

## God Is With Those Who Fear Him

Haggai 1:12-15

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*<sup>12</sup> Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, 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 feared the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, "I am with you, declares the Lord." <sup>14</sup> And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, <sup>15</sup> on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king."*

What is our duty towards God?

*"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."* Ecclesiastes 12:13

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught his disciples to fear God. *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell"*. Matthew 10:28.

There was a time when you would say so and so is a "God-fearing man or a God-fearing woman". It is used to describe a man or a woman who is upright and conducts himself or herself rightly before God and others.

The fear of God is a foundational quality for the disciple of Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that we must conduct ourselves in the fear of God. The fear of God is a major theme across the entire Bible.

Sadly, in our day and age, the fear of God has taken a back seat. The fear of man and appeasement of man has taken the place of the fear of God. And that is not the way of God. Proverbs 29:25 reminds that *"the fear of man is a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe"*. King Saul was one such man. He feared people and appeased people to the extent that he sinned against God. And eventually Saul was removed from being king. (1 Samuel 15:23-24.)

And that is what the exiles did as well. They had laid the foundation of temple in 538BC. They rejoiced in the new beginning. But as soon as opposition came, they abandoned God's temple.

*"<sup>4</sup> Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build <sup>5</sup> and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose."* Ezra 3:4-5

However, we see a turn-around in today's passage.

We began the book of Haggai with the Lord telling the exiles to consider their ways and then go and rebuild the temple. And in this passage today, we will consider the response of the exiles. A key response is found in the last part of verse twelve. They *feared* the Lord.

Let's begin at verse *twelve*.

*<sup>12</sup> Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, 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 feared the Lord.*

They obeyed the voice of the Lord. God delights in the obedience of his people. God delights in your obedience. The word obedience is actually the word *heard*. Same word as the word *shema* as used in the Great Shema in Deuteronomy six and Mark twelve. The exiles heard, considered and paid attention to what God said through the prophet. And it was not just the governor who obeyed, not just the high priest but all of them obeyed. Everyone heard and paid attention to word of God. This was a case of national repentance.

Notice what the exiles say about God – "*obeyed the voice of the Lord their God*". This is a reversal of what the exiles believed about the temple in verse two – "*These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord*". They once thought it wasn't time to build the temple but now they realize that God's business is their business as well.

And in verse twelve you see the conjunction "*and*" in "*they obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai the prophet*". Another way to read this part of verse *twelve* is to say – "*they obeyed the voice of God on account of words of Haggai*". The prophet was the messenger for the message from God.

So the first response from the people is *obedience*.

And you see another response. And the people *feared* the Lord. The author communicates this response in a single separate sentence. They feared the Lord.

\*\*\*What would it look like if churches in our country began turning back to God and live in the fear of God? Instead, we have whole churches and denominations caving in to unbiblical and false teaching.

The fear of the Lord is foundational for every believer. Obedience is followed by the fear of the Lord.

How should we understand the fear of God?

Al Martin in his book “The Forgotten Fear: Where have all the God fearers gone” writes this about the fear of God – *“Until a person knows the forgiveness of God based on the blood of the everlasting covenant (through Jesus Christ), he will never rightly fear God. He may be terrified of God; he may have a dread of God; but that terror and dread will drive him away from God. The fear of God is couched in the consciousness of forgiveness is a fear that causes us to draw near to God and to cling to Him and His ways”*

Fear of God is active rejection of what God does not approve. It means opposing sin or evil by deliberate action or effort. Proverbs 8:13 puts it this way *“The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate”*. Proverbs 3:7 says *“Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil”*. Romans 12:9 *“Abhor what is evil”*. Sin must be hated and sin must be rejected. The fear of God is hating sinful thoughts, ideas, practices or methods – whether open or secret. It is not selling integrity for personal gain. It is humbling before God’s Word. Nehemiah was one such man. He went from being cup-bearer to being governor. And as governor, he refused to lay heavy burdens on the people unlike his predecessors. What was his reason? The fear of God. (Nehemiah 5:15). Nehemiah had a keen sense of awareness that God was watching him. Job was commended by God as a blameless and God-fearing man.

