

HAGGAI

“CONSIDER YOUR WAYS!”

“When what we do is aligned with God’s will and His priorities become our priorities, then we become living evidence for His existence.”

Notes and Outline

By

David E. Rembert

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HAGGAI 1:1-2

THE HEART OF THE PEOPLE

Haggai 1:2

“...Thus says the Lord of Hosts, ‘This people says, “The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.”””

INTRODUCTION

In 1985 and 1986 I had the opportunity to teach the book of Haggai on three different occasions. On each occasion God took this small Old Testament book and changed people’s priorities including my own. I asked the Lord to deal with my heart as I served Him in building up His church. I asked the Lord to take His holy and eternal Word as written in the book of Haggai and redirect my thinking, my actions and my priorities to be in conformity with His sovereign will for His glory. I would like to invite you to join me in that prayer as we take a journey through the book of Haggai. When what we do is aligned with God’s will and His priorities become our priorities, then we become living evidence for His existence.

By way of introduction I would like to point out that there are two separate categories of prophetic books in the Old Testament. There are the Major Prophets and there are the Minor Prophets. They are called “major prophets” and “minor prophets” based on the size of the books not on the importance of the book. The Major Prophets consists of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. The Minor Prophets are the last twelve books of the Old Testament starting with Hosea. The book of Haggai is one of the Minor Prophets.

THEIR HISTORY

The book of Haggai is only two chapters in length, yet it has a powerful message. A message that is just as relevant today as it was when it was written in 520 BC. It was given during a four month segment in history, from September 1st to December 20th 520 BC, yet it is a message that God has intended for His people to hear throughout the centuries. The underlining theme of the book is stated in the phrase, **“Consider your ways!”**

The people were challenged to stop and think about what they were doing and why they were doing it in view of God’s sovereign plan and purposes. In **Haggai 1:5** the LORD said, **“Consider your ways!”** In **Haggai 1:7** the LORD again said, **“Consider your ways!”** In **Haggai 2:15** the

Lord said, “...*consider from this day onward.*” Again in **Haggai 2:18** the LORD said, “...*consider from this day onward.*” The people that heard Haggai’s prophecy were to consider what was important to God and then do whatever was necessary to get their priorities straightened out.

From time to time, as Christians, we need to do the same thing. The pressures of life tend to cause us to get our priorities out of kilter, especially in view of God’s sovereign plan and purposes for our lives. It is a healthy exercise to take the time to consider our ways. We should ask ourselves questions like: Are we in the will of God? Are we doing what is important for God?

At least once a year I take a day, sometimes more, and spend that time alone with the Lord to consider the direction my life is headed and what I am doing for Him. I have written down my life purpose statement, which is written around my spiritual gifts and my passion in life and ministry. I take time out to evaluate whether I have deviated from the very things that God has placed on my heart to do for His kingdom and for His glory. If my priorities and the way I spend my time need to be adjusted, then I make the adjustments. I get refocused on what is important to God. The people during Haggai’s time needed to get refocused as well.

During Haggai’s four months of ministry he gave four prophetic messages, which dealt with God’s priorities for the lives of His people:

- He gave a call to rebuild the house of God (**Haggai 1:3-15**).
- He gave a call to courage in the Lord (**Haggai 2:1-9**).
- He gave a call to clean up their lives before the Lord (**Haggai 2:10-19**).
- And, He gave a call to confidence in the Lord (**Haggai 2:20-23**).

Certainly we need to consider these same priorities.

In **Haggai 1:1-2** we are given the historical setting as well as some insight into the heart of the people. It says, “*In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of Hosts, This people says, “The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.”’*” Haggai’s prophecy began in the second year of Darius, the king of Persia, on the first day of the sixth month. According to the Jewish calendar that would put Haggai’s ministry starting on September 1, 520 BC.

The background leading up to Haggai’s ministry is recorded in the book of Ezra Chapters One through Four. Here is a summary what took place.

