

Consider Your Ways

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Date: 07 July 2013

[0:00] Consider your ways.

Haggai. Haggai. It's the second to last, third to last book in the Old Testament there. Haggai is only two chapters long.

! It's a little book, but a powerful book. It's four sermons, over a three-month time span. And the message of the Lord through Haggai is this. Consider your ways.

Consider your ways. One of the good things about the book is that the people of Judah heard the message and they listened and they acted on it.

They shifted their devotion from self to the Lord. And this all took place when the Hebrews had just returned from 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

[1:02] Seventy years they'd been away from their homeland. They'd come back and they'd set up the altar of burnt offerings in Jerusalem. They'd laid the foundations for the temple. But then they got discouraged.

Who's ever been discouraged? I know I can put my hand up to that one. We can get discouraged. That's what these people did. They got discouraged and they stopped the work.

The work got suspended. And this inactivity lasted for 16 long years. 16 years of inactivity.

Now I don't know whether you've ever had the experience of complacency. Complacency it means she'll be right mate. You know I'll just coast along and take an easy ride.

Take it easy. You know I've got a habit of saying take it easy you know to people things like that. It's a kind of expression isn't it? We get complacent. And the prince of Tozer said complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth.

[2:06] Complacency it's a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. That's what happens to the people here in the book of Haggai. They got complacent. Oh she'll be right mate.

I'll just take it easy. They had come to a standstill spiritually. They'd come to a grinding halt. That God had told them what to do they'd started but then they just thought oh I'll just take a break.

16 long years at a standstill spiritually. The temple lay in ruins because the people grew lazy and careless.

Really it was sinful neglect of spiritual things. Really it was the work of the Lord that took a second place in their lives. The work of the Lord was left to one side while they attended to other things.

Can that be true of you of me? Can it? Can it be true? Can it happen to us today in this 21st century? Yes it can.

[3:08] We can grow cold and get stagnant and come to a spiritual standstill. So we can learn some lessons from Haggai's book today.

Even in this day in this day in this 21st century we can learn from Haggai. So let's step into the time machine and travel back almost 2,533 years.

An interesting fact about Haggai is he actually dates the various sermons and the segments of his book and it's dated to an exact date the 29th of August 520 BC.

It was on that day that the word of the Lord came. Haggai 1 verse 1 In the second year of Darius the king in the sixth month in the first day of the month came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zarephath the son of Shealtiel governor of Judah and to Joshua the son of Josedek the high priest saying Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts saying This people say The time is not come The time that the Lord's house should be built.

The word of the Lord came it's interesting as we read the Lord addresses the people as This people not my people Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts saying This people say It's interesting that isn't it He doesn't say my people say He says This people It's as if God would not own them in the season of backsliding and disobedience It's alike to in Exodus 32 verse 7 as the people came down as rather Moses came down from the mount and the people were there playing up and it says in Exodus 32

verse 7 The Lord said unto Moses Go get thee down for thy people which thou broughtest down of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves Thy people Your people Moses they've corrupted themselves He didn't say my people interesting isn't it They were in backsliding in disobedience and the people then they started to make all kinds of excuses

[5:33] Now we can all make excuses for why we're not spiritual why we're not following heart after the Lord like we ought to like I ought to We can all make excuses Of course we don't do that today do we They were saying it's not the right time It's not the right time to build a temple Not yet Not now Not at the moment I'm too busy really There's other things occupying me It's not the right time the people said Really it's because they were focused more on their selfish interests on their own personal ambitions They were preoccupied with other things They chose to neglect the things of God They had become lazy Let's face it They had become lazy about spiritual things Neglectful about spiritual things And God says to them

It's time It's time It's time Time to stop putting it off Time to get right with me Time to get on with what I've called you to do Haggai's message is a message of urgency of action of urging to rebuild of revival Consider your ways Consider your ways Let's look at some of the things that we can learn and hopefully apply from the Lord's word through Haggai Firstly consider what satisfies you What satisfies you The Lord speaks to us about where does our satisfaction come from What's the basis for it It's a challenge here for us to think about all the wasted opportunities all the wasted things the wasted priorities the wasted energies

