



Connection Group Participant Guide

September 19, 2021

Haggai 2:1-9

Teaching Point 1. Does it now seem to you like nothing (v. 3)? - God is expressing what many people were thinking. We can see this in Ezra 3:12-13. While the people were mostly very excited about building the temple, and the step they were taking in serving God, the very oldest felt a mixture of joy and grief. They had seen Solomon's Temple in all of its glory. They remembered what it was like to be a free nation. The riches, the culture, and the freedom they enjoyed were all part of their memories. As a nation their disobedience to God cost them everything. Although they had been restored, what they were restored to was not the same as what they had lost.

From this we learn that God is merciful to forgive and restore those who have sinned against Him. The exile teaches us of God's justice. But the return teaches us of God's mercy. God's discipline toward believers is always for the purpose of ultimate restoration. In this passage though, we also see that what He restores us *to* may not be exactly the same as what we had before we sinned. While they were grateful for God's goodness, they also remembered what they had lost. The new temple was not the same as the one before. Jerusalem was not the same. And of course many of the people were forced to leave the land and could never come back.

Application: This passage is at the same time both a warning and a comfort for us. The warning is that sin is costly. Sin could cost you your marriage, your relationship with your children, your job, your reputation and much more. It is always better to obey God the first time around.

At the same time, God is good and His steadfast love endures forever. If today you feel like you are far from God, He is waiting with arms wide open to receive you. All you need to do is to come back to Him and He will restore you. If you feel like you are far from God, just pray in your heart right now and tell Him "I want to come back to you." He will welcome you.

Teaching Point 2. Work, for I am with you (v. 4).

Application: If you are obeying God's will for your life, He is with you. Do not fear persecution. Do not give in to pressure from society. Don't worry about your boss and your parents or whoever may be against you. Obstacles are normal. Even when God told them to rebuild the temple, He did not remove obstacles. These obstacles were a test to build their faith and character. Obstacles are an opportunity for you to exercise your faith and grow.