In Ezra Chapter One, we find that Cyrus, who was the king of Persia at that time, overthrew the Babylonians in fulfillment of the prophecy given in **Jeremiah 25:12**. Then, in 536 BC Cyrus released the Jewish people from their Babylonian captivity in fulfillment of the prophecy recorded 200 years earlier in **Isaiah 44:21-28**.

In Ezra Chapter Two, we find that the number of Jewish people who returned to Jerusalem was about 50,000. Then, an offering was taken to rebuild the Temple, which included 277,550 ounces of gold and 6,250 pounds of silver.

In Ezra Chapter Three, we see that the foundation of the temple was built and the people rejoiced. However, some of the older men began to weep because the new temple was not going to be as large as Solomon’s temple, which was destroyed 50 years earlier. Discouragement began to grab the hearts and minds of the older people, which ultimately had an impact on all the people.

In Ezra Chapter Four, we see the enemies of Israel, under the direction of king Artaxerxes, putting a stop to the rebuilding efforts until the second year of Darius, king of Persia. For fifteen years the construction on the temple stopped. Then in Ezra Chapter Five, the temple is rebuilt under the direction of Haggai.

THEIR HEART

With that as a background, we then see the heart of the people in **Haggai 1:2**. We are told, *“Thus says the Lord of Hosts, ‘This people says, “The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.””* What took place within the heart of the people during Haggai’s time is what sometimes happens within the church and within our own personal lives.

Just like the people during Haggai’s time who were released from bondage, we too are released from bondage. We are released from the bondage of sin through faith in Jesus Christ. And just like the people of Haggai’s time we get excited about what God has done in our lives, so we get busy working and serving Him. Haggai’s people got busy building the temple and we get busy building up the church and God’s kingdom.

Then, someone comes along and puts a damper on what we are doing for the Lord and we become discouraged. Sometimes we get criticism rather than support from our spouse or from our brothers and sisters in Christ and we get discouraged. Sometimes we place our own expectations upon what we are doing for the Lord too high, and when we don’t accomplish those expectations we get discouraged. Sometimes we try something different and when people resist the change we get discouraged. Then, it seems like the devil shows up and begins to whisper in our ear things like:

- So and so had 25 people in their Adult Bible Fellowship class – you only had two – you ought to quit teaching.
- Or, people don’t really appreciate what you are doing – you ought to go somewhere else.
- Or, people aren’t responding to your preaching and teaching – you’re not very good at it any way – you’re not being effective – you ought to give up.
- Or, things aren’t going to change under your ministry – you ought to get out of the ministry while the getting is good.

A discouraged people who face resistance or too much pressure, will give up. They will stop serving the Lord. Sometimes it takes years before they get back to serving Him again. Quite often it takes a man of God who proclaims the Word of God with authority and conviction to get them off dead center and back doing God’s work.

That is what Haggai was facing. Haggai was facing a discouraged people, a defeated people – people who came face to face with opposition and quit. God’s direction for His people is always to press on and to run the race with endurance even in the face of opposition. We are to make sure we are doing what pleases the Lord according to His Word and press on.

I want you to notice something that is very important in **Haggai 1:1**. Notice that Haggai’s message was first given to the leadership. His message was first given to Zerubbabel the governor of Judah and to Joshua the high priest.

May I say: If the leadership is discouraged so will the people be discouraged who are under their leadership. If the leadership is not excited, neither will the people be excited. If the leader-

ship of a church is not sold out to God and doing God's work God's way, then neither will their congregation. Before the congregation can get off dead center and get excited about God's work the leadership needs to get off dead center and be excited about God's work.

The people during Haggai's time were saying, according to **Haggai 1:2**, "*The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.*" They were saying that because, that was what their leadership was communicating to them -- if not by words, then certainly by their lack of action and conviction. Their root problem was procrastination. They went from discouragement that resulted from opposition to procrastination. They had become complacent in their service and relationship with God. They became self-centered, focused more on their own homes rather than on the house of God. They grew cold towards the things of God and as a result lacked sensitivity to the leading and will of God. For sixteen years they had been set free from Babylonian captivity and for fifteen years they did nothing for God, only for themselves.

