

(Rebuilding the House of the Lord) 3. the Lord's House Lying Waste

by Roy Hession

The sermon explores the challenges and revival of rebuilding the Lord's house amidst opposition and the importance of maintaining spiritual vision.

Duration: 54:41

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Revelation 20:12

Topics: "Rebuilding"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being prepared to risk everything for the sake of God's work. He shares a story about a man named John Collinson who was willing to be known as a sinner saved by Jesus and gave his testimony in a parish where no one was saved. Despite facing criticism, the house of God began to grow in that parish. The speaker also mentions the messages of conviction and comfort found in the book of Haggai and Zechariah, specifically highlighting the message of comfort that God's work is not accomplished by human might or power, but by His Spirit.

Transcript

I'm going to read quite a bit, but what a story it is. I hope that by the time we've finished our reading, you might almost feel the message is superfluous, because you can be given insights by the Holy Spirit into the meaning and its application for you as we go along. I was going to have a show of Bibles as to who had revised standard version and who had the authorised.

And if there was a preponderance revised standard version, I was going to read the revised version. But I've left it in my little cubby hole, my monastic cell as I call it, a little tiny little place where I get alone. So it'll have to be the authorised version.

And after all, I still feel we should never do without our authorised, we should never become outmoded. Because it is still, strange as it might seem, the most accurate translation there is. There's no translation which is more word for word than the King James Version.

Though of course, there are obscurities, and the revised standard version sometimes comes with great freshness. Well, you've got the revised standard version, you can follow, and you may get the benefit of bits there, but others of us will get this great old version. Now we're going to read from chapter four.

You know how far we got yesterday? The exiles have returned to their ruined land, their ruined city, and their ruined temple. And the work of revival has begun. The first thing was the setting up of the altar, and the institution of the burnt offering upon that altar.

And then they began and they completed the laying of the foundations amidst shoutings of joy. And you remember, Haggai told them, encouraged them, that though this doesn't look very much, the glory of this latter house is going to be greater than that of the former which was destroyed. For one day the desire of all nations is going to come and walk upon its pavements and fill it with his glory.

They were building bigger than they knew. But all did not go easily, it never does, because there's a devil, and he does hate to see grace being shown to ruin people, to a wasted church, to people who are cold, and a fellowship that's gone wrong. And so we come into this phase of things.

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD, I'm going to use Jehovah, whenever you have LORD in capital letters, in the old test, in their authorized version, it always means Jehovah. Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, then they came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the fathers and said unto them, let us build with you, for we seek your God as ye do, and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esahaddon, king of Assyria, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel and Joshua and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel said unto them, ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God, but we ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us.

Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah and made them afraid to build, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even unto the reign of Darius, king of Persia. And in the reign of in the beginning of his reign wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and in Jerusalem. And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishram, and we'll leave out their names, can't quite pronounce them, and there are some more difficult ones coming, unto Artaxerxes, king of Persia.

And the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian town and interpreted in the town. Rehum, the chancellor, and Shimshai, the scribe, wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes, the king, after this thought. Then wrote Reham, the chancellor, and another group of people who we can't pronounce, and at such a time.

Well now here's the copy. I don't know, Ezra must have had access to the files at headquarters, because it's so absolutely, sort of, it is a factual copy. I don't know whether he had one of these dry copiers or something.

But here it is. This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes, the king. This is the accusation.

Thy servants are men on the province beyond the river. That's how the RSV puts it. It was a province called beyond the river.

Be it known unto the king that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations. That was a lie. They hadn't got as far as touching the wall.

They had barely begun with the temple. But that didn't matter to them. But be it known now unto the king that if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom? And so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the king.

Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonor, therefore have we sent and certified the king. That search be made in the book of the records of thy fathers, so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time, for which cause this city was destroyed. They were dead right there.

We certify the king that if this city be built again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river. Then sent the king an answer to Reham the chancellor, and to Shimshiah the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and to the province beyond the river. Peace, and at such a time.

That's the date you see at the top of the letter. The letter which he sent unto us hath been plainly read before me, and I commanded, and search had been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. Therefore there have been mighty kings over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river, and told tribute and custom was paid unto them.

Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not built until further notice. That's what that means, until another commandment. Take heed now that ye fail not to do this, why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings.

Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes letter was read before Reham, and Shimshiah the scribe, and their companion, they were just told to bits, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and they made them cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased under the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

And for 13 long years that house lay waste with only the foundations laid. Chapter five. Then the prophets Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Edo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.

