Haggai - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 4 (1856), Consider Your Ways.

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Haggai. 1:5, 7.

ONCE and again did the Lord of Hosts, by the prophet Haggai, sound these solemn words in the ears of His ancient people. They had in heart turned away from the God of Israel. Still calling themselves by the name of the Lord's people, they justified their neglect of His house, by saying, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." Self and its many interests had absorbed their minds, as their ceiled houses plainly witnessed. Corn, oil, cattle, wine, earning money, and laying it up, were eagerly sought after, while at the same time the Lord's house was lying waste.

This condition of things called for God's discipline; their expectations in earthly things proved abortive. The prophet was commanded to say unto them, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes ... Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of Hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands." (chs. 1:5-11.) Thus we see that God taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and, that when He is provoked to jealousy, how much stronger He is than His provokers. He shows His people that He is thoroughly acquainted with everything that their hearts are set upon, and that He teaches the difficult lessons, that "God is greater than man," and that to attempt to occupy a position of independence of Him is madness and folly, and sure to end in failure and disappointment.

But the Lord not only rebukes His people, He also exhorts and encourages them; He assures them of the blessing connected with obeying Him: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." (vs. 8.) This was very gracious, and the sequel shows how ready the Lord was to come in to help and bless His people, when they obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and did fear before the Lord. He sent the prophet to them, saying, "I am with you, saith the Lord." He stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, and the spirit of Joshua, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did the work in the house of the Lord of Hosts their God. After this, the prophet was sent again to cheer and encourage His people, saying, "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts.... My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." (chs. 2:4, 5.)

We also find, that as soon as the people had a heart to serve the Lord according to His mind, from that time the blessing of God was with them. "Consider now from this day.... even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it.... from this day will I bless you." (chs. 2:18, 19.)

Is there not much in this history, beloved, that we may apply to ourselves? Is it not to be feared, that many of the Lord's people are wont to excuse their anxiety for success in temporal matters, or for maintaining a certain standing in society, and their lack of energy in the service of Christ, by saying, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built?" May not many cases of sorrow and distress be considered the Lord's rebuke and chastisement for seeking our own things, and not the things of Christ? God surely has a work to be done now. His church— His house—is ever dear to Him. He beholds the present scene of division, confusion, and dishonor to Christ, and He commands us to build— "Edify one another," "Exhort one another daily," "Consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works." Many who have not carefully weighed these scriptures, may be tempted to think, that building the Lord's house in our day, is the work only of a few that are specially gifted; but, "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." It was not only the spirit of Zerubbabel and Joshua that God stirred up to work, but all the remnant of the people. This is very important. Each member of the body of Christ has his measure of grace and service. All are needed. Every believer should solemnly feel this before the Lord. Let none expect the blessing of God, either personally or on their work, if the welfare of the house of the Lord is only of secondary importance. Each saint should be much in self-judgment and prayer to God. "Consider your ways," is assuredly a word for the times. We should all seek to stir up one another to turn to God with purpose of heart, to seek first the kingdom of God, and to cry earnestly, continually, and believingly, to the Father of mercies, for reviving in these last days. Our estate is a very low one, but there is help in God. The Lord's house lieth waste, and we must build. We may well count upon God. He changeth not. He will hear our prayers, and answer them for Jesus' sake. Let us try our hearts and all our ways by the Scriptures. We need not hesitate, for God can meet us at the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. Let us be earnest, honest, and of good courage, holding fast the authority of the Written Word of God, and presence and power of His Spirit. Let us individually and collectively consider our ways, and build the Lord's house. Christ pleased not Himself.

How precious the Church is to Christ! He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. What love! The preaching of the gospel, too, is precious to Him. When souls are converted, it is like hewing out costly stones from the quarry for the house of the Lord; but even if the report be not believed, He can take ineffable delight in it. "We are," says Paul, "unto God, a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." (2 Cor. 2:15.)

Beloved brethren, we are called unto the fellowship of the Son of God. We are in partnership with Jesus in everything. All therefore that concerns Him should deeply interest us. Being joined unto the Lord and one spirit, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, we should never cherish objects and interests apart from Him. Time was, when the simple and true-hearted fishermen could leave their nets and follow Jesus. They felt His claim upon them more than even the necessary details of this present life; not that they were unwilling to cast a hook into the

sea, and take up a fish, but it must be at the Lord’s bidding.

It is a deeply important matter that every believer should take heed to himself, and seek his own soul’s comfort and blessing; but it is a terrible thing to stop there. The heart of the Lord is upon His whole church; He intercedes for all saints; and fellowship with Him would lead us into the same path. It is also clearly the mind of God, that saints should labor with their hands in the thing that is good, to live honest toward them that are without, and to owe no man anything; but it would be a sad thing to stop there. True fellowship with the Lord would aim higher than this; it would lead us to labor also, that we might have to give to him that needeth—to build His house.

When the Lord comes, beloved, we shall not regret that we have lived for the glory of God. We know not how soon He may come again. Let us be found, when He appears, building His house. We have much to praise Him for now, but,

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