

I. Introduction to Haggai: A Christmas Message

The minor prophets, really, it is easy when defined. It is the third book from the end of the Old Testament, and it will be the book of Haggai. I did not plan it this way, but I know that all across the city today, and really across the country, I suspect that everybody is putting together and having their Christmas message. I am not much of a traditional guy; I am in some things, but I think that we can take something and do the same thing so many times that it, much like Christmas, loses its meaning and loses its purpose. We get caught up in doing things just because that is the way we are supposed to do it.

I am not that way when it comes to churches or the Bible. I think that we ought to have something fresh every time we come up. There are some good traditions within the church, and I do not fight that at all; I think that is good. But I think that Christmas time is a situation where we get so caught up in so many different things. I think the book of Haggai is probably, and maybe you will not think this when I am starting out, but I think you will get there by the time I am done, a great book about Christmas and a good Christmas message.

The name itself tells us there is something different about it because the name Haggai means "born during a festival." This is the festive time of year. You all have your little snow sweaters on and sweatshirts and your little reindeer hats. Some of you, I mistook those reindeer horns for the horns you normally wear. But it is already into the festive time of things.

What we are doing is coming through each book of the Bible and trying to focus on how Christ is portrayed. Most people just take for granted that the Bible is a book about right and wrong and things you cannot do and not much you can do. That is not really true. The Bible is built around a key figure, and the key figure in our life is when we celebrate on December 25th what we hold to be the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ. So again, it is a great concept in this book that I want to talk to you about today. In this particular book, Christ is typified as the desire of all nations. I think that in itself is a great concept behind the scenes.

Many times over the years, with all the commercial things of Christmas—the presents, the trees, and all of the things that we do—we get caught up in them. We really miss and lose sight of the real purpose of it. I want to talk to you about that today, and I think the book of Haggai, based on the fact that Haggai means "born on a festival" and Christ is "the desire of all nations," is perfect. You will find that in Haggai 2:7.

II. Doctrinal, Inspirational, and Historical Context

- Doctrinally
- Inspirationally
- Historically

Again, I want to take just a second and refresh for you something that we talked about many, many months ago when we started this, and we talk about it, but I think you need to know it today, especially with all the visitors here today. We need to stop and kind of refresh our memory on this. If you have your Bible for a moment, keep one finger there in Haggai and then turn back to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. I think we want to kind of set the stage here with everybody that is here today that you can maybe better understand where I am coming from and then better understand how we are trying to apply some of this today.

1 Corinthians chapter 10 is a great chapter, and I am going to read the first 11 or 12 verses. If you do not have a Bible this morning, just listen, and it is fine. Just listen, and you can follow along. It will be very easy for you today.

1 Corinthians 10:1-12

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Now Father, we ask You today to help us to put all this together. We thank You for the good people that are here today. Lord, may they leave today, Father, understanding that the greatest gift that they ever have will not be what is under a tree in a couple of days. The greatest gift their children will ever have will not be a new bike or a doll or something that they pointed out of a catalog that they want. But in reality, the greatest gift that man could ever have is Christ, the desire of all nations. I pray Father today that You will help us look at this and understand how the

greatest gift that we have today, in a time of the year when we talk about gifts, when we talk about the things of giving to others, may we stop this morning and reflect and pause on the greatest gift that God ever gave to mankind, and that is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the desire of all nations. Thank You now, Father, in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

III. Learning from Israel's Mistakes: Examples and Ensamples

What that passage says that I just read for you is simply this, and this will help put it into perspective: Everything you read in the Old Testament, everything that the nation of Israel struggled with, everything that they went through, every defeat that they had, every problem that they had, the Bible says that they were written for our examples and our ensamples. The Bible says that they were written for our admonition. That means that we can look at the mistakes that they made, the problems that they had, and then we can apply them to our lives and the problems that we have today.

I do not believe there is a bad person in this room today. I think that probably you are all good people who do the best you can with life and try to struggle through the things of life. I think that if we were honest this morning, we would all have to admit, and I know I put myself at the head of the list, that there is none of us that are perfect. We all have issues. We all have problems. We may struggle with different things, but we certainly all struggle. This is where the Bible is so important.

So many people get a bad concept of the Bible. Maybe they went to some Baptist church sometimes, and Baptist churches are notorious for this; they just clobber you over the head with something and beat you senseless, and you get a bad taste in your mouth. Here it is different. We will beat you senseless and leave a good taste in your mouth. No, I am just kidding.

I always tell people this: obviously, in our life, there has to be rebuke. When you were raised as a child, it was important that your parents had discipline with you and that they had to rebuke you at times. A Troy understands when he went to basic training. I had a friend of mine years and years ago; he grew up and he got saved, and he gave a testimony after he got saved when he went into the Marine Corps. He got up and he told how stupid his life was, how dumb most young people are when they are growing up. He says, "I rebelled against my father, I rebelled against my mother, I thought I knew more about life than all of them, and I had problems with my mom and my dad every day. I could not wait to get out of the house. When I turned 18," he says, "I finally escaped my mom and my dad." I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I joined the Marine Corps."

Through that experience, he got saved, and he learned the lessons that in life there has to be structure. There has to be discipline. There has to be reproof. You will not be the soldier that you really have the potential to be unless they structure you. They do a lot in basic what I do here. They strip you down and then rebuild you back the way they want you to be. My job is to strip you down and then build you back not the way that I want you to be, but the way that God wants

you to be. We just do not use the superlative languages here that they use there. Maybe we should. They might get a little more done that way. I am just kidding.

But that is what it is all about. This great passage tells us that the things that happen to them in the Old Testament are the same things that happen to us. We talk about victory in the Lord, do we not? Last week I talked about the fact that in life I always try to live above the circumstances. I have been in this business a little longer than most of you. Some of you still can claim ignorance in some things, and you have some maybe excuses for some things you do and do not do. I do not have any excuses. A few older Christians do not really have any either. I know exactly what the score is, and I know enough about the Bible to know that I do not have any excuses.

I told you last week that I will never paint myself as the victim. I will never complain that somebody did me wrong. I believe that things happen in life for us to grow through. The Bible is true where it says in Romans 8:28 that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. If we really believe that, then how can anything bad happen in our lives if we are a Christian? God will even take the mistakes that you and I make and turn them around so that we do not have to be the victim.

