SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
June 8, 2014

Trust and Obey

Read Haggai 1:12 & 2:1-9

Key verse: “This house will be more glorious than its predecessor, says the Lord of Heavenly forces. I will provide prosperity in this place, says the Lord of heavenly forces” (Haggai 2:9).

Sometimes the old hymns say it best: “When we walk with the Lord, in the light of His Word, what a glory He sheds on our way! When we do His good will, He abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey.”

In Haggai 1:1-11, the prophet brought God’s word of challenge to the returned exiles in Jerusalem. They had neglected the work of finishing the temple. Instead, they had become preoccupied with their own self-centered priorities. It was time to put God and God’s business first, by returning to the task of rebuilding the temple.

Verse 12 gives their response to this prophetic word: “Zerubbabel, Shealtiel’s son, and the high priest Joshua, Jehozadak’s son, along with all who remained among the people, listened to the voice of the Lord God and to the words of Haggai the prophet because the Lord their God sent him. Then the people feared the Lord.”

To fear the Lord means to show God reverence, respect, and the willingness to obey. “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way....” With this initial response, the people of Jerusalem and their leaders were ready to move forward into God’s will.

Their work of rebuilding the temple would involve a human-divine partnership. Notice how verse 4 calls for this partnership—God’s people working in obedience to God while trusting for God to work on their behalf: “So now, be strong, Zerubbabel, says the Lord. Be strong, High Priest Joshua, Jehozadak’s son, and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord. Work, for I am with you, says the Lord of heavenly forces.”

This human-divine partnership is summarized in those 6 words: “Work, for I am with you.” Work, it has been said, as if it all depended on you. Pray as if it all depended on God. God’s work in the world flourishes when God’s people get this partnership right. “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way....”
I have always liked the story of a man who took over a garden plot that had been neglected for years. He cleared the land of rocks, weeds, and debris. He planted and watered and weeded, until a beautiful garden emerged. One day a neighbor walked by the garden as the man was working there. Being a particularly pious person, the neighbor said to the gardener: “My, what a beautiful garden the Lord has made!”

The gardener stopped his work, looked at the pious neighbor, wiped the sweat from his forehead, then said: “I guess so.... But you should have seen this garden when the Lord had it by himself.”

“Be strong....work.” That’s man’s part. “For I am with you.” That’s God’s part. God calls us into this divine-human partnership. As we partner with God, by trust and obedience, God does great things in and through us.

In verses 6-9, God promises to bless the peoples’ work and provide all the resources needed to rebuild the temple. “The silver and the gold belong to me,” God reminds them (v. 8). Whenever we respond to God in trust and obedience, God will provide the resources we need. After all, the silver and the gold belong to God! That’s an important reminder.

Pastor Ed Young shared in a sermon:

I took my family to a high school football game. During the third quarter, my daughter Landra said, “Dad, can I have some money to buy some candy?” Now I’m not a big candy guy, but I said, “Landra, here’s $5. Go and buy some candy.”

She came back with a sack full of Skittles. As I watched her eat them, I said, “Landra, can I have some Skittles?” She said, “No.” I said, “Landra, just give me a couple.” She said, “They’re mine.”

My little daughter didn’t understand several things. Number one, she didn’t understand the fact that I was the one who bought the Skittles for her. Number two, she didn’t realize my strength. I’m strong enough to forcibly take those Skittles from her and eat every one of them. If I wanted to, I could have done that. Number three, she didn’t understand that I could have gone to the concession stand, put 300 packages of Skittles on a credit card, come back to her, and given her so many Skittles that she couldn’t have eaten them all in a year.

We all have Skittles. Some of us have a pretty nice-size pile of Skittles. Others have a medium-size pile of Skittles, and some of us have little bags of Skittles. Our loving God comes to us and says, “Would you bring me some Skittles?” What do you think our reaction is? “No! They’re mine!”

God says, “Just bring me some Skittles.” But we still say, “Uh-uh. I made those Skittles. I own those Skittles.” Like my daughter, we don’t understand several things. God is the one who gave them to us. They’re His Skittles. He
bought them. In an instant, God could take all of our Skittles. Also, we don’t understand that God could rain so many Skittles on our lives, we wouldn’t know what to do with them. We couldn’t possibly spend or enjoy all of them.

“The silver and the gold belong to me, says the Lord of heavenly forces. This house will be more glorious than its predecessor, says the Lord of heavenly forces. I will provide prosperity in this place, says the Lord of heavenly forces” (Haggai 2:8-9).

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