And as a result of the message they gave, then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedek, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem. And with them were the prophets of God helping them. That of course provoked what you would think it would.

At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor of the province beyond the river, and Shesabosnai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who has commanded you to build this house and to make up this wall? Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building? But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease till the matter came to Darius. And then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter. Now here is a copy of the letter which was sent, the second letter.

And the interesting thing is, not merely what the letter said, as from Tatnai the governor, but what he quoted the Jews are saying in the letter, most illuminating. The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side of the river, and Shesabosnai, and his companions, etc., they sent a letter unto him wherein was

written thus, Unto Darius the king all peace. Be it known unto the king that we went into the province of Judea to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones and timber is laid on the walls, and this work goeth fast on and prospereth in their hands.

Actually it was only the foundation, but once again they exaggerated a bit to make their point. Then asked we those elders and said unto them, Who commanded you to build this house? Oh yes, they had got on of course by this time. Maybe that was right.

They got the walls going up. Who have commanded you to build this house and to make up these walls? We asked their names also to certify thee that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. And thus they returned answer saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up.

But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon the Chaldean, who destroyed this house and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. And the vessels also of gold and silver, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem and brought into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one whose name was Shezbar, whom he had made governor, and said unto him, Take these vessels.

Go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in this place. Etc. Verse 17.

Now therefore, if it seemed good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house. Two searches of the records. Two searches of the records, most significant.

And what a different result was the second search from the first. Let search be made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so that a decree was made by Cyrus the king to build this house of God in Jerusalem, and let the king send his treasure to us concerning this matter. Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

And there was found at Acmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll. And therein was a record thus written. In the first year of Cyrus the king, the same king made a decree concerning the house of God of Jerusalem.

Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid. The height thereof, three-square cubits, and the breadth thereof, three-square cubits, etc., etc., etc. Verse 6. Now therefore, Tacnae, governor of the province beyond the river, Shesla, Bosnae, and your companions, which are beyond the river, be ye far from hence.

Let the work of this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. For over, I make a decree, what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house, that of the king's goods, even of the taxes beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.

And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, rams, lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let

it be given them day by day without fail, that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and of his son. Also, for good measure, I have made a decree, that whosoever shall order this word, thank goodness, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon. What a complete reversal! What a glorious victory! And let his house be made a dunghill for this.

Verse 13. Then Titanii come from the side river, and Chesna Bosnia and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had said, so did they speedily, did they hop. He had them hopping.

They didn't appreciate having their houses pulled down, and themselves hanged on gallows, and their homes be made a dunghill. And he meant it. Have you ever heard such a story? And the elders of the Jew built it, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Edo, and they built it, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Osiris, and Darius, and Artaxerxes, king of Persia.

And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. Well, now, there's valuable time taken in reading the record, but I think it's absolutely essential, because we forget so soon. The Bible's a big book, and if you're in one part of the Bible in your daily reading, it may be six months or twelve months before you get to another part.

When were you last in the book of Ezra? And so I know for myself, it's so easy. For a record which I know, or did know, and lived in twelve months ago, I've got a bit hazy in my memory of the blessed details. So that's the reason why we simply had to read it.

So they started, got the altar erected, the burnt offerings instituted again, and the foundations. This wonderful work of restoration then ceased. 424.

Then ceased work on the house of God at Jerusalem. This was the whole purpose for which they'd begun. Revival was beginning in their hearts, if you like.

And then it ceased, and they gave up. And it lay in that condition for thirteen years. They got busy on making their own houses, but the Lord's house lay waste.

Now we heard last night the story of someone who began anew with Jesus, and became the object of the restoring, reviving grace of God. And God began to give her back that spiritual glow which she had once known but had lost. And you can say, if you like, that in her case, that habitation of God through the Spirit which had lain waste was being rebuilt.

And she had a new testimony, she told us about it, as she came anew to the cross and found grace for sinners once again. But you remember, she said, then ceased work on the house of God at Jerusalem. Somehow she slipped away.

And it was for years after, I think, was it thirteen, was it more years than here, did God come back. And so work in her life, that new thing in her heart was recommenced. Now that is so typical of the experience of many of us.

How many times people said, you know, I came to Abageli years ago, or not only to Abageli, to some other fellowship, and God began a new thing. He began to show me the new and living way, the way of the blood, the way of taking the sinner's place and receiving the sinner's grace. But you know, I'd gotten away

from it.

