

Haggai 1

Sunday 1/3/2021

Good morning, everyone. I hope you are off to a good morning. It never ceases to amaze me, no matter how many times I speak before the youth group and get comfortable doing that, or how many times I deliver a message up here, there is always nervousness bringing the Word of God to this body of people. I think that is a good thing. It keeps me trusting in Him and keeps me on my toes.

I do have to call out some of the brethren in the church today. After those great messages we heard on Thursday night—Danny starting it off with one of the best outlines I have ever heard; Jim Deriskiewicz charging us to remember to charge God and have Him put His power in our lives to do things He can do in us that He cannot do in unsaved people; and then Bob Greg with 'Nothing ventured, nothing gained'—a lot of the brethren came up to me afterward and said, "Well, Zach, three home runs. I hope you do not blow it on Sunday." So I thought, "Well, thank you for that encouragement. I appreciate that." I feel a lot better going into it.

I have to thank you all. I think the next time anything happens to me, I am going to give Bob a disclaimer like, "Hey, I am not going to be able to make it to church today, but please do not tell anybody why." Here is the problem: when I got injured, it was completely me being a fool and a moron, being completely stupid. But you all are so awesome; you are so kind. I received texts and phone calls: "Brother, are you all right? How is the shoulder? How is everything going on?" It is so embarrassing to explain to you why that happened. It was nothing but a show of machismo.

Laura Stevenson, it is your fault. That is right. She called me out and said, "Zach, come here. Come here." She has this ab roller. On the commercials, everybody is doing the ab roller on their knees. But we are Christians; we are going to have glorified bodies. So I figured maybe God gave me a little dispensation outside of that; maybe I can experience that glory right now. She said, "No, no, no. What you have to do is try doing it from your feet. Stand over, take the ab roller, instead of getting on your knees, drop it to the ground, then go all the way down." I thought, "Absolutely, I can do that. I have done this before." So I started going on it, and right before I got to that 180-degree level, there was a pop right behind my sternum in front of my spine that I have never felt before in my life. Glory to God, I think what they are saying now is it seems I might have separated my ribs. So the shoulder is fine, the arms are okay, and thank God everything is good to go. Thank you all for your love, your care, and your concern for this fool. As the old saying goes, "God always looks out for fools and drunkards." And I do not drink, so there you go.

Let us open with a word of prayer, and we will get right into what the Lord has put on my heart. I do not think we will keep you too long here today.

Heavenly Father, Thank You so much for this opportunity just to talk to Your people, Lord. I am just like them, Heavenly Father. There is nothing special about me. There are so many more who are more qualified and better speakers, Lord, with better insight, and just closer to You in general, Lord. Oftentimes, I feel bad, Lord, that just in the day and age we live in, I am the one

who has to come up here and try to edify Your people. But God, the awesome thing about it is that they are Your people. I am just a tool. If anything gets done today, it is going to happen through You, Lord, reaching their hearts and touching them. That is what I am asking for right now, Lord, that You would just move me out of the way and speak to them and give them what they need. In Your Son, Jesus Christ's name, I pray and ask it all. Amen.

I. Introduction And Personal Reflection

If you have a Bible, turn to Haggai 1. While you are turning there, I will tell you why this is something I wanted to share with you; it is something the Lord has been dealing with me on. I hate to be cliché, but this year, as you have heard from so many—I am almost sick of hearing people say this—has been a special year. It has been a different type of year. For all that went south in the world, for all that did not go as we planned it to go, I have to be honest: 2020 was a really good year for me. To be quite frank with you, 2020 has been very easy for me.

Anybody who has been in the ministry around this church knows how we usually run things: all the activities—volleyball, softball, we do dodgeball with the youth, we even do a turkey bowl every now and then. We have all the youth activities that have happened throughout the week. The past couple of years, it has really picked up for me in the youth group, and I had to go out and get more helpers just to try to meet the demands of the ministry. We wanted to go out and have a footprint and show up at every event that our kids were doing to let them know that we love them, we are a part of their life. We are not just performing for them at church on this stage, but we want to be down there in their life helping them out with what they are going through.

I would say every week of the past couple of years, I had about two or three events to go to throughout the week to check on the kids. So life was completely super busy. Full-time job, family, youth events, all the activities we do at the church—it made the years go by super quick. Then all of a sudden, it all stopped. When it stopped, as I said, it got pretty easy for me. My schedule cleared out, the demands of my life kind of slowed up. For the first time ever, really, I was sitting at home watching church on TV. I got to sleep in. I did not have to get up, put my makeup on, and get up here. No, I do not do that. But I was rolling out of bed at 10 o'clock on a Sunday morning, strolling out in my underwear, and sitting down on the front couch, turning on YouTube. Well, thank God for children.

It got very easy, and it was actually kind of fun, too. We had these little small groups; we would come over, drink coffee and tea in the morning, sing a couple of songs, watch Bob on TV, and then spend the rest of the day at home with the family. Even at work, it got kind of easy. The first part of it was horrible when everybody went crazy over the toilet paper. We distribute medical supplies. Because we distribute medical supplies, they look at us as frontline workers who are heroes. Not too long after March, there was this big banner hanging in the front of my building: "Heroes Work Here." I knew I was not a hero. I knew I was not doing anything special. As a matter of fact, I knew my life got a lot easier. My company started giving out \$500 bonuses periodically just because we were frontline heroes with this pandemic. So my activities slowed down, my schedule got easier, my pockets got more full. 2020, honestly, for me, got pretty easy.

