

Haggai 1:12-15

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[0 : 00] There's a little phrase in the passage that I want us to look at and it's there in verse 14. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubel.

It should be repeated in the middle of verse 14. And the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehoshaphat. And it should be repeated again. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And the reason why I want to look at this little passage today is because Haggai is an astonishingly successful preacher. He's one of the most spectacularly successful preachers in all of the Bibles. And he's brought the people a really stern and unwelcome message. He hasn't been popular. He hasn't told the people how to live your best life now. He hasn't told them what they wanted to hear. He's not been comfortable to listen to. He hasn't flattered them. He has rebuked them for their laziness. He has scolded them for their excuse making.

[1 : 06] And Haggai in the passage that we've just read has declared God's judgment on their sin. And he has told them that God is angry with them. And he says God is angry with you and he urges them to repent.

To change their ways. And for them to repent and change their ways it was costly and it was deep. There's not many people like listening to preaching like that.

People don't like it then and they don't like it now. And people who often preach like that get into trouble don't they? But these people they don't react like that. So Reabel the prince he might have stormed off in a rage but he didn't.

Joshua the high priest might have debated theology and whether Haggai got the right message but he didn't. The people might have stoned him. Or at least walked away but they didn't.

They listened to the preacher. And they did more than listen. They followed his advice. And they did what he told them to do and they began to rebuild the temple. And they did it very quickly.

[2 : 09] It's the middle of harvest time at the end of the chapter. It's the busiest time of the year. And yet as we read on in Haggai we find that in 23 days the people organized themselves and they did the work and they did it unanimously.

And again and again we read the phrase the whole remnant of the people. All the people who came back from exile.

They reunited in this. The whole remnant of the people responded. I don't know what you think of preaching. Preaching often seems so ineffective. God's message to the world seems to fall on deaf ears.

How can we explain here this tremendous and enthusiastic and unanimous and rapid wholehearted response. To what was a pretty certain and rebuking message.

What was it that led the people to respond in such a wonderful way. Well I've shown you the phrase. It's there in verse 14. The results of the preaching.

[3 : 28] They were not due to the brilliance of Haggai's oratory. He wasn't a brilliant orator. They weren't due to the force of the prophet's personality.

The explanation needs to be found in a different place. It is God who did it. Do you see that? The Lord stirred up their spirit.

Literally the word is awakened. The Lord woke them up. These were the people of God. Yes. They had come back from exile. And yet there was something in them that was sleepy.

And when Haggai spoke. The spirit of God took the word of God. And touched them. And woke them up. And stirred them up into vigorous action.

And these people of God. They were the true people of God. They weren't fake believers. They were real believers. But they had slid backwards.

[4 : 30] And they were drowsy. And they were easy going. And they were half hearted. And their vision. Well. It was dim. But here they stood up.

And their energy is renewed. And they are filled with a new enthusiasm. And a zeal. And everything that happened afterwards. All the building. All the regeneration.

Of the Lord's house. Was because of the initiative of God working. The Lord stirred up the spirit of the people. I want us to look at two signs. Of a people that have woken up.

To the voice of God. So first of all. Let's see an awareness. Of the voice of God. Now. Can you just look at verses 12 to 15. And I wanted you to see. That the stress.

Throughout. Is not on the preacher. It is not on the man. But it's on the God. Who sent them. So look at verses 12. Then Zerubbabel. The son of Shealtiel.

[5 : 28] And Joshua. The son of Jehoshadak. The high priest. With all the remnant of people. Obeyed. What did they obey? Can you see it? The voice of the Lord.

The voice of the Lord. Their God. That's who they obeyed. And secondarily. At the end of the verse. It says. And the words of Haggai the prophet.

But do you see. How it's immediately qualified. Isn't it? And the words of Haggai the prophet. As the Lord. Their God. Had sent him. And the people feared the Lord. Why did they obey the voice of Haggai?

Well only because. The Lord had sent him. Because of the tremendous threat. In verse 13. Then Haggai. The messenger of the Lord. Spoke to the people.

With the Lord's message. I am with you. Declares the Lord. There you go. Three times. Do you see it? Verse 13. The messenger of the Lord.

[6 : 30] The message of the Lord. Declares the Lord. Where is the emphasis. In verse 13. Is it on Haggai? No it's not is it? The emphasis.

Is that it was God himself. It was God's voice. And the people realised. That this was not a message. From a human being. They looked past Haggai. To the real source.