I've gotten away from it. But oh, thank God, he's got me on the old road again. How typical that experience is.

It may not be for a long time. It may be for six months. This work of revival in your heart has ceased.

And you say, you know, lately I've been so dry. I've lost the vision. It's very easy to lose the vision, to become insensitive to sin, to cease to go on calling sins, sin, which it's shown you.

Years ago, I picked up my first wife's Bible, Revel, and I saw in the fly leaf a list of sins, rather subtle ones, worrying, tenseness, bossiness, and things like that. I said, Revel, what is this? She says, those are the things that God has shown me as sin from time to time. And I keep that list to check as to whether I'm still seeing them as sin.

Not to check whether I'm doing them or not. Much more important, do I still call bossiness a sin? Do I still call tenseness a sin? And I can't remember what else was there. Maybe I was the one who provoked her to those things for all I know.

That's it. You began. And you began to be sharp on sin, and you praised the Lord for the new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Are you still those things you began to call sin? For instance, some of us began to call reserve a sin. Do we still call it sin? It comes. But the difference is that we don't call it sin now.

We're not really trying to get us to get onto some impossible peak of holiness. The thing is, am I still, I'm talking to those who had some blessed experiences of these things in the past, and we began to call things sin, do I still call them sin? Or have I learned to live with them? I remember dear Fred Barthes saying, you know, God hasn't been sending many people into our home lately. I fear it must be because we've got cold.

We haven't been repenting. We haven't been at the cross. Well, who of us hasn't had times like this? But it can last a long time.

You had a touch, and you began on a new and living way. But we've lost the vision, just as they did here. And all that we've got are the foundations.

But the superstructure for a habitation of God by the Spirit hasn't been going on. And what is true of an individual, it can be also true of a work, because we mustn't limit the application of God's word of this here. Many a blessed work has begun, a work of renewal, a work of salvation, in a fellowship, or in a church.

But after a point, things stopped, and people lost the vision. Then ceased the work of the house of God. So the house of God may not be only that work in us, it may be some other work that we're engaged upon.

We began. In a Christian union it can happen. In a church it can happen.

In a fellowship meeting, in an evangelistic outreach it can happen. It began. Then ceased the work of God.

Now why did it cease? Well, quite obviously, as you read the story, because of opposition. I want to tell you, the devil hates the saints being blessed and being made channels of blessing to us. And the moment

you set out on the new and living way, this way of being real with God about yourself, and presenting yourself at Calvary again and again, as a candidate for that marvellous grace that flows to sinners there, the devil hates it.

And you do everything he can to oppose it, in one way or another. Some people, it may be nothing more than the fact that they haven't had fellowship, but that's not the real reason. They could have gone on with Jesus, but the devil used it.

No one else walks this way. Everybody else is wearing a mask. Why should you be forever taking yours off? No one else gives a current test to me.

You'll be marked if you do. And we go back, perhaps, to a cold spiritual atmosphere of unreality. Now that's no reason, that's no excuse, but the devil tells us those things, and perhaps that's quite enough.

Cause us to lose the vision and to stop this walk on the new and living way, this building, to use the other phrase, of the house. But sometimes it's very direct opposition. Sometimes the whole church can be up against their minister.

They'd love a minister on his pedestal. They hate a minister to give a sinner's test of his congregation. And a man says, I can't go on like this.

And he pipes down. And he goes back to sort of formal little messages, not laced as they should be with testimony. Then ceases.

Work on the habitation of God. And it could be like that for a long time. I know what this opposition is.

I was asked to leave two societies with which I was working, simply on this ground. We can't bear this testimony. We can't bear this message.

Some people have never forgiven me. A man who's asked to leave this well-known society and that evangelistic committee that brought him onto their staff. We used to know him as the big evangelist.

That's what we thought we'd appointed. We found a man who was giving a sinner's testimony. Oh, I know I wasn't all that balanced.

I don't suppose I put things with the balance I should. Perhaps I think I've learned a little more now. But a bother.

I'm amazed at the hatred of Satan. A thing happened in my own experience. I opened my mouth once in one meeting and that was enough for the committee to meet and start rescinding my appointment.

There's a dear sister here in this meeting whose husband now in glory had to leave his church. They didn't want that which would take them to pieces and put them together again. And this church was one of the most fundamental bible-believing churches in that city.