In the middle of that, I became complacent. One of the things that God brought to my mind is what I want you to keep in your mind throughout this message today. This is what He said to me: "Zach, you are comfortable in this world, but am I comfortable in you?" I know it was not like that for everyone. I know some of you have had a really tough go at it this year, not just because of the financial issues with things shutting down, but because of health and how that has affected you. Our kids, especially the ones who are athletes, have had the pressures on them of, "Do not test positive, otherwise you are going to cause the whole team to have to quarantine, and now it is your fault." There have been some serious pressures on people. But my life was not like that, and that is why God convicted me with that question: "You are comfortable in this world, son, but am I comfortable in you?"

II. Israel's Complacency And God's Question

I want to go back to the book of Haggai now and show you how Israel was in a similar situation. God charged them with a question, and they had a choice: they could choose to give God what He wanted or continue to pursue the things that they wanted in their life. That is the thing that God charged me with: "Son, when I brought you to this church, when I called you into the ministry, I took you out of something. I took you out of some hard situations, and I gave you what you are looking for. Are you going to be content where you are at right now, or will you continue to move forward for Me?"

Haggai 1:1-7 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built. 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. 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. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

The first thing I want to say to you right now is that most of us want to wait until we get our lives together before we start to serve God. But what God wants is to help you get it together while we are serving Him. That is where the question comes up in verse 4: "Is it time now?" Life has slowed down. Things have been put on lockdown. Our schedules are a lot cleaner. Is it time now?

Israel was in captivity for over 70 years, and finally God gave them grace and allowed them to come back into their land. The first thing they wanted to do, look at what they say in verse 2: "This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built." That is how we are. We are oftentimes trying to get our things where we want them, trying to put our priorities where we want them before we take care of what God desires and what He wants for us.

That was one of the things that came as a shock, and I think most of Christianity has that idea nowadays. We have kind of a secular view on how we have to go about life. The idea is that you go to school, you get your job, you get established, and then once you get your feet planted where they have to be, then we turn to God.

That was one of the shockers for me. I was back in college and I was pursuing music, and I thought that was what God wanted me there for. I got a scholarship to do that, and I figured, "All right, Lord, You would not have opened that door if You did not want me to have it." But the more I tried to go through that door, the more I tried to live that lifestyle, the less fulfilled I felt. Finally, long story short, God ended up touching my heart and calling me into the ministry, and I got so excited about that. I was so overjoyed that finally I knew I had purpose in life. I knew exactly what direction God wanted me to go, and I was going to charge down that road and do it. So I ran home to tell my father, the pastor, "Dad, like you, I am going to be in the ministry. I have actually chosen to go get this job and just start reading the Bible and doing what God wants me to do. Dad, what do you think about that?" He said, "Son, have you lost your mind? You are in school. You need to finish that. Then God will give you a job. And after He gives you a job, then if He is ready for you, He will use you." I do not say that to call out my dad. That is the idea I had too before. That makes sense, right? Get established. Take care of your things first, and then when God is ready for you, He will come and grab you. No, that is the problem. Modern Christianity says, "Now is not the time. Now is not the time that we should build the Lord's house."

III. God's Greater Purpose For His People

Here is the problem: any nation or any person can go about their lives with that type of thinking. What God wanted to do with us is so much more. Consider the nation of Israel. God did miraculous, powerful, and wonderful things with them. He saw one man, Abraham, back there in Ur of the Chaldees, and He called him out from his family and from his kindred. He told him to seek Him; He was going to make him a father of many nations. Abraham's faith led him to having Isaac. Isaac had Jacob. Jacob had the twelve tribes. Those twelve tribes became a great and powerful nation. God took that nation; He built them up 430 years down there in Egypt. Then, with this man Moses and a mighty outstretched hand, He delivered them from slavery. Through that wilderness for 40 years, He delivered them. He gave them great miraculous things. He split the Red Sea for them. He did many signs and wonders for them. They got to Jericho; they knocked down the walls. All these tremendous things God did with Israel, showing His power and His might, were not for them to get here in Haggai and say, "Lord, we are just content that we finally have houses now." That was not God's plan for them. His plan for Israel was for them to show the world God's glory, His might, and His wonder.

Like Israel, it is the same for us. Anybody can graduate. Anybody can get a career. Anybody can get a job and be content with the things in this life. What God has called you to do is something so much greater. What is God doing through your life that He cannot do through an unsaved person's life? Does anybody here have people in their life that they feel are just impossible to reach? Those are the people that God wants to reach through you, but you are going to have to

build His house. The future of Israel depended on them building God's temple. Without it, they could not move forward with God. Likewise, you cannot move forward with God if you stop building your temple. That is what God was telling me.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 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? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

That is how God called me. I feel embarrassed to do this; I feel horrible every time that I have to go back and tell you what God did. You say, "Well, Zach, is not that what we want to do? Do we not want to be grateful and remember what God did and not forget those things?" Yes, but is it not about time for me to tell you what God is doing and what I am looking forward to Him getting done?

