

Haggai 2:10-19 (New International Version)

Blessings for a Defiled People

10 On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Haggai:

11 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Ask the priests what the law says:

12 If someone carries consecrated meat in the fold of their garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, olive oil or other food, does it become consecrated?'" The priests answered, "No."

13 Then Haggai said, "If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?" "Yes," the priests replied, "it becomes defiled."

14 Then Haggai said, "'So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,' declares the LORD. 'Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.

15 "'Now give careful thought to this from this day on—consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the LORD's temple.

16 When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty.

17 I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not return to me,' declares the LORD.

18 'From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid. Give careful thought:

19 Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit.

"From this day on I will bless you."

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends! I greet you this morning with an invitation to praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him for keeping you though the night; praise Him for waking you in your right mind with a heart to come and worship. Praise Him for being your Father and sending His Son to save us. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

I want to thank each of you for whatever you did for the family of Bertha Borage. Her only daughter Carolyn and her grandson KJ are members here and we did what Christian folks ought to do. We had folks in the parking lot, folks in the kitchen, folks on the sound system, folks walking the halls to make sure that things went according to plan. The folks called FBC-Park Forest honored our church covenant, which calls us to

...demonstrate by our every action and deed only that which represents Christian life at its best.
 to watch over one another in Christian love;
 to remember each other in prayer;
 to aid each other in sickness or distress;...¹

Thank you!

To each of you I say again Happy Father's Day. When I was in seminary I met many other seminarians that had a great deal of difficulty calling God, Father. They said their difficulty stemmed from a poor to non-existence relationship with their biological fathers and therefore God as Father was a hard concept. I understood the words spoken, but they did not find a place in my heart, as I believed then and now God is Father and how James (my biological father) lived his life did not diminish God as Father.

But I would be dishonest if I **did not** acknowledge that some fathers lived into God's concept of fatherhood better than others. The Bible is very clear about the role of father: a Father is to teach his children the Word of God.

¹ 2014 FBC Park Forest Church Covenant

² <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+6&version=NIV>

*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.²*

The Bible makes a father a very important member of the family and the church of God.

⁴Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.³

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.⁴

I want to make it clear that Fathers are not second class citizens in fact they are called by God to be leaders in their households, in the raising of their children and in the church of God. But this is where we find a problem - too many of our fathers are absent from the community, absent from their households and absent from the church of God. So when a father is absent a mother picks up the job and does the best that she can. That often leaves us with mothers coaching the sports teams, mothers leading in the church and mothers trying to teach boys how to be men.

I believe that God is speaking to each of us as He speaks thru Haggai in this third sermon but I ask you to listen to these words and see if you hear a message for the men in our communities, our homes and our

² <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+6&version=NIV>

³ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=eph+6&version=NIV>

⁴ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205&version=NIV>

churches. You might even need to take notes, because many of our men are not here and you will need to share the message with them. As we study the book of Haggai we are focusing not on a physical temple but rather a spiritual temple, our bodies. Our theme for this morning is:

THINGS GO BETTER WITH GOD!

With that as background will you join me in prayer?

Father God, we need to hear from heaven today. We need a word of instruction, a word of encouragement and maybe even a word of discipline. Please sir, give us what we need. I ask that you use me to preach "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. To keep my head in all situations, to endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and discharge all the duties of ministry."⁵ Let my words, my teaching, my example make a difference in the life of your people today. In the blessed name of Jesus the Christ we pray. AMEN and AMEN.

THINGS GO BETTER WITH GOD!

Many of you know that my home pastor, the Rev. Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall was more than a traditional pastor in my life. He was teacher, confessor, counselor, sometimes father and until the end he was my friend. One day I called his home and asked to speak with Mrs. Hall, in a very teasing manner he said he was not going to let her talk to me, because some of my bad habits might rub off on her. Without missing a beat I asked wasn't good more powerful than evil and if that was so wasn't there was a better chance her good would rub off on me.

After nine years of being your pastor my mentor asked, "how is the church?" I responded, "I am just holding the reins. We were not growing, but we were not diminishing either. We are able to keep the lights on and the doors open but I can't see our progress." My mentor responded maybe

⁵ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+4&version=NIV>

that is what you are suppose to be doing, just holding the reins, maybe there is something the people need to be doing.

The first conversation took place when I was in my early 20's and the second took place after 60 but they came back to mind as I wrestled with this text. What is required for us to let our good rub off on others? What is the minister's job and what are the jobs of the members? How do we build our physical bodies so that God will bless and bring the increase?

God tells Haggai to tell the people:

When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not return to me,' declares the LORD.

In other words you were so concerned with your houses, that you ignored my house and even when I sent blight, mildew and hail you still did not understand that these things were the result of your failure to honor me first. God says, you did not have good crops, you did not produce good wine, you were struggling to make ends meet and it was because you failed to put me first.

Stay with me:

our children are not good, our grandchildren are a disappointment

our finances are in distress, we have nothing set aside for emergencies

our projects fail and we know we are not living up to your potential and God says it is because you fail to put me first.

But when you begin to put me first, when you have laid the foundation and are building the walls of your life with me as the mortar between the bricks.

When you begin and end each day with your mind stayed on me. When you spend time with your children and teach them my ways. When you love your wives as Christ loves the church. Then God says because you have **begun again** to work on my house “From this day on I will bless you.”

That promise is still being extended. God is still waiting to bless us, but we must put Him and His work first. We must get our spiritual temple, our bodies, in order before we can experience the blessings of God. So what does that mean to the men, **young and old** of FBC-Park Forest.

- You need to know what the Word of God says before you can live it, teach it and support your wives, sons and daughters.
- You need to be an example in your community, on your job, in your health and country club of a man who knows and fears the Lord.
- You need to speak the truth in love and not repeat what you do not know to be fact.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV)

Repeat these basic essentials over and over to God's people. Warn them before God against pious nitpicking, which chips away at the faith. It just wears everyone out. Concentrate on doing your best for God, work you won't be ashamed of, laying out the truth plain and simple. Stay clear of pious talk that is only talk. Words are not mere words, you know. If they're not backed by a godly life, they accumulate as poison in the soul. (The Message)⁶

Young men:

⁶ <http://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/2%20Timothy%20%3A15>

- Your lives, your language, your lifestyle ought to set you apart from the crowd. Not because you are **all that** but because the God you love and serve is **all that**.
- The girls and women you hang out with ought to be people who are working on their lives, language and lifestyle.
- The young men you call friends ought to be the same

²²Run from temptations that capture young people. Always do the right thing. Be faithful, loving, and easy to get along with. Worship with people whose hearts are pure. (CEV)

²²Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men often have, but stay close to anything that makes you want to do right. Have faith and love, and enjoy the companionship of those who love the Lord and have pure hearts. (TLB)

I can hear someone saying but pastor I am doing all right: I got a job, some money in my pocket, someone that cares about me, things are good! My answer is imagine how much better it could all be with God!

THINGS GO BETTER WITH GOD!