And you're going to be under great pressure. Those of us who've begun. Some of us don't know what I'm talking about.

The new and living day. What in the world's that? Well, you'll have to keep on listening to the end of the week maybe. But some of us know.

Some of us have had experience. We've begun. Are we going on? We had the foundational experiences of renewal and revival.

But has it stopped? Well, of course, so often it does. For shorter or longer periods. Here it was a longer period.

So there was the first reason why it stopped. Now the second reason, a deeper reason, was this. They gave the wrong testimony.

They were really, these Jews, standing on the wrong ground. Now their adversaries sort of said, well now let us build with you. We serve the Lord like you do.

But they didn't belong to Israel. They really had no part in building God's house because they weren't God's people. And the Jews told them so.

You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God. But we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel. We're Jews.

We're God's people. You aren't. Only God's people can do it.

Now that seemed right and I believe it's true. Spiritual work can only be done by spiritual men. And very often the devil will send someone along who rather approves what we're doing and he gets voted on to this or that.

And bless my soul, the work is diluted by the coming in of people who aren't the people of God at all. But they want to help. Or so they say.

But actually the devil is going to use them so often to disrupt and dilute. Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast wind it in either direction.

But actually the devil is going to use them so often to disrupt and dilute. And as I say, they told them so and we tell them so. We're born again.

We aren't. You aren't. We believe the Bible.

We're evangelicals. You're a liberal. We don't agree with the ecumenical movement.

You do. And so we could go on. I want to tell you those things are true.

For myself, I don't agree with the ecumenical movement. But if you start working for God on that ground, you're going to have the same experience here. They were not working as sinners.

They were not working for God as a people who have been under God's chastening. And it was utter mercy that they were having a chance at all. They were putting themselves on a pedestal.

And at bottom, they were standing on their own righteousness. And I want to tell you, our evangelical stand, our opposition to the ecumenical movement. I don't care what you say.

God may have to show you. It has become a part of your righteousness. And you won't have God with you if you stand on that ground.

And you'll give the devil every opportunity he wants. It says that God is near them, that are broken in the contrite heart. But when I'm arguing the toss and saying, I'm right and you fellows are wrong and this is my work and you can't touch it.

I want to tell you, we can be on the wrong ground. I believe it's right. I believe it's a principle.

All right to believe that. But it's the bigger thing is, I don't care whether a man's a liberal or not, but no one could be a bigger flop than me. And you know, the failures of the saints who believes the Bible are more grievous than that of the liberal.

His sins are often without knowledge. I have so much knowledge and yet I'm so wrong here or there. It ill befits me to take high ground when I shouldn't have any part in the work of God at all, but for grace that I didn't deserve.

I said, all right, listen. All right, listen. We'll try it out.

And they sent that letter up to headquarters. So you search and see that there'd been a rebellious people. And they had.

They were dead right. Because they'd been overcome by Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuchadnezzar spared the city and spared the temple. And if only Zedekiah had vowed to submit to the chastening, the city would have still stood.

But he didn't do about and what trouble Nebuchadnezzar had with that city. And they looked and search was made in the book of the records and there it was. It was all true.

And of course, orders came down, you stop it. And they did so with all the authority of Babylon. And they had the power of an army and much else on their side.

And they made them cease, notice, listen, very important, which you'll see in a moment, by force and power. And they had no option, it seemed. And for that reason, oh, my dear friend, I'm not on sinner's ground as I build.

The devil is a great one to point to the record. My before up wondering, you'll be trying to work for God with a bad conscience. I've often found I've been working for God.

Oh, I'm so just a Bible believer and so on. But as I've been working for God, there's been a little demon from hell on my shoulder saying, you hypocrite, you hypocrite. Do I get on very well? I don't.

I can't speak with boldness. I may take this high ground and that high ground. Don't misunderstand the things I've mentioned, I believe.

But all of us stand on that ground and finish. You'll have the devil accusing you. And you'll have other people too.

What sort of a man is he? And, you know, we who've been hard and aggressive don't have a good name, among others. We who feel we are the spiritual people, none else must do with us. That's true.

But our attitudes have sometimes made us stink in the nostrils. What people want is love, oh, truth and testimony. But it must be a sinner's testimony.

And this is what they were not giving. Later we shall see they did. And that was the turning of the corner for the proud he knows afar.

And so it was, the work ceased. And it was this, there was a great mountain rose in the way of their progress. And they felt they had no power or might with which to move it or defy it.

