



*10 In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 11 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, 12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. 13 Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. 14 Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean. 15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: 16 Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. (Haggai 2:10-16)*

The whole of Haggai's message – being to the labor of our hands, the treasure of our hearts, and the thoughts of our minds – may be summed up in the single word – DUTY! Whatever treasures abide in our hearts (and the heart is the key to all living) motivates our hands to labor, our minds to learning, and our hearts to love. Idle hands that are able to work and achieve are generally empty of heart and thought. It is for this reason that the apostles were always busy at their labors when Christ called them to *"Follow me!"* It was the 'beginning of knowledge and wisdom' for many of them; but that knowledge and wisdom grew to profound proportions as they came to learn from the Lord the greater matters of heart and faith. There later prosperity reached the whole world.

It is quite revealing each proclamation of Haggai is preceded by the phrases (as in this chapter as well) of . . . *came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,* and *Thus saith the LORD of hosts.* These are not words that are prominently heard from the modern pulpits of our day as the Bible recedes more and more from being heard in its strong counsel from our weak and sterile preachers.

If we are sincere professors of the Word of God, we must first of all love the Word of God, meditate on that Word both day and night, and demonstrate the depth of our commitment to that Word through profitable and dedicated ACTION.

Today in God's message of Haggai is the word "CONSIDER." Those things received by faith and love in the heart must be refined by intelligent thought and consideration. A little known and less heralded truth in our day is the fact that all of the major sciences were founded by Christians who believed all of their knowledge and discoveries flowed from the Mind of God as Maker of all natural law and of all things. The Mind of God illumines the mind of man to discovery if man's religion is stayed on Christ and the beauty of His Universe. *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.* (Psalm 1:2)

Such moral consciousness ALWAYS results in an outward expression of achievement beyond the man's sole ability to accomplish. I ran across a very revealing line of thought today while reading In His Image by William Jennings Bryan (1922):

*Religion is the relation between man and his Maker--the most important relationship into which man enters. Most of the relationships of life are voluntary; we enter into them or not as we please. Such, for illustration, are those between business partners, between stockholders in a corporation, between friends and between husband and wife. Some relationships, on the other hand, are involuntary; we enter into them because we must. Such, for illustration, are those between man and his government, between man and society, and between man and his Maker.*

*Tolstoy declares that morality is but the outward manifestation of religion. If this be true, as I believe it is, then religion is the most practical thing in life and the thought of God the greatest thought that can enter the human mind or heart. Tolstoy also delivers a severe rebuke to what he calls the "Cultured crowd"--those who think that religion, while good enough for the ignorant (to hold in check and restrain them), is not needed when one reaches a certain stage of intellectual development. His reply is that religion is not superstition and does not rest upon a vague fear of the unseen forces of nature, but does rest upon "man's consciousness of his finiteness amid an infinite universe and of his sinfulness." This consciousness, Tolstoy adds, man can never outgrow.*

The more years I put behind me, the better I can understand the logic of both Bryan and Tolstoi. There is perhaps one point made by Tolstoi that needs strengthening for today's Christian. There are many in the so-called "cultured crowd" who truly believe themselves above the Old Time religion; but they are perfectly willing to allow themselves the prideful privilege of holding themselves out as Christians while their hearts are more fixed on vanity and the world.

Haggai's counsel (actually the Lord's) is to CONSIDER all that it means to follow God and obey His commandments. The Psalmist asks: *3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* (Psalm 8:3-4) Do we look upon God's Creation with awe of the intelligent mind, but also with an intrigue of the heart? Unless the heart rules the mind, it will be ruled by greed and pride.

Consider our works! What have they amounted to? Our success in the Gospel is not measured by stone and straw, but by the abundant treasures of the heart. Any Holy thing is Holy in and of itself. The hem of the Lord's garment did not heal the woman taken by an issue of blood – it was her faith in the Person before her who wore that garment and hem. It was not the hewn stone and cedar wood of the Temple that was Holy, but rather the Personage for whom the Temple was constructed. Actually, the doctrines and truth of Holy Scripture are very reasonable and easy to believe for those whose minds are not cluttered with false pride and false religion – or even science

falsely so-called: *20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: 21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.* (1 Tim 6:20-21) True science does not challenge its Maker for God is the author of all natural law and science; but science, falsely so called, has gotten the prominence in our day in the minds of pretentious believers and sorcerers of false theories.

Here in the closing lines of Haggai, God addresses Zerubbabel as His anointed who stands in the figure of the coming Christ: *20 And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, 21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; 22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. 23 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.* (Haggai 2:20-23) Those whom the Lord chooses are granted high authority – and every true believer is chosen. Each is given a signet of authority. In Biblical times, a signet ring bore the king’s seal. It represented the authority of the King even if that authority was delegated by the King to an emissary. Well, we are emissaries, and our words and deeds must reflect the will of the King whom we represent.

You will recall the Prodigal Son who took his inheritance early and struck off to a “far country” – a land far away from the will of his Father. In a short time, he spent all of his living in revelry and decadence. Finally, his sunny day friends deserted him when his wealth was exhausted. So, he joined himself to a stranger of that land. The stranger (who is Satan) will use you and ruin you. He cares not for your soul except to destroy it. When the young man “came to himself,” i.e., when he got into his right mind (for none who are lost are in their right mind) he made a resolution to return to his father as a servant. He then acted upon that resolve, for no resolution is worth a penny if not acted upon. His father had watched that long-winding road over which his son had departed for days, weeks, months, and years. Finally, the son appeared on the distant horizon. He did not resemble the handsome young man who had departed so proudly so many months ago. He was filthy. His clothes were tattered and smelled of the odors of the pig sty. Yet, his father RECOGNIZED him even at a distance, and RAN to Him, and HUGGED him. This tells me God cares not how far away from Him we have gotten so long as we are headed in the right direction – TOWARD Him!

The father has the boy appareled in the finest robe (of Salvation), he has shoes put on his bare feet (for the perfect liberty that the Christian enjoys), and he has his own ring (signet) placed on his finger to show AUTHORITY! All of these three things are what God offers those who bear the likeness, image, and imputed righteousness of His only Begotten Son. He will even give us accommodation to live in the Temple not made with hands. The stones are not of granite, but of the tender sinews of many hearts bound together with the bands of love and faithfulness to Christ.

Our next devotion of Haggai will be a conclusion of all that we have studied up to this point in this excellent and inspiring little Book.