

SERMON FOCUS: I do not have permission to neglect the Lord's house.

BACKGROUND:

When we left off two weeks ago, those working on rebuilding the temple had faced opposition and were finally stopped from building by physical force. Today, we pick up with the command to continue rebuilding.

SCRIPTURE READING: Ezra 4:24-5:5; 6:14-15

Now the construction of God's house in Jerusalem had stopped and remained at a standstill until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia.

But when the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them, **2**Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak began to rebuild God's house in Jerusalem. The prophets of God were with them, helping them.

3At that time Tattenai the governor of the region west of the Euphrates River, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues came to the Jews and asked, "Who gave you the order to rebuild this temple and finish this structure?" **4**They also asked them, "What are the names of the workers who are constructing this building?" **5**But God was watching over the Jewish elders. These men wouldn't stop them until a report was sent to Darius, so that they could receive written instructions about this matter.

(6:14-15) So the Jewish elders continued successfully with the building under the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Iddo. They finished the building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius,

and King Artaxerxes of Persia. [15](#)This house was completed on the third day of the month of Adar in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

INTRODUCTION:

What will happen if I do not turn in my last two seminary papers which are due this week? I will have wasted 3.5 years, a lot of time and money, and five trips to Indiana. God calls us to be faithful to the task that He has given us from start to finish. Sometimes, we don't feel like it. But we trust in Him and continue to work.

There are three things that we need to observe from our passage today. We must receive the Lord's message, we must do the work, and we must be faithful to the finish. Let's look at these today.

MESSAGE:

1. WE MUST RECEIVE THE MESSAGE

(Zech. 1:1-6) In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah, son of Iddo: [2](#)“The Lord was extremely angry with your ancestors. [3](#)So tell the people, ‘This is what the Lord of Armies says: Return to me — this is the declaration of the Lord of Armies — and I will return to you, says the Lord of Armies. [4](#)Do not be like your ancestors; the earlier prophets proclaimed to them: This is what the Lord of Armies says: Turn from your evil ways and your evil deeds. But they did not listen or pay attention to me — this is the Lord's declaration. [5](#)Where are your ancestors now? And do the prophets live forever? [6](#)But didn't my words and my statutes that I commanded my servants the prophets overtake your ancestors?’”

So the people repented and said, “As the Lord of Armies decided to deal with us for our ways and our deeds, so he has dealt with us.”

- a. The message Zechariah delivered to them was to turn from their evil ways and deeds.
- b. Their ancestors had not turned away from their evil deeds and had their inheritance taken from them.
- c. The daily office describes it as “thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and what we have left undone.”
 - i. That evil thought about your neighbor
 - ii. That lustful thought
 - iii. That careless word
 - iv. That intentional act of disobedience
 - v. That thing God wanted you to do that you refused to do.
 - vi. These are all sin, and we are called to repent of them.
- d. These people were guilty of not doing what God had called them to do!

(Haggai 1:1-5) “In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

2“The Lord of Armies says this: These people say: The time has not come for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.”

3The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: **4**“Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?” **5**Now, the Lord of Armies says this: “Think carefully about your ways:”

- e. The people were trying to rationalize why they were not doing the work.

- f. Scholars believe that it had been about fifteen years since they had been forced to stop work. The king had changed. The governor had changed and was no longer using military force against them.
- g. More importantly, God had never commanded them to stop.
- h. The people were content to say, “it’s not the time to rebuild.”
- i. They used the cedar that had been bought to panel their homes.
- j. God is never pleased when we deny Him what is properly His.
- k. Hearing the words of God through the prophets would have done no good if they had not acted on them, so they got busy.

2. WE MUST DO WORK

- a. (Ezra 5:2) Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak began to rebuild God’s house in Jerusalem. The prophets of God were with them, helping them.
- b. Note what is important here. The people did the work. The prophets helped them.
- c. When God calls us to Him, He gives us a work to do. Each of us.
- d. Even in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were created for work.
- e. We are re-created for His work.
- f. 1924 Olympian Eric Liddell is quoted in the movie “Chariots of Fire” as saying, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.”
- g. What is it that you can do that causes you to feel God’s pleasure?

- h. For the Israelites returning from exile, it was finishing the temple. We are told it was completed in the sixth year of King Darius, or about four years.
- i. It was important not only that they do what God had commanded them to do, but that they did that until the finish.

3. WE MUST BE FAITHFUL TO THE FINISH

(6:14-15) So the Jewish elders continued successfully with the building under the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Iddo. They finished the building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and King Artaxerxes of Persia. [15](#)This house was completed on the third day of the month of Adar in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

- a. We have seen a lot of instances lately where people who were thought to be faithful did not finish faithful.
- b. Remaining faithful is deliberate and takes much effort.
- c. It never includes resting on our laurels.
- d. As long as we are here, God has given us a work to do.
- e. We must be faithful to the finish because Christ is faithful to the finish.

4. CHRIST IS FAITHFUL TO THE FINISH

- a. I've mentioned before that having this temple completed was necessary to set the stage for Christ's advent.
- b. The entirety of scripture points to Jesus.
- c. He came to earth to live a sinless life and die for our sins.

- d. He was faithful to His call, even the death on the cross.
- e. We owe it to Him to be faithful as well.

CONCLUSION:

How is knowing this going to change the way you live?

Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.