And so they gave it up. They got on making, building their own houses and not merely prepared to have just ordinary roofs, they made them sealed houses with nice ceilings. And they improved this and improved that.

But for 13 years, the Lord's house lay where you can get on busy in church work or in Christian work. But we lost the old-time vision where grace had begun to meet us. There's plenty to do, plenty to keep us busy.

And that in the Lord's service, ah, but that new house he was beginning to build in us or in our church, it has ceased. But after 13 years went by, grace began again with a people who so little deserved it. And how did it begin? With two men of God.

Oh, I love it in the Old Testament. I'm going to make a study sometime. There came a man of God out of Judah.

Sometimes these men of God are nameless, sometimes they give a name. Oh, what God does through a man or a woman of God who gets a clear vision, who can see what's gone wrong and come either with the word of challenge or the word of encouragement to begin again. And that's exactly what happened to these wonderful men, Haggai and Zechariah.

There it is, chapter five, verse one. Then the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied unto the Jews. And as a direct result, the work was begun again.

Now at this point, we must see what they had to say. Now two prophets and Haggai had one aspect of the message he gave them and Zechariah had the other. Haggai's message was a message of conviction.

Zechariah's message was a message of encouragement, just the encouragement that we need. Just turn to Haggai. He's fourth from the end in the Old Testament.

Just comes before Zechariah. Verse two. 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.

You can't expect revival. It isn't really quite the appropriate time for this to go on in me and to go on in my church. They're not quite ready, you know.

They're not used to this. You can't speak to my people as you speak in Clevedon. Oh, I can give a Clevedon message on a Clevedon platform.

It's not appropriate in my church. That's the trouble. That's the trouble.

There's only one message. It's not the Clevedon message. It's this message.

It's grace that's come by Jesus Christ. And if we're giving a Clevedon message, God help us. If it isn't here, if what we're doing is not a rediscovery of the whole hidden secret of grace and the gospel, then you

tell us.

And maybe we aren't always clear. Maybe we are. You tell us.

But for me, that's what it is. And we say, The time is not yet come. They're not ready.

Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet. Is it time for you, oh ye, to dwell in your sealed houses? And this house lie waste? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. You've sown much and bring in little.

Ye eat, but ye have not enough. Ye drink, but you're not filled with drink. You clothe you, but there's none warm, and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put them into a bag with holes.

Verse nine. You look for much, and it came to little. When you brought it home, I did blow upon it.

Verse ten. Therefore, now that's going too far there. What he said, he said, you consider your ways.

You say it's not time to build the Lord's house. You say you cannot defy this edict. You say there's a great mountain in the way.

But listen, it's not time to build the Lord's house, but you're looking after yourselves pretty well. But he said, are you looking after yourselves pretty well? You need to consider your ways. How's it working out? Crops going well? Strange.

For those thirteen years, they never got decent crops. Can you do eat? Strange. Since the day they gave up building the temple.

They had a bit of a famine in that land. You drink, but you're not filled with drink. Nothing seems to satisfy you.

And all your efforts to improve your life is like putting wages into a bag with holes. And by the time you look at the bag, you've lost your wages. He says in verse ten, listen, he says, the heaven over you is stayed even from you, let alone no rainfall.

And the earth, as a result, is stayed from her fruit. I call for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the beasts, and upon all the labor of your hand. Oh, what a word of conviction.

And he says this now, why? Why? There it is in verse nine. Why has this happened? For one simple reason. Because of my house that is waste.

And you run every man to his own house. And that's the message that comes to us first of all. We're doing many things, engaging in many bits of service, but my house in you is still lying waste.

You cease to see things of sin that you used to. You're not visiting Calvary as you once did. And Jesus isn't being appropriated for a desperate man's need.

My house is lying waste. But how's the rest going? Friend, not well. Not well.

You've become irritable perhaps. I have done sometimes in my home. Things aren't happy between you and other people.

Blessing isn't coming to others as it ought to. And you know he might have to touch your pocket. Maybe he's done that already.

Why? Why? I know what this is. There have been two classic occasions in my life when I lost my vision. First of all, I lost my vision for the unsaved.

I became so concerned with preaching to the saved that I lost my vision for the unsaved. And when I found myself preaching to them and taking advantage of campaign, I lost my faith and expectancy in that. It was only on that line.

