

Our Service to God Will Make a Difference

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Introduction: God wants us to see our place in His eternal plans.

- A. There are times where it is difficult to see how our efforts will make a difference.
 - 1. When we cease to walk by a living faith we will cease to fervently work for the Lord. In that state we cannot accomplish the will of God. **(Heb 6:11-12)**
 - 2. We must keep a view to the unseen. When we see and our mighty God and His promises, then our physical sight will not discourage us. **(Heb 11:24-27)**
- B. The book of Haggai was written at a crucial time in the history of God's people.
 - 1. The book was written around 520 BC.
 - 2. In AD 538 around 50,000 Jews were allowed by the Persian king Cyrus to return to Jerusalem. Levitical sacrifices were reinstated and in the second year the foundation of the new temple was laid.
 - 3. Because of harassment and Persian pressure the rebuilding was halted. Then spiritual apathy set in. No effort was made to rebuild the temple for 16 years!
 - 4. How do our efforts appear in the context of the world around us?

I. God wanted His people to consider their ways

- A. When God's people become self-serving then they become miserable.
 - 1. This is a place that you do not want to remain for long. Your priorities become inverted and you go through the motions spiritually.
 - 2. God described the self-serving people of Malachi's day as despising Him and despising the sacrifices. **(Lev 26:14-16; Mal 1:6-7)**
 - 3. Carnally minded people always want less of service to God and more of the things that they can spend on their lusts. **(Jas 4:1-3)**
 - 4. It becomes easy to make excuses and put off things that your heart does not want to do. What is our present view of God? **(Hag 1:2)**
 - 5. God pointed out to these people where their possessions and efforts were placed. Compare their personal houses and the house of God! **(Hag 1:3-4)**
- B. God was merciful to His people and brought great discomfort to them.
 - 1. They were failing in the physical realm as well! **(Hag 1:5-7)**
 - 2. Have you ever been so overwhelmed by your failures that you turn and reexamine your relationship with God? God wants adversity to cause us to think!
 - 3. It is always good for us to look again at our relationship with God. **(Micah 7:9, 18-20)**

II. God wanted His people to see the unseen

- A. We need to remember those times where we vividly could see God and were determined to glorify Him! **(Deut 5:29)**
 - 1. We must choose to see the unseen! **(Heb 11:3, 6)**
 - 2. What things can we do to "see the unseen?"

- B. When we understand how God made us, then we should know that the only fulfillment in life is to glorify God. **(Hag 1:8-10)**
1. One of the worst things that could happen to us is uninterrupted physical success. **(Deut 8:11-20)**
 2. We are made to feel empty when we fail to pursue eternal purposes. **(Ecc 3:11)**
 3. The providence of God also may help us be humbled so that we might “consider!” What is real fulfillment to you?
 4. We cannot “straddle the fence” in finding purpose in life! **(Mt 6:24-27)**
- C. Haggai gave the message from God about their condition and the people received it.
1. The message showed that God knew their hearts and how He wanted to heal them. **(Mal 1:12-13)**
 2. These people let the guilt of sin draw them closer to God in reverence!

III. God wanted His people to see His power in their efforts

- A. God now dealt with the source of discouragement that was holding back the work.
1. He called the men who had seen and remembered the glory of the first temple. **(Hag 2:1-3, Ezra 3:8-13)**
 2. They were judging the efforts strictly from a carnal standpoint! How many judge churches by physical standards? How about our efforts as parents?
 3. All they needed to know was that God was with them and that they were tools in His work. **(Hag 2:4-5)**
 4. They had a covenant with God that defined their relationship and gave them a strong hope for this life and the life to come. Our God is faithful!
- B. God allowed them to understand that this temple would be a far greater one in the plan of God and the glory that would be associated with it. **(Hag 2:6-9)**
1. What physical things were lacking when compared to the first temple?
 2. One day Jesus, God in the flesh, would come and visit this temple! The ultimate plan of God would be fulfilled in Him.

IV. What is discouraging your heart today?

- A. Some may be discouraged by their own spiritual growth. **(Mk 9:23-24)**
1. In time each of us will experience such discouragement. The process of testing, failure and standing again is meant to be painful. **(Heb 12:3-4)**
 2. As we continue to walk by faith genuine growth will come.
 3. There is a big difference between how we see our struggles and how God does!
- B. Some are discouraged by the number of genuine disciples. What are you doing?
1. This actually is the normal condition in the history of God's people!
 2. God does not put us in charge of the body of Christ. **(1 Kgs 19:14, 18)**
- C. Some may be discouraged by the difficulty in establishing a genuine faith in their children. **(Deut 6:4-9)**
1. The time will come when you will think “Did I teach you anything?”
 2. God can take our feeble efforts and make them into something powerful.

Conclusion: If I am discouraged then I need to look again at my relationship with God.