Many times when people come into this church, they are beat up. They have had bad relationships or they had problems. I look at this place as a kind of an oasis in a dead, dry world. I believe that the Bible is a book that you can solve any problem you have if you really want to. I think many times people never get to a place where they get what they need. Most churches always want something back from you. I really do not want anything from you. I want you to give what you have to the Lord, but I do not want anything from you. My job as a pastor is not to take from you. My job as a pastor is to give to you so that you can give to the Lord. I think we have lost that concept today, just like we have lost the concept of giving and Christmas and all the other things.

These verses tell us that what we are about to look at in the book of Haggai are some problems that Israel went through. We learn by what they went through, the mistakes that they made. The Bible says they are examples and ensamples. Let me talk to you about that a moment. An example is something that you do, but an ensample is something that you are. When you go through something in life or you see somebody in the Bible going through it, like the nation of Israel, we can learn from that. The Bible is a book that shows us how people got into problems, why they got into problems, but most importantly, it shows you how they got out of the problems. If they never did get out of the problems, it shows you that they could have. That is what happens in the Old Testament. That is why the Old Testament is so valuable. That is why he is saying here that these things were written for our admonition. Because we need to learn from these books in the Bible. All this doctrinal stuff is very important. The prophetic stuff is fun. The historical stuff is boring to most people. I like it, but many people are bored with it. But the inspirational side of it is absolutely crucial in your life and in my life. You are going to find that both Haggai and Malachi and Zechariah, they all basically deal with the same issue.

IV. The Problem in Haggai: An Unfinished Temple and Lost Vision

Let us get down to the issue. Here is what happened. In the book of Haggai, here is the problem: They have now been back for 12 years. They started in Ezra and Nehemiah to rebuild the temple. Rebuild everything that God had for them that they were supposed to do. But now here it is 12 years later, and the temple of God is still unfinished. Now it is causing them some problems. It is causing them some issues. The Jews go back and they rebuild in Ezra and Nehemiah. But here in Haggai, some 12 years later, it is still unfinished.

Historically, the reason they have stopped here again is because again, the nation of Israel, we learn from their mistakes, they have lost sight of God in their life. Now, after 12 short years, they came back with a purpose and a desire. "We are going to build the temple. We are going to reestablish Jerusalem and bring God back to the center." Twelve years later, they have lost that vision.

The day you committed to become a Christian, I have never met a person who genuinely got saved that when they got up from being saved, was not going to do something for God. The reality of that is very few of them do. The reason why they do not, and the reason why maybe some of you here today are having the issues that you are having, I have a gift I want to give you today. It is Christmas. I have something that I want to give you that will probably be the greatest gift that you will ever have, that you will never get. I wish to tell you that I bought it at some fancy store, but I did not. I would like to tell you that I even paid for this gift, but I would be lying if I told you that. No, no, no, no. This gift cost God more than anything that you could ever imagine, monetarily wise. If you had to buy it or I had to buy it, you could never afford it. That is why it is called God's gift, and it is God's gift to you and it is God's gift to me.

We have seen in the last couple of weeks, last week we had a great lesson, I think, on one of the problems in Israel, that they had no leadership. We talked about the importance of leadership. That was two weeks ago. Then last week we talked about why they had no revival. Josiah comes in, he tried to bring a temporary revival, but it did not last. We have seen now two or three good lessons that build on each other. The great spiritual truths in this book, they are incredible, and they all build toward each other. Today we are going to look at another aspect that we can take from what they did in the Old Testament and apply it right into our lives in everyday 21st century.

V. Building Your Temple: The Christian's Spiritual Foundation

In this book, we learn what is probably the most singular important thing that you and I have to do from falling back into the mistakes that the nation of Israel made: and that is to keep building your temple. Let me talk about that concept. In the Old Testament, all of Israel's relationship with God, everything that Israel did, everything that they were, everything that God was going to do with them and had planned to do with them, went through the temple that they built. In the Old

Testament, before Solomon came to the throne, we know that that temple was in a temporary establishment called a tabernacle. They would take it down, set it up, take it down, set it up. But it goes before them when they are journeying through the wilderness, and it is always at the forefront because it represents the most significant thing in their life. Everything that they had with God had to go through that. God even created a special class of priests called Levites that ministered within that tabernacle in that temple. That is what their job was when the high priest made the sacrifices for the nation of Israel. They went through that temple.

A little bit later on, when that temple got established under Solomon, it was in Jerusalem. You know how they are going through the land, and the whole Bible is basically a record of the beginning of the nation of Israel, the formulation of the nation of Israel, and then the establishment of the nation of Israel. By the time we get to King David and Solomon, Solomon builds that temple, and now that temple is at a fixed spot. If you know anything about the Bible or the stories of the Bible, you know the story about the Queen of Sheba, how she comes in and she asks Solomon many hard questions, and he shows her all the magnificence of the temple of God. She is overwhelmed. If you read a little bit farther, dig a little bit deeper, you will find that all the nations of the earth were coming into Jerusalem. It was not just the Queen of Sheba. God at that time had established a name for Himself with His people, the nation of Israel, and He was reaching the world through a temple that He had built in Jerusalem. That temple was overlaid with gold. Gold in the Bible is the picture of deity. It had within that temple all the beautiful artifacts that we will talk about here in a second. But that temple was the place where God came down, and He met with the leaders of Israel, and everything that Israel had spiritually had to run through that temple. That is why it is so important.

Of course, we find that today in your life and my life. The Bible says what?

1 Corinthians 6:19

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

Now let me tell you how it works. Folks have been around here for a while; they pretty much understand this. I have said it a lot. But here is how it works so you get the concept. In the Old Testament, God had a real building, a real building overlaid with gold, a beautiful building. It is laid out for you in Ezekiel 40-48 and Exodus 25. It is a beautiful temple overlaid with gold. That is where God required everybody on planet earth that wanted to find out who God was and have God in their life, they had to come to Jerusalem and worship at that temple. Ah, but in the New Testament it changed, did it not? Now your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Where in the Old Testament all the world was to come to the temple, now in the New Testament we are to take the temple to the world. That is why the theme of this book is so important: Christ, the desire of all nations. Whether you know it or not, people around this world, whether they know it or not, the greatest need they have is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, it was at a fixed spot, and it was like God put loudspeakers on angels, and they flew over the earth and said, "You want to find God? Come to Jerusalem." Well, God does not use angels today, and He sold all the loudspeakers. He does not need them today because

who is supposed to go and scream and talk and yell and tell everybody about Jesus Christ is you and me. We are to take our temple to the world.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 that the day you got saved, you laid a foundation in your life. That foundation is the day you became a Christian. You do not have to be a Baptist to be a Christian. The Baptists do not have the only way to heaven. The only way to heaven is through Jesus. Baptists sometimes get it all out of whack. I have met Methodists that were saved. I have met people that were saved. We get this idea. There is an old joke that a guy went to heaven one time, and Saint Peter is showing him around, and he takes him into this big room, and they are filled with people, and they are all eating fried chicken dinners. The guy says to Saint Peter, "Wow, this is great. Who are all these people?" He says, "These are all the Methodists because Methodists always have fried chicken dinners." He walks down a hall, and he goes into another big room, and there is a bunch of people playing bingo. He says, "Wow, who are all these?" He says, "Well, these are where all the Catholics are." So he walked down to another hallway into a big room, and there are big flashing lights. "No talking. Be quiet." And people in there just busy down doing something, but big signs, and Saint Peter said, "We cannot talk here." The guy says, "Well, who are these people?" He says, "These are the Baptists, and we do not talk, and we have all these lights on because they think they are the only ones up here." That is so true of so many times of Baptists.

