

Potential for Greatness

Text: Zechariah 4:1-10

Introduction

1. The message of the angel in the text was intended to awaken Zechariah.
2. The books of Haggai and Zechariah have the common theme: “Build the temple!”
3. Under Zerubbabel the rebuilding following Babylonian captivity got off to a good start.
 - a. Opposition arose from the Samaritans, hindering the work.
 - b. The people began to “drag their feet” finally resulting in the complete postponement of the work.
4. The general attitude of the people toward the rebuilding of the temple seemed to be that the work was unimportant, insignificant, small, trivial and to be “despised.”
 - a. It was the task of the prophet to stir them to action
 - b. Consider Haggai’s rebuke of them (Haggai 1:2-4, 9)

I. Small versus Great

- A The people were discouraged because they knew they could not match the size nor splendor of Solomon’s temple.
 1. They did not have the money, manpower or resources to bring the temple to its former glory.
 2. They did not have the respect, encouragement or help of other nations.
 3. They needed to learn that what seemed insignificant and unimportant to them was of great importance to God.
 - a. Others may laugh and scorn.
 - b. It may seem small and insignificant but it will result in blessing for you and glory for God.
- B. The thoughts of the Judeans are typical of many.
 1. We live in an age where “bigger is better.”
 - a. In society: “big” government, “big” business, etc.
 - b. If we want to impress someone we must do it on a big scale.
 2. This type of thinking has permeated the church: a “big” congregation is better, a “big” program of work is needed, a “big name” preacher, etc.
 - a. If it’s not some big idea, we can’t get excited about it.
 - b. If I can’t have a big role in it, I want nothing to do with it.
 - c. If it’s not a “big name” preacher, he’s not worth hearing.

II. The Value of “Small” Things and People

A. Examples from daily living.

1. The farmer knows that great harvests come from planting little seeds.
2. A mother knows that a weak, helpless child can grow into a great leader of tomorrow.
 - The example of Winston Churchill. “Winston was born the son of an eminent Tory politician, at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, England, on November 30, 1874. His father, Lord Randolph Churchill (1849-1895), was a leader in the Conservative party, and his mother was Lady Jennie Jerome Churchill (1854-1921), an American heiress. Mrs. Churchill was beautiful and charming... Winston adored his mother...He regarded his father with fear and awe. Winston was high-spirited and had a stubborn streak, which annoyed everyone. His childhood was unhappy, he was chubby and did poorly in school; he talked with a lisp and stuttered. His father, a brilliant scholar, found him to be a disappointment, and also had little time for him. At age 12, Winston entered Harrow school, a private secondary boarding school. He was the lowest boy in the lowest class. However, Winston began to blossom at Harrow. He discovered a love of literature and writing, which he would enjoy all the days of his life. Winston’s father, observing him at play with his toy soldier army, impatiently judged his son to be of limited intelligence. Thus, he decided his boy was suited only for a military career. Winston, after failing the entrance exam twice, entered the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. He soon led his class in tactics and fortifications. Winston graduated eighth in his class, and consequently was appointed a second lieutenant in the Fourth Queen’s Own Hussars cavalry regiment just a month after his father’s death.” (www.u-s-history.com)
3. A teacher knows the importance of only 26 letters for they form the foundation of all the great essays and literary works.
4. The scientist knows that great cures come from small discoveries.

B. Examples from Scripture.

1. Four little things of great importance. (Proverbs 30:24-28)
2. Bethlehem was little among the thousands of Judah but out of her came:
 - a. The greatest king Israel ever had, David.
 - b. The “King of kings,” the Savior. (Micah 5:2)
3. When Saul was little in his own sight, God made him king. (1 Sam. 15:17)

4. Ruth, as a poor person, gleaned the fields for herself and her mother-in-law but she was destined to be the great-grandmother of David and ancestor of the Savior. (Matthew 1:5)
5. The kingdom of heaven is likened to a mustard seed, least of all seeds. (Matthew 13:31-32)
6. Jesus chose twelve men of little importance and low estate to carry His message throughout the whole world. (Acts 2:7-11)
7. Those whom God calls are not the mighty, wise and noble but the foolish and simple (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)
8. All heaven rejoices over one soul. (Luke 15:7, 10)

III. Recognize the Potential for Greatness

- A. Do not overlook or underestimate the usefulness and importance of your service to the Lord.
 1. Some think they have no real value to the Lord and His cause.
 2. Do not look around you and think the conditions are so deplorable that no matter what you do it will have no effect.
- B. Remember the gospel makes its appeal in units of one.
 1. Seed must fall into a single heart.
 2. We often think in terms of reaching the masses and forget that the masses are composed of individuals.
- C. Consider and use the resources God has given you no matter how small or insignificant they may seem to you.
 1. "If I only had more ability and talent, I would do more."
 2. Consider Matthew 10:42.
 3. If you are not using the abilities you have to their fullest measure, you would not use greater ones if you had them.
 4. "The greatest results will come when the many use what few talents they have."
- D. God's evaluation and measurement of a thing may not be the same as ours.
 1. The people in the time of Zechariah looked upon rebuilding the temple as unimportant and their effort as feeble but God considered it all extremely important.
 2. There is a great reward awaiting those who measure by God's standard and do the "little things" He wants done.

Conclusion

1. Scripture and life itself have taught us that extraordinary things can be accomplished by ordinary people.

2. We may see ourselves as only a small group of saints assembling together but God sees us as “lights in the world.”
3. We may see ourselves as insignificant creatures who aren’t able to stir up interest in the gospel but God sees “a city set on a hill” that “cannot be hidden.”
4. While we may be ordinary people in many respects, we are God’s people and there is nothing ordinary about that.
 - a. We have the power to stand as soldiers of Christ.
 - b. We have the sword of the Spirit to wield fearlessly in the face of error.
5. Let us not hide behind the excuse of personal insignificance.