When He brought me here, I had no idea what I was doing in life. I was completely lost in trying to figure that out. I was saved, but I did not know which direction I was going at all. My pursuits in life, I thought it was going to be sports at first. I was getting some looks playing football. I figured, "Okay, God is going to do this with me." As you can see, I am very injury prone. That started way back in high school; I ended up pulling my hip out of my socket three times, ended up tearing my MCL. Finally, I thought, "Lord, if You do anything else, I am quitting sports." So He broke my jaw from my tooth down to my chin. Obviously, Lord, I cannot do that. I am going to go to music now. So He opened that door, gave me a scholarship to go play music. No fulfillment came from that. "Lord, what am I supposed to do?" I finally got to that point in my life where I said, "God, I do not care what it is. I do not care how embarrassing it is. I do not care what it is You tell me to do. I am doing it, Lord. I am going to quit all this stuff and do exactly what You tell me to do."

Then God sent a man my way. He was discipling a guy at Denny's on a Saturday morning while I was getting my oil changed. At that time, I had been praying, "God, please send me some godly man that I can learn from, that I can glean from, Lord, and learn which direction to go in life." There he was; He dropped this guy off right in my lap. So I was sitting there eating my breakfast, and I started to hear what these guys were talking about. I was kind of an arrogant Christian at that point because I grew up in a pastor's house, and I felt like I had always been around church and the Bible. I had heard all this stuff. "What could this guy possibly be telling this man? He does not know anything." I was a kid in college; I knew more than everybody else in the world at that time. He was sitting there counseling this guy, and the more I listened to the conversation, the more I realized this stuff was great. It was actually better than anything I had ever heard. It was actually really starting to fire me up. I thought, "Wow." That is when it clicked. I had been praying, "Lord, send me some godly man." And God was like, "All right, there is one right there." About an hour later, they finally finished up, and I was sweating because I had a choice to make. I could go to this guy and say, "Hey, I have been praying that God would send me a godly man, and you are definitely one of them. I can tell right now. I just want to know if I can have your number to meet up with you." But the only problem was I had heard all the dirty details about this man's marriage now that he had been counseling this guy on. Complete stranger. I was just some punk kid, and these were two adults. I was thinking, "Man, if I say I have been

listening, eavesdropping on you, I could get my butt kicked." But that is where I had a choice to make: "Is it time now to build the house, Zach? Or are you going to walk away and wait for God to give you a more convenient opportunity?" You know the long story short: I went over and asked, and I did not get killed. I actually took my check and paid for my breakfast. Then he gave me a call and led me here to Old Paths Baptist Church.

From there, God has been working on me and developing me and moving me over. One of the next greatest things that happened was when I took over the youth group. What a crazy year that year I took over the youth group! I had lost one job. God just gave me a brand new job that I was learning. Jenny was pregnant. We just got married. And now we were also moving into a new place. It was a hectic, crazy year. But it was also one of the best years, and God kept developing me and doing that. This is what I am talking about. He took me through so many great things and powerful things back then. The question comes up: "Look at you now. You know exactly how you want to run your youth group. You know exactly who you are going to go to at church when you get here. You know exactly how you want to do the ministry. You have everything laid out just like you like it, do you not? Are you going to keep building the house, or are you going to become content, son?"

In Christian circles, one of our phrases that we oftentimes say is, "We have to get back to Bethel." That has actually been my problem: going back to Bethel. You say, "Well, what do you mean? Why would you say that?" Because Bethel is convenient for me. Bethel is what I know. Bethel is where I know God has done something before. But what God is saying is, "No, do not go back to Bethel. I want you to seek Me and move forward." You may not believe this.

Amos 5:4-6 For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live: But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought. Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.

Bethel is familiar. Bethel is automatic, and we know where it is, but the problem is it does not take any faith. Daily seek the Lord, and daily build the temple.

Just like God was charging Israel, saying, "Hey, you have been doing your things, you have been living life and putting it into a bag with holes." Listen, it is time for you to put aside these side projects, put aside trying to build up your own infrastructure, and build your own nation, and make yourself into what you want to be. Build My temple, and watch what I do for you. Move forward with Me. That is what we have to do now. We have to move forward and build God's house, and that is what I want to charge you today, and that is what I want to talk to you about today: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" You are comfortable in this world, but is God comfortable inside of you?

IV. Building The Temple: Avoiding Pitfalls

The first thing I want us to look at is down here in Haggai 2:7. The Bible says, "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways." So there are some things in these upcoming verses that we ought to consider, and to simplify it, I want us to consider two things.