It is so easy to fall into that trap. It is so easy to become complacent and then camouflage that complacency with excuses. We tend to say:

- I'll wait until the economic situation is better. Things are tight right now. There is really nothing that I can do right now.
- Things are just too busy at work. It's taking all of my free time. I can't get involved right now.
- I don't know how to lead a Sunday school class. Someone else should do it.
- I don't know how to share my faith. That is not my gift.
- No one wants to hear my testimony. It's not very interesting or exciting.
- I've done my part, now it's time for someone else to get involved. Someone younger.

These are just a few of the excuses we use to camouflage complacency and I should know because I have used them all.

From my own life experiences I must say that I don't know of anything that will get us off dead center except to get into God's Word. Then, ask the Lord to take His Word by His Holy Spirit and redirect our thinking, actions and priorities so that they are in conformity with His plan and purposes for our lives.

What I have done and I suspect you have done it as well, is this: I have sat and listened to the Word of God preached and I have let it go in one ear and out the other without it having an impact on my heart. We need to let God work His Word into our lives before He can work through our lives. We need to have a passion for God's Word before we will have a passion for God's work.

This was, in part, the problem during Haggai's time. The people had a heart problem that needed fixed. If we are not careful we can develop the same problem. That is why I have asked the Lord to take what He has said in Haggai and redirect my thinking, actions and priorities. Will you join me in doing the same?

HAGGAI 1:3-15

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

Haggai 1:5

“Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Consider your ways!’”

REVIEW / INTRODUCTION

We saw the heart condition of the people by looking at the first four chapters of Ezra as well as **Haggai 1:2**. We saw that they were a discouraged and defeated people who became complacent in their relationship with God and in their service for God. Instead of being fearless, trusting in God, they became fearful of King Artaxerxes’ opposition. So, for fifteen years they did nothing for God, only for themselves. For fifteen years they became self-centered. They focused more on their own homes than on the house of God. They focused on their own priorities rather than the priorities of God. They camouflaged their complacency with excuses. They said, in **verse 2**, *“The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.”* They did not take that position based upon a decree from God, but rather from the decree made by one man – King Artaxerxes.

Usually it takes a man of God to preach the Word of God before the people of God will get off dead center. That is how God works and that was Haggai’s commission. We are told in **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”* God takes His Word by His Holy Spirit and changes the hearts of people. God spoke through Haggai during a four month period in history to communicate His Word to the people and to get their focus back upon His plans and His purposes. God worked through Haggai to give them a reprimand, to give them the remedy and to give them a rebuke. As a result, the people responded to the Lord. They responded to the Word of God. They went back to doing the work for God.

THE REPRIMAND

The first thing God did was give them a reprimand in **Haggai 1:3-5**. It says, *“Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ‘Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your*

paneled houses while this house lies desolate?’ Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Consider your ways!’

In **verse 4** we are told that the people were living in paneled houses. In those days paneled houses were associated with the very wealthy and usually associated with kings. We see that in **1 Kings 7:1-13**. When Solomon built his own 11,250 square foot house, he paneled it with cedar (notice **1 Kings 7:3 and 7**). Even Solomon’s Temple, according to **1 Kings 6:9**, was paneled with cedar.

Now, God is not saying that He is against paneling in your homes or living in homes that are nicely decorated. The reason God was upset with these people was because they took the paneling that was to be used in rebuilding the temple and they used it to build their own homes instead.

In **Ezra 3:7** we find that they bought and shipped cedar wood from Lebanon for the construction of the Temple. However, when the construction stopped for fifteen years they apparently used the cedar in their own homes. I say that because in **Haggai 1:8** they were instructed to go back up to the mountains and get more wood to rebuild the temple. That is why God gave them a reprimand in **verses 4-5** saying, *“Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?’ Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Consider your ways!’”* God was telling the people to search their hearts and get their priorities straight.