And they became aware. That God himself. Was speaking to them. From heaven. And they were hearing. A supernatural voice. A message from the Lord.

And so here is a mark. Of a people. That have woken up. Of an awakened people. That God is speaking to me. Now of course. I and your ministry.

Is not a prophet. In the Old Testament sense. I do not receive. Any direct revelations. From God. Sometimes I wish I did.

[7 : 24] It would make preparation. A lot easier. I can tell you. But I do not. Receive any direct revelations. From God. And neither does your minister. Or whoever he is. God told Haggai.

Exactly. What to say. He doesn't tell me. Exactly what to say. He doesn't tell the preacher. In your church. Exactly what to say. No matter what he claims. There is. No more.

Direct. Revelation. But that does not mean. That God. Does not speak. As directly now. As he did then. For he does.

Doesn't he. Because we have. This book. We have the living. Word of God. And every word. In this book. Is a direct.

Personal. Revelation. From God. To us. Listen to John Calvin. John Calvin says. The glory of God.

[8 : 22] So shines in his word. That we ought to be. So much affected by it. As though he were near us. Face to face. The glory of God.

So shines in his word. That we ought to be. So much affected by it. As though he were near us. Face to face. So think for a moment. Think of suddenly.

A remark. And remarkably. A white light. Was to fill this building. In this room. And a voice. Came out of that light. Addressing you. By name.

And spoke to you. How would you listen? How serious. You would take that word. Wouldn't it?

You'd never forget that. To the end of your life.

You would say. God spoke to me. But God is speaking to you. God is speaking to you. And to me. In his word.

[9 : 17] Just as plainly. And as directly. And as authoritatively. And so in your church. Before the final reading. And they say.

This is the word of God. That is what we mean. And as the preacher. Is God's chosen spokesman. And we believe.

That although the godly preacher. Does not receive direct revelation. From God. Yet the Bible does assure us. That the godly preacher.

Will be guided. In his choice of scripture. And then in his preparation. Of scripture. As he works in his study. During the week. And we believe. That God will control. His mental processes.

And the Lord will direct. His ways. And his thoughts. And move him. So that particular truths. Will be emphasized. And the way he brings them out. And the way he delivers them.

[10:14] In such a way. That whether the preacher. Realizes or not. As God's word is taught. God speaks. To his people. And addresses the needs.

Of his people. And God is able to. In a very mysterious. And wonderful way. Speak through. Fail. Frail. Fallible.

Sinful man. So that his word. Comes directly. To you. From the Bible.

Through. The preacher of the gospel. Let me read you. From. Our Lord's words. In John chapter 13. And verse 20.

John chapter 13. And verse 20. Which explains to us. Something of the mystery. Of preaching. Truly. Truly. I say to you.

[11:09] Whoever receives. The one. I send. Receives me. And whoever receives me. Receives the one. Who sent me. And that is something.

That should make. Every true preacher. Tremble. That God. Speaks. Through. His. Chosen. Servants.

To his people. And so that's one of the marks. Of an awakened people. Isn't it? That we become aware. That week by week. God is dealing with us.

He's dealing with us. Through his word. And so we can. Expecting me to. Hear God's word. And we forget. Whoever it is. Is preaching. Whether it's a good sermon.

Or not. Whether it's an interesting. Sermon or not. We come. Wondering. What will God say to me today? What will God say to me today? Because I realise.

[12:06] That the Lord. Is addressing me. Through his word. By spirit. Spirit. And when the people are awakened. They hear the voice of the Lord. They obey the voice of the Lord.

They realise that something supernatural is happening. Something that human beings can't explain. That does happen. Isn't it? You know what it's like.

Isn't it? You've been listening to a sermon. And the preacher has said something. That's touched your life. That's touched your life. So exactly. That maybe you've been annoyed. And you think.

Who's been telling him? Who told him that? I've had that experience. Where you've listened to preaching. And it's as if. It's been speaking to you directly. And you think.

Well he's told him. And then you realise. That God is addressing you. And so I want to urge you. As you come Tuesday by Tuesday. And as you come Sunday by Sunday.

[13:02] To your church. To come expectantly. That we have to remember. There is a supernatural element.

To preaching. And when we come. We must realise. It's not about ability. It's not about preaching skill. It's not about ingenuity. And good listening. All those things are good things.

There has to be something mysterious. Something inexplicable. Something divine. Something supernatural. And what I pray for. And what you must pray for. Is that God will speak to us through his word.

That he will give us an awareness. That we are dealing with him. Not just my thoughts. And my ideas. Or your minister's thoughts. Or ideas. They are worth nothing.

