

Just Checking In #85

Starting Over, Over and Over Again

May 1, 2010 The Book of Haggai

Psalm 39:12 "Hear my prayer, O Lord... for I am a 'pilgrim' with You..."

If you want to follow Christ faithfully for the long haul, you must learn to start over quickly, over and over again.

I began the year in January memorizing the little book of Haggai. It took most of the month to get it down, and now I quote it five days a week on my way to work, for review. Israel is in the return stage of her kingdom history. They went from Family (Abraham) to Tribe (Jacob) to Nation (Moses) to Kingdom (Saul-David-Solomon.) Once they reached Kingdom status with the anointing of Saul in 1095BC, they experienced three more distinct periods: DIVIDED (the breaking up due to Solomon's idolatry into northern and southern kingdoms – 931 BC) then DEPORTED (captivities to Assyria in 722BC and Babylon in 586BC) and lastly RETURN in three waves. Return wave one was with Zerubbabel due to the decree of Cyrus in 538BC, wave two was under Ezra and wave three was under Nehemiah.

42,000 Jews returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple. **The temple was central for three major reasons.** It was central to **Worship**: a place to gather to hear God's word taught and worship the true and living God according to His laws. It was also central to **Witness**: a place for all nations to come and hear the saving message of God and behold the uniqueness of the one, true and living God. It was also important as evidence of Israel's faith in the coming Messiah, a rebuilt temple was a place to **Welcome** God's Christ.

No sooner had the foundation of the temple been laid than opposition from the Samaritans shut it down with a decree from one of Cyrus' successors. As time passed (16 years) the Jews accepted *the status quo of life without a temple*. They turned their attention to their own farms, homes and interests. As far as their *original purpose* in returning to the land to rebuild the temple... they had **started**, and then were **stopped**, and now they were **stuck**. **They had adjusted to and accepted a life of limited obedience to God.** The result was increasing dissatisfaction with life and increasing trouble, with the advent of drought and economic disaster.

Two more kings in Persia had come on the scene since the decree that stopped the temple restart. It seems the Jews were waiting for God to do something spectacular to signal the time to restart the building process. Instead, God sends His prophet Haggai to tell them that they needed to step out in faith and obedience and start the process of rebuilding once again. Then they could trust God to intervene on their behalf. ***Procrastination is not the same thing as waiting on God.***

There were any number of reasons why they stayed stuck in a state of inactivity.

- **They could have been stuck in fear...** “what if we start and even greater opposition results... we might lose what little we have.”
- **Perhaps they were stuck in confusion...** “we tried to obey and look what happened. God didn’t come through then, why should we try it again?”
- **They could have been stuck in apathy...** “we got along this far without it, didn’t we?”
- **Perhaps they were stuck in greed or laziness...** “it would take an incredible amount of effort and years of sacrifice to move all the rubble, cut timber, fashion building materials, and get the temple done. We have our own homes to think about. Times are tough. It’s not the right time.”
- **Or maybe they were stuck in discouragement...** “This is pathetic. Even if we build it, it will never be like the old one... the days of Solomon’s temple are gone forever. It will never be the same again.” Whatever the reasons, none of them were good reasons. There is a never a good reason to stay stuck in disobedience!

Start...stop...stuck. *But God will never let His own people stay stuck.* You may be stopped in your pursuit of God’s will by Satanic opposition. *But stopped is not stuck.* Paul was stopped by a Roman prison, but he wasn’t stuck. He pushed forward reaching the prison guards with the gospel. You can stop a servant of God for a time, but you’ll never need to see him stuck. *To be stopped is the work of the evil one, but to be stuck is our own choice.* We need never be stuck in disobedience. Abraham, Joseph, David, Paul... all were stopped at various times along the journey, *but they never stayed stuck.*

God sends Haggai to call the people to repentance. To recognize their altered priorities (“your ceiled houses”) the reasons behind their afflictions (“I blew it away.... I called for a drought”) and the need to repent of their inactivity (“because of my house which remains a ruin”) and the need to start over in their original purpose (“go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house that I may take pleasure in it and be honored.”)

We too are called to a life of obedience to our Delivering God. We are called to a life of worship, of witness and of welcoming the soon appearing of our Messiah the second time. It is just as easy to get sidetracked today on our own agendas, adjust to a life of limited obedience, and reap the consequences of ever increasing dissatisfaction with life. There is no joy for God's people who are stuck in a life of delayed and limited obedience. Don't mistake procrastination with waiting on God. If you need to make a fresh start of obedience, don't wait for God to make the first move. He already did! He's calling you to step out in obedience now! **Trials and troubles in life for the believer may be chastisement, or may be a test of obedience, is always an opportunity for self examination, and is never an accident.** The Lord of Hosts is sovereign and active in calling His people to lives of worship, witness and welcome. Let's learn to start over quickly, over and over again. Col 2:6; Rev 2:1-7

Self Check:

1. What is my most common "stuck" factor: fear, confusion, apathy, greed, laziness or discouragement? Other?
2. When was the last time you "started over" in renewed obedience to Christ?
3. How does Haggai's message "consider your ways" apply to your own walk with God today? Are there any "areas of limited obedience" that you need to repent of and renew your full obedience?

For further study:

- Consider the following individuals who were stuck and needed to start over, some on more than one occasion. Write out the "stuck" factors they were confronted with. Jonah, Abraham, Moses, Peter.
- Revelation 2:1-7 The church at Ephesus was well taught, but lacking in "first love". Why is "first love" so important to God? What do you think that "first love" refers to? What was the remedy Christ gave to this people to correct this spiritual malady?
- Check out the old Charles Wesley hymn "***I want a principle within***" (you can find it on the internet)... print it and make it your prayer every day this week.

"Lord of Hosts, I bless you that you care enough for my soul to rebuke me with Thy truth. Your Word rebukes, corrects and instructs me in righteousness. Grant me a tender heart that accepts rebuke, repents quickly and sees the rebuke result in revival in my soul today. In Thy Name, O Savior I pray, Amen."

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... Jn 9:4 Ron & Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable, changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows, spending our time on eternity, owning nothing yet possessing everything that matters and lasts. We are Pilgrims in Paradox. Welcome to THE JOURNEY.