God does not get upset if we live in paneled houses, but He does get upset when we take that which He so graciously gave to us such as our time, money and material possessions, including our homes, and use them for our own extravagance while His work goes to pot. What God so graciously gives to us is intended to take care of our needs not our greed. What He gives us is certainly His provision to take care of our needs, but it is also given to us so we can serve Him by ministering the Word of God and the gospel in building up His kingdom, and in ministering to others. Therefore, God says to you and me, “Consider your ways!” In other words, where is your heart? What are your priorities?

Notice the result of wrong priorities in **verse 6**. It says, *“You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes”* (NKJV). The Jewish people were in the midst of a harvest and there was not enough to eat or drink. They didn’t even have enough clothing to keep warm. As far as their money or earnings were concerned, there was more going out than coming in.

Have you ever had that problem? Perhaps God is trying to get your attention. In **verse 7** He says, *“Consider your ways!”* God was essentially saying:

- Get your priorities straight.
- Take your eyes off yourselves and fix them on Me.
- Stop living for yourselves and start living for Me and I’ll provide the harvest. I’ll provide for all your needs.

That is what Jesus taught His disciples in **Matthew 6:25 and 33**. He said, *“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

Do you have trouble making ends meet? Do you find yourself coming up a day late and a dollar short? Perhaps, several dollars short? God says, **“Consider your ways!”** God says, **“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.”** The word **“seek”** means **“to track down,” “to search for”** and **“to pursue with diligence.”** In other words, the first and foremost priority in our lives, as the redeemed children of God, is His kingdom and His righteousness. We are to be at work building up His kingdom and demonstrating His righteousness.

I don't want to imply that if you are going through difficult times that you are unspiritual, or that you are not seeking His kingdom or His righteousness. There may be other factors to consider. Such as:

- Stewardship. You might want to ask yourself: *“Am I handling what God gives me wisely or have I squandered it?” “Am I a victim of impulse buying?”* You may think that God has not provided for your needs or the needs of your family when in reality He has, you just spent it on something else. I say that from personal experience. I know God has taken me through tough financial times to teach me good stewardship.
- God also may want to teach you a certain character quality such as contentment, gratefulness, etc. He has taken me through difficult financial times to build within me certain character qualities that I would not have learned any other way.

Any time you go through a financial drought and are struggling to get out of it, a good exercise is to evaluate your priorities. Determine whether your priorities are in line with God's plans and purposes. Evaluate your walk with Him. Determine if you have become complacent. Are you pursuing diligently His righteousness though your personal time with Him in His Word and with Him in prayer? Are you being a good steward of what He has given you? That was the problem that the people in Haggai's time had. So God said, **“Consider your ways!”**

THE REMEDY

God gave them the remedy in **verse 8**. He said, **“Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,” says the LORD.** In other words, get moving. Get off the dime. Get back to doing God's work so that He is pleased and glorified.

We should ask ourselves: Is what I am involved with or doing pleasing to God? Is He glorified through it? When I am involved in some way building up His church and His kingdom using the spiritual gift He has given me relying on the power of His Holy Spirit to work through me, then I know He is pleased and glorified. These two purposes should underscore everything we do and say. In **1 Corinthians 10:31** we are told, **“Whatever, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”** If we withhold being a blessing to God, He may in turn withhold His blessings in our lives.

THE REBUKE

God rebuked the people in Haggai's time because they did not please Him or glorify Him. So He withheld His blessings. Notice what God said in **verses 9-11**. He said, **“You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?” declares the LORD of**

hosts, 'Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house. Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands.' God did not bless their focus or their priorities because they were all wrong. Their focus was on themselves not on Him. Do you want God's blessings in your life? Then give Him the supreme place in your life. If you don't, then expect His discipline in your life not His blessings. If you don't believe me, then read **Hebrews 12:5-11**. The Lord took disciplinary action with the people in Haggai's day and notice their response once they understood.

THE REACTION

In **verses 12-15** we are told, *"Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for the LORD. Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke by the commission of the LORD to the people saying, 'I am with you, declares the LORD.' So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king."*

The strong words that God spoke through the prophet Haggai demanded a decisive response. Either the people would resist the Lord even more stubbornly and get rid of Haggai, or they would acknowledge their complacency, repent and commit themselves to serving the Lord in rebuilding the temple. The decision was theirs, the ball was in their court, so would they obey or resist?