Haggai delivered a message of rebuke a confronting message Verse 3 Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet saying Is it time for you O ye to dwell in your sealed houses and this house lie waste The word of the Lord came Is it time for you to get preoccupied with your sealed houses the senses of the specially furnished houses they were ornately decorated like palaces that's what the people were actually getting into they got all their priorities quite wrong they laboured hard to beautify their fancy houses to make their own lives cosy and comfortable at the neglect of God at the neglect of the things of God they neglected the temple they neglected the worship friends time is finite your time my time our days our hours our minutes our seconds are numbered our time is precious and it can be so easily expended and for the people here in this book as is so true of us today are saying like this yesterday's luxury had become today's necessity yesterday's luxury had become today's necessity they were there preoccupied just making their houses so fancy and furnished that they neglected the work that

God had told them to be about to be preparing that place of worship to being in that place in that devotion of worship and how we can learn today of the selfishness of the worldly presumes that crowd out God from our lives the vain things that swallow up our time our effort our energies what satisfies you now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts verse 5 consider your ways the Lord of hosts speaks the Lord of hosts that means literally the Lord of armies our commanding officer it's a title of power consider his sovereign power he says to you the Lord of hosts the Lord of armies in all his military might and fundamental power and reign he says consider your ways consider in other words attend to or carefully assess your ways how you're living it's time it's time time to get our priorities in order the essential message here was put

God and his work first honour him glorify him let him and his glory be your number one priority the Lord urges his people not to put their selfish interest ahead of God not to crowd out God rather that attending to your relationship with him is your fundamental concern that's where your real satisfaction comes from verse six it goes on you so much and bring in little you know they're busy sowing in the fields but really little to show for it you eat but you have not enough you know have you ever been at these all you can eat places you still feel a bit hungry when you're driving home you think oh I could have had another one of those cakes or whatever it is you drink but you're not filled with drink no satisfaction you clothe you but there is none warm I'm like that lately these cold nights are rug up and I'm still feeling cold

[11:47] I don't know about you but you clothe you but there is none warm and then it says and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes have you ever had that experience you just can't earn enough to pay pay for what you really want you know it's lost like that

isn't it and you're earning and earning and it's just pouring out the bottom of the bag you're putting it into a bag of holes thus saith the Lord of hosts consider your ways what satisfies you what satisfies you consider your ways Isaiah 55 it says our Lord says for my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord for as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts consider your ways are the way that is the way that we are choosing

God's way or is it fundamentally our own way the messenger Haggai calls to people to consider this issue of satisfaction of a bag with holes what are we expending our lives and what are we seeing for it what are we investing ourselves into is it into a bag with holes misplaced priorities misplaced priorities what they were doing was not satisfying them they were sowing but not really reaping they were wearing clothes but not yet not worn eating yet not satisfied drinking yet not satisfied earning wages but putting it into a bag with holes just misplaced priorities not satisfied it left them feeling empty and disappointed it's like they were building houses on a foundation of sand it's like they were trying to collect water in a sin just pouring out the bottom it's like they were the two like the two drunken men who boarded a boat one night and it was dark and they got in and both began to pull for home they rode very hard all that dark night wondering why it took them so long to reach the other side and the great dawn of morning broke and tired out and cold they hope now to locate their whereabouts and behold they found they'd forgotten to raise the anchor what a sheer waste of energy some people's lives are like that a waste of energy of poor investment and Satan deludes millions into occupying themselves with such vain effort getting nowhere fast

Haggai's message was a challenge to the people of their materialism of their vain effort what a waste what a sheer waste of a life focusing their lives on material things at the expense of the spiritual like trying to fill a bank full of holes where's your satisfaction found such things cannot satisfy our true need do we consider whether we are honouring our God pleasing Him with the way that we live our lives it's time the Lord says through Haggai it's time to be about what matters about the Father's business verse 8 go up to the mountain and bring word and build the house and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified saith the Lord won't it be good at the end of our lives at really the beginning of our eternity that there'll be something to show not for our glory but for His for the life we've lived do we want God to be pleased with the lives that we live do we want God to be glorified in our life

