

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 30 Oct 2022

Sermon Title : Haggai Sermon Series
Think Again: Obedience is Overrated

Speaker : Rev Reuben Ng

Text : Haggai 2:10-19

INTRODUCTION

Many today may think that obedience is overrated or old fashion. Emphasis is on being individualistic, having our own way of thinking and feeling. Everything is mainly about me, not about society or others. Compound to that is the concept of freedom - as individuals we are free to do whatever we want, however and whenever without any restrictions or limitations. Added to this is a growing mistrust of authority, organizations and institutions due to potential, perceived or actual abuse of power which we have either personally experienced or read about. With this current culture in our society, it is not impossible that some of this thinking has crept in to influence the way we relate to God. We may have diminished the importance of being obedient to God. Even when God prompts us with His Holy Spirit or sends people to encourage us to make changes in certain areas of our lives, we may think we are individuals with freedom to exercise our will and right to say 'No' to God in these areas. To show we are not totally rejecting God, we try to compensate by doing many other good things for God in His name, as expressions of our love for Him.

Recap of events in Haggai 1:1-2:9

1st day of 6th month: God calls the Israelites to rebuild His Temple (Hag 1:1)

24th day of 6th month: Israelites started work on God's house (Hag 1:15) – refer to Haggai Sermon Series 1.

21st day of 7th month: God encourages the Israelites to "Work on". (Hag 2:1) – refer to Haggai Sermon Series 2

Haggai 2:10-13

24th day of 9th month: 3 months after they began rebuilding the temple, God released another message to the Israelites through the prophet Haggai. (Hag 2:10)

(Note: God was not silent in the 8th month - God's word came to Zechariah to remind, encourage and challenge His people to return to Him in Zechariah 1:1. Haggai and Zechariah were contemporaries ministering to God's people at the same time.)

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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God told Haggai to ask the priests for an interpretation of the Law in 2 areas:

1. If one carries consecrated meat (meat set aside for God's use - anything set aside for God's use becomes holy) in the fold of one's garment and with the fold touches bread or stew, or wine, or oil or any kind of food, does it become unholy? (Hag 2:12)
 - The priests replied that even if the consecrated/holy meat touched other food, that would not make the other food holy.
2. If one who is unclean by contact with a dead body, touches any of these, does it become unclean? (Hag 2:13)
 - The priests replied that those food would become unclean.

Uncleanness/impurity/being unholy can spread/transmit and contaminate clean things to make them unclean, but holiness/cleanness does not spread to what is unholy to make it holy.

Haggai 2:14

Something has occurred to cause God's people then to be unclean and so because of that, whatever they offer and do out of their genuine sincerity to honour God, has become unclean. (Hag 2:14)

What this DOES NOT mean

Some may misunderstand this to mean that since uncleanness can be spread, we must be very careful in everything or we can accidentally touch, hear, eat or pass-by something that is unclean that causes everything that we do for God to become impure before God. This is not true and Haggai 2:10-14 is not trying to make us fearful about everything and tiptoe around so that we do not become accidentally impure in God's eyes because fear is not from God. 2 Tim 1:7 tells us that God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and self-control.

What is God calling us to fulfill specifically in Haggai 2:11-14?

A. Saul's disobedience (1 Sam 15:1-22)

Around 1020 BC, God told king Saul through Prophet Samuel to attack the Amalekites and utterly destroy everyone and everything. God did this to punish the Amalekites for attacking the Israelites when they came out from Egypt. (Exodus 17) While the Israelites won that battle because Moses lifted his arms in worship of God while Joshua fought, God did not forget what the Amalekites had done.

Instead of obeying God completely, king Saul did not kill Agag king of the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:8) and spared the best of the sheep, cattle, fatted calf and lambs (whatever was valuable) to offer to God as sacrifice. (1 Sam 15:15) He only destroyed things that were despised and worthless.

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Although under normal circumstances this would have been the right and commendable thing to do - giving our best to God, God did not accept this sacrifice. Instead, Samuel asked Saul why he did not obey the voice of the Lord but swooped down on the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (1 Sam 15:19).