1. Consider how easy it is to please Him.

Consider how easy it is to please God. Haggai 2:8 tells us exactly what we have to do:

Haggai 2:8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

Notice that. Oftentimes when we try to build our spiritual house, we make it more complicated than it needs to be. God did not ask us to do a mass. He did not ask us to do any penance or sacrificing. He did not ask us to cast ourselves aside in exile and be like monks who go off in isolation, and He did not even ask us for martyrdom right there. All He simply asked us to do is keep building, keep working at it. Your body is the temple. Have you given up on making that into what God wants you to be? This message I am preaching today is so simple. It is just discipleship lesson number six: "The Will of God for Your Life." Have you stopped daily becoming more like Christ? That is His will for you. He has a plan for it. He wants to do something with you, but first you have to become a tool that He can use. But verse 8 lays it out; it is very simple: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified." God is not asking for perfection; He is just asking for our persistence.

The Bible says in Proverbs 24:16, a just man is not just because he is perfect. He is not just because he never messes up. He is not just because he never gets it wrong and has to apologize. But the Bible says in Proverbs 24:16, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." He is a screw-up. But the thing that makes him just is he does not give up on his Lord and Savior because he rises up again and again and again. Have you quit? I think I might know why. Building your house requires you to sacrifice what you love the most, and that is your way, your will, and you.

If you look at Haggai 2:8, it says, "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD." I just said that the reason we do not do that oftentimes, even though it is such a simple thing to do, is because of what it causes us to sacrifice. Turn back to Genesis 22. I am going to show you a similar passage. This man here, before he could move forward with God, God called him to sacrifice what he loved the most. This is Abraham.

Genesis 22:1-3 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

If that were me, it would be, "Zach, take now thine only son, thyself, whom thou lovest." The Bible says about us in the last days, "men shall be lovers of their own selves." That is the thing we oftentimes love the most. That is why social media is so appealing to us, because it shows our

face, it shows our interests, it shows us in different angles with different filters, and that is what we really like. That is why that thing has become more addictive and more popular than anything else in history. But Abraham was charged to take the thing he loved the most: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Look at the parallels here: "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him." Back in Haggai 2:8, "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house." That is what God is calling us to do. I can understand why it is hard for me to move forward with God, because it is hard for me to sacrifice who I am for Him. Until you do that, you will not be pleasing to Him.

2. Consider how worthless life is until you will please Him.

Look at Haggai 1:9-11. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

What verse 9 simply means is this: God is working against you until you start working for Him. You might be thinking, "Is God petty? Does He not have better things to do? Why is He picking on little old me? Can God not move on and just be content with what I give Him?" No, because He lives in you. You are comfortable in this world, but is God comfortable inside of you? Oftentimes, what we do, we just chalk it up to bad luck. "I just have not found my niche yet. For whatever reason, I just have not had the pieces fall to me like they ought to." No, if you are saved, God is working against you until you start working for Him because you are comfortable in this world, but He is not comfortable inside of you.

V. Building The Temple: Essential Practices

Enough of the beat down. Let us talk about some of the things we can do to get back in line with God so that He can help build us up. That is what I want to talk to you about today: build the house. Do not give up. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. Just like Israel had to build their temple in order to move forward with God, you are going to have to build your house to move forward with Him. There are five things I am going to go over with you today, because five is the number of death, and in order to build your house for God, you are going to have to die to yourself.

The first thing I want to say is this: you have to avoid two things when building your house. Avoid these two things.

➤ Avoid Building a Prison House for God

He is living inside of you. He is dwelling with you. The problem is oftentimes we build a prison house that keeps the Holy Spirit in when He wants to get out and minister to others. This is called quenching the Spirit. In 1 Thessalonians 5:19, the Bible clearly tells us, "Quench not the Spirit." Some of us have the Holy Spirit of God on lockdown. This is my issue, and I have noticed myself doing this when I get content. God has blessed me at work, and He has treated me very well. He has given me—it is petty, but He has given me awards there. He has given me favor with my bosses. They did not even let me develop what I am doing right now; I am pretty much doing my own job. I have made the job that I thought would help out the company the best, and they are letting me do that. So God has definitely given me favor.

There was a time when I did not care what anybody thought about me. I wanted to make sure that I witnessed to them. I did not care how it made them feel. But with this favor, with this position that I have gotten, I have become a lot more careful about what comes out of my mouth so I do not stir the pot. What I have done nowadays is I have taken my testimony and I have used that to quench God's liberty. This is what I mean by that: there are times where I definitely could have opened up my mouth and witnessed at work, but because of the position that I was given, the favor that I was shown by my bosses, I thought, "Oh, Lord, Lord, Lord, hush up. We are not talking about that right now. Absolutely, Lord. I could definitely tell them something about the Bible right now, but Lord, you know what is going to happen with that. They are probably going to think twice about giving me the spot. They are going to think, 'Oh, that guy is a religious fanatic. We cannot have him with these type of responsibilities,' and I have quenched the Spirit. I have built God a prison house. The Holy Spirit wants to get out. He wants to minister. He wants to work. What I have said is, 'But Lord, what about my testimony amongst the unsaved world?' I have put my testimony before God's liberty. I have said 'not now' to the Lord when He wants to witness because in me, what I want is a testimony that comes with prestige. I want a testimony that is accepted by everyone regardless of what they think about God. In my mind, my testimony must be respected and always accepted. What I am doing a lot of times is confusing getting along with the world as having a good testimony with Him. But in reality, all I am doing is hiding among the crowd from what God called me to do. Great testimony. Pathetic relationship with the Lord. I have taken His liberty and slipped it in place with my testimony. Do not build God a prison house.