Let me tell you this: there is only one way you get to heaven, folks, and that is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross. But the Baptists do not have the corner on that market. God will save anybody if you come through the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. The church does not matter what church, the denomination will take us hanging around your neck. Churches do not get you to heaven. The Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, anymore than the Baptist Church will. What gets you to heaven is Jesus Christ, God's Son, dying on the cross and God offering up the gift of salvation.

Christmas time. Remember? Christmas time. You want a gift? I have a great one for you. I have a great gift for you. It will not cost anything. I will tell you something else: once you take it, you cannot take it back. I like that too. You do not need to take it back. It will fit every size in this room. It will be your right color. It will definitely enhance how you look. Some of you can really use that today. Let me just help you with that one.

VI. The Furnishings of the Temple: Gold, Silver, Precious Stones, and Hallowed Things

The Bible says that upon that foundation, you build three things: gold, silver, precious stones.

- Gold That gold, we already know in the Bible, is a picture of Christ's deity. So it means that once you get saved, the first thing you put on that foundation is learning about Jesus Christ. Learning about God. We call it discipleship here. We have all kinds of classes that help you lay on that foundation gold. I think the most important thing about keeping you where you get to the point that you become the ambassador for Christ, that you take the gift that God gave you and give it to other people, it is Christmas. Here is to know who God is.

- Silver Then the second thing they put on there is silver. Now silver in the Bible represents the price of redemption. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He was sold for 30 pieces of silver. Remember when Judas sold Him out? So silver in the Bible represents redemption. So once you learn who God is, gold, then the next thing, or even in the process, you have to learn what Christ did for you. This is the stuff you put on your foundation.
- Precious Stones Then the third thing in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, the Bible says, is precious stones. Precious stones in the Bible represent people. People think that becoming a vibrant Christian is hard. I have had people say, "I have a tough time witnessing," or "I cannot talk to people." I understand all that. But in reality, you know how simple it really is. This is just the way I look at things. I do not look at things very complicated. I am not a very complicated person. I have to see things that are usually the lowest common denominator for me to understand them. I am not very technical about things. My way of fixing something is a hammer. If that does not work, get a bigger hammer. That is how I look at life. Sometimes that works and sometimes that does not, especially if it is your kid. But anyway, I think this: When a person gets saved, they become a Christian. You focus on knowing who God is. You really know who God is. Then you focus on the silver, understanding really what God has done for you, the redemption. I do not understand how you can really understand who God is and then really understand what God did for you without wanting to tell everybody about it. There are your precious stones. That is how that works.

I know that many times people come in here, and they have obstacles in their lives. They cannot get to that point. That is our job here. Our job is to remove the obstacles in your life and help you get to that point. But this book talks about the greatest thing that you have to keep on doing in your life. You know what it is? Do not find yourself in the condition that they were in the book of Haggai. You have to keep growing spiritually. I cannot emphasize that enough. Over the years of my life, I have watched people who were Christians, vibrant Christians at one time, loved the Lord, loved the Bible. I have seen them grow cold to the place that after a while, they did not care about God, did not care about church. You look at things like that, and you think to yourself, "How does that happen?" Well, it happens simply because people quit growing. The book of Haggai is exactly what happened. They had been there 12 years now, and they have not done anything else to build that temple. It shows. That is where the problem comes in. It is exactly where the problem comes in. You have to keep building that temple.

I talked about the Tabernacle and how important it is. In the book of Exodus 25, you do not have to turn back there. You can just listen to me on this one. In Exodus 25:27, there is incredible detail on that Tabernacle back there. Remember now, everything in the Old Testament is there to show you something about your life and my life in some kind of picture form. That is just the way it works. So you have back there all kinds of things in this Tabernacle.

The first thing you had was the ark. If you saw Indiana Jones back when it came out, in fact, it has been on here the last couple of weeks, you get an understanding in a very kind of a goofy way what the ark was. The ark was that golden chest with the cherubim bent over on it that they carried on stage wherever they went. That is the Ark of the Covenant. No, Indiana Jones may not be a real deal. The Ark of the Covenant was a real deal. I have to tell you that Adolf Hitler, along

with all of the other great leaders down in history, they understood in some general way about the power that that ark generated for the nation of Israel. Yes, they all did look for it. That part is true. But it is not in a warehouse in Washington, D.C., someplace. I can guarantee you that. But that ark represents Christ.

Now, that ark was in a compartment all by itself. What separated the ark from the rest of the tabernacle was something called the veil. That veil in that compartment called the Holy of Holies, where the ark was, the only one that could go in there was the high priest. He is the only one that could go in. That represents in your life and my life that you can have all your friends in the world that are good spiritual friends, and you can have a great church that you can go to, and you should. You do, by the way, if you come here anyway. You should have all of those things in your life. But the reality of it is this: when it comes down to your personal relationship with Jesus Christ, it has to be just you and Him. You cannot live on somebody else's spirituality forever. Yet, that is what you do a lot when you first get saved because people help you, and that is fine. But sooner or later, I mean, do you want your kids living in your house when they are 40 years old? Do you want to still be paying their car payment and making out their checks every month? Or do you want them to take responsibility for things? Well, God's people are the same way. I do not want you to be dependent on somebody else for your spirituality all your life. I want you to grow up, and I want you to take responsibility. I want you to become everything that God wants you to be. You do that by building your own personal relationship with Christ.