The word of God. Is the important thing. Secondly. Look at verse 12. I want us to see. Activity. In the work of God. Awareness of the voice of God. And then secondly. Activity in the work of God.

[14:01] Look at verse 12. It says. As the river well. The son of Shealtiel. And Joshua. The son of Shealtiel. Hosted the high priest. With all the remnants of the people.

Obeded. 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. There's an interesting kind of pun here.

Messenger in verse 13.

And work. Are very very similar. In Hebrew. The messenger. Caused the people. To begin the work. So the second mark. The second mark of a people awoken.

Is that they heard. And then they obeyed. And so here is the acid test. Of a true work of the Holy Spirit. It is not enough.

For you and I just to be moved. And touched. And have our emotions stirred. You can go watch football. If that's what you want. Or you can go to a gig. It is very possible.
[14:57] For a preacher. By his powerful personality. Or skill. To move you. It's very easy to do. It is possible. To stir people's emotions. It's possible.

To tell stories. To speak in such a way. That people will weep. And they are affected. By what they're hearing. It's possible. To create a mood. By music. To sing certain. Hymns. And songs. Which will move you. Emotionally. You can do that. By psychology. You can have a great crowd. And get people. Worked up to joy. And excitement. To sorrow. But that may not be. May not be. No more than brainwashing. Adolf Hitler. Got people very stirred up. Didn't he. In the way they spoke. It may be no more than. Psychological manipulation. How can you tell the difference. Between that. And the real thing. How can you tell the difference. Between when you go to a meeting. And you're caught up.

[15:52] In the emotion of it. And the real thing. Well the difference is. What happens afterwards. So let's look in Haggai chapter 1. Do you see it?

The people obeyed. The voice of the Lord. They were changed. And they sought after obedience. Obedience. All too often. The emotion of a service. Evaporates. Doesn't it? In the chill air. Of a Monday morning. That's why I quite like. The lunchtime talks. It's a little bit like. We're stripped back. Totally aren't we? We've got 25 minutes. We have the Bible. We pray. We teach the word. And then we're back to work. Or back in the middle of the day. And it's so easy isn't it? For what we hear. To evaporate into the chill air. People say.

What a wonderful meeting. But the question is. Has it changed you? Has it made you a different person? If it hasn't. It wasn't a wonderful meeting. It wasn't a wonderful service. Here's a sign of the spirits working.

[16:50] The people of Jerusalem. Took up the work. They'd been neglecting. For so long. They freed themselves. From their other responsibilities. And they organized. They actually began. They showed urgency.

And effort. And they sacrificed. We're told earlier in the Bible. That Solomon's temple. Took seven years to build. With really the help of. Kind of forced labor. And heavy taxes. In Ezra chapter 6. This temple was completed. In four years. In half the time. These people acted. They heard the word. And they lived out the message. And they were not only aware. That God was speaking to them. But they did something about it. Now of course. We want to have a sense of God. When we meet together.

We want to feel. God's blessing. I think that's right. We want our emotions. To be stirred. We want to feel the truth. That we believe. That's right. We want as we meet together.

[17:46] To know that God is in our midst. We want outsiders. To come in. And as they hear God speaking. And say God is in this place. As they see how people. Love one another. As Christians. And they say God is speaking to us.

But more important than all of that. Is we want to be changed. By God's word. So of course. I'm encouraged.

When you say to me. Thank you for that message. I found that helpful. I enjoyed it. I don't want you to stop. Doing that. But far more important than that. Is that. You and I. Should do something about the word.

Myself included. That we should put it. Into practice. Joyce Baldwin says. When God speaks. Apathy. Apathy. Is evidence of practical atheism.

Apathy. Is evidence of practical atheism. And the mark of an awakened people. Is to be zealous. In living for God. In praying for the conversion.

[18:43] Of our friends. In seeking to overcome sin. To walk more closely with Christ. To love his church.

And be stuck into it. And to do more for God. And the Lord stirred up. And that's important for you. And it's important for me. As we start out in the new year.

Isn't it? We can have all sorts of resolutions. I've managed to keep mine for three days. And we think new year. New beginnings. And all that nonsense. But if I have any respect.

This morning. We are sleeping. And we are drowsy. And we are half-hearted. And our love has gone cold. And we've slipped back.

May God stir you up. And awaken you to hear his voice. And may God enable us to obey you. The Lord stirred up.

[19 : 50] The whole remnant of the people. Let's pray. Let's pray.