

Obedience

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[0 : 00] Let's set the scene for tonight's study by doing a quick review of what we covered last week.

! Remember we talked about last week how on August 29, 520 BC, God used Haggai to deliver the same message two different ways. Haggai first delivered the message to Joshua and Zerubbabel, the high priest and the governor.

Haggai then delivered the message to the people. God's message was one of discipline for the people. The people, including Joshua and Zerubbabel, had become so busy attending to their own affairs that they neglected to rebuild God's temple.

Neglecting God's principles and priorities brought consequences to them. And let's look at a few verses from last week to remind ourselves of that. In Haggai chapter 1 verses 2 through 6 say, Thus says the Lord of hosts, These people say that the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins? Now therefore says the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.

[1 : 22] You have sown much and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough. You drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm.

And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. God then gave them a direct command. Here are Haggai 1, 7 and 8. Thus says the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.

Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. And then finally last week in verses 9 through 11, we saw that God summarized again how he disciplined the people for their lack of attention to God.

Those verses told us, You look for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why, declares the Lord of hosts? Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.

Therefore the heavens above, you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.

[2 : 39] Tonight we'll study the people's response to God's message. And that response comes in verses 12 through 15 of Haggai chapter 1. The end of tonight's passage takes place 23 days after the events in verses 1 through 11.

So that sets the date as September 21st, 520 BC. Let's go ahead and read verses 12 through 15 now. Starting in verse 12, it says, Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jehoshadak, 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 feared the Lord. Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message. I am with you, declares the Lord.

And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Jehoshadak, 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, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year, of Darius the king.

[3 : 58] In tonight's passage, we'll see that obedience to God leads to fellowship with him. That's the main idea.

Obedience to God leads to fellowship with him. That main idea was true for the people of Haggai's day, and it's written in the present tense because that main idea is still true today.

Just as it was for the people back then, the same is true for us and that obedience to God leads to fellowship with God. We're going to study tonight's passage in three sections.

The first section comes in verse 12. And in that verse, we see the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the first thing that we'll look at.

So listen to verse 12 again. It says, 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 feared the Lord.

[5 : 08] We're actually going to take this verse apart a little differently. We're going to start at the end of the verse and work backward to the front of it. And you see there, at the end of the verse, it says, The people feared the Lord.

In your handout, I gave you the definition of the word translated as fear. It has a couple of different senses. It can mean fear, as we use it today, in the way of fearing or being afraid.

Or it can mean to be in reverential awe or to revere somebody. So it can either mean to be afraid or be in reverential awe of something.

And it also can mean to inspire reverence or godly fear. So you can see from the definition that the original Hebrew word can mean fear, as we use it, or it can mean reverential awe, as we said.

And the text here seems to carry both senses for the definition. The people do seem to be afraid and they also seem to have reverential awe for God. They had reason to be fearful because God clearly had disciplined them for failing to follow his priorities.

[6 : 19] They also had reason to be in reverential awe because God revealed himself through his prophet and God had told the people how they could restore fellowship with him.

The Hebrew phrase used there literally means to fear in the presence of. So they were fearing in the presence of the Lord. And that phrase also is used elsewhere for humanity's response to judgment or just to the awesome presence of God.

Haggai has identified the presence of God in judgment in their recent past. And their response is one of trembling fear as they willingly receive God's word.

Think about what's happening here because the people become intimately aware of who God is, his holiness and his awesome power, among other things. And they are compelled to bow in obedience and submission.

So in a very real sense, this mirrors the picture we see elsewhere when people encounter the presence of God. Think about Isaiah in Isaiah 6 when he came in the throne room of God and saw a vision of it at least.

[7 : 29] As Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and became deeply aware of who God is, his response was recorded in Isaiah 6.5. In Isaiah 6.5, Isaiah said, Woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips.

My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. The Israelite people here that we're looking at tonight heard Haggai's words, and they were repenting and preparing to walk in obedience, partly because they were driven to worship God as they became more distinctly aware of his might.

The idea that God is majestic, powerful, and able to save is a key element to correctly understanding who God is and to correctly worshiping him.

The Israelites' disobedience would have been, at least in part, driven by their earlier forgetfulness of who God is, how awe-inspiring he is, and how he is able to save.

The Israelites we see repenting here in this text could have said the words of Psalm 61, verses 1-5. Listen to what Psalm 61, verses 1-5 have to say.

[8 : 49] To the choir master, with stringed instruments, of David. Hear my cry, O God. Listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth, I call to you when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy. Let me dwell in your tent forever. Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings.

