



## Start With the Heart

Zechariah 1:1-6

Pastor Guy Gray

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### Discouraged and Distracted, To Say the Least

The Book of Zechariah is God's word of promise for everyone who answers God's call to build. As we saw last week in Ezra 1, that's exactly what a very special group of people had done. Their hearts were stirred! So they took a bold step and walked out of Babylon to make the arduous journey back to their homeland. They went back to Jerusalem, a city in ruins. They believed God was going to build something amazing, right out of the ruins of their old life.

They had a good start. But it didn't last. Soon enough they stopped building. The book of Ezra tells the story (Ezra 4). They encountered intense opposition. The people all around them took issue with what they were doing. First the people tried to "join" them in the work, but they didn't really want to join the work at all. They actually wanted to redefine and redirect the work on their own terms. If that had happened, there would have been nothing distinct about the identity or mission of God's people – doing God's kingdom work in this world. This is a sly form of opposition; opposition with a smile and a handshake. In the end its aim is to redefine the Gospel and to empty it of its power. God's people said no. That's when the overt opposition started. All of this was extremely discouraging to God's people who had answered God's call to build. So they got intimidated and they stopped. Then having stopped, they got distracted by the desires of their own hearts and started focusing all their time and energy on building their own homes. They got totally focused on temporal things instead of the work God had called them to. So they stopped building – for 16 years! Intimidated and discouraged; distracted and self focused, they got totally stuck. That is when Zachariah and Haggai the prophets began to speak God's word to them. By this time, it was the second year of King Darius. You can read more about the self-focused distraction of the people in Haggai, chapter 1.

### The Work of Building Starts With Your Own Heart

Zechariah spoke God's word, to call God's people back to their mission – to build. To do this, he had to start in the right place. So he started with the heart. See Zechariah 1:3. "Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts." This is the starting place. It's a call for heart level relationship with God. Before the building begins, the heart must be engaged with God, or none of it matters. God is not concerned with our efforts; our works; our building projects or our ministry endeavors, unless He first has our hearts.

This was the problem in Israel all along. The people became focused on religious observances, worship services, and human efforts for God. Their hearts were far from Him. This is what led to disaster! This is what the former prophets had spoken out against over and over. Now God asks them for their hearts – 100%. This is where we also must begin. This is a challenge, because it is in our nature to give our hearts to all sorts of other things. We too become self-focused. We too give our hearts to our own agendas, our own little "building" projects, and our own "stuff." Then we go through the motions of being spiritual – loving Jesus. But God knows our hearts. He cares deeply. So He calls us to Himself first and then to the work of building.

### Don't Put This Off

Zechariah teaches them by reminding them of the former generation, a generation that made the tragic error of waiting too long to give their hearts back to God. They finally did, but by then the situation was tragic. So Zechariah says, "don't wait!" The opening of Zechariah may seem intense or negative to us. But think again. Everything God says, He says in love. God cares infinitely for you. God wants to get the central issue right up front. The issue is your heart. Will you open your heart up to Him? Will you open your heart to His Word? Will you let His Spirit lead you into His salvation and into His priorities for your life? There is nothing more pressing or timely! This is God's first word as you answer God's call to build!