Sometimes Christians are faced with the same question. Will we obey or resist the Lord's will for our lives in accomplishing His plans and purposes? Quite often our actions answer that question without the question even being asked. I think we should ask ourselves some questions, such as:

- Should I work harder to get ahead in my career or should I spend more time serving the Lord? In my case I often worked harder without even giving a second thought to the Lord and His work. Please understand this: Part of the Lord's work is your own family. If you have children, they are your primary mission field. How are you doing in that area? Are you serving the Lord by serving your family? Have you told them about Jesus? Have you shared with them how the Lord is working in your own life? Can your spouse and/or your children see Him at work in your life?
- Should I buy that new car, or whatever, even though I know that by doing so I will need to withhold or reduce my tithe or offering to the church?
- Should I redecorate my home knowing that the church is in need of repairs or does that concern ever come to mind?

Our response to those questions is determined by what we consider to be more valuable, our will or God's will.

Joshua said in **Joshua 24:15**, ***“If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, chose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”*** The people of Haggai’s time were faced with life’s most important question: Do I obey the Lord or not?

The response of the people during Haggai’s time was beautiful. The people showed reverence to the Lord. They came together and began to work on the house of God. It began with the leadership taking the first step. Then notice the Lord’s response in **verse 13**. He said, ***“I am with you.”***

Do you desire a closer walk with the Lord? Do you want a closer personal love relationship with God? If you do, then you must be obedient to the Word of God and get busy doing the work of God. That is what Jesus said in **John 14:23-24**, ***“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.”*** Where are your priorities? Do you desire to please Him and glorify Him? Are you seeking His kingdom and His righteousness? Do you want to build up His church? If that is your heart’s desire, then you must be obedient to His Word and His plans and His purposes. You must do God’s work His way for His glory. If you hesitate, then I encourage you to ***“Consider your ways!”***

HAGGAI 2:1-23

BE READY FOR A GOOD SHAKING

Haggai 2:20-21

“Then the word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month saying, ‘Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, ‘I am going to shake the heavens and the earth.’”

REVIEW / INTRODUCTION

God told the people to consider their ways in Chapter One, verses 5 and 7. He wanted them to get their priorities straight – aligned with His. He wanted them to take their eyes off of themselves and get them back on His plans and His purposes. He wanted them to stop living for themselves and start living for Him by trusting Him for His direction, protection and provision in their lives.

God gave them a reprimand, the remedy and a rebuke and the people responded. They showed reverence to God and they obeyed the Word of God in Chapter One, verse 12. They went back to doing the work of God, doing what was pleasing to God and bringing Him glory in Chapter One, verse 8. As a result God said in Chapter One, verse 13, *“I am with you.”*

The same is true today. God wants every person who by faith has trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord to consider their ways. He wants believers to keep their priorities straight – aligned with His. He wants believers to do what is pleasing to Him and what glorifies Him. He wants believers to be obedient to His Word and equipped by His Word so that they can do His work. God wants believers to be involved in some way accomplishing His plans and His purposes using their spiritual gifts and talents for His glory.

Our lives are not to be all about us, but rather all about Jesus. God wants believers to accomplish the work that he has commissioned us to do in building up His church and His kingdom. As we do, we are to keep in mind what Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20 as He gave the Great Commission to go and *“make disciples of all the nations.”* He said in Matthew 28:20, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* God’s promise is always the same to those who do His work, His way for His glory: *“I am with you.”*

A CALL TO COURAGE

The words that God gave to the people of Haggai's day are very applicable for today. As they went to work for God doing His will He told them to have courage, to be clean and to be confident in what He was going to ultimately accomplish.