It is great to have friends. I have friends. Nobody likes a party better than I do. Nobody likes getting together with people better than I do. Nobody loves sitting down with people and talking about the Bible better than I do. I have people call me on the phone and ask me a Bible question, and they actually apologize for saying, "I am sorry, this is probably a dumb question." I say, "It is not a dumb question. I love talking about the Bible." Now, you do know it is \$100 a question, so you can have as many as you want. I enjoy talking about it. I really do. I think that is the greatest thing in the world. But I understand that all of those things do not really make me in my relationship with Christ. That is me giving out to others. We are all like sponges. A sponge can soak up only so much water, then you have to wring it out or it will not pick up any more water. That is the way a Christian life is. But the real bottom line is you have got to keep going back to the water source, the bucket, to get it filled up again. Your spirituality is my spirituality. There is no difference. Your spirituality will only be as deep as the personal time that you spend with the Lord Jesus Christ, just you and Him.

If you have issues in your life, I may be able to help you, but I cannot solve your problem. You know what I can do? I can point you in the direction and give you the material, but at the end of the day, it is you and God who have got to come to terms with it and deal with it. I can point you in the right direction and give you everything in the world except do it for you. That is what that ark was.

Then you had the... In the second area there, you had the seven candlesticks, and they represent the Spirit of God. You had the altar of incense, and of course, that was burned all the time, and that is a picture of your prayer. You had the showbread, which was baked fresh every day, and that is a picture of the Bible. Then of course, you have the table. That is a picture of your study

and your fellowship. Then outside that, you had the brazen altar, and that is where the sacrifice was burnt. Brass is a picture of judgment in the Bible. Then you had the water or laver where the priest washed his feet when he came in and came out, and all of those things. All of those things are pictures. If you ever want to get it down in a very easy, understandable way, all those little pamphlets back there, I call them Christmas stocking stuffers. They are back there on the tabernacle that will... It could take you an hour, and you would basically get that thing broken down with all the references. It is a great little book back there, but it is things like that that try to help you.

Once they got under Solomon, a lot of things were added to it, and this is all a picture of your life and my life. When you get over there and it talks about the tabernacle under Solomon, there are lamps. There are spoons. There are dishes. There are cups. There are bowls. There are the spoils of war, gold and silver and the precious stone that they bring in. Now in the Bible, all these things are called the hallowed things. They were things that were put in the temple when it became a literal building. They are things that were called the dedicated things, the holy things. Do you know what they represent? That was a place in the temple where nobody ever went into. The thing that got a lot of the leaders in trouble with the nation of Israel is when they let the foreign kings come in and see the treasure trove of God. Many times when they were really pressed because they were not doing what was right, they bought off the impending nations that were going to destroy them by giving them the very gold and jewels that was in God's holy treasure trove. That is a terrible thing.

You know why? Because the things that are in that treasure trove, in that temple, picture the things that God has given you through your life journey that are special to you. The things that God has given you in a time when you thought you were not going to make it and God came through. A lot of it will be people that maybe you have won to Christ. A lot of it will be principles or things that God has taught you through the Bible. A lot of it will be experiences that you go through and that you learn from. God shows you and gives you some grand understanding of something that you never have. The problem with God's people is simply this: God has a lot of special things that He wants to give just to you that He wants you to keep in your heart only to Him. Most of God's people do not do that.

Every woman in some form or fashion, it is not in vogue much today, but every woman in some form or fashion, she has what they call a jewelry box. That jewelry box will be usually, if you are a criminal here and you want to break into somebody's house, it is usually on the dresser in the bedroom so you know right where it is at to go there. You open it up, and sometimes they play music. Sometimes they have little drawers in them, and sometimes there is a little ballerina dancing around them, or sometimes it is cute little things. They have little apartments and little drawers, and then there is where you keep all the jewelry. You have something from your boyfriend and your husband or somebody special gave you something, your earrings, your diamond rings, all the stuff that you... You have to be careful now because they wear nose jewelry and ear jewelry, so you take your nose off and put it in there. They later put it back up, whatever. I am not sure how you drill holes in there and put them little bolts on. You have a little wrench, just tuck that down. Anyway, but you put stuff in there that is special.

Every Christian ought to have a jewelry box. You ought to have a special place where you keep the holy things that God gave to you that you do not share with anybody else. Things that only you and God have. This is the tragedy with most of God's people. They never do this. These are part of building the temple. Now, these things are called furnishings. That is why the Bible says, coming back to the New Testament in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Now, you would think that in proper English grammar it would say, "finished." But it does not say "finished." The only Bible on the market today that says "furnished" is a King James Bible. A King James Bible, one of the things that I love about it, is it protects the internal doctrines of the Bible and everything that it does. It does not say, "all the new Bibles say, thoroughly equipped." But my Bible says, "throughly furnished." That is very important. Somebody said, "Well, what is the big deal?" Because "throughly" is the word that means that it starts on the inside of you. Truly, your relationship with God has to be internal. So, "throughly" is the right word. Not "thoroughly." It is "throughly." It starts on the inside and works its way out. If you are not equipped, you are furnished. The furnishings that he is talking about inside your temple match up to the furnishings in the literal temple: the table, the showbread, all of those things are the holy things.

I think that this is why Christianity is so shallow today. I think people today do not understand that it is the internal stuff that you have to have. That you keep growing spiritually. That you laid that foundation the day you were saved. Then you are building upon it day after day after day: gold, silver, precious stones. Then God gives you those hallowed things, those holy things. Those things that God comes through and does in your life that you could never tell. Did you ever try to tell somebody some incredible thing that God has done for you, and you feel so inept trying to tell them? It does not, it is almost like that old saying, "You have got to have been there to understand it." It just does not come out. Then you feel goofy because you were so moved by it, and you are trying to explain it to them. Then when they are looking at you like, "Well, come on, what is the point? When will you get to this? What happened?" You know why that is? Because God has given you some things that you can only understand in your own life. When you try to explain it...

I have a lot of illustrations and a lot of things that I use in my preaching that God has done with me over the years. But let me tell you something, I cannot even tell you many of the things that He has done because it would just fall flat on the ground. Because it does not mean anything to you. It does not mean anything to you. It is like some guy collects bottle caps, and you are walking down a dirt road, and there over there is a 1919 Pepsi bottle cap, perfect condition, worth \$6 million on eBay. This guy looks at that and he says, "Whoa, look at that!" And you say, "I have never seen such an idiot so excited about a dirty old bottle cap." It does not mean

anything to you. It means something to him. The Bible does not mean anything to a lot of people. But it should mean something to you. That is just how it works.

