

Trust God's Promises

Haggai 1:12-15; 2:1-9
SS Lesson for 06/08/2014

Devotional Scripture: 2 Peter 1:3-11

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A greater glory that outweighs them all (2 Cor 4:17)

A greater glory that no eye or ear or mind can conceive (1 Cor 2:9)

A greater glory that we are being transformed into (2 Cor 3:18)

A greater glory that will be accomplished by Jesus (2 Thess 1:10)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM J. STEVEN COLE

1. God understands and cares about the discouragement we face in serving Him (2:1-3).

A. The loss of initial excitement can discourage us.

B. Delays can discourage us.

C. Outside opposition and criticism can discourage us.

D. Inside pessimism, comparisons, and faulty expectations can discourage us.

E. A wrong view of success can discourage us.

2. God's word to us when we discouraged in serving Him is to persevere (2:4a).

A. Perseverance requires the right attitude: Be strong!

B. Perseverance requires the right action: Work!

3. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His presence, His promise, and His prophecy (2:4b-9).

A. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His presence (2:4b).

B. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His promise (2:5).

C. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His prophecies (2:6-9).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson reminds us to **Trust God's Promises**. The **study's aim** is to understand that God always responds to faith in and obedience to His Word. The **study's application** is to observe what God will do in response to obedience and faith from His people and to set our hearts on living by the principles found in this lesson daily. (From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary).

Key Verse: Hag 2:9

9 The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the Lord of hosts."

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

The people's unfavorable comparison of the restored temple with Solomon's temple (Hag 2:3) was counteracted by God's assurance of ultimate success because of the future glory of the millennial temple. This proclamation about coming glory was given to encourage present success. The words *in a little while* suggest not chronological immediacy but the impending or imminent it-could-occur-anytime character of God's action indicated here. This future divine judgment (I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land) is depicted in terms of an earthquake as a symbol of God's supernatural intervention (cf. Isa. 2:12-21; 13:13; Ezek. 38:20; Amos 8:8; Hag. 2:21-22). When Jesus Christ returns to earth, "the earth and the sky will tremble" (Joel 3:16; Matt. 24:29-30). This event will affect not only the natural order (Hag. 2:6) but also people (I will shake all nations, Hag. 2:7). This "shaking" of the nations may refer to God's gathering the nations for the Battle of Armageddon (Zech. 14:1-4). The writer to the Hebrews quoted Haggai 2:6 in Hebrews 12:26 and then added that the kingdom of God, which "cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12:28), will survive all divine judgments. This divine judgment was impending in Haggai's day since the Old Testament prophets did not see the valley of time lying between the First and Second Advents of Jesus Christ (cf. Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-21). The adornment of the future temple will be provided by the nations' wealth. The desired of all nations should probably be understood as a collective noun ("desirable things," i.e., treasures) to correspond with its plural verb (in the Heb.) will come, suggesting that surrounding nations will gladly give up their treasures to adorn the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 60:5; Zech. 14:14). The rendering, "the desire of all nations" (KJV), has been usually understood as a messianic prophecy referring to the coming of the One desired by all nations. The trend of recent translations and commentators has been away from this personal reference to the impersonal "desired things." However, the evidence is not all one-sided, and a case can be made for retaining a personal messianic reference. Perhaps Haggai deliberately selected a term that had exactly the ambiguity he wanted in order to include both an impersonal and personal reference (see Herbert Wolf, Haggai and Malachi, pp. 34-7). The future millennial temple (this house) will be filled with glory. This too could refer to material splendor (cf. Isa. 60:7, 13) but elsewhere the only "glory" that is said to fill the temple is the Shekinah glory of God's presence (cf. Ex. 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11). Though the ultimate reference is to the glory of God in the millennial temple (cf. Ezek. 43:1-12), Christ's bodily presence in the temple at His first coming may also be implied in Luke 2:32. Simeon referred to Jesus as "the Glory of Thy people Israel" (NASB). Some of the Lord's inexhaustible natural resources (silver and gold) will be available for use in constructing the temple, for He has ultimate providential control of the wealth of all nations. The restoration temple (this present house), Haggai said, would have a glory greater than the Solomonic temple (the former house) because during Herodian times the presence of the Messiah would adorn it (cf. Matt. 12:6; John 2:13-22). (The Herodian temple was a continuation, in a sense, of the postexilic "second" temple, not a "third" temple.) In addition, the ultimate fulfillment of this greater glory will be in the millennial temple. By building this postexilic temple the people would help advance God's program of manifesting Himself in a central place of worship: the Solomonic temple, and the yet-future millennial temple. So their work was more than merely constructing a building; it was a spiritual work which would ultimately culminate in God's millennial program. The blessings of the Messianic Age are summed up in a word—peace. This place probably refers to Jerusalem, not just the temple. Lasting peace in Jerusalem will result only from the presence of the Prince of Peace (cf. Isa. 9:6; Zech. 9:9-10).