➤ Don't Build God a Torture House

Your body is His temple, and there are times when He wants to get out and bless others and work with them and use you to witness and to minister. But there are other times that God, all He wants to do, is abide with you. He wants to come, as that song says, into the garden alone and have sweet communion and sweet fellowship with you. He just wants to take things and show you them in the Bible and keep them between you and Him that nobody else might understand, that nobody else might get. Oftentimes, what we do is we build God a house of torment, a torture house.

Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

This is what it is like: the Holy Spirit comes knocking and He comes into your life the day that you get saved, and oftentimes what we do is we open up that door to Him. We let Him in. Thank God you are saved. It is cool because when He comes in there, He is accepted. It is warm and it is welcome, and He might even hear a song playing in the background, "Abide with Me." It is talking about bringing the Holy Spirit of God into you. He comes in there and He walks through, and you say, "Lord, can I get You something to drink?" He says, "No, I just want to abide." You say, "Well, Lord, let me show You to Your room." You take God to His room, and He gets into that room, and that room is furnished and it is beautiful and nice and plush. You say, "Lord, now I am going to leave You in here. Is there anything I can get You before I leave You?" "No, son, that is fine. I am just going to abide." Then He goes in there and He lays down on that bed and He puts His feet up. Right at that moment, right before He gets to enjoy His abiding with you, rip! The roof comes off, and all of a sudden a dump truck unloads on Jesus Christ. You say, "Zach, what are you talking about?" I am talking about the filth that we let into our lives that causes the Holy Spirit of God to be grieved by us. Absolutely. He is in there. He is abiding. He is never going to leave. We are saved forever. We are eternally secure. But the junk that we pour on top of Him while He is in there makes it a torment for Him to be inside of us. It is the stuff we take in through our ears. It is the stuff we take in through our eyes. It is the stuff that we consume ourselves with that tortures the Holy Spirit of God while He is inside of us. We have the nerve to tell Him that we love Him, or we play music that He cannot stand. We have the nerve to tell Him that we want to be close to Him and have a great relationship with Him when we show Him things constantly that He cannot tolerate. Do not build the Holy Spirit of God a torture house.

Those are the two "don'ts." Here are the three things that we must do when building our house for God.

➤ Clean Out the Attic

The first thing you have to do is clean out the attic. I do not know anything about selling houses; talk to Meredith about that and those who do it. But I would not doubt that a lot of you are just like me when it comes to attics. In order to build God a good house, you have to clean that attic out. That is your thoughts. Second to the basement, I think the attic is the creepiest room in the house. Especially when you are home alone, it seems like there are always creaks happening. I do not know if it is on the roof or what is going on, but there are always creepy things happening up there. Second to no room, the attic is neglected more than anything else. I have been in my house over a year and a half now, and I still have not seen my attic. That is probably not good, but that is the truth. I know where it is; I know how to find it. I think I can access it, but I have never actually seen what is up there. As far as I know, Elvis, Tupac, Bin Laden, and Epstein could probably be hiding up in my attic right now. I would not know. I know I have an attic, but I have no idea what is up there.

Here is the thing: in the spiritual idea, it is easy to neglect this because no one can see it. That is your house. No one ever goes to your attic when they come over. When you have events, you invite people over to the house; the first place you go is not the attic to start cleaning it. You clean the stuff that people can see. Oftentimes, that is how we are. We like to build the things that people can see. We like to clean those things up. But do not forget where the Holy Spirit of God

dwells. He dwells inside of you. I want to say this: oftentimes it is what is in the attic that affects the whole house. Has anybody ever had a dead animal die in your attic? Or maybe they did not die in your attic; I do not know how it got up there anyway. That smell, I have walked into some houses before where they had no idea where that smell was coming from. Later on, they came to find out a squirrel, a raccoon, Bigfoot, somebody died up in the attic. That smell, what it did, it went through the vents and it permeated throughout the whole house. They told me they scrubbed the carpets. They took out the trash. They did everything possible. Cleaned out the garbage disposal. The smell was still there until they went up to the attic. That 90s movie that was super popular, Jumanji—they did a remake of it. Do you know where all that trouble came from? They ended up tearing up the whole house. It started with that Ouija board in the attic. That is where it came from. What is in your attic? What is in your thoughts?

A similar story: I never forgot when Bob told this story. It shocked me that something like this could happen. He tells a story about one time back at his old church how there was a woman that ended up showing signs of possession—showing signs that she had been bothered by demons. Long story short, they ended up going over to that house with several preachers, and they ended up finding out that there was a demon down the water heater. I do not know what that is like. I cannot imagine. If I heard a voice talking to me from a water heater, my pants would turn into the water heater. I mean, that would be wet. It would be all over. There is no way in the world I am going to... Those guys have backbones. That is obviously why God has not put me in a situation like that. But later on, after they ended up taking care of that and pleading the blood and getting rid of that situation, they went investigating throughout the rest of the house. What they ended up finding when they went up to the attic were Ouija boards, all these weird old effigies of religious things, and crucifixes, and weird trinkets up there. You say, "What caused the problems in that house?" It was what was in the attic. What causes problems in our house? Oftentimes, we put on new clothes. We brush our teeth. We take a shower. We might even hang out with new friends and go to new places, but we never took time to clean out the attic—our thoughts.

