

God's Promise of Turnaround Haggai 2:18-23, Zechariah 4:6-10

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Turnaround time is the amount of time it takes to complete a process. An easy way to think of turnaround time is the time from the moment a request is made, or a process is started to the time when the request is fulfilled, or the process is complete.

Every now and then God will place a time limit on the accomplishment of His purpose.

He told Hannah and Sarah *"by this time next year you will have a son."*
God told Elisha *"by this time tomorrow the economy will be restored."*
God told Joshua, *"in seven days Jericho will fall."*

In our text today God tells Haggai, *"From this day on I will bless you."*

Haggai 2:18-19, *"From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid. Give careful thought: Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit. "From this day on I will bless you.""*

The Israelites were in the grip of an economic downturn. The seed was still in the barn, the grapevines were bare, the fig tree, pomegranate, and the olive tree were unfruitful.

Yet, God says, *"From this day on I will bless you and you will experience a turnaround!"*

These few verses are important and necessary. They were designed to encourage Zerubbabel and the rest of the leaders.

Haggai's first sermon called the people to consider their ways. It was time to reboot and change their course. The people had become deceived, lost, selfish and needed to be stirred up!

Then Haggai called the people, and the leadership, to remember God's covenant and His promises. It was time to renew their minds and their heart.

Haggai explained that how you see was important; what you believe was vital, and what you'll experience would be the manifested glory of God.

Next, God used Haggai to remind the people of the value of living holy and obedient lives.

In other words, how we live makes a difference. Then, as soon as they moved towards holy obedience, God began turning things around.

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In today's message, we find that God sent Zerubbabel a personal message. But why would God send him a private message?

Well, Zerubbabel, as the governor of Judah, was the leader of this remnant people of God and with this position he was under a lot of pressure. But, who was this man?

Zerubbabel is a Babylonian name meaning "seed of Babylon" implying he was probably born while in captivity.

His father, Shealtiel, was the eldest son of King Jeconiah, also known as King Jehoiachin and, being blood relative to King Jeconiah, the Scriptures teach that Zerubbabel was also a direct descendant in the Davidic Messianic lineage.

So, what was this message that God had for Zerubbabel?

Haggai 2:20-23, *“The word of the Lord came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month: ‘Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. ‘On that day,’ declares the Lord Almighty, ‘I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”*

Four times in the span of three months, God sent messages causing the people to complete the work on the temple.

Now God turns His eye on the leaders and sends the governor, Zerubbabel, a word of encouragement.

God understands the pressure of leadership, that leaders must not only lead in the moment of crisis, but they must also lead their people into the future.

This message was important as God knew Zerubbabel’s mind was pre-occupied with current issues.

Even though the people were satisfied to know that the harvest would come, that prosperity would return, and that they would have daily provisions, Zerubbabel knew they were living in a hostile environment.

Rumors of his enemies plagued his mind. He understood that he was a leader of one of the weakest and ill-prepared people in a hostile region.

He had no army, no official authority, and only Joshua the priest stood with him. How could a governor so limited and so weak protect God’s people?

Zerubbabel was not only operating under the national pressure of leadership, economic pressures of famine and dealing with some very persistent enemies, but he was also a father of seven sons and one daughter.

Zerubbabel was facing so many obstacles that the Bible calls them a mountain. If you understand the impact of discouragement on lay people, it's multiplied in the life of a leader.

An Olympic Medalist talked about the pressure of the Olympic games. She said, *"You work so hard, push yourself to the limit, but if you fail, the discouragement and disappointment is unbearable."*

This was why, before Zerubbabel could lead into the future, God had to rebuild his faith and his confidence.

Zechariah 4:6-10 "So he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty. "What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'" Then the word of the Lord came to me: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. "Who dares despise the day of small things, since the seven eyes of the Lord that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel?"

God's promise of turnaround gave added strength in shaky times, which we need to remember, as we will all go through shaky times.

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This is why God was encouraging him. God was preparing Zerubbabel for some shaky times. But why did he need encouragement?

Well, people tend to lose their faith because they believe God will protect them from shaky times. And when shaky times come, they think God has abandoned them.