- God was not pleased with Saul's sacrifice of the best from the Amalekites' animals because he was disobedient.
- His good intention of wanting to sacrifice the best animals to God did not make the act of disobedience right.
- This act of disobedience not only negates the good sacrifice they brought to the Lord. Disobedience brought it down to a negative value; it was evil in the sight of the Lord – obedience does not spread but disobedience does.
- Samuel reminded Saul that the Lord did not delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices but in obedience; to obey is better than sacrifice. (1 Sam 15:22)

Lessons learnt:

- ❖ **Doing other good things cannot compensate/cover for or spread to our disobedience towards God in areas that He is calling us to obey Him.**
- ❖ **Disobedience to God not only negates all the good we do in His name but brings them to a negative value – all the good become evil in God's sight.**

B. Simon Peter's obedience (Luke 5)

Peter who had been fishing the whole night in the Sea of Galilee without success obeyed when Jesus told him to put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch. Although Peter was a professional fisherman who knew that Jesus was not part of the fishing community in Galilee and that Jesus' instructions did not make sense, he chose to set aside his reservations and simply obeyed. As a result, he and his partners caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break and the boats began to sink.

- ❖ **When we obey God, blessings always follow.**

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight." (Proverbs 15:8)

Haggai 2:15-19

The Israelites previously got less measures of grain and wine than they expected from their hard work. (Hag 2:15-17)

- Sometimes, God allows us to go through difficult times to remind us to turn back to Him out of His merciful and gracious heart, so we may recognise that the best place we can ever be is in the perfect will of God.

Now that they have turned back to God, He blesses them. (Hag 2:18-19)

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CONCLUSION

While God demands obedience, He is also a merciful and compassionate God who does not expect us to change totally overnight. God gently prompts us to turn around, stop or start doing something. Once we take the first step of obedience, we are transformed closer to the likeness of Jesus Christ. May we not be concerned whether God is on our side but that we are on God's side (Abraham Lincoln), so blessings may follow when we obey. Obedience is not overrated; God demands obedience.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

- 2a. Appoint someone to read Haggai 2:10-19 aloud slowly.
- 2b. Given the current culture that calls for us to be individualistic, how is the concept of obedience still relevant today?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. God told the Israelites through Haggai that whatever they did or offered to God were defiled because of their disobedience. (Haggai 2:14)
 - a. How have you tried to compensate for or justify your disobedience?
 - b. How has knowing that disobedience not only negates all the good things you do in God's name but causes them to be evil in God's eye impacted you?
 - c. Is there any area in your life that you have not been completely obeying God and sense the Holy Spirit is prompting you to change?
 - d. What is one concrete step you can take to obey God in the area He is prompting you in 3c.?

4. Simon Peter trusted and obeyed Jesus even though it did not make sense from human perspective.
 - a. Is there an area in your life you have chosen not to obey God because you think that obeying Him does not make sense?
 - b. What is one thing about Simon Peter's obedience that you would like to follow?
 - c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 4b. in the following week(s) until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayer and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your personal testimony of how your decision to obey God even when it did not make sense, was followed with blessings.

OR

Give thanks to God that He is merciful and compassionate and does not expect us to change completely overnight but blesses us once we begin to choose to walk in obedience to Him.

6. With a prayer partner, seek the Lord's forgiveness for areas of disobedience in your life. Bring all that have been shared in 3d., 4b. and 4c. to God, asking the Holy Spirit to help you obey Him especially in areas of your life that you have tried to compensate for or justify your disobedience. Pray for your group and our church to always be on God's side, obeying Him and aligning ourselves to walk in His ways so that we may enjoy His blessings in all we do and offer to Him.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. A Thousand Hallelujahs – Hillsong https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR_sl9lkowA
2. Alabaster Jar – Gateway Worship <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFhftNsHyds>
3. Speak O Lord – Keith & Kristyn Getty <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubRLJj8xkds>

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