Haggai calls the people the house of worship was laid waste the people had gotten caught up with other things with their own busy lives and yet barren lives seemingly crammed full lives yet empty lives how did the people respond in verse 12 we pick up where the people responded in repentance and reverence in fear of the Lord in energised response verse 12 says the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and they did fear before the Lord verse 13 then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people saying I am with you saith the Lord knowing this changes everything know this I am with you saith the Lord he will encourage us to make those choices to consider our ways to find our satisfaction in him in him our satisfaction is truly found in him not being self satisfied but a satisfaction found in pleasing and glorifying God what satisfies you let it be him let it be Jesus let it be the Lord God secondly we see in verse 14 a stirring a stirring consider your ways we see what satisfies you is it a bag with holes or is it him secondly consider what stirs you what really stirs you what gives you an energy and a motivation to get up and go what stirs you verse 14 it says the Lord stirred up the spirit of some people what does it take to get you stirred up what does it take what excites you what excites your enthusiasm your passion your emotion you know

I honestly think I'd be correct by saying let me be honest now some of you get more stirred up by a Hollywood movie than by the preaching of the word of God I know if you see a good movie and it brings tears to your eyes you know it's all fiction and make believe but sometimes Hollywood stirs that emotion doesn't it it stirs an emotion a gut level reaction sometimes we can get more stirred by Hollywood than by the holy word more stirred up some of you get more stirred up by a game a footy than you do by the conviction of the holy spirit of God more stirred up some of you get more stirred up about a degree of inconvenience standing in a queue than about the lost souls all around you what does it take for you to get stirred up let's be honest consider consider your ways today consider your ways today what does it take for you to get stirred up what stirs you what motivates

you what provokes you it's a very important question it's time it's time time to get stirred up about what matters time to get stirred up and do something the stirring up we're talking about here is the prompting of God's spirit in verse 14 it says and the Lord stirred up the spirit of

[20:07] Sarah Babel the son of Shealtiel governor of Judah and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedek the high priest and the spirit of all the remnant of the people and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts their God it says they got stirred up and came and watched no they got stirred up and came and worked and I was encouraged this morning when a brother said to me he wants to get involved in the work amen that's a good thing it's a good thing to get stirred up and come at least come at least attend but more than that more than that come and work be a worker be a worker Haggai's sermon was fruitful within 24 days the temple work began in 24 days the people started to work on the temple they came and they did work and the building got underway what does this signify for us how can we apply this here and now it pictures for us a stirring up of zeal a stirring up of devotion a stirring up of faithfulness to our Lord a stirring up to wanting to be in the place of prayer to wanting to be in the place of worship to wanting to devote ourselves to the service to get stirred up to serve when was the last time you really got stirred up do spiritual things ignite a fire in you are you saved that's the most important thing because our working doesn't save us let me make that clear but as a saved man as a saved woman there's a service for you God's got a job for each of you he's got a gifting a calling a commission for each of us Romans 12 11 it says not slothful in business another is not lazy but fervent in spirit serving the Lord that's God's will for you fervent in spirit serving the Lord have you a fervency for him in laboring in prayer in fervent love for the brethren in serving the Lord there's many verses about fervency just touching on them quickly 1 Peter 1 22 it talks about obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned in other words real love of the brethren seeing that you love one another with a pure heart fervently love one another with a pure heart fervently love one another with a pure heart fervently that's a command 1 Peter 4 verse 8 and above all things have fervent love or fervent charity among yourselves!

fervent love and James 5 16 talks about the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous manner of a righteous manner they are much I don't think we get stirred up enough people I don't think I get stirred up enough it's easy to be complacent it's easy to coast along it's easy to be lazy I'm saying that for myself it's easy to take an easy ride it's easy to take it easy we don't get stirred up enough get stirred up people get stirred up brother stir up fan into flame that gift that ability that God has given you whatever it be the people got stirred up in their spirit and they came and they did work there was renewed faith and zeal and it translated into direct action and we see this stirring up through the word of God

Paul had it he had that same problem he was addicted to the ministry there's people in 1 Corinthians they were addicted to the ministry they were addicted to the service of God it was an addiction a good addiction if you've got addictions today this is an addiction you don't want to get rid of it's an addiction we need to be addicted to the ministry in Acts 17 16 it says Paul when he came to Athens his spirit was stirred in him his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city was holy given to idolatry consider your ways it's time to get stirred up people it's time brother to stir up the gift it's time sister to stir yourself into action when the enemy hits you hard it's time to get stirred up I've said this before I know a preacher