2 Corinthians 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Renew. That is to make it new again. That is to start over and take the stuff that is out, that is up there, and make it clean. That is what it is going to take. In order to build a good house for God, we have to clean out the attic.

➤ Adjust the Temperature

2.) In order to build a good house for God, we have to adjust the temperature. Clean out your attic, but then adjust your temperature. This is your attitude. Our job, just like a thermostat, as a Christian, is to make it a comfortable place for God to dwell inside of us. Just like a thermostat compensates for the temperature in the world, that is our job also as Christians. Our attitude

should compensate for the temperature in the world. Just like we do not turn on the heat in July and just like we do not turn on the AC in January—sometimes I wonder if the AC is on down here; I am freezing over there under that fan. Alex, what does that thermostat say back there right now? "Sixty-eight." Feeling great. Normally, you would not turn on the AC in January, but a Christian is supposed to be in contrast to this world. When the world gets upset, we should keep our cool. When they are mean and cold, we should be warm and loving. Unfortunately, what we have done with our house that we are building for God is we have built a house without any insulation. The temperature outside becomes our temperature inside. This makes God very uncomfortable inside of us.

The problem is, this is exactly what the devil wants. He wants our attitude to fluctuate with the extremes in this world. When you look at what the devil does, he operates off of extremes. Look at what he is doing to this nation: America, this great mixing pot, this great melting pot where everybody comes together and gets along for so long. All you have to do is point out differences and make those things the things you will not move on. Look what happens to this country: it is either pro-life or pro-choice. It is either socialism or nationalism. You are on the left or you are on the right. Nothing in between. You either like to listen to alternate media or the mainstream media. You are either for a mask or against them. You are either for vaccines or against vaccinations. You are either for blacks or for whites. There is nothing in between. That is what the devil wants you to do. He wants to take you and polarize you on one side or the other to promote as much chaos and hate and division as possible. These polarizing issues produce extreme attitudes that not only make it uncomfortable for God to dwell in us, but it causes us to go after the wrong enemy.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Now, who actually believes that? If you actually believe that, you cannot look at a person that you are upset with and say that is your enemy anymore. You cannot look at the Democrats. You cannot look at the Republicans and say that is the problem. That is the issue. It is Antifa. It is the Proud Boys. It is Black Lives Matter. It is white supremacists. You cannot say that anymore if you actually believe that. We say we believe the Word of God. We say we believe the Bible, but look what the Bible says: "Who is your fight against?" It is not the things you can see. But that is what we draw lines on. That is what we end up battling against. When you have issues with people in the church, it is them. No, the Bible does not say that. You say, "Well, look at how they live their life. Look at how they act. They do not do the ministry the right way. Look at how they are living." The Bible says that is not who you are fighting against. So simple: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood." This is what I am talking about. This is what the devil wants. He wants us to get caught up in these polarizing attitudes that destroy us and make it very uncomfortable for the Holy Spirit of God to live in us. You are comfortable. You polarize. You find people that believe what you believe, and you hang out with them, and you make that your group that you dwell with while the Holy Spirit of God is freezing inside of you, hoping that someone turns that thermometer up and makes it warm again. When it comes down to it, our

fight is not with other people. A really cruel way of looking at it is that people are just puppets for spirits. It is not the man, but the spirit behind him. That is our enemy. Therefore, the weapons of our warfare, the Bible says, are not carnal, but mighty through God. But then again, maybe that is why we do not believe that verse, because it is easier for us to have a carnal fight than a spiritual fight on our knees with the Word of God and prayer.

Romans 14 is a great spot. I have been hanging out, getting my own attitude in check, and I am going to read that to you quickly, verses 1-3, and look at what happens. Paul knew this was happening in the church. He knew that the devil would get inside the church and try to polarize people based off of these extremes. So he put this spot right here for us, and thank God for it.

Romans 14:1-3 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Do you know what just happened right there? There was one guy way over here on the far right, another guy who was way over here on the far left. They both disagreed. What did God say about those two? Did God say, "Yes, I am with the right"? Absolutely. Did God say, "I am with the left"? No. The Bible said, "God hath received him." Him. Zach, you just laid out two things. Should it not be "them"? No. "Him." What God has done right here, He has received both of those individuals. This is an issue He really does not even care about, but what God does, He takes us no matter what our beliefs are and where we are coming from, and He works with us from there.