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The concept of the outline of the lesson came from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

Verse	Phrase	Commentary
1:14	So 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	Trust God In Our Work
2:3	Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing	Trust God During Challenges
2:9	The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former	Trust God Remembering a Promise of Glory

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Last week's study introduced us to the Old Testament prophet Haggai, who challenged the people to finish rebuilding the temple. Today's text features Haggai continuing his encouragement to the people, but with a different focus—a focus to think in terms of an extreme makeover. Today's lesson begins where last week's ended, at Haggai 1:12, and the year is still 520 BC. Since the background is the same, that information need not be repeated here. Even so, a bit more can be said about the larger historical context. The book of Haggai is set in the period of Persian dominance, which began with the rise of Cyrus in 539 BC. Persian expansion to the west was eventually halted by defeats at the battles of Marathon (490 BC) and Salamis (479 BC). These battles occurred within the time gap between the last verse of Ezra 6 and the first verse of Ezra 7. The book of Esther is set within this time frame as well. Persia was overthrown by Alexander the Great of Greece in the 330s BC. Thus the existence of Persia as a superpower in the ancient Near East lasted a bare 200 years. Her rise and collapse was foreseen some 30 years prior to the ministry of Haggai (Daniel 7:1, 5; 8:1-7, 20; 11:2). God was using these historical currents to protect his people.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Trust God In Our Work (Hag 1:12-15)

12 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 showed reverence for the LORD.

13 Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke by the commission of the LORD to the people saying, " ' I am with you,' declares the LORD."

14 So 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,

15 on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

Trust God by being obedient (12)

Obedience motivated by love (John 14:15)

15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

Obedient because God promised blessings (Deut 28:1-2)

28:1 If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:

Obedient as part of service to God (Dan 3:16-18)

17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Obedient because Jesus was an example (Phil 2:8)

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross!

Obedient because God is pleased with it (1 John 3:21-22)

21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

Obedient because that's why God's Word was written (Rom 16:25-26)

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him

Trust God by being assured of His being with us (13)

Being assured that God is with us wherever we go (Josh 1:9)

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Being assured that God's promises are sometimes based on our obedience (Matt 28:20)

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Being assured that God will never forsake us (Heb 13:5)

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Being assured that God will protect us (Ps 37:28)

28 For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off;

Being assured that God will uphold us (Isa 41:10)

10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Trust God and He will stir our spirit (14-15)

God stirs our spirit through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:4-11)

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to

another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

God stirs our spirit by putting things into our heart (2 Cor 8:16)

16 I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you.

God stirs our spirit through working in us to do those things that please Him (Heb 13:20-21)

20 May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God stirs our spirit to act according to His good purpose (Phil 2:13)

13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

God stirs our spirit as well as determines our steps (Prov 16:9)