Let me tell you, For you, O God, have heard my vows. You have given me the heritage of those who feared your name. Going back to our Haggai passage, the phrase just before the last sentence of Haggai 1-12 tells us what caused the people to fear the Lord.

The cause of their fear was the voice of their Lord, their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet as the Lord, their God, had sent him. The phrase is more profound than it first sounds. The people only heard Haggai's words. However, they knew his words were accurate. Because of the genuineness of the message, the people knew that through Haggai, they were hearing the voice of the Lord himself.

[10:06] And they knew that the Lord had sent Haggai to them. Consider this. True prophets always are sent by God. If someone claims to speak for God in our day, we simply need to compare what that person says with the word of God, the Bible.

If we lack a printed copy of the Bible nearby, we can look up electronic versions on our computers or cell phones. And if the person's words agree with what the Bible says, that person really is proclaiming God's word.

In Haggai's day, telling whether someone was a true prophet was more difficult than it is today. They hadn't received cell service in the rebuilding Jerusalem yet. But the Bible also had yet to be completed.

And Haggai's original audience, though, still had enough revelation to understand that Haggai's words lined up with what they had been told to expect. For example, we looked last week at how Isaiah 45, at least 160 years before Cyrus was born, said that a man named Cyrus would equip God's people to rebuild the temple.

And that it happened just like Isaiah said it would. So let's keep working our way backward through Haggai 1.12. The beginning of the verse tells us the people's response to God's message.

[11:30] The beginning of the verse says, Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jehoshadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God.

The people's response to God's word delivered by Haggai was to obey it. And we need to realize that obedience is the only proper response to God's word.

In response to God's words being preached, the Israelite people repented. They were completely reoriented around the nature and character of God.

Notice that their leaders were the first to model this repentance. Verse 12 says, Then Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God.

Something else is significant about that part of the verse, and that's the reference to the remnant. The concept of remnant is used in various ways in prophetic literature of the Old Testament.

[12:37] It sometimes refers to a faithful segment of a larger group that included less committed Israelites. At other times, the word is more inclusive, serving as a general designation for all Israelites who had escaped a particular disaster.

That guy seems to use the term in a broad theological sense here, where he's referring to those who were truly part of the covenant community with God, whether they had returned from the exile or whether they had been part of the few who'd stayed in the land all along.

The remnant represents those who have experienced the covenant discipline of God and have emerged purified. At the same time, the remnant is pictured as a community who will experience the presence of God.

In particular, they will have God's spirit within them, and you can read about that in Ezekiel and Joel. This remnant theme carries over into the New Testament, too, and it sets the stage for the advance of the church in Acts.

In Acts 2, Jews stream into Jerusalem from all over the ancient world. As they do, they hear wonders of God in their own languages.

[13:55] Peter explains this phenomena by quoting from Joel 2, a passage that refers to the remnant, and there in Joel 2, Joel refers to the remnant as the survivors, and he talks about them returning and receiving the Spirit of God.

Here is the verse from Joel that Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost. It's Joel 2, verse 32. Joel 2, verse 32 says, Does that sound familiar?

Then moving on in the verse, it says, For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

The use of the word remnant in tonight's Haggai passage shows how much hearing God's word has changed the people. We just read Haggai 1, 2 again where people were referred to by God as

these people instead of my people.

After the people repent, in verse 12, the same people are called the remnant. They once again are claimed by God as his people. And we'll come to that idea again as we go through the verses even more.

[15:21] For now, let's move to the second section of the lesson. So we've seen fear of the Lord. In verse 13, we see fellowship with the Lord. Fellowship with the Lord.

Verse 13 says, Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message. I am with you, declares the Lord.

The verse first emphasizes two things, the messenger and the message. The word messenger is important.

You won't be surprised to hear that the root word for messenger is the same as the root word for message that we see later in the verse. The meaning has something important to say to us about the role of a preacher.

The root of these words speaks to God's words being given to humanity and it's intended to convey the idea that the words we are hearing are directly from God.

[16:25] That same root word that gives us message or words from God himself gives us messenger like we mentioned. Haggai wants us to understand just how significant the role of the messenger and the content of his message are.

They're both linked together. The messenger, at least the true messenger of God, represents God. He speaks for God. In fact, that word translated messenger here is translated across scripture in other contexts. It conveys the idea that the messengers have no inherent authority or truth in themselves, but they are to be listened to and honored because they carry the weight of the one who sent them.

When they convey the message, they convey a message that is not their own, but a message that comes from God himself. Messengers have a distinct responsibility to represent the one who sent them.

In this case, of course, the sender is God. Preachers represent and reflect God to their audiences, and that is why the Bible points out to us in James 3.1 that the preacher will carry a greater responsibility before God than others will.