I could put all the, not me personally, I could put all the psychologists and all the psychiatrists and all the therapists in the world out of business in 20 minutes. Because, if you are a saved person, I am going to tell you something: every problem you have... We are big today on acronyms, breaking things down. NRA, National Rifle Association. Everybody has their little words. Everybody has, you watch television, it is either ABC, CBS, or it is all broken down for you. We get some great medical thing, that destructive thing, like, you cannot even say it, so you call it AIDS, A-I-D-S. You go in there and you say, "My kid has all kinds of problems. He will not sit good in school. He will not do this." The doctor said, "Well, you have ADS," whatever that is. I can tell you that. I like acronyms too. Let me tell you something. Everybody in here that is saved, if you have struggles in your life and you have problems in your life and you have issues in your life, or your children have issues in your life, I will tell you: You have problems because you have LBP. That is a lack of biblical principles in your life. In other words, you are taking a life that God gave you as a gift and gave you a book to run it by, and now you are trying to run it by another side. You are trying to run it by another set of standards that God never intended it to run by, and you are actually wondering why it is not working for you. Dr. Phil said, "It is not working for you."

I try to maintain a very simple style of ministry, very compassionate, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Patience, long suffering, but at the end of the day, trying to force you into the mode through the Spirit of God and the Word of God that you grow. Because if you do not grow, you will grow cold. It happens all the time. Your continual spiritual growth. You say, "Are you getting off your Christmas message?" No, I am just warming up. The best part is coming.

VII. The First Excuse: Procrastination

Let us take the opportunity to learn from this, and let us go back and look at it. The first thing that Israel said when they were confronted with getting back to building their temple, it is amazing. It is the first thing God's people say. I have been in this business for over 40 years. I have heard every excuse for every reason people do not do what they are supposed to do. I have heard them all. It is amazing to me that something that happened back there in, what, 670 B.C. could be so relevant to what takes place in 2010, 2011.

In Haggai 1:2, here is what it says:

Haggai 1:2

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.

Now, the first excuse that God's people always give is right there. The biggest problem we have, you and I, is the first problem Israel had, and that is the problem of procrastination. "Do not do today what you can put off to tomorrow." I love that. My favorite verse in the Bible is, "Lying is an abomination in the sight of God, but a very present help in a time of trouble." That is taking

two things and putting them together that is not true in the Bible, but we try to make things up. "Never do today what you can put off tomorrow."

The two tragic stories in the Bible, two tragic stories in the Bible, a man who took that position, one of them back there was Pharaoh. Remember back there in Exodus when Moses was going up there with Pharaoh, and he is trying to get Pharaoh to let the people go? Remember what Pharaoh says? Pharaoh says when confronted with God what every man and woman says when they are confronted with God and they have got to make a decision today. Moses said, "I want to let those people go. They are God's people, let them go." Pharaoh said exactly what we say. You know what he said? "Tomorrow. I will let them go tomorrow." You know what happened in his life? Same thing that happened in your and my life. Tomorrow never comes.

I think the great example out in the New Testament is King Agrippa. Remember that one? Paul is over there, and it has always been amazing to me. Paul is in prison by Rome, or as it seems, and he has got a captive audience. Boy, he is standing for King Agrippa, and he is talking about what God has done with the Jews, the majesty of God, and he is talking about everything that God has done and what He is doing before an unsaved pagan Roman governor, King. When he is done laying that out, King Agrippa, just like Pharaoh back in the Old Testament, makes one of the greatest statements in the Bible. He says, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Procrastination. "I will do it tomorrow. Almost. I am ready to do it, Bob. Almost. I am almost there. I am almost there." People today, the Bible says, "The people says, the time has not yet come."

Years ago, I used to hear when the old boys used to preach, they used to tell this story. It is a story, not true, of course, but it is a good illustrative story. It is a story they used to tell about how way back in the distant past, the devil, the devil sat down with all his cohorts and planned out the destruction of mankind. They all were putting in ideas that the devil was going to run with. It was a great meeting of all the demonic spirits in the universe with the devil at the head of the table. He laid out the thing, "All right, guys, we are going to destroy the plan of God. Let us come up with a plan. What do you have?" One guy raised his hand, one demon raised his hand. He says, "I have an idea. Let us propagate the idea that there is no God." The devil thought about that for a moment. He said, "Well, that is a good idea, but that is not going to work. What the Bible says in Psalms 33:6, 'By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.' Romans 1:19-20 said, 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.' That is not going to work. God built Himself into everything. Every time somebody goes out and looks at the stars, looks at the moon, looks at the beauty of this world, it just screams out that God did this. That will not work."

So they went back to the planning session. One of them said, "I have a great idea. Let us get everybody to believe that there is no place called hell." The devil thought about that for a moment. He said, "Now, that is a good idea. I know. You can even get a group of religious people walking around here that would go door to door and tell people there is no hell. That might be a good idea." Somebody said, "No, that is not going to work." "Why not?" "Well, I just bruised the

New Testament real quick, and 28 times Jesus Himself talked about a place called hell in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It is not going to work."

Back to the table again. So a few minutes later, somebody else comes up and says, "Hey, I have a great idea." He says, "What is it?" He says, "Let us tell everybody there is no heaven." He said, "Man, that is not going to work. Man, I mean, everybody wants to believe in heaven. I mean, what are you going to do? Get up there in the funeral and say, 'Your grandma went to hell.' She did not go to hell. That is not going to work. Heaven is a concept that everybody, that is the best deal they have going. They are not going to take that away."

After hours, nothing. One of them said, "I have it. I have the foolproof plan." "No, telling them there is no God will not work. Telling them there is no hell will not work. Telling them that there is no heaven will not work. But I have the thing." "What is it?" "Let us just tell everybody there is no hurry." The devil said, "That will work." They played on human nature. That is what is going on here. The people say, "The time has not yet come."

God's people today, "I just do not want to, I am so busy. My job, my career, my school, my kid. I have a soccer game to go to. I have volleyball. I have baseball. I have football." A thousand other reasons. Of course, you understand the real reason is, "I really do not want to." Let me tell you something about your kids. You watch this. You try to get your kids to come to school, church, and they do not want to come or do something they do not want to do. But you notice this? Kids will always find a way to get where they want to go. They may have to call nine people to get a ride, but they will find a way to get there. It is true, you and me. We will find a way to do what we want to do or to get where we want to get. Except when it comes to the things of the Lord. We always find a way to do that. Most of God's people, they have no sense of urgency.