God sent this message to help Zerubbabel stay grounded. We're told in Scripture that *"In this world you shall have persecutions"* and *"A man born of a woman has but a few days and they will be filled with trouble."*

When we are on God's assignment, God is with us. But weapons will still be formed against us. Expect it and prepare yourself mentally for it.

Haggai 2:21-22, *"The word of the Lord came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month: 'Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother.'"*

The reality is that some kingdoms must be thrown down, they won't just fall or melt away or quit. Chariots and their riders must be overthrown.

The 2020 pandemic brought shaky times, personal struggles, memberships scattered, finances were low, etc. Those were shaky times. So, expect them to come but also expect them to end!

Zechariah 4:6-7, *"So he said to me, 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty. 'What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'"*

God's not expecting Zerubbabel, or us, to go it alone. God promises He'll overthrow. God promises He'll cast down. God promises He'll take us and make us!

This assurance of God was designed to encourage the governor to proceed with the work regardless of the opposition.

Attempting great things for God creates opposition. Friends become jealous. Critics more critical. Enemies become enraged. But the battle is not ours, it's the Lords.

"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty. "What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground."

This same promise should encourage every Christian. We have the favor of God. We must lean on the strength of God.

We might not have political power, strength in numbers, or human strategies to do the work of God, but we have God's Power to do God's work. God can do by His Spirit, what we can't do for ourselves.

Shaky times will come, but we can lean on the strength of God and proclaim His favor over every situation. Tell yourself, *"This is my moment; the Lord is with me and favors me. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."*

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Haggai 2:23, *"On that day,' declares the Lord Almighty, 'I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,' declares the Lord, 'and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,' declares the Lord Almighty."*

Zerubbabel knew the significance of a signet ring. He recognized and understood its value and authority.

Historically, wearing a signet ring was a mark of prestige and power. It signified family lineage, social status, and identity in official correspondence.

Today, while many wear them as stylish accessories, for others, they still hold familial and historical significance, a “*seal of authority*.”

Signet rings played an important role in business and politics within early civilizations. During the 10th century, signet rings were often used to authenticate documents and to guarantee treaties.

Royals and nobility would have their family crest, or other designs solely unique to them, engraved on their ring which could act as a 'signature' on important documents.

When the engraved side of the ring was pressed into melted wax, it was a mark of authentication.

Zerubbabel had to learn to move forward with the authority of God. Zerubbabel knew that he had the blessing of King Darius of Persia, but Darius was thousands of miles away.

His neighbors had no regard for Zerubbabel, and neither did his enemies. Therefore, God sent His word, “*You have my authority, and I will back you up.*”

God was telling Zerubbabel that although others may overlook you, look down on you, or criticize you, remember, I have chosen you!

You may look and feel limited in strength and personal ability, but I will make you as a signet ring.

God was not only reaffirming, but He was guaranteeing His promises to Zerubbabel. Coming from bondage in Babylon, God restored him.

God Himself chose him and gave him His authority to act. Power is just raw ability, but authority gives you the lawful privilege to act.

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Conclusion

We too can rejoice in the fact that God has chosen us, adopted us, redeemed us and accepted us. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

This truth should make us see our real value and motivate us to keep on keeping on. When you feel down, undervalued, and unappreciated remind yourself that God has chosen you!

Hearing God's Message through the Prophet Haggai should help us get our priorities straight and quit worrying about what we don't have. It should motivate us to keep on building with what we do have.

God's concerned about our holy obedience, not lip service. There's a bright hope for the future despite any opposition or troubles we face. God can handle the pitfalls and the problems.

Remember, we didn't call ourselves, God called us and sent us out. The work is His work. The plan is His plan. If God has a plan, He will work it out!

We must continue to put Him first, stand on His promises, walk in obedience, keep the faith, and live and work for Him. Our God will not disappoint us. He will do what He said!

A turnaround is on the way! God will use us in the process. Yes, we might go through some shaky times, so expect them. When you feel weak or afraid, lean on God's Strength. His Spirit is with us.

So, embrace your God-given authority and shout grace over your mountains. God promises that they will become a level plain. Just keep moving forward.