God is not trying to punish his people. God was trying to restore his people, that was his goal.

What's really loving to me is what God did. All he did was cut off their supply. Notice he didn't make them sick. He didn't kill their kids. He didn't do something cruel, he just cut off their supply. Basically to get their attention to turn back to him. "Oh yeah God, you are our provider. You are the one the controls the season...I forgot about that!"

If this seems unloving for a moment, remember, if you are a loving parent you would do the exact same thing to a rebellious kid. If your kid is off at college and you're sending money every month to help support your kid, and your kid is smoking it away, drinking it away, partying it away, not going to class, abusing your generosity, the first thing you're going to do as a loving parent is cut off that supply. Why? Because they are not representing the values, and until your heart comes back to these values then I'm not going to continue to supply your party lifestyle, and this is what God said. God said, "I'm not trying to punish you, I'm trying to restore you, because I want your heart. Your heart has turned away from me."

If you go back to week number one, you remember the simplicity of God's message? They're like, "I know we're supposed to build it but we don't know how God," and God said, "Here's how you do it." This is so easy don't miss it. God said, "Here's how you do it, one, two, three."

Number one, go up to the mountain. Number two, bring down the timber. Number three, build my temple. That's how you do it. If you read it ... God said, "Just do this. Go up to the mountain. Bring down the timber. Build my house."

Week two they're doing it but they're discouraged, "We're discouraged, we want to give up." God said, "This is so easy... Just be strong, and do the work. Put down another stone. Put down another stone. Just stay in the game. Just be faithful. One stone on top of another." **Successful people do consistently what normal people do occasionally.** Just put down another stone.

Week number three, God has one simple message, and in this text above all else God says, **more than anything else God says, "I want your heart."** More than anything else God says, "I want your heart. I want you to seek me with all of your heart."

You used to love me. I used to be first, but guess what? Now you turned away and worshiped other idols. I want your heart. I want to be first in everything... Matthew 6:33 Jesus said to "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and then all these things will be added unto you." God says, "I want you to delight in me. To enjoy me. To seek me, and then I will give you the desires of your heart, but first you delight in my heart. I want you to pursue me with all of your heart." When you seek God with all of your heart he says, "You will find me and I want you to put me above all else."

In the New Testament Jesus said, "There is one command above all others, and that is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength." It's all about the heart. If your heart isn't right with God then everything you do is wrong, but when your heart is right with God you'll see him start to bless you... It's all about the heart.

I don't care if you have a nice house, but don't put your house ahead of my house. God says, "I want your heart," and that for me is the biggest battle that I face. I can be so in love and so faithful to God and then all of the sudden conditional obedience. "But God, this isn't going my way. But God, is it worth it? But God you... but God, God, God, God, God." **We don't obey so God will bless us. We obey God because we love him.**

That's why what we do is so important. That's why corporate worship together, where we come together in the church and we corporately sing to God. We say, "God, we love you with all of our hearts." We hear his word together in our hearts. That's why this matters.

This is the amazing part of the story... God says this to them. Even though they hadn't finished the temple. Even though they didn't do anything do deserve it, only because their hearts had changed God said, "I am giving you a promise now. Now's the time to build the temple." Now's the time to get your hearts right with God. Now is the time to repent of sin that you have rationalized or justified. Now is the time to stop giving God lip service and give him your heart. Now is the time not to put your house first, but to put His house first. Now is the time. Now is the time.

Stand and Pray