I am a history buff in every form of it, military history in particular, but I just love history. I study every aspect of it. I mean, I just lose myself in it. I do sometimes. Fortunately, I find myself and come back. Anyway, I was reading the other day about the Titanic. I love this mystery. Did you find out that they think they might have found Amelia Earhart? How about that, huh? Now, that is another one of my favorite ones. Boy, there were some things out on her. One theory was the Japanese got her. Remember hearing about the Japanese got her over there because they were building up, and she crash-landed there with Fred Noonan or whoever it was. They have done all kinds of stuff. I cannot tell you the things that they have done of going back and finding the old radio transmissions of where she was and then plotting them. It is unbelievable what they can do. Now over there down south of Howland Island where she was supposed to land, they found some bone fragments and some makeup cases. I mean, only a woman would go on a world trip and take her makeup case. I mean, you know what? "We are going to crash." "Not yet." "It does not look good." But they found all. I mean, they had no food, no water. They ate turtles and little birds, found their carcasses, and they got rainwater. They had survival stuff on the plane. She did not get any survival stuff, but she got her makeup kit. Now, what does that tell you? It is a little bit of a joke, huh? I do not know.

Anyway, I love things, and I was reading about the Titanic, and that has always been a... When Ballard went down and discovered the Titanic, as he did the Bismarck, as he did the Lusitania, it

was incredible. I love stuff like that. But I was watching a thing on the Titanic, and I thought to myself, that is so much like Christians. The Titanic in 1912 hit a gigantic iceberg. I liken that to Christians' lives today. Many of God's people have hit a big old iceberg. The Titanic was doomed the moment it hit the iceberg. It ripped out the hull, and the water was flowing. It was a design flaw, the greatest ship. I thought it was always interesting. This was during the time when some of the great evangelists were really going across this country. The spirit from Europe of humanism was getting to creep in. Do you know what they actually stated in the newspaper, in the media, about the Titanic? Because she was supposed to be the... Most people do not know there were three Titanics. They were not all named Titanic. There was the Titanic, there was the Gigantic, and then there was another really big one. I cannot remember its name. But the Titanic, once it sunk, but they used to say publicly that it was unsinkable. Do you know what they said? They said it was a ship that God Himself could not sink. You know what? You have got to be pretty dumb to throw that challenge on the table to God. I mean, if He split the Red Sea, and one angel killed 186,000 men back there in 2 Kings, and He can make the sun stand still in Joshua, He can float your boat anytime He wants to. I mean, I probably have been out there that night, and you have a spiritual view of it. That ship was coming down through there and was going too fast anyhow. You would look behind that iceberg, there are probably 6,000 angels pushing that thing into that path of that ship. God said, "Watch this. Cannot sink it?" Yeah, beside the point. I get carried away with things. I am really parched with that.

Anyway, I thought to myself, it hit an iceberg, and it is going to sink. You would think that people would get the idea when it starts going like this. What would be your first clue? Lay your drink down and slide down the table. Something is not on the up and up here. I thought to myself, so many of God's people's lives are just like that. You have hit something in your life, and you have ripped open your hull. The water is pouring in faster, and if something does not change, you are going to sink. You know what God's people do? Your ship has been hit, it is taking on water, it is going to sink, and you are running around rearranging deck chairs for your next event. Oblivious that your ship is going down. You know why? Procrastination. "I will do it tomorrow. I will do it later. Let us have one more this. Let us do that one more. I will do it tomorrow."

Now I want to keep interjecting in a verse here. Look at Haggai 1:5 because God keeps interjecting it, and He keeps putting this through this whole thing.

Haggai 1:5

Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

Consider your ways. Most of God's people are just like the temple in Ezra and Nehemiah. I think the most terrible verse, when I understand the great magnitude of what God wanted with the nation of Israel, how that temple was overlaid with gold, how it was everything, God's design, what He wanted it to happen, the plan that He had for the nation of Israel. Then I read down there in Nehemiah 2:13-17, and Nehemiah goes down there in the night time, and he goes down there, and he looks at that total destruction, and I think the most terrible words in the Bible in the Old Testament where it simply says, "Jerusalem, lie of waste." You realize that Jerusalem was

God's plan for the world in the Old Testament? Now it is lying waste. You realize that your temple today, you and me, your body is God's plan, and in most cases, we are just like the nation of Israel in the city of Jerusalem, overgrown with weeds, cracks in the foundation, everything burnt and knocked down, everything in disarray, and nothing built on that foundation. You know what they did in Ezra and Nehemiah? They cleaned off the foundation, and they began to build, just like the day that you made a commitment to Christ. But here it is, 12 years later, they quit growing.

VIII. The Second Excuse: Misplaced Priorities

Let us look at the second thing. The second thing they do or they do not do is found in Haggai 1:3-5. Now watch this.

Haggai 1:3-5

Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

That is a question, and it is in the form of God's sarcasm. He says, "Is it time for you to build the house of God?" Well, hello, I guess it is, you have been here 12 years, that is what I sent you back for. The greatest thing in this little study that comes out to me, and this is just me, it shows me again how God has one thing that He wants me to do and the way He sees it, and I see it totally different and do not do what God wants me to do. You have got to get on the same page with God, and many times we do not want to be on the same page with God. "O ye to dwell in cieled houses." Now that is our word for ceiling, right there. This is a ceiling, cieled houses. In other words, part of the problem is that the house of God had no roof on it.

You will find 2 Chronicles 3:5 and Jeremiah 22:14 that the word "cieled" is always connected with God's temple, God's house. In other words, here is what He is saying, "Do you know why you are not building the temple of God?" He is getting down to it now, "I will tell you why. Because you are taking the materials that I gave you to build God's house, and you are taking that and building your own house with it." That is what they are doing. That is exactly what we do. I am not talking about your physical home, I am talking about the fact that your spiritual home. You take the things that God has provided for you and do not build this spiritual home. You put the emphasis on the things in this world, the things that you want to have, the things that in life that become more important to you.

I am telling you, I think if God gives you the ability to live in a million dollar home, I am all for it. I do not begrudge anything that anybody has. I think that if you can do that and you are happy with it, that is fine. But my rule of thumb spiritually is this: Do not get so caught up and so excited about picking out the color of the carpet and how many bathrooms it has and the way the layout of the house is. Do not get so caught up in doing that and leave the temple of God unfurnished that God has given you to do what He wants you to do. He has got a job for us.

I have people all the time, I have heard it all my life. People say, "Well, this is my dream house." I understand that because I know women. Women want to have, and they should. Women want to have, it is her house. She has her kitchen, she has it, she has decorated the way she wants. She can do what she wants to do. She ought to be able to do that. You know what, every woman has a dream. Every man has a dream. Sometimes they just do not, are not the same dream, and that comes into a nightmare. But anyway, that is another message.

