

# Trust and Obey

Series: Renewal

Ezra 5-8

April 5, 2009

## Sermon Outline

### Introduction

- This morning I want to talk about something that can be hard for all of us: Dealing with disappointment. Just to be clear, here is why I mean by disappointment: Disappointment is the sorrow we feel when expectations fail. For many, disappointment a source of great distress.
- Because we live in a fallen world, disappointment is universal.
- What should we do when life has disappointed us? What should we do when it doesn't seem like the future will be any better than the past?
- Our story this morning answers those questions...
- I believe its main lesson is that **when life disappoints, trust and obey...**

### 1. **We must trust God**

- To trust in something (anything) means to place your hope and your confidence in that something. Its to rely and depend on it. It follows that to "trust God" means to depend on God, hope in God and rely on God – something that for most people, including the people in our story, is easier said than done. Because of the sinful inclination of our hearts, its easier to trust in just about anything – other than God.
- The people in the chapters we just read certainly found this to be the case. As we saw last week, in chapter 4 the Israelites encountered some real disappointment. Things were not working out like they dreamed when they left Babylon. The people began to rebuild the temple, even finished the foundation, but then real adversity struck as the people of the land opposed the work. As a result for fifteen years they abandoned rebuilding the house of the Lord in favor of – as the book of Haggai informs us – of working on their houses and building a comfortable living for themselves. Their dream of bringing great glory to God through a restored temple and city was, in face of the disappointment, exchanged for a lesser dream of surviving in relative comfort.

- Instead of seeing the difficulty they faced as an opportunity to glorify God by trusting Him, they responded with fear and discouragement. We can relate. Our story is here because God wants to encourage us today that we can trust Him even when disappointment strikes. We can trust God because of who God is – because of His character:
  - His sovereignty
  - His care
  - He keeps His promises
- Look at examples from passage of these attributes of God's character

## 2. We must obey God

- Through the prophetic pleas of Haggai and Zechariah and later the preaching of Ezra, the people learned that when life becomes difficult, straying from the narrow road of obedience to God, doesn't somehow become an option. It's not right to live for our own comfort when God's glory is in the balance. You still have to obey. You still have to do the Lord's work. If you don't there are consequences. So for instance, what the prophet says in the book of Haggai, is that the drought the people were experiencing was the direct consequence of a failure to continue the work of the temple.
- The lesson here is this: From God's perspective, disappointment is not a sufficient reason to postpone trusting *and obeying* now, today. No matter how disappointed we may be, we simply must not permit ourselves to wallow in self-pity, fear, and discouragement. Disappointments no matter how bitter, are not a sufficient reason to jettison living for God's glory in pursuit of one's own comfort. For as the people in our story discovered, that just compounds the problem. Our unbelief, invites God's fatherly discipline and does not make things better at all!
- In the face of disappointment, what the people needed, even though they couldn't see it at first, was to remember the sovereign reign of God, refresh themselves in the promises of God's Word and get to work obeying God and rebuilding the temple. That is why God in his mercy sent them leaders who could help them to trust and obey.
- Thankfully, in response to the prophetic urgings of Haggai and Zechariah, the people's faith was renewed. They began to trust and obey again, and guess what happened? The temple was rebuilt. The place of God's worship was re-established through their labors, and the people experienced great joy (5:22).

## CONCLUSION

- Here is what all of this means. Like the people in our story needed to learn, we also need to learn that when life disappoints, we must trust and obey...
- This is easier said than done. According to Paul in Romans 1, we all have an inward bent, to depend on, hope in and trust in the Creation rather than the Creator. This is why when life disappoints, our natural impulse is to place our heart's trust in all manner of created things - in a spouse, a job, a living situation or in the case of the people in our story – a home. When disappointments hit...we default to those things for our peace, rather than to God.
- The problem of course, is that those things, as good as they may be, can never replace God. That's why true Christian peace and joy comes not from the removal of disappointment because even if you could somehow make all earthly disappointments go away, if you didn't have God, you would still be disappointed! That's because abiding satisfaction, and lasting joy comes from God alone – nothing else - and thankfully this is exactly what the Gospel makes possible.
- You see, its only by the power of the Gospel that we come into right relation to God. In the gospel we sinners are reconciled to God; we have access to God; wherein we find fullness of joy in knowing, enjoying, trusting and obeying Him. In other words, its only by the power of the Gospel, that we can trust, obey, and be happy.

# Take It Home Questions

## Questions for Reflection/Discussion

### 1) Background:

By decree of Cyrus, the Emperor of the Persian Empire, the Jewish exiles – living in Babylon – were released to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. The people arrived and not long after they arrived, they began to rebuild the temple foundation. The temple foundation was rebuilt – which was cause for great celebration and rejoicing. However, not long after that, the non-Jewish population began to oppose the rebuilding of the temple. The people were fearful and as a result the work stopped for 15-20 years. That is where we pick up our story today.

### 2) Read: 5:1-5, 6:14-15, 7:6, 7:8-10, 8:21-23, 8:31-32

3) What does it mean to trust God? Back in chapter 4, how did the people in our story fail to trust God? How should they have responded?

4) In chapter 5, God acts and proves Himself to be trustworthy. His sovereignty, His care, and His commitment to keep his promises are all on display.

- a. How is God's sovereign control on display?
- b. How does God care for His people?
- c. What promise does God keep in this passage?

5) According to Paul in Romans 1, we all have an inward bent, to depend on, hope in and trust in the Creation rather than the Creator. How does this affect the way we naturally tend to respond to disappointment?

6) "In the gospel we sinners are reconciled to God; we have access to God; wherein we find fullness of joy in knowing, enjoying, trusting and obeying Him. In other words, its only by the power of the Gospel, that we can trust, obey, and be happy." Explain what that means.

7) What difference would it make in our lives if we sought to intentionally "trust and obey" when disappointment strikes?

8) Is there any way that you are currently experiencing disappointment that we can pray for God to comfort, encourage and strengthen you in (these can be little or big disappointments).