God's message here in this verse is short, but it's very reassuring. That message, again, is, I am with you. This declaration from the Lord is different.

[17:58] Instead of just being a statement of confidence, the way he says it actually carries the weight of a legal transaction. He's not making a simple statement. He's binding himself to a legal transaction here.

It is a certain promise from God to his now repentant people, and we'll see God make this promise again next week when we get to verse 4 of chapter 2.

We learn from verse 12 that God already has identified the people as his remnant. Now the people who heard Haggai say these words for the first time knew that same truth.

They no longer were these people. God was with them. They were indeed God's people after all. Consider this as well.

The people in the remnant always were God's people. It wasn't as if God just decided, oh, okay, I guess I'll let them back in after I kicked them out. No, he knew all along that they were his people.

[18:57] The difference is that now they were acting like God's people, and their actions led to reassurance for them from God. So God wasn't the one who was reassured here.

The people are the ones who are reassured that they are God's people. The core promise when God says, I am with you, has two key words in it that form a partnership and those are the words you and I.

And of course, you refers to the people and I refers to God. And it begins the movement toward God as the source of this project that will climax then in the next verse.

The people are obedient, yet they're filled with fear and they're comforted by God who reassures them by this simple promise that he accepts them and will accompany them as they do the work. Notice the change in tone from God here. Earlier, the people were disobedient so he compelled them to obey. Then they turned from their sin and embraced righteousness so God immediately began to affirm them and his presence among them.

[20 : 11] He is with them and he will be with them. It's a promise of comfort, it's a promise of blessing, and most of all, it's a promise of grace because God didn't have to do this for the people.

The concept of God being with them would have reminded the people of other times in their history when God used similar words to comfort his people. Let's look at a few of those.

The people then would have known of all of these. After Joseph had been sold into slavery to Potiphar, Moses wrote these words in Genesis 39.2.

Genesis 39.2 says, the Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.

Shortly after that, you'll remember Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of trying to rape her. Joseph gets thrown into prison. Despite that, Genesis 39.21 has these words.

[21 : 17] Genesis 39.21 says, But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

In Exodus 3.10-12, Moses himself received a similar assurance from God. Listen to Exodus 3.10-12.

God said to Moses, Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?

He said, talking about God, But I will be with you and this shall be a sign for you that I have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.

Then moving on to Deuteronomy. in Deuteronomy chapter 31, we see Moses commissioning Joshua as his successor. And listen to what Moses says in Deuteronomy 31, verse 6.

[22 : 28] Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them. And of course, there he's talking about the people currently occupying the promised land. And then he goes on to say, For it is the Lord, your God, who goes with you.

He will not leave you or forsake you. In Judges, after Gideon doubted that he'd been called by God to attack the Midianites, we see these words in Judges 6.12.

Judges 6.12 tells us, And the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said to him, The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor. God made the same promise to Jeremiah twice in the first 19 verses of Jeremiah's prophecy after Jeremiah was fearful of the people.

Jeremiah 1.8 says, Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord. And then a little while later in Jeremiah 1.19, we see this, They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you.

So you can see how the words, I am with you, would have been very significant to the people of Haggai's day. Those weren't just idle words.

[23 : 48] They had examples in their history where God had said the same or very similar things and then had delivered on that promise. Thinking about the people of Haggai's day, remember the situation that we discussed last week.

They had returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. Instead of being blessed by God like they might have expected, they had faced several poor harvests at a time when their economy had high inflation.

They naturally would have been concerned that maybe God had abandoned them. Instead, at perhaps their very lowest point, they heard God's messenger deliver God's simple yet powerful message, I am with you.

God's people We know that God never changes. Therefore, when God's people today do the will of God, we can be confident that God will be with them.

Better yet, let's personalize it a little more. When we do the will of God today, we can be confident that God will be with us. God's people sometimes find themselves in painful or lonely circumstances, and the desire is to complain or be angry with God for those circumstances.

[25 : 05] Instead, we need to remember God's promise and God's promise to us is that He will never abandon us. That commitment from God should compel us to be strong and to be faithful.

The last section of tonight's passage comes in verses 14 and 15. So far, we've talked about fear of the Lord and fellowship with the Lord in verses 14 and 15.

We see fervor from the Lord. So fervor from the Lord is your last section. When we read the verses again, you'll see why fervor is a good word to use there.

Verses 14 and 15 say, And 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, on the 24th day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year, of Darius the king.

[26 : 14] The heading for this section is fervor from the Lord because of the first words of verse 14. It says, The Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and the spirit of Joshua and the spirit of the remnant.