As the people of Haggai's day returned to the LORD and started doing His work God gave them three messages. The first message is found in **Haggai 2:1-9**. In **Haggai 2:1-5** we read, *"On the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet saying, 'Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people saying, 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison? But now take courage, Zerubbabel,' declares the LORD, 'take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,' declares the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' declares the LORD of hosts. As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!'"* Haggai's second message was a message of encouragement. The timing of Haggai's second message is interesting. It took place at the end of a Jewish festival called the Feast of Booths. The Feast of Booths celebrated their release from bondage in Egypt as well as the gathering of the summer harvest. However, there was a drought in Haggai's day caused by their complacency towards God and as a result there was not enough to eat or drink. They had a physical drought caused by their spiritual drought. They certainly needed encouragement. It is interesting to compare what Jesus said during the Feast of Booths in the New Testament, to those who also had a physical drought caused by a spiritual drought and how it relates back to Haggai. In **John 7:37-39** we are told, *"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."* Today, every person who, by faith, trusts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord has the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. We see that in **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**. The indwelling Spirit of God gives us the encouragement, the spiritual strength and power to press on to do the work that God has commissioned us to do. We do not need to fear or become discouraged because God is with us. The presence of God's Holy Spirit abiding with the people of Haggai's day, as they did the work that God commissioned them to do, was the basis for their encouragement and the source of their spiritual vitality. God's Spirit empowered them to do the work. Therefore, they were not to fear or become discouraged because God was with them.

In **Haggai 2:1-3** as well as in **Ezra 3:10-13**, we discover that there were those who still remembered the glory of Solomon's temple. It was much bigger. Some of the people were still discouraged and disappointed in the size of the new temple even though fifteen years had passed since the foundations were laid. You know, a handful of discouraged and disappointed people can ruin the enthusiasm of all the people and God knows that. So the message He gave in **verse 4** was, take courage Zerubbabel, take courage Joshua, take courage all you people for *"I am with you."*

The key is not the size of the work or the size of the church or the size of the ministry, but rather is God in it and are we doing it and is He glorified. The key is not so much what God has

done in the past, but rather what He is doing now and are we involved in it. Certainly we need to learn from the past and be encouraged by the faithfulness of God working in the past. However, we cannot live in the past. We must live for today and look with confidence at what God will do in the future. That is what God was showing the people of Haggai's day.

Notice what is said in **Haggai 2:6-9**. *“For thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. I will shake all the nations, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘and in this place I shall give peace,’ declares the LORD of hosts.”* God turned their attention to the future millennial kingdom and the future temple when it would be filled with His glory. If you ever question the importance of the ministry that you are involved in, all you need to do is look to the future results as Christ returns to set up His kingdom and the glory and the peace that will fill the earth. We get a little glimpse of what it will be like in **Ezekiel 43:1-5**. We are told, *“Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters (compare **Revelation 1:15-16**); and the earth shone with His glory (compare **Matthew 24:29-30**). And it was like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar (see **Ezekiel 1:3**); and I fell on my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the east gate facing toward the east. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.”* All through history God has taken the eyes of His people off the past and off of the present and put them on His ultimate plan.

If you ever get discouraged in ministry consider the ultimate results of that ministry and take courage. To remain excited in ministry we must be encouraged by God while in the process of doing His work. God does that by letting us see the ultimate results of our efforts.

A CALL TO CLEANNES

There is something else God wants us to understand as we go about doing His work. Before we can be blessed in doing the work of God we must have our hearts and lives cleansed by God. Please read the second message that God gave through Haggai in **Haggai 2:10-19**.

I think it is important to understand that holiness is not contagious, but iniquity is. That is what these verses are teaching. If you touch a dead animal and then grab a burger before you wash your hands that burger is going to be contaminated. I don't think anyone will disagree; the sin of gossip usually promotes more gossip not less. A lack of love in a church usually undermines the unity in that church and promotes less love in the church not more. One can catch a cold from someone else, but it is impossible to catch the health of another. Like the common cold, common sin is all too contagious and it must be avoided if we are going to have our ministry blessed by God.

In **Haggai 2:14** there was a blessing. God told the people of Haggai's day that He would bless them. Why? Because they got back to doing His work His way for His glory. Their hearts and actions were cleansed. They were now ready to be blessed by God.