As you live your life everyday out there, there may be situations that will be presented before you to make a choice and we are instructed to *“..continue in the fear of the Lord all the day”* Proverbs 23:17

Obedience and living in the fear of the Lord invite God’s presence and blessings on your life. There is great blessing in living your life in the fear of God.

So the exiles respond with obedience and reverence. How does God respond to them?

Look at verse thirteen.

<sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, "I am with you, declares the Lord."

This has been God's covenantal promise to the people of Israel from ages. As followers of Jesus, hear what Jesus says to his disciples in Matthew 28:19 – "<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Hebrews 13:5 "I will never leave you nor forsake you".

God promises to be with you. Not because you were perfectly obedient. But because His Son Jesus Christ was perfectly obedient.

"..so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." Romans 5:19

God declares you righteous because of His Son's obedience. God gives the Holy Spirit to dwell in you. And God promises to be with you. What a privilege!

Here a few incentives to live life in the fear of God.

1. The *friendship* of the LORD is for those who fear him.. Psalm 25:1. Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." John 15:14
2. Behold, the *eye* of the LORD is on those who fear him Psalm 33:18
1. Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no *lack*! Psalm 34:9
2. He provides *food* for those who fear him. Psalm 111:15
3. He *fulfills* the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them. Psalm 145:19
4. ..the LORD takes *pleasure* in those who fear him. Psalm 147:11
5. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of *wisdom*. Proverbs 9:10
6. In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge. Proverbs 14:26
7. The fear of the LORD is a *fountain of life*. Proverbs 14:27

"The fear of God is the holy soil that produces a godly life" – Al Martin

God is not done with the exiles. God moves towards them and moves in them in response to their repentance and obedience.

Look at verse fourteen and fifteen.

<sup>14</sup> And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the

*remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God,<sup>15</sup> on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.”*

This word “*stirred up*” is resurrection language. The grammar suggests this was causative action by God. He caused the people to be stirred up for the rebuilding of the temple. To come and work on the house of the Lord. God stirred up Cyrus the Persian King to help rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1). Is your heart stirred up for the Lord?

The disciples of Jesus saw him clean up the temple and they remembered Jesus was zealous for the house of God. “Zeal for your house has consumed me” John 2:17.

Let me summarize the four key action verbs we see in the passage. God spoke through the prophet Haggai – rebuild the temple. The people *obeyed*, they *feared* the Lord, they *came* and they *worked* on the house of the Lord. And in verse fifteen, it was twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month. In verse one, we see that the prophet’s message came on the first day of the month. The people obey God in just twenty-three days.

Let’s consider our ways. Let us turn to God.

May the Lord give us strength to obey Him, to fear Him, to come together and work for expanding his kingdom.

If you have never responded to God’s call, here is a question for you.

Have you been living without any fear of God? Indifference to who God is?

That is not good way to live.

*“for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.”* Romans 2:8

There is good news, however. Repent and trust in Jesus Christ and receive the forgiveness of your sins. God will draw near to you.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **God Is With Those Who Fear Him.** Haggai 1:12-15

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What is the fear of God and what place does it have in the life of a Christian? What are some noticeable examples of the fear and awe of God recorded in the Old and New Testaments? Deuteronomy 2:24-25, Psalm 105:36-38, Leviticus 19:3, Mark 4:41, Luke 2:9, Acts 5:11, Genesis 3:10, Psalm 119:20, Hebrews 10:31

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

1. Do you believe "the fear of God" is a foundational characteristic for a disciple of Jesus Christ? Why or why not? What are some practical implications? Exodus:20:20, 2 Corinthians 5:10-11, Acts 9:31, Ephesians 5:21, Hebrew 12:28
2. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

1. For personal reflection: Is there anything in our life that you need to consider changing towards a God-fearing life?