9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

Truly Free? (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

On December 18, 1865, the United States ratified the Thirteenth Amendment to its Constitution. With this amendment's adoption, slavery officially ended. What a wonderful day for America that was! But then something strange happened: slaves were free to decide their own futures, but the vast majority voluntarily stayed in slavery. The war was over, blood had been shed, and the price of freedom had been paid. Yet little actual change took place as slavery continued to be the *de facto* practice. Yes, slaves were legally free, but to live out their new freedom in a practical way was something new and foreign. They had trouble living free lives. Israel faced a similar challenge following years of captivity. When the people finally returned home, Haggai makes it clear that the Israelites had difficulty using their freedom to bless themselves and to serve God. They had trouble thinking in a new way. At Haggai's instruction, people finally learned to use their freedom to obey. Christians today can identify with those slaves. Set free from sin—yes! Jesus is Savior. Transformed living? That can be a different story. Galatians 5:1 says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (*King James Version*). Second Corinthians 3:17 makes clear that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." Have we learned what it means to live a life that is truly free to serve Christ as he wants?

Trust God During Challenges (Hag 2:1-5)

1 In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying:

2 "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying:

3 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?

4 Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the Lord; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the Lord, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the Lord of hosts.

5 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

Challenges of disappointing comparisons (1-3)

In comparisons we need to consider that God is in control at ALL times (Eccl 7:14)

14 When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.

In comparisons it is not wise to wish for the "good old days" (Eccl 7:10)

10 Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions.

In comparisons we sometimes need to forget the past and focus on the future (Phil 3:13-14)

13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

In comparisons don't let the past hinder our service for God in the present (Luke 9:62)

62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

In comparisons realize that things aren't as bad as we think (Num 14:2-3)

2 All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! 3 Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?"

Challenges shows us God's strength (4)

Challenges shows us that we can do all things through Jesus, who gives us strength (Phil 4:13)

13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Challenges shows us that strength is one of the glorious inheritances we have in Jesus (Eph 1:18-19)

18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

Challenges shows us that in our weakness, Jesus' power makes us strong (2 Cor 12:10)

10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Challenges shows us that we are strengthened by the power of God (Col 1:11)

11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully

Challenges reminds us of God's covenants (5)

Reminds us that when we are sinful, God will remember His covenant (Lev 26:42-45)

42 I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. 43 For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. 44 Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God. 45 But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord."

Reminds us that God is faithful in keeping His covenant of love (Deut 7:9)

9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

Reminds us that God is attentive to our prayers for the sake of His covenant (Ps 106:43-45)

43 Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin. 44 But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; 45 for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.

Reminds us of God's unfailing love (Isa 54:8-10)

8 In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the Lord your Redeemer. 9 "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. 10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Trust God Remembering a Promise of Glory (Hag 2:6-9)

6 "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord of hosts.

8 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts.

9 The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the Lord of hosts."

Glory that comes after a shake-up (6-7)

A glory that is part of deliverance (Joel 2:30-32)

30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 32 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

A glory that brings Jesus back for His elect (Matt 24:29-31)

29 "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' 30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

A glory when we become part of a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:26-28)

26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken — that is, created things — so that what cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

Glory that is greater (8-9)

A greater glory that outweighs them all (2 Cor 4:17)

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

A greater glory that no eye or ear or mind can conceive (1 Cor 2:9)

9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—

A greater glory that we are being transformed into (2 Cor 3:18)

18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

A greater glory that will be accomplished by Jesus (2 Thess 1:10)