When we are obedient to God's Word, when we desire His righteousness and keep our ways pure, when we desire that He be pleased and glorified in all we say and do, then His blessings will follow. When we get our priorities straight – aligned with His, then we can expect His blessings, not before. God told the people of Haggai's day ***"Yet from this day on I will bless you."***

A CALL TO CONFIDENCE

When we experience the Lord's blessing in our lives and ministries, we are encouraged. It builds our confidence. We have the assurance that He is present with us, that He is in the work, that we are in His will and His future plans and purposes will be accomplished. Notice the message that God gave to Zerubbabel through Haggai in **Haggai 2:20-23**. It says, ***Then the word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, 'Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, I am going to shake the heaven and the earth. I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.'*** ***'On that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,' declares the LORD, 'and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,' declares the LORD of hosts.***" There is no greater blessing and no greater encouragement than to know God is going to accomplish His plans and purposes and that we have a part in them. In the case of Zerubbabel, God said He would make him like a ***"signet ring."*** That was God's way of honoring Zerubbabel and to guarantee that he would continue the Davidic line that would lead to the birth of Jesus Christ (see **Matthew 1:1-17**). Zerubbabel could move forward with the confidence that God was with him and that God was going to accomplish His plans and purpose through him. What a blessing.

It is important to note that the prophecy given in these verses looks forward to the time when Christ will return to rule the nations of the world and sit upon the throne of David. In **verse 7** as well as in **verse 21** God said He is going to shake the heavens and the earth. The word ***"shake"*** means ***"to shake violently."*** It is a prophetic reference to the Great Tribulation period prior to Christ's return, see **Matthew 24:29-30**. God is going to get everyone's attention. Everyone will see Jesus coming back. He is going to fill His house with His glory and rule the nations by His power. It is guaranteed. Nothing will prevent God from accomplishing His plan!

Consider this question: Are you upset, disappointed and frustrated with government leaders? Even angry? Well, so is God. Most of the world's leaders have turned their back on God, they have rejected Him and want out from under His authority. It was true when the book of Haggai was written and it is true today. Most of the leaders of the world's governments have fallen into the **Psalm 2:1-3** category. ***"Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed (Jesus Christ), saying, 'Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!'"*** A note to world leaders: Change is coming. Jesus is coming back in all His glory as the King of kings and the Lord of lords (**Revelation 19:15-16**) and when He does He ***"will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations"*** (**Haggai 2:22**). ***"He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury"*** (**Psalm 2:5**). He will ***"...break them with a rod of iron..."*** and He will ***"...shatter them like***

earthenware” (**Psalm 2:9**). Compare **Revelation 19:15-21**. However, there is hope, even for today! There is a solution, even for those in leadership today and for those governed by ungodly leaders. As we are told in **Psalm 2:10-12**, **“Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son (Jesus Christ), that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!”** Even in the face of difficult and ungodly times, like it was in the day of Haggai and Zerubbabel, it is encouraging to know that for **“all”** who have taken refuge in the Lord, God is our protector, He is with us and He is still working through us to accomplish His plans and purpose. We can be confident that our Sovereign God is for us and, **“If God is for us, who is against us”** (**Romans 8:31**)?

Stop for a moment and consider your ways. Are you ready for the good shaking that is going to come? Are you on the winning side? Do you know for certain that God is with you not against you? Do you want His blessings in your life including the forgiveness of sin and the blessing of eternal life in glory with Him? If you have never asked Jesus to be your Savior and Lord you can do that today by simply going to Him by faith in prayer. Here is a suggested prayer:

Dear heavenly Father,

“I know that I have sinned against You. I believe Jesus died for my sin and paid the penalty for my sin upon the cross. I believe that You raised Him from the dead. Please forgive me of my sin and come into my life as my personal Savior and Lord. Thank You for Your forgiveness and for Your free gift of eternal life. Amen.”

If you prayed that prayer, then God will say, **“I am with you.”** Welcome to the eternal family of God. **“How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!”**

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