Every woman has a dream, and I have heard them say all my life, "Well, this is my dream house." I understand that. I know we use words like that. But let me just say something to you. Your temple right here, God's temple, ought to be your dream house. That is where the reality of your life ought to be. I hear people, I kid my kids just all the time, and it is a joke in our family. They will say, "I love this dress." And I will say, "Yeah, that is what we do. We love things that cannot love us back." Loving inanimate objects will lead to you... I am telling you, I kid with them, and I do it too just sometimes just to throw them off. But, "I just love this house." Really? "Oh, I love this suit. I love this car." When you start loving things that cannot love you back, and you love inanimate objects more than you begin to love people, you are going down the wrong road. It will lead you to the same place every time. That is just the way we are. Loving inanimate objects, loving things that cannot love you back. Of course, the love that God has given to you is to be given out to others. That is part of the whole thing.

IX. The Third Excuse: Unfulfillment

Now, the third thing. It is found in Haggai 1:6.

Haggai 1:6

Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

I think this is probably where America is today. Christmas time and New Year's, for me, is always my busiest time of year with people. Depression sets in more. In reality, problems set in more at this time of the year than any other time of the year. It has just always been true. Anybody who works with people will tell you your busiest month will be December and the beginning of January because people get so depressed. I think Christmas, as fun as it is, is one of the biggest letdowns you ever have all year long. You cannot put the energy that we put into Christmas. I mean, I have seen them put Christmas things in the store at the end of August. Everybody in this room has a million things you have got to do this week. Some of you have your Christmas shopping done, some of you do not. Some of you have things that you are going to take back. You have got to fight the traffic, you fight the people. You have people that, I mean, it is just unbelievable what is out there. You are under the pressure, and then add to that your own social schedule. You have things with family, you have things that you want to do. You have kids with your kids. They are in programs at school. You have church. You have everything you have got to balance out.

Then all of a sudden, on December 25th, it all hits in the morning, what you spent three months getting ready for is ripped open and laying on the floor in 20 minutes. You work about this meal, and afterwards everybody eats it. Nobody says thank you, and everybody falls asleep during the football game. You walk around saying, "Boy, I am glad it is over." Then you get up the next day, and there is nothing to do. No presents to buy, no presents to open, no excitement, no eggnog, no nothing, no nobody around anymore. Then what happens? Because the things in this life are what carry us on? We get depressed. We get down in the dumps. We look at life. We say, "Oh, what is the matter with me? I am so out of sorts. I am so depressed. What is my problem?" Your problem is now you are moving at three miles an hour versus light speed, which you were going through last week. You just now come crashing, hauling your emotions, are not caught up with it yet because of the fact that your whole world..

I mean, when I look at Christmas, I enjoy it. I mean, I do. I enjoy the kids. I look forward to the kids. But it is no big deal. To me, it is just another day. To me, it is just the fact that when I was growing up, it was me. I had to get up at four o'clock in the morning with my kids. Then I would go back to sleep. They worked every trick in the world. They would bring me coffee. "Daddy, it is time to get up. Daddy, it is time to get up." "Get out of here, kid. I am not eating Christmas. It is only 4th of July. I have six more months to go." But I enjoy it. But you know what? I do not get hung up on it. There are some people who get into it so much that when it is over, their life is over. I hope there is more to your life and what you have got in life than just that.

It is a thing where life has more to it. This verse clearly says that a life without building God's temple and putting the emphasis on building and keeping a balance in your life, it will lead to a life of unfulfillment. That is where we are at today. It will lead to broken dreams, broken hearts, disappointments, unhappiness. At the end of your life, you will work and sweat and try to save everything you can and get every, like the old boys used to say, "Get all you can and can all you get." Life is still empty because the Bible says that the end of your life without Christ in your life is like a bag with holes. That means you stuck stuff in this bag thinking you are going to have it. When you finally get to the end of your life, you look down there, there were holes in that bag, and everything you thought was worth something is gone. Because the only thing that is worth anything is understanding God's gift to you and what you were to do with that gift, giving it to others. Christ, the desire of all nations. That is just the way it works.

"You eat, but you have not enough." I remember every time I go to the grocery store, I am overwhelmed. Aisles and aisles and aisles of food. You go to the produce department. It looks like the rainbow from the Wizard of Oz, every type of fruit you could want. I remember every time I go there, I never forget being in Romania many, many years ago, right after the wall came down, and the pastor taking me to the store. It was a little foggy to me why we had to go to the store at 4 o'clock in the morning, but that is fine. I am here. I will go. I came for two hours, and a line was two or 300 people in it to get some bread. The bread ran out right after he got his bread, and nobody else did not get anything. I walked into the store, and the shelves were absolutely bare. The only thing on it was four or five cans, fruit of something that looked like it had been there for 20, 30 years and having nothing. Then I walk in over here where we have everything.

We as Americans, we do not understand. We get so much. We do not understand that so much in the world has nothing. We take it for granted. We really do. We take it all for granted.

We waste food. I watch my grandkids. They will spend \$15 for McDonald's. They will get happy meals. You know what they want out of their happy meals? They want the toys. They do not want the food. You know why they do not want the food? Because while we were doing something else, they were snacking on cookies, eating all my Twinkies. "I cannot eat no more." They have been stacked up for 30 years. They only want the toy. I watch them. I watch their cheeseburger here, cheeseburger here, McNuggets over here, whatever. It was a time I liked that because my prayer was, "God bless this food and let these little kids get strengthened by it. And please God, do not let them eat it all because I will clean it up when they are done." That was my prayer. I mean, accidentally, you come across three bags of McDonald's french fries, what are you going to do? You cannot throw them. I have got to eat them. There are three cheeseburgers there. They have got little nibbles out of them, and they have not even eaten them, and they are playing with the toy. What are you going to do? Throw it away? I always tell myself, "There are kids in Africa that would die for that food." You know what? I cannot take it to Africa, so I will eat it in their name. I do not know their name, but I am going to eat it. I cannot even do that anymore.