10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts From J. Steven Cole

The famous inventor, Thomas Edison, tried again and again to find the right filament for the incandescent electric light bulb. One day he had completed his 10,000th experiment only to discover another way that would *not* work. When he arrived home that night, he shared this bit of news with his wife. "Aren't you pretty discouraged, Tom?" she asked. "Discouraged?" responded Edison. "Certainly not! I now know 10,000 ways that won't work!" Perseverance seems to be an outdated concept in our day of instant everything. If it doesn't come easy, why pursue it? If it's hard or requires endurance, maybe it isn't your thing. It's easy to start a new diet. It's tough to stick to it when you crave that cinnamon roll. It's easy to start a new exercise program. It's tough to persevere when your aching muscles scream, "No more!" It's easy to get married. It's tough to hang in there and work through problems over a lifetime. It's easy to begin a new ministry in the local church. It's tough to keep on when problems arise or when the results don't match your initial expectations. That describes the people in Haggai's day, just shy of a month after they had obeyed his first message and resumed work on rebuilding the temple. The foundation had been laid about 15 years before, but the project had been set on the shelf. But now, in response to Haggai's word from the Lord, the leaders and people had begun to rebuild on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius (Sept. 21, 520 B.C.; 1:15). The seventh month in Israel began with the Feast of Trumpets on the first day, followed by the Day of Atonement on the tenth day. Then the Feast of Tabernacles went from the 15th to the 21st. On the last day of that feast (Oct. 17th), Haggai delivered his second message to the people (2:1-9). It is a message of God's encouragement to discouraged workers. We learn that ... God encourages His discouraged servants to persevere in His work. These verses teach us three things about persevering by turning our discouragement in serving the Lord into encouragement:

1. God understands and cares about the discouragement we face in serving Him (2:1-3).

The Lord did not gloss over or ignore the reality of the situation. He knew what they were thinking and feeling, and He brings it up to show them that He understood and that He cared for them. If we do not keep in mind that in all our troubles the Lord understands and cares for us, we will easily become discouraged. The text and historical context reveal several potential sources of discouragement when we get involved in serving the Lord:

A. The loss of initial excitement can discourage us.

There is always a certain sense of excitement when you begin a new ministry or project. But the glow easily rubs off in the grind. There were probably piles of rubble that needed to be removed. Perhaps some of the workers had envisioned putting the finishing touches on some gold work or other craftsmanship, but they hadn't thought about hauling rubble. Their initial enthusiasm was already wearing thin. The summer after I graduated from seminary, I was involved with a group of men in starting a new church that was branching off of an existing church. We received some wise counsel from the elders of the mother church. They said, "What you're doing now is new and exciting. But the time will come when the glamour wears off and then you'll need to know that God has called you to this work and persevere in it." The leaders did persevere, because last year I received an email from the pastor telling me that they were celebrating their 25th anniversary.

B. Delays can discourage us.

Work for the Lord seldom moves as quickly as we had hoped. Perhaps working around the numerous feasts and Sabbath days in the seventh month had dampened the initial enthusiasm because the work was going so slowly. It's easy for that to happen in anything we do for the Lord, and the delays get us down.

C. Outside opposition and criticism can discourage us.

In verse 5, the Lord says, "Do not fear!" He would not say that unless they had a reason to be afraid. Probably the same men who had threatened them and lobbied against them at the Persian court 15 years before were at it again. Any time you attempt to do God's work, Satan will stir up opposition. We're in a battle with the forces of darkness that are opposed to the church of Jesus Christ. Expect opposition!

D. Inside pessimism, comparisons, and faulty expectations can discourage us.

When I began in ministry, I naively thought that most of the opposition would come from *outside* the church. Boy, was I wrong! Most opposition comes from *within*, and it takes different forms. One common form is *pessimism*. "We tried that before. It won't work!" When they had laid the foundation years before, there was great joy mixed with weeping (Ezra 3:11-13). The young people who had not known the glory of the former temple were rejoicing. But the old-timers, who had seen Solomon's Temple, wept at this new temple, because it just didn't measure up. Although they would be in their seventies or older by now, a few were still around when the work got started again. Maybe they were saying, "God's blessing just isn't on *this* temple!" Pessimism! A second form of inside opposition comes from those who drop little *comparisons* on you. The old-timers were saying, "You should have seen Solomon's Temple. Now *that* was a temple! This new one is hardly worth calling a temple compared to the old one!" Sometimes people will say, "That church on the other side of town really has their act together!" (Implication: You *don't*!) Or, "Have you ever heard Chuck Swindoll preach? He's *really* good! You ought to listen to him." Thanks for the encouragement! And then there are those who have *faulty expectations*. This usually operates in conjunction with comparisons. "Where is all the gold? Solomon's Temple was lined with gold. Why isn't this one?" I've had people tell me about their former pastors who must never have slept and changed into their pastor uniforms in a phone booth! These pastors would visit *everyone* in the church, preach superb sermons (with great illustrations), attend *all* the youth activities, and *always* have time for drop ins. Besides that, they *never* neglected their families! Implication: "Why aren't *you* like they are?"