And you know my wife and I became so impoverished that we had to sell a carpet to make two ends meet. We said, Lord, why? And he showed me, you've lost your vision. On another occasion later, it wasn't that I lost my vision for preaching the gospel to the unsaved, but I lost my vision of the revival of the saints.

It was after Billy Graham's first crusade. I'd been pressed into action down here in Bristol on the, for the relays and began to lead them. We saw many people coming to the Lord.

And I was pushed into action. I said, my, I'm coming at my own at last. And just after that, we went to a little team conference.

Joe Church was there up in the Midlands. And all I saw was a small bunch of people repenting around Jesus. I said, how irrelevant.

This is the day, big thing. We ought to be doing these big things. And I really, I'm afraid I rather unsettled my brethren.

And I said, we all ought to be doing big things. And you know, there came a famine in my heart. The heaven over me was stayed from due.

I found I lost that freedom of sweetness in preaching Jesus. I got back to my old striving days from which God had delivered me so largely. And because I wouldn't take note of that sign of something wrong, God touched my pocket.

And Revel said to me, he said, Roy, I'm not worried about the money. I'm worried about you. And it was relief to hear her say it.

I said, it's true. And I had a whole week when I said, yes, Lord, you're right there and I'm wrong. You're right there and I'm wrong.

By the end of the week, the heavens had opened. I went to some meetings and the old sweet gentle power of the Spirit was there. Jesus was in the midst.

People were beginning to repent again. I hadn't been seeing that for quite a time. And the famine in my pocket eased too.

Oh, I want to tell you he's going to take us to task. If we're running everyone to our sealed houses. And the Lord's house is laying waste.

And all you've got is a mere foundational experience. That was what Haggai had to say. And so a practical thing was this, verse 7. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.

Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house and I will take pleasure in it. And you'll see a new day dawn. Friend, he's saying, go and do it.

But what about this opposition? Risk it, man. Defy it. I either defy opposition or I disobey the law.

Wasn't that something? You're supposed to bow to authority, not necessarily. And what God wants is ministers, I'm speaking to such, who are prepared to be crucified if necessary for Jesus' sake, who will defy PCCs, not on these secondary things about whether you turn east, left, or right, or center. Those are largely unimportant compared with preaching a saving message.

That's the real reproach of the cross. Those that will care not what the diaconates say. They're going to build the Lord's house and they're going to give their testimony.

They're going to share their hearts with the people. John Collinson, whom you know and love, many of you, what a story he could tell along this line. An hour years ago at a conference God met him here.

He went back to a parish where there wasn't one saved man, a rather posh sort of parish. And then the following Sunday he gave his testimony, half of it in the morning, half of it in the evening. And he was prepared to be known for what he was, a sinner whom Jesus has had mercy on.

He cared not what they said. And the old house began to be built. Some hated him.

Some couldn't sleep after it. To think of their vicar, a sinner like that, saying those things. But some were saved.

And those of you who know the parish of Leyland, the vicar of which is now our dear friend Desmond Guinness, will know how the Lord's house has grown. As a result of the vicar getting right with God and saying, of course I'm going to be faithful. God brought together a fellowship of people who loved the same thing, who were saved as a result and who began to go on.

And they met twice a week. Once before breakfast and once in the evening. So hungry to go on.

And the fruitage is to be seen to this day. Go and do it. Get the wood said Zachariah.

I don't care about these others. Go and do it. I am with you.

And now the other message is in Zachariah. If Haggai's message was a message of conviction, Zachariah's message was a lovely message of comfort. We can't read the whole of the chapter.

It needs to be read. Verse six. Well, he has an angel appear to him.

Zachariah does in verse five. Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, knowest thou what these be? The vision of two olive trees. Then he answered and spake unto me, this is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts.

Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. And he shall, he shall, he shall bring forth the headstone, the final stone of the temple with shoutings crying grace, grace unto it. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation and he's not going to begin and not finish.

Those very hands shall finish it. And thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts has sent me unto you. I believe to understand this passage, you've just got to alter the order of the phrases.

This is how I believe you could read it and it makes it understandable. Who art thou, O great mountain? This was the message of Zerubbabel. Before this feeble Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain and that not by might or power, but by my spirit.

This man who began is going to see the completion of the temple. What a lovely message. It's very interesting in the Hebrew, not by might means not by the might of one man and power, nor by the power of many.

It's going to be accomplished. That mountain of opposition is going to vanish away, not by the might of one super leader, nor by the power of a great number, but by another way ought to go. By my spirit.