But that is where your kids are. You bought them, I guess this week, every kid will have fun. They will have everything they want. Everything they want. But I do not know if you noticed it or not, last Sunday when we wrapped the presents, they had more fun with a cardboard tube than the wrapping paper. They would run around here making laser lights out of them. Kids have the ingenuity. You could have saved yourself probably five or six hundred dollars if you had just scarfed up the cardboard tubes, wrapped them up, and given them to them. Could you imagine that morning, "We are opening up the thing, a cardboard tube?" "What am I going to do with this?" "Make a spy glass out of it. Make a ball bat out of it. Use your mind." They did here. They were running up and down, short fighting with those things. I thought it was an Aeroflot movie. We give them everything. I am not saying we should not. I spoil my kids.

He says, "You drink, but you are not filled. Clothed, but none warm. And then he says your wages into a bag with holes." Simply put, there is no happiness in these things. There is no fulfillment. God saved you for a purpose. That purpose was to fulfill His will and plan for your life. I want to tell you something. Nothing short of that in your life will satisfy you and make you happy. Some people think they have the problem is this, this, this, this. That is not the problem. Those are just the symptoms of your problem. Your real problem is LBP, lack of biblical principles. Your real problem is you are going through life, and maybe you have got yourself in scenarios where your problems are overwhelming. I understand that, but the way there is a way in, there is also a way out. God did not allow you to... You can take the issues that you are struggling with right now and let God turn them around, and down the line, you can help somebody else by you getting the victory, not being the victim. That is the way it is today.

So many of God's people today are like the old story of the old circus clown. There is a guy that lost his family, lost his wife, lost his kids. The old saying was, "I am going to run off and join the circus." And he did. He has no family, has no holidays, no home, travels from place to place,

week to week. Cannot even remember all the places he has been, puts his head down to sleep in a different place every night. Heartache broken, the most saddest guy in the world, but every performance. With a broken heart on the inside and his dying, paints that smile on his face and goes out to the audience portraying somebody who is happy when he is dying on the inside. That is most of God's people today. They paint the clown face on the outside, but they are brokenhearted. Their dreams have been dashed. Their lives are in great turmoil. It all comes back to the same reason. God saved you for a purpose. He has a plan for you just like He did the nation of Israel.

X. Conclusion: God's Unspeakable Gift

This is where the Christmas message comes in. Christ, the desire of all nations. He gave you a gift. That was the greatest gift that man could ever give anybody, but He does not want you to keep the gift. He wants you to... This is the legitimate gift that keeps on giving that Hallmark coined her money, made her money on, because you keep giving it out. Until you do that in your life, nothing will be happy. I am not saying you do not have to work through some issues. I am saying you are in a place that whatever problems you are dealing with, whatever you are facing, you can get the victory over them unless you just want to be the victim. But you will never be happy. The longer you wait, the more unhappy you become, and the more traumatic life becomes. Pretty soon it does not affect you and your wife or you personally if you are single. It affects people around you because the devil does not miss any of those details.

I told you this was a great Christmas message, and it is. Matthew 7:11. Do not turn to it. Just listen to it.

Matthew 7:11

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Now in the book of Luke, it defines what that good thing is, and it says the Holy Spirit. The gift that God gave us was the gift of the Holy Spirit of God. That gift came down in Acts chapter 1, did it not? The Day of Pentecost. That is the gift that God gave us that talked about in Matthew 7:11. It is Luke 11:13, I think. It was the gift that God gave to mankind. Because without the Holy Spirit of God, there is no salvation. Once Christ died on the cross, He had to have a vehicle by which God's salvation came because Christ went back to heaven, and that vehicle became the Holy Spirit of God. Once that Holy Spirit of God gets inside you when you become a Christian, then it is your job to take the gift that God gave to you and give it to others.

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

The unspeakable gift was God sending His Son down to die on the cross for you and for me. On that cross, He paid the sin debt for your sins and mine. Then after He went back to heaven, the Holy Spirit of God came to be able to take the work that Christ did and do the work in your heart and your life. Because just like in the Old Testament, the temple, the temple was God's main

concept that everything, everybody in the Old Testament that found God had to find Him through the fixed temple at Jerusalem, through the nation of Israel, where they brought the honor and the glory and the treasury and all of the hallowed things and all of the things that were in that, and it radiated God's love out to planet earth. Well, that temple is gone now in a literal sense. The Bible says God is not dwelling in temples made with hands today, but your body and my body is now the temple.

Just like the plan in the Old Testament was the whole, that temple and the whole world to come to it, the plan in the New Testament is for you and me to build our temple. Keep growing spiritually. Do not let that foundation, if you are just somebody who has just been saved and you are just working through the thing, get everything you can. Let us help put everything in your life on that foundation. If you are somebody who maybe, you have been saved for a long time, but God brought you here and you have some issues in your marriage or your life or personally or your children or whatever the case, this is the time to get it cleared off, get it started. Start getting the principles in your life that you are not the victim anymore, that you become the victor because that is what God has for you, and you will never be happy. You will go from church to church to church running from God because at some time in your life and my life, we have got to do what they did in Ezra and Nehemiah. You know what they did? They cleaned off that foundation, and they said, "I am going to stay right here, and I am going to build on the foundation that God gave me, gold, silver, and precious stones."

You have got the greatest gift already. God gave it to you. That is what this time of year is supposed to be about. It is lost in the commercial aspect of it. It is lost in the present. It is lost in the food. It is lost in the fun time. I am not saying you should not have all those things. I am saying in the midst of all those things, do not lose your focus that God gave the gift to you and me, and then He wants you through the Holy Spirit of God living inside you to be God's gift to this world. Take your temple where you work, the people you know, and you let them see Christ in your temple. You let them see the holy things, the hallowed things. You let them see that your life is different. You let them see that your life is a bag without holes, that you are happy, you are complete, you have everything that you want in life because you are content. As I gave you last week that great verse in 1 Timothy 6:6:

1 Timothy 6:6

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

You are satisfied with who you are with Christ because God is you. You will never, if you are a Christian, you will never be satisfied and fulfilled in life until you understand the concept of Haggai and keep building the temple.

Every head bowed and every eye closed. Now Father, we do thank You and praise You today for the Lord Jesus. Lord, maybe there is someone here today that does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior, I do not know. Lord, I am just telling them, Lord, there will be no satisfaction in life. You may delude yourself into thinking it, but when the tough times come and the doctor report comes back bad or some tragedy happens in your life, you will find that you are on that street all by yourself, and God never intended it to be that way. He is the

great Comforter, He is the great Guide, He is the great Illuminator. He wants to wrap His arms around us today and lead us and guide us into all truth. He wants to take whatever problems anybody is having, any couple, any individual, any kid, and He wants to take those things and He wants to develop it into the victory where they get the victory on it and then turn around and is used of God down the line to help somebody else with the same problems. God...