E. A wrong view of success can discourage us.

Some view success *externally rather than internally* (or spiritually). "This temple isn't as big as Solomon's Temple was. This temple doesn't have all the gold and fancy workmanship that Solomon's Temple did." But God says through Haggai, "I own all the gold and silver in the world, and I could cover this temple with gold if I wanted to. But I'm going to do something better. Instead of gold, I'm going to fill this temple with glory, the glory of My Messiah" (paraphrase of 2:7-9). God doesn't view things as we do. Just because one church isn't as big or outwardly slick as another church doesn't mean anything to God. A church may have a multi-million dollar facility, but if it doesn't honor God's Word or promote His glory among the nations, that facility is a big pile of wood, hay, and stubble! God is looking for the glory of Christ formed in the hearts of His people, not for the outward, superficial signs of success. Another wrong view of success is the *instant view as opposed to the eternal*. None of the workers on this temple lived to see its glory exceed that of Solomon's Temple. That didn't happen until Messiah came into this temple over 500 years later, and even then many missed it! God says, "Once more *in a little while*, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land" (2:6). While there may have been a partial fulfillment of that prophecy within a few years of Haggai's day (in the overthrow of powerful kingdoms), the ultimate fulfillment is *still future* in our day! God will shake all the nations at the Second Coming of Christ, and they will bring the wealth of the nations to His temple in the Millennium. If the people in Haggai's day were viewing success from the short range, they would have been very discouraged. With God, a thousand years is as a day. True success will be measured in the light of eternity, not in our lifetimes. We need to keep this in mind as we labor for the Lord. The harvest is at the end of the age, not at the end of the meeting. God's timing is not our timing. Whatever our source of discouragement, God understands and He cares. But He doesn't coddle us or let us stay there.

2. God's word to us when we discouraged in serving Him is to persevere (2:4a).

Three times the Lord repeats, "Be strong!" ("Take courage!") And He tells them to work. Keep going! Persevere! There are two aspects to this kind of perseverance: an *attitude* and an *action*.

A. Perseverance requires the right attitude: Be strong!

The people had the wrong attitude. They were weak because they had gotten their focus off the Lord and onto the slow, disappointing progress on the temple. Maybe they were thinking, "This will *never* get done. We're just wasting our time!" Have you ever noticed how much your attitude affects your ability to persevere? If you're motivated, you can stay up all night on some project. But if you get discouraged, you procrastinate and never get around to finishing it. We hear about many pastors burning out and quitting the ministry. While in some cases the cause of burnout is not properly managing one's schedule, often the real cause is an attitude of discouragement because of setbacks or disappointments. I recently read that 70 percent of pastors constantly fight depression. Eighty percent of pastors and 84 percent of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their ministries. I think every pastor *should* feel unqualified (2 Cor. 2:16), but *not* discouraged. As Americans, we're far too emotionally fragile. Someone offends us, so we get our feelings hurt and drop out of service. Someone doesn't do what we had expected, so we quit. Someone criticizes what we're doing, and we say, "I'm out of here!" But God says, "Be strong!" We aren't to be strong in our own strength, of course, but in God's strength (2 Cor. 3:5). But, be strong! Have the attitude that hangs in there in spite of obstacles. The real question is *not* how do *we* see things, but how does *God* see things? If we have not factored God into the equation, we don't see things in the right perspective. Do you remember the story of the 12 spies who went into the land of Canaan? Ten of them came back focused on the giants in the land and said, "We're like grasshoppers in their sight. We can't conquer them!" But Joshua and Caleb came back and said, "Because God is with us and He has promised us that land, we will eat them for lunch!" (Num. 14:9, paraphrase). Be strong in attitude!