Romans 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Those of you who were here for Institute on Saturday, Bob talked about this, believe it or not. He talked about how with atomic structure and with the universe, God is the thing that is holding all that stuff together. Hebrews 1:3 and Hebrews 11:3 talk about how He holds it together with the word of His power, how the things that are not seen are held together by the things that are made. Just like God holds those atoms together, it is our job as Christians to do the same: to work towards peace and to edify one another in the Holy Spirit of God. When it comes to our attitude, when it comes to our temperance, Galatians 5:23 lays that out. The Bible talks about what the fruit of the Spirit is, and one of those fruits is temperance. It is temperance. That is moderation. That is not an extreme. The devil wants to use the extremes to divide us. In 2 Peter 1:6, Paul is talking about how to be a great Christian, the things you ought to add to your Christian life to make you more spiritual for God. He says, "And to knowledge temperance." That is the issue right there. Knowledge, what it does, it puffs up. But knowledge needs to be governed so we do not use it to hurt others and polarize. You have to have temperance.

➤ Fill with Furnishings

The last thing I want to show you is the thing that we absolutely have to give for God. It is the thing that we all love: the furnishings. You have to fill that house with furnishings.

2 Timothy 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

We cleaned out the attic. We gave God a nice, comfortable temperature to dwell in by fixing our attitude. The last thing we have to do is give Him something to dwell on, to hang out on, to lay on—give Him some furnishings. What I want to talk about today is just those good works that we do. It is the things we do for God that furnish Him. The good works you do are just for God. Those are the only ones that matter; those are the only ones that He can benefit from. Not the stuff we do to be seen of other men; it is not the stuff we do for our own religious order. It is the good works we do that are just for God. Others may benefit from those things when you do them for Him, but you are not really doing them for them; you are doing them for Him. One day when you put off the earthly house of this tabernacle, He will take those works you did for Him and give them back to you as gold, silver, and precious stones. You have to give God some furnishings. It is the stuff you do for God only because it pleases Him. You do not benefit from it sometimes, and others may not either. There are times I wake up in the morning and I do not want to read my Bible, but you do it anyway just because you know it pleases Him. There are times when there are folks around you not doing what is right, and you know what the right thing is to do, and you do not want to be an outsider, but you know it pleases God to open up your mouth and witness or to take a stand and do the right thing, and so you do it because it pleases Him. One of the toughest things to do as a Christian is to keep short accounts with God. It is so easy to get caught up in the fads of this world and the things that are happening with our schedules and the busyness. But to check in constantly: "Lord, are You comfortable? Lord, are You okay with what I am doing? Lord, do You approve where I am going? Lord, do You approve what I am thinking? Lord, do You approve what I am saying? Lord, is it okay for me to listen to this?" I hate that. It is so much work. It is so much effort, but you realize who He is and what He did for you, and therefore you do it for Him. It is easier for us to murmur and complain. It is easier for us when hard times and adversities come to faint. It is easier for us to grumble about those things, but instead, what we do is we endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ because He is pleased by it. No matter what doubts come our way, no matter what terrible times come into our lives, you keep faith in His Word and you keep faith in Him, and that pleases Him, and therefore it furnishes Him.

Before we end, the second to last spot I want you to come to is 1 Corinthians 13. This concept here really shattered me. It is how we furnish God by serving others.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

When I looked at verses 1-3, I saw somebody who had all the tools it took to do the ministry. They had all the traits, all the character qualities, all the gifts needed to perform God's work. Then in verse 3, not only did they have those tools, but it shows that they actually used them for the ministry. They gave to the poor, and they even gave the ultimate sacrifice of martyrdom. But without one ingredient, even with those actions, the Bible says it is still worthless. That is

charity. Now, why is that? Having the tools and having the traits and doing the job is great, but it does not help out unless you know why you are doing the job and what the purpose behind that job is. Being able to speak with tongues, being able to prophesy, understand mysteries, having all the knowledge and all faith—even if you take that and use it to remove mountains, even if you give to the poor, and even if you take your body and offer it to the Lord as a sacrifice—the Bible actually says it profits you nothing. Why? Because of what charity is. What is charity? It is taking what God gives you and giving it to others because of what God has done for you.

Look at 1 Corinthians 13:4: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind." Why? Because there are some people that are going to be intolerable that you do not want to put up with, and they need what you have got. It is not going to be fun to keep ministering to them and keep working with them, but you stick with it because of how Jesus Christ stuck with you. Oftentimes, we have these traits, we have these abilities, we have these gifts, but we only execute and we only use them as far as it pleases us to do. What God says is, "No, son, the reason I gave that to you, the reason charity is so important, is because you stick with them the same way I stuck with you." When it comes to charity, this is how you look at it: I look at Sanya, that is not Sanya, that is me. I look at Jordan, that is not Jordan, that is me. When I look at Sarah, that is not Sarah, that is me. And I am Jesus Christ. Here is the question: "When do you want Jesus Christ to quit on you?" So when I cannot tolerate Jordan's attitude, no, that is Zach having a bad day right there. I am Jesus Christ. When do I want Jesus Christ to give up on me and let me go? That is charity. It takes you out of it. It puts you as the one that is benefiting, even though you are ministering to them.

The awesome thing about it, 1 Corinthians 13:8 says, "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." But charity never fails. It is what you are doing for Jesus Christ based off of what He did for you. The blessings that fall to others, they are just crumbs from the main course that you are giving to God. When you operate through charity, you see the person you are ministering to as yourself, and you see yourself as Jesus Christ. When do you want Jesus Christ to give up on you? Whenever work you do is like this, God will be pleased by it, and He will be furnished in you.