The people needed God's help to stir their spirits to do God's work. Notice the same sequence we saw in verse 12. God first stirred the leadership, then he stirred the people.

God needs none of us. Sorry if that hurts your feelings on some of you, but hopefully that's not a revelation to anybody. God needs none of us. However, in his wisdom and sovereignty, God has ordained humanity to accomplish his purposes and God has specifically chosen to use leaders to move his people to accomplish those purposes.

Let's consider some of the reasons why God must stir us up and enable us to serve him. The primary reason is human nature itself. Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 3.

Paul said in Romans 3 verses 10 through 12, as it is written, none is righteous, no, not one. No one understands, no one seeks for God.

[27 : 33] All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one. Paul also wrote Colossians chapter 1 verses 28 and 29 where he says, in other words, how God stirred him up.

Listen to what he said in Colossians 1 28 and 29. He says, him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

And here's the key verse, for this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. So Paul says that he's toiling and struggling with all Christ energy, that Christ works from within Paul.

It doesn't come from Paul himself. It comes from God first and works its way out through Paul. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, the Bible is consistent.

And that's because God is consistent. Think about leadership again. Leadership is unable to lead rightly unless God enables the leaders by supplying his power.

[28 : 48] Acknowledgement of our weakness and need is a necessary component to faithful and successful spiritual leadership. This passage actually should show us that everything is theological.

It may not seem like it, but let's talk about why that is. The people had a problem and their problem was a lack of progress on the building project.

But why is that a spiritual problem? Well, their lack of physical obedience was a direct result of their unwilling and disobedient hearts. All physical acts, both good and bad, start in the heart.

Therefore, every behavior ultimately is a spiritual issue. Everything a person does reflects the relationship of that person's heart toward God. All leadership begins with the condition of the heart, and good leadership leads the heart first, recognizing that changed hearts lead to changed actions.

Listen now to what Paul said about the source of leadership's authority. This is Romans 13.1.

Romans 13.1 says, Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

[30 : 15] Whether we like it or not, leaders are a God-ordained reality. When we understand this, we're enabled rightly to emphasize the importance of having godly leadership.

leadership. And godly leaders are able to comprehend the weightiness of their task. All leaders need to realize that they're stewards or managers of the responsibility that God has given them.

Then the end of Haggai 1.14 through verse 15 tells us what God stirred up the people and their leaders to do. Starting with the end of verse 14, it says, God's words had a bigger impact on God's people than simply stirring them up emotionally.

The stirred hearts propelled them into action. The people transitioned their fear for God into appropriate actions, the same actions that God had told them to do when God spoke through Haggai back in verse 8.

Those actions provided even more proof that the people truly belonged to God. Think about the end of verse 14. It says that the people worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God.

[31 : 41] So what a difference hearing the word of God has made. Just 23 days after God called the Israelites these people, we see the effects of properly reorienting their priorities in response to God's word.

The people are working on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God. Before we leave this section, let's talk about the date mentioned in verse 15.

You might be asking the question, if the people were so stirred up to obey God, why did it take them 23 days to get started? Well, the context seems to suggest that the people did obey immediately. However, preparations had to be made first before the rebuilding could begin. Remember that the time of year was harvest season for some of their most important crops. And also remember that God had told the people to go cut down wood to rebuild the temple.

23 days between verses 1 through 11 and verses 12 through 15 seem like a reasonable period to bring in the small harvest to cut and transport the wood for the temple and to clear the temple's foundation so that something could be built upon it.

[32 : 53] Based upon the Lord's reaction to how the people responded, the people certainly seem to have repented immediately and to have begun preparing to rebuild immediately, even though that building didn't start until 23 days later.

We can say that because verses 12 through 15 only have reassurance from God rather than additional discipline. We know that God wouldn't have been shy of calling them out if they weren't doing what he had told them to do.

Remember the main idea. Obedience to God leads to fellowship with him. Knowing that God is with us is the best fellowship we could have with God.

But we need to talk about a few secondary points as well. One is that the book of Haggai is a bit unusual in the Old Testament, particularly among the other prophets.

Haggai's message actually gets through and the people respond in repentance and obedience. Other prophetic books denounce disobedience only to see the people of God brush off the admonition and continue in their sin.

[34 : 02] Haggai stands out as encouraging. He stands out as an example of what can happen when God's people listen to God's word delivered to God's prophet and then they experience God's blessing because they obey.

The text also shows us that fellowship with God comes from hearing and obeying God's word. That is why proclaiming God's word should be at the center of every church service.