B. Perseverance requires the right action: Work!

The attitude provides the motivation, but motivation without work won't get the temple built. Joshua and Caleb had the right attitude of trust in the Lord. But they still had to go into the land and fight the giants. Much of the Lord's work is far more perspiration than inspiration! That is certainly true of my weekly sermon preparation. These messages don't come floating down from the sky! I have to work hard to prepare them. Just because you're gifted in whatever you do for the Lord does not mean that it just flows effortlessly. To persevere we must not only be strong; we also must work. Thus God encourages us in our service for Him by showing that He understands what we're feeling and He cares. His word to us is, "Be strong and work!" Finally,

3. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His presence, His promise, and His prophecy (2:4b-9).

A. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His presence (2:4b).

After telling Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people to be strong and to work, God adds, "'For I am with you,' says the Lord of hosts." The Jews may have feared a hostile host against them, but God is *the Lord of hosts*, the Supreme Ruler over all the armies of heaven and earth. If the Lord of hosts is with us, who can defeat us? If we're serving Him, then nothing can happen to us accidentally or without His express permission. The assurance of His presence should lift our discouragement and enable us to press on. After many years of hardship and danger in the heart of Africa, David Livingstone received an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow. On that occasion, he said, "Would you like me to tell you what supported me through all the years of exile among people whose language I could not understand, and whose attitude toward me was always uncertain and often hostile? It was this: 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' On those words I staked everything, and they never failed."

B. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His promise (2:5).

"Promise" (2:5) refers to the covenant God made with Israel when they came out of Egypt. He promises them now, as He had then, that His Spirit would go with them and abide in their midst. Therefore, they need not fear. God has made a better covenant with us than He did with them, the New Covenant, enacted on better promises (Heb. 8:6). Jesus sealed that New Covenant with His own blood. He promised us the indwelling Holy Spirit to be with us forever (John 14:16).

When we grow discouraged in our service for Him, we should remember His promise, that He would not leave us as orphans, but would come to us and that in the meanwhile, He has given us the Holy Spirit to enable us to serve Him.

C. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His prophecies (2:6-9).

The many prophecies in Scripture are not given for us to speculate about the future, but to strengthen and encourage our faith. When we see how God has worked down through the ages in accordance with what He told His people in advance, it encourages us to keep serving Him, knowing that the remaining unfulfilled prophecies will surely yet be fulfilled. Commentators differ on when the shaking of heaven and earth and the nations (2:6-7a) would take place. Some say that it referred to God's stirring up Darius to supply help and materials for this rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 6:6-15). Others say that it refers to God's bringing future judgment on the Persians, Greeks, and Romans (see James Boice, *The Minor Prophets* [Baker], 2:476-477). While that may be an initial fulfillment, like many biblical prophecies, there may be multiple fulfillments. In this case, it refers ultimately to the Second Coming of Christ, when God will shake the heavens and the earth (2:21; Joel 3:16; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 16:18-20) and conquer all the rebellious nations (2:22). Haggai 2:6 is the only verse from this book quoted in the New Testament. In Hebrews 12:26-27, the author states, "And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.' This expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." This refers to the final judgment when God will destroy the heavens and the earth, prior to establishing a new heavens and earth (2 Pet. 3:10, 12-13; Rev. 20:11; 21:1). There is also debate about the translation of the phrase, "the wealth of the nations" (2:7). Some translations have it, "the desire of the nations," which would be a reference to Jesus Christ. While this is possible, both the Hebrew grammar and the reference to silver and gold (2:8) probably tilt the evidence toward "the wealth of the nations," a reference to the nations in the Millennium bringing their wealth in homage to Jesus Christ. The Lord also says that He will "fill this house with glory" and that "the latter glory of this house will be greater than the former" (2:7, 9). Again there is some debate. How could Zerubbabel's temple be greater in glory than Solomon's? While Herod replaced this temple with more glorious buildings (the temple in Jesus' time), this verse probably refers to the coming of Jesus into that temple. His presence made it even more glorious than Solomon's Temple. In the Millennium, His presence as King of Kings and Lord of Lords will surpass the veiled glory of His first coming. In the new heavens and earth, there will be no temple, "for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev. 21:22). Finally, the Lord promises that in this place He will give peace (2:9). Again, this has multiple fulfillments. In His first coming, Jesus preached peace to both Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:17). We have peace with God and with one another when we trust in His shed blood (Rom. 5:1). But true and lasting peace for this world and for Jerusalem will only come when Jesus returns. We could get hung up on the details of interpreting these prophecies. But the application for us is that since the Lord of hosts has predicted the certain final triumph of the kingdom of His Son, we should be encouraged in our work for Him, knowing that our work in the Lord is never in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