VI. Conclusion: The Call To Build And Bring Peace

Let us close this out. Come back to Haggai 2. I want to show you one last thing. "Is it time now? Have you considered your ways?" If so, it is time to get to work building that house so that God can get to them. Just get to work. This is why God wants us to build our house. There are folks in our lives that seem like they are unreachable, but God is the God of the impossible, and He can reach them if we become what He wants us to become.

Haggai 2:6-9 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

Historically, what God wanted to do and what He is going to do doctrinally in the future: He is going to take Israel after they come to that tribulation period—that time of proving, that time of bringing them back to God, that time of cleansing. He is going to take them to that tribulation period, and what He is going to do is set them up like He planned to set them up a long time ago, as the pinnacle, as the jewel of all the nations. What He will do is draw all nations to Jerusalem, and there He will give them peace through His people. He said He is going to fill that house with glory. Just like God wanted to bring peace to the world through Israel, and He is going to do that after He takes them to the tribulation, God wants to use you to bring peace to others also. But He cannot do that unless you go to your daily tribulation of building your house, of crucifying yourself, of putting yourself on that altar, of doing as the Bible said back there in Haggai 1:8: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house." You are going to have to sacrifice yourself in order to accomplish that. Haggai 2:8 says, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts." Haggai 2:9 says, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts." You are going to allow God to take your life, take your body, and use it to bring peace, or you are going to polarize and join sides and be used by the devil to accomplish what he is doing right now. You are going to take what God wants to do with you to reach out to others and bring peace, or you are going to be content with where you are at. Build the house. Do not stop. Keep building that house.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We do love You. We pray Your blessings upon all that we do. Thank you for the men that preached over the last couple of days, and we look forward, Lord, to taking these young men and these young ladies and training them up to be everything that God wants them to be. Lord, we just want to always be available for those who want to go the extra mile, want to go up the next level. We just thank You and praise You for all that You do for us now. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

Thank you, Zach. Great job. If you have learned anything this weekend, you have learned that there are some really good Bible preachers and Bible teachers in our church. I could have four more next week, four more the week after that, and just keep on going for quite a while with the guys that really know the Bible. The point I want to make about that is: every one of them started where many of you are at right now. They came into this church. They had no real clue about the Bible, and they applied themselves, and God blessed them, and God brought them to the point where they are an active part of this ministry. I feel very comfortable letting them stand in this pulpit because I know what they are going to give you is the truth of the Word of God. It is a real blessing to me to hear these guys preach. It would be fun sometime, once we get past this pandemic or whatever it is, to take a Saturday afternoon or evening, buckle our seat belts, and just get about eight, nine, or ten guys and let them go 45 minutes each and just have a marathon preaching. And really enjoy all of that. That would be a fun thing to do. We will have to put that on the burner at some point to be able to do that once we get past all of this. It has been a good last couple of days. We appreciate everything that God has done for us here, and we are looking forward to 2021 next week on Sunday. We will be back in John 2. It is going to be a blend of several things. I want to get into chapter 2, but I want to reestablish some things, and I want to put it into a 2021 context of where we go, but yet look at the beginning of chapter 2 in that text.

So I think it will be a really good time for all of us. Then Thursday night, just so you know, at Institute on Saturday morning we were in Hebrews 11, and we did not only get through the first three verses. What we were looking at is, Zach made a reference to the evidence of faith being the evidence of things not seen but of things that God made. We talked about that is probably the greatest defining passage on the atomic structure in the Bible and how it all relates to everything in the Bible and in life. So Thursday night, there was a part of that we talked about, about the deep, and I am going to take that night, and I got several phone calls yesterday on it from people that wanted me to clarify it. So I think I am going to take that night and start out anyhow and break down Genesis 1 and show you how that whole thing lays itself out. If you do not have that in your Bible, you need to make sure that you get it that night. So Genesis 1 is probably the paramount chapter in the Bible that feeds everything else you are going to get into. So we will take the time to do that, clarify it, and for those of you in the Bible Institute, it will put everything into a context for you. For those of you who are not, it will at least give you Genesis 1. Hey, thanks for being here today. I pray for all the folks on the prayer list. I look forward to being back on Thursday. Enjoy the rest of your day, and we love you. Thanks again, Zach, for a great message. Thanks, Danny, for a great message. Thank Jim, for a great message. This weekend, everything was really a blessing, and it was a really, really, really good time and everything that we got into. We appreciate all that God did. The guys here in our church—my mind is right—who preached Thursday night? It was Danny and Bob Greg. Bob Greg did a great job too, and we have to send him off. The Lord did a great thing through all of you. So have a good rest of the day, good week, get some rest. I guess most of you go back to work tomorrow, and we will put together everything to get ready for this next week. And then bigger than that, 2021. Let us pray. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We do love You. We pray Your blessings upon all that we do. Thank You for the men that preached over the last couple of days, and we look forward, Lord, to taking these young men and these young ladies and training them up to be everything that God wants them to be. Lord, we just want to always be available for those who want to go the extra mile, want to go up the next level. We just thank You and praise You for all that You do for us now. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.