Think about what Hebrews 4.12 says. Hebrews 4.12 reminds us, For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

We certainly have seen the effect of hearing God's word on Haggai's original audience. And we also see from tonight's passage that God's word often comes through a preacher.

God's words are powerful, but God has ordained the preaching of his word by faithful preachers as the primary means in which his message is to be delivered to the world.

[35 : 14] The key word in that sentence is faithful. God has ordained the preaching of his word by faithful preachers as the primary reason by which his message is to be delivered to the world.

We should be thankful that we have pastors Mike and Tyler who are faithful to the scripture in the sermons they preach and the songs that we sing. They and other pastors before them have kept this church grounded in God's word by following the charge that Paul made to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, 1 and 2.

Here is 2 Timothy 4, 1 and 2. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing in his kingdom preach the word be ready in season and out of season reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

And of course any of us who have been around in any church for a long time and any of us who have been in this church for a long time have seen times where preaching the word was in season and out of season but fortunately we had people faithful to these verses.

We also need to appreciate when our leaders model appropriate behavior. Here is how one commentary put it about this passage tonight. It said, When confronted by God's words the Israelite people repented but only after the high priest their spiritual leader first modeled repentance.

[36 : 48] Good leadership leads by example in humility and in obedience to God's words. It is hard to overstate how significant this is. It is powerful to note that in response to the high priest

obedience the entire remnant of the Israelite people repented.

It may be quite possible that among many of our churches today sin is not taken seriously because the church has never seen our leaders publicly taking sin seriously.

It may be that the church is just waiting for the leadership to acknowledge the deadly danger of sin to recognize that this sin sometimes exists in their own lives and to repent and walk away from sin toward righteousness.

Tonight's section also gives an Old Testament picture of what happens when people truly are saved. Think about what we saw in the passage tonight.

The Israelites heard about their sin. They acknowledged that sin. The Israelites repented and they followed their repentance with appropriate actions. These same actions begin when a person is first saved and the same cycle repeats itself or at least it should repeat itself every time a believer confesses sin.

[38 : 05] The response of God to the Israelites repentance is a foreshadowing of God's response to our own repentance today. The Israelites believed God's word they turned from their sin and then God affirmed his presence among them.

It's a reminder of God's consistent unfailing love in the face of our own disobedience and unfaithfulness. And there's no more precious truth in all of Scripture than 1 Timothy 1 verses 15 and 16.

Listen to what Paul said in 1 Timothy 1 verses 15 and 16. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost. But I receive mercy for this reason that in me as the foremost Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

While we stand as perpetually unfaithful unforgiving unloving and ungrateful God stands with affection and grace ready to usher us into his family through the redemption that is offered to us in the life death and resurrection of Jesus.

[39 : 24] All of this is because of God's radically sufficient grace. The statement from God that we saw tonight that he is with the people is more than just a statement of presence or a declaration of victory.

We talked about how it is contractual but it is even more breathtakingly a declaration of love. It's a message that points us forward to the message of Jesus taught to us by the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 5 verses 8 through 11.

Here are Romans chapter 5 verses 8 through 11. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

More than that we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation. Nothing can be better than the salvation that we receive from God through faith alone in Christ alone.

[40 : 42] But something comes close. Like the remnant in Haggai's day true believers today have the assurance that God is with us. We touched on this assurance earlier when we noted that God never changes.

Because God never changes true believers can be assured that God is indeed with us. But we also have that assurance in multiple places in the New Testament.

When Jesus came into our world his very name signified that God is with us. Speaking about the birth of Jesus listen to what Matthew wrote in Matthew chapter 1 verses 22 and 23.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel which means what?

God with us. The exact words there. After Jesus grew up and began his ministry we have the same assurance of God being with us from Jesus himself.

[41 : 52] In these next two examples notice how the assurance of God's presence follows calls for obedience. In John 14 Jesus has just told his disciples that he soon will be going away.

Then listen to what he says in John 14 verses 15 through 17. Jesus says if you love me you will keep my commandments and I will ask the father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor

knows him you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you.

After Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection Jesus provided another assurance of God's presence when he gave the great commission. Here are Matthew 28 verses 18 through 20 and Jesus came and said to them all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age.

Those words sound very much like the promise that God made in Haggai 1.13 when he said through Haggai I am with you declares the Lord. Let's pray.

[43 : 30] Father we thank you tonight not only for the reminder that obedience to you brings fellowship with you we also thank you for the reminder that you are with us and that you will enable us to carry out what you would have us to do help us remember that as we go through our world today help that make us more willing to share your good news with others in in Jesus name we pray amen