This is the real context of that famous text. You know why they stopped? They stopped because of force and power and they hadn't got another. God says you're going to go on and you don't need to have force or power.

You don't need to have a stunning leader for revival. You don't need to have a tremendous number and a well-organized campaign. It's not going to be by the might of one man or the power of many.

God's going to favor Zion by his spirit. Therefore the feeblest and the newest Christian can get in on this and be used of God. And that which has been blocking the way and making us scared stiff is going to blow away.

That mountain is going to become a thing, but not by a clever scheme. Not by great gift. It's going to vanish away by my spirit on condition that you begin.

You arise and build. And what stories can be told that when said I sat there and said if it costs me my job, if it costs me being turned out, I'm going to be faithful. God says that's it.

You'll see what I'll do to that mountain. And you've read the story. Oh man.

What a story. Completely reversed. They weren't only allowed to build, but were told that all the expense of the building was to be paid under the king's taxes.

And even the burnt offerings were going to be paid by him. And anybody who disobeyed, they'd better look out. There was that gallows waiting for you.

Have you ever heard of such a story? Except it can be matched again and again by some of you dear ones. Oh, you can say I dare to go forward. Not by might or power, by his spirit.

He removed the opposition. Things began to happen. The things I was so scared of.

You know, he wants to take you to task for lying down to opposition and me. For compromising, for trimming our sails. We say how can you do otherwise? I can't disobey, can't you? Can you not obey God rather than man? But it would cost.

Yes, sure. But he says you take, I'll take care. When a man is prepared to risk all, mountains become plains.

Not by might or power, but by my spirit. But time is, although it's twenty-five to, I'm going to take five more minutes. Anyway, we had to have the notices.

I gave them, I know. But let me tell you what was the crucial thing. As they defied, they began to build.

They came along. Hey, what are you doing? But the eye of the Lord was upon them that he didn't stop. Zechariah said, don't take no notice.

Carry on. I said, take no notice, carry on. No, no, get off, get off, get off.

But what are you doing? Take no notice. So by the providence of God and through the prophesying of these great men, they kept on building. And these fellows couldn't stop them.

All right, we know what to do. And they sent a second letter. But apparently the Jews had said something different this time.

When they were accosted, I'm going back to Ezra, if you can find it quickly. When they were accosted and said, who are you? They said, we are the servants of the most high God and build the house that was once built in many years ago. But after our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar and carried the people into Babylon.

But in the first year of Cyrus, he made this proclamation. And we're doing it at the proclamation of Cyrus. They'd said that before, but it didn't seem to work.

But you know what this time? They gave a sinner's testimony. Who are you? We're supposed to be the people of the law, but we're pretty forlorn, aren't we? We're supposed to be evangelicals. We believe our Bibles, I do, back cover to cover.

But look at our state. And he said, it's all our fault. It used to be a beautiful house, but our fathers disobeyed and the wrath of God came and we were rightly and properly carried away to Babylon.

And we never thought there'd be any hope, but grace had mercy on us and gave us this little revival. And if you search and see, you'll see that there's a record up in Babylon saying we can do it. They gave a sinner's testimony.

They didn't deny the record of sin. Indeed, they didn't wait for them to find out what their past had been. They told them, but they pointed to another record, the record of grace.

I said, all right, we'll go and see. And it took quite a bit of hunting and at last they found it. That second search, that second record, and there it was found written.

Yes, the first only revealed when they stood on their own righteousness, the record of sin. But this time they didn't stand on their own righteousness. They didn't wait for other people to find out.

They told the other people the sort of things, people they'd been, but they pointed upon another record there, the record of grace. Will you turn to Revelation 20? Revelation 20. This is the great white throne.

Verse 12, And I saw the dead small and great stand before God and the books were opened. What's this? And the books were opened. And another book was opened.

The books. There's the record of our own brokenness. There's the record of the sinners we've been.

There's the record of our rebellion against the disciplines God has given us. There it is, the books. But oh, thank God, there's another book.

The books. Another book. It's called the Lamb's Book of Life.

One is the book of sin, the other the record of grace, written with the blood of Jesus Christ. And I want to tell you, all that's written in the books is true, but you'll find another book and you'll find my name there. The Lamb's Book of Life.

Those whom Jesus has restored and forgiven them to death. And that was a turning point. And I believe if we began to go forward, taking sides with God against ourselves and giving a sinner's testimony, God would be on our side.

He always is.

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