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Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

How do you trust God's promises? There is an excellent outline for us in this lesson. Christians live by and under the promises of God, and we must learn to trust God for them. The good news is that the people of Haggai's time responded to the rebuke in Haggai 1 to get going on the completion of the temple. The Lord stirred them up to obey (vs. 14). Part of this response was a new application of the principle of trusting God for His promises. We first have to understand that God gives us many promises in His Word. God gave one in our text to the people of Haggai's time—the new temple they were building was going to be greater than Solomon's temple of old, which had been destroyed. That was probably hard to believe at the time. In fact, when the temple of Haggai's time was rebuilt, some of the people lamented that it was such a poor replacement (Ezra 3:12-13; Hag. 2:3). The good old days seemed so much better to some. But many understood then that God was giving them a new promise. We have to learn to take God at His word and search out His promises to us. Then we begin to pray these promises back to God in heartfelt prayer, and He stirs our hearts to trust Him for a new fulfillment of His wonderful word (Hag. 1:14; 2:4-5). We must realize that God is with us and that we can trust Him to fulfill His promises. As our faith grows, we will begin to act on these promises and to wait in hope and faith that God will show us how He is going to fulfill them. This process is life changing. It brings a freshness and an expectancy to our Christian living. We are no longer living with a mind-set locked into the depressing and discouraging circumstances we face. Rather, we are waiting on the Lord and believing that we will see His hand at

work again mightily. Are you living this way? Are you trusting God for His promises? Are you searching His Word for promises and praying them back to God? Such trusting in God for His promises must occur even when circumstances do not seem favorable. The Israelites of Haggai's day rebuilt a very modest temple. They built it during a season of relative barrenness. But God gave them a new promise. And in time, God did exalt the new temple, and it became great in the city of Jerusalem. He fulfilled His promises. That is what trusting God is all about: envisioning the hand of God powerfully at work even when it is not yet happening. That is faith. That is waiting on the Lord. That is taking God's promises and laying them out before Him and trusting Him to hear and answer from heaven. Maybe your circumstances seem discouraging. Maybe your ministry is stagnant. Are you searching God's Word for promises that He can give you? Are you praying them back to Him? Remember that these are His promises to you! Trusting God for His promises will bring freshness and excitement to your life and ministry.

This is why in days of decline or setbacks, we should not get discouraged. We can still trust God for new days of glory. Search out God's promises, and pray them back to Him. Then see what He will do.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. To fully reverence God, one must fully obey Him (Hag. 1:12; cf. Isa. 29:13)
2. God's timing is always perfect (Hag. 2:1; cf. Lev. 23:34; I Kings 8:2)
3. It is better to deal with difficulties head-on rather than try to ignore them (Hag. 2:2-3)
4. The promise of God's presence should calm even our greatest fears (Hag. 2:4-5; cf. Isa. 41:10)
5. Knowing God's character enables us to trust His promises for the future (Hag. 2:6-7)
6. God often uses the inferior to demonstrate His superior plan and power (Hag. 2:8-9)