

*Put God First
(The Book of Haggai)
Part 10*

^d In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest: ² This is what the LORD Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built.' " ³ Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: ⁴ "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" ⁵ Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." ⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. ⁸ Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD. ⁹ "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. ¹¹ I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands." ¹² Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. ¹³ Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: "I am with you," declares the LORD. ¹⁴ So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, ¹⁵ on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius." (Haggai 1:1-15)

The people of God when God allowed them to return back to Jerusalem the main purpose of their return was to rebuild the house of God, the temple, in Jerusalem. When they returned they started to do that and because of certain

discouragement and opposition they stopped working in the project of rebuilding the house of God and instead they started to be busy in building their own houses.

And that is why the word of God came to them, *² This is what the LORD Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built.'" (Haggai 1:2)* The people they left God and went away from serving the Lord because they faced opposition and they thought the presence of struggles is because the timing to rebuild the house of God is not correct. But the truth is this: Every time you decide to follow God and serve Him you will face resistance and struggle from the devil who will use all what he can do to stop you. The point that I want to stress on you that you need to put God first and continue to serve Him, ***"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*** (James 4:7)

The people after they left the project of rebuilding the temple undone they were involved fully to rebuild their own houses and they were careless toward God and toward His temple. So the call of God to them through the prophet Haggai was a call for repentance to leave what they were busy with and turn to God and start to serve Him again. The message was as the following: ***"Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" (Haggai 1:4)*** The point here the people were so concerned with their own lives and that might be the case with you; you must know that being busy with your own life will not bring you the blessings that God had ordained for you. If you will not go back to God and serve Him then you will never be blessed by Him.

Why that call of repentance was so important? In the New Testament after Jesus death on the cross for our sins we became the temple of God. ***"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own."*** (1Corinthians 6:19) Therefore if you will fail to serve God and be an active part of His church then you will not be benefited at all. Therefore ***"Give careful thought to your ways,"*** being a people of God and living away from Him and from His will and non serving Him that will bring the following troubles:

1- Lack of personal blessings: If you fail to serve God and fail to put him first then the following will be your lot: ***"You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have***

your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” (Haggai 1:6)

2- Lack of success: The final outcome of all your plans and projects will be failure, *“You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the LORD Almighty. “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house” (Haggai 1:9)* Serving the Lord is building yourself, your present life and future. When you put God first and your heart and mind are fully occupied with Him then the Lord Himself will lead you to do things that will be a real foundation for a successful life and wonderful ministry.

3- National and global economic recessions: When you disobey God and turn away from Him you are failing to bring His light to the nations and the people who are around you in the place that He had put you. *“¹⁰ Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. ¹¹ I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands.”* If you put God and his work aside the Lord will work it out that you will find yourself in a dry atmosphere.

Therefore, *“⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. ⁸ Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the LORD.” (Haggai 1:7-8)* God wants you to honour him in achieving the following things:

A- Start to think correctly: *“Give careful thought to your ways.”* Without God you are failure and no future for you.

B- Put your best effort to serve God: *“Go up into the mountains”* The mountains was the place where the people need to go to bring wood. And we know that climbing mountains is something need to exercise physical effort. In serving the Lord you might be called to spend physical effort, transport and moving from one place to another in order to serve God.

C- Bring the material things that are required for God’s service: *“bring down timber”* You are called to specifically bring what is required so that God’s ministry and church be build up.

D- Put your heart and mind and start to work with God in building His church: *“build the house.”* Work it out with God to start first to repent of your sins and to renounce all your shortcoming and start to build your life in accordance to God’s word. So that your life will be light for others so that in order for them to see God through you and walk in His ways, *“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)* In this way you will be a good disciple and follower of Jesus and the Lord will use you to evangelize and go and make disciples of all nations and you will really be used by the Lord to build up His church.

Think about the message, God concern about your life and want you to rebuild up your life and bless you. When you agree to go with the terms of God it is not that you will lose and God will take from you but it is the opposite, you will receive more from God than what you gave or going to give to Him.

When the people at the time of Haggai they heard the message of God through Haggai they obeyed the message and their hearts was stirred up to respond to God’s call for repentance and turn away from their own selfish way toward God and His work and will. In respond to the people obedience, the Lord gave them through Haggai the following message: *“I am with you.”*

My Dear and Beloved: God is longing to rebuild you up and to build up your life, and will give you a good future. You need to yield to Him and give Him your life and your heart and mind. Put God first and commit your life and all what you have for Him to serve him and you will see with your own eyes how He is with you in building you as you agree to pray.

My Prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the Cross for my sins and rose from the dead to give me eternal life. Lord I repent from the lack of commitment and being away from you and from your service. Lord I commit myself to put into practice what I hear and to complete the work entrusted to me. I will give careful thought to my ways; put my best effort, bring the material things that are required, and put my heart and mind and start to work with you and doing your work. Lord Give me the strength and perseverance to do that. This all I ask and pray in Jesus name, Amen.*