

## CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

### **TEXT: HAGGAI 1:1-11**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The prophet Haggai ministered to the Jewish people of Jerusalem in 520 BC, eighteen years after they returned from exile in Babylon (538 BC).
2. Haggai preached during the reign of the Persian king Darius (1:1).
3. At that time, Zerubbabel (1:1), the grandson of King Jehoiachin, was the governor of Judah, appointed by the Persians.
4. Haggai is one of the prophets whose personal history is unknown to us. He is mentioned, along with the prophet Zechariah, in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14.
5. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, “To hearten, rebuke, and instruct that feeble and divided remnant was the task of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The theme of Haggai is the unfinished temple, and his mission to admonish and encourage the builders.”
6. The LORD was displeased with the people who returned to Jerusalem from exile because they still hadn’t rebuilt the temple (1:2).
7. They had started the work on the temple, but the work had been interrupted by the hostile and devious Samaritans, and for about fourteen years almost nothing had been done (cf. Ezra 4:1-6).
8. These years of inactivity had dulled their zeal and they were becoming cold, and indifferent, and backslidden. This always happens when Christians are inactive!
9. Furthermore, it was a bad testimony to others.
10. The key words are, “Consider your ways” (1:5, 7; cf.2:18).

1. **THEIR PRIORITIES WERE NOT RIGHT**
2. **THEY WERE NOT CONTENT**
3. **THEY WERE BEING CHASTENED BY THE LORD**

#### **I. THEIR PRIORITIES WERE NOT RIGHT**

1. Their priorities were not right, and so the prophet Haggai began his prophecy with a strong rebuke (1:2-5).
2. The people lived in beautiful “cield (expensive wood-paneled) houses,” but after fourteen years, God’s house still wasn’t finished. Notice the

- contrast in verse 4 – “your cieled houses, and this house” (God’s house), and in verse 9 – “mine house” and “every man unto his own house.”
3. Their priorities were not right. “Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house” (1:9).
  4. “Run” (1:9) indicates the zeal they showed in pursuing their own interests.
  5. Some Christians are zealous for money, and zealous for the things money can buy, and zealous for worldly pleasures, but they are very cold and indifferent when it comes to the things of God.
  6. Isaiah said, “Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field... but they regard not the work of the LORD” (Isaiah 5:8, 12). This describes many Christians today. They are “running” after money and worldly pleasures. Selfish gratification always leads to spiritual stagnation.
  7. Many are zealous when it comes to making money and accumulating wealth, and buying houses and cars, etc. but they have little interest in the Lord’s work.
  8. Many Christians do not even contribute one cent to missions.
  9. One old commentator said, they “have no glow of zeal for God, but are full of self-love” (Edward B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets Volume 2*).
  10. Over 100 years ago, H.A. Ironside said, “The covetous spirit of the age is eating the very life out of many companies of the Lord’s people. The grasping avariciousness everywhere prevalent in the world is making dreadful inroads among Christians. Alas, how much is sacrificed for money!” (*Minor Prophets*).
  11. Haggai disproved their feeble excuse for not rebuilding the temple (1:2). Charles Feinberg said it is easy to camouflage spiritual coldness “with an abundance of excuses, evasions, and subterfuges” (*The Minor Prophets*).
  12. Billy Sunday said, “An excuse is a skin of a reason stuffed with a lie.”

Their excuse: the people were not saying that the temple could not be rebuilt; they were saying it was not the right time to do the work (1:2).

Procrastination is a thief of time. First Samuel 18:7 says the women sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." And someone said, “If wicked unbelief has slain its thousands, then procrastination has slain its ten thousands!”

13. Note: “This people” (1:2); not “My people.” Normally God refers to the Israelites as “His people,” not “This people.”
14. “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I

- hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14).
15. J. Vernon McGee used to tell a story about preaching in a certain church building that was in a very shabby condition. After the service, a deacon invited him over to his house and it was a beautiful mansion.
  16. On another occasion, a church member took Dr. McGee out to eat in a very expensive restaurant, and Dr. McGee noticed that the man gave the waitress a very generous tip. Then after dinner, they went to hear a certain preach at a special meeting. When the offering plate was passed around, Dr. McGee was shocked to see that the man only put \$1 in the plate.
  17. Consider your ways!
  18. Many Christians need to get their priorities right.
  19. King David had his priorities right (cf. II Samuel 7:1-3).
  20. The people in King Hezekiah’s day had their priorities right (cf. II Chronicles 31:4-10).
  21. And King Hezekiah had his priorities right (II Chronicles 31:20, 21; cf. II Kings 18:5-7).

## **II. THEY WERE NOT CONTENT (1:5-9).**

1. The people were selfish, and they were not content.
2. The apostle Paul said, “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:1).
3. “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (I Timothy 6:6-8).
4. Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your conversation (conduct) be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.”
5. But the people in Haggai’s day were not content. They sowed much but reaped little (Haggai 1:6).
6. They ate, but they were not satisfied (1:6). The LORD warned them that this would happen. Back in Leviticus 26, we read, “But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments... ye shall eat, and not be satisfied” (Lev. 26:14, 15, 26).
7. Hosea 4:10 says, “For they shall eat, and not have enough...because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.”
8. Micah 6:14 says, “Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied.”

9. They drank but were always thirsty (1:6). When people leave God out, they are never satisfied (cf. John 4:13, 14; 7:37-39).
10. Haggai said, “Ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes” (1:6). God disappointed them in all of their endeavors.
11. Their self-seeking got them nowhere.
12. The great evangelist R.A. Torrey told the story of Barney Barnato, an Englishman who made a fortune in diamonds in South Africa. Barnato became one of the richest men in the world, but it did not make him happy. He took to heavy drinking and he became suicidal. His friends employed a man to watch him at all times because they were concerned that he would kill himself. One day on a steamer heading back to England, when his bodyguard was not paying attention, Barney Barnato ran to the rail of the ship and jumped out into the Atlantic Ocean and drowned.
13. Jesus said, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark8:36).
14. Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33; cf. Haggai 1:8-11).

### **III. THEY WERE BEING CHASTENED BY THE LORD**

1. They were being chastened by the Lord, but they were so blinded by selfishness that they could not see it (1:9).
2. “I did blow upon it” (1:9) means the LORD would send strong winds to scatter their grain. Why? (1:9). Because of their sin.
3. Because of their sin, God withheld the dew (1:10). In the Bible, dew is a symbol of God’s blessing, and God’s grace.
4. Isaac said to his son Jacob, “Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine” (Genesis 27:28).
5. Deuteronomy 32:2 says, “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.”
6. There was drought, and there was famine, and there was no more fruit. No more crops (1:10, 11). This dryness and barrenness was because the people were spiritually dry and barren.

7. Spurgeon said that selfish people who do not contribute to the Lord's work often use the excuse that they must care for their own families, but they forget that to neglect the house of God is the sure way to bring ruin upon their own houses.
8. Spurgeon said, "Selfishness looks first at home, but godliness seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, yet in the long run selfishness is loss, and godliness is great gain... Our God has a method in providence by which he can succeed our endeavours beyond our expectation, or can defeat our plans to our confusion and dismay; by a turn of his hand he can steer our vessel in a profitable channel, or run it aground in poverty and bankruptcy."

### **CONCLUSION:**

I counted dollars, while God counted crosses,  
I counted gains, while He counted losses,  
I counted my wealth by the things gained and stored,  
But He valued me by the scars that I bore.  
I counted the honors and sought for ease,  
He wept while He counted the hours on my knees,  
And I never knew until one day by a grave,  
How vain are these things we spend a lifetime to save.