[25:28] I know he says when the devil hits him hardest he gets a bag of tracks and he says I'm going to show you devil and he goes and gives our tracks so instead of having a pity party when you're feeling like oh what it's me I'm having you tough today go and get some tracks and give it to him suck it to the devil get out there and give him trouble get stirred up when the enemy gives you a hard time when you see the spiritual wickedness in high places get stirred up when you see the city is holy given to idolatry get stirred up I'd like to see some people stirred up this morning in a good way in a good way Hebrews 10 24 it says and let us consider one another to provoke or stir unto love and to good works that's a good thing provoke one another I'd like you to be a provocative

Christian today after the service when you get a chance to talk to someone go and provoke them you know it's got the sense of jab them with a hard stick you know stick it in their ribs!

that's a good thing to be provoked into isn't it and to provoke others to get stirred up and come and do some work consider your ways what satisfies you what is your satisfaction founding what stirs you what stirs you and thirdly what strengthens you in verse 4 yet now be strong O Zerubbabel I've got to learn how to say that word saith the Lord and be strong O Joshua son of Josedek the high priest and be strong all you people of the land saith the Lord and work for I am with you saith the Lord of hosts consider your ways early in verse 14 of chapter 1 it said the Lord stirred up the spirit of some people and they came and did work now verse 4 the Lord says to you be strong and work what strengthens you where does your strength come from is it your own it will fail you will fail in your own strength friends it's easy to get weary who's ever felt weary we won't be human would we without that in 2

Thessalonians 3 13 it says but ye brethren be not weary in well doing be not weary in well doing and the context of 2 Thessalonians 3 it's about work Paul Paul wrought with labour and travail night and day non-stop he's worse than 24-7 Kevin he was 24-7 Paul he wrought with labour and travail night and day he was a non-stop Christian he was a full-time full-time wrought with labour and travail night and day and then verse 11 of 2 Thessalonians 3 he says but there are some who walk among you disorderly working not at all but are busy bodies now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work and eat their own bread be not weary in well doing that's the context of that verse there in other words be strengthened and work Haggai goes on to tell a coming shaking time a shaking time friends we need to consider our ways and be strong be strengthened because there is a shaking coming a time of shaking faces you and you need a strong foundation for such times to draw your strength from where it's not going to falter when everything is shaking and falling apart all around you you need something you can rely on something rock solid unshakable unmovable when there's a whole lot of shaking going on you need God's presence you need his spirit to hold you strong and fast you need God's presence as your security as your strength God says be strong take courage how can we be strong how can I be strong in these days when everything's shaking when life's so busy when there's so many things to occupy myself with how can I be strong spiritually verse 5 chapter 2 the word is my spirit remaineth among you fear you not my spirit remains with you fear you not we need to be strengthened because there's a time of shaking coming on we need to be strengthened by the spirit of God it says verse 6 there's a little while and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land the time will come when the Lord will shake the nations he's going to shake the nature he's going to shake all things yet he says to you fear not consider your ways where is your satisfaction found where is your where is what stirs you up found where is what strengthens you found is it him is it Christ one day he's going to shake the governments of this world the religions the business homes are going to get shaken the economy is going to get shaken cultures are going to get shaken

God is going to shake the world in Christ returning and he wants to shake us now he wants to grab a hold of us and shake us shake us out of our complacency shake us out of our sleepiness shake us shake us and wake us out of our comfort zones we need to be shaken now by the spirit of God and find that strength that he gives that place of security of peace there's more in the book we won't cover in detail but it tells of honouring God of pleasing God God I've got my pages mixed up now but friends we need to realise what really matters what really counts what what is what is it that we can consider today and only you can consider your life it says in the word let a man examine himself you know

[32:39] I could try to examine you and think oh this one here's a good guy and this one's not so good or this lady's quite a good Christian and this one's not so good a Christian but only you can answer for yourself there's a self-assessment there examine yourselves whether you be in the faith I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations shall come verse 7 of chapter 2 and I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord of hosts I urge you brethren I urge you gentlemen and ladies here today to be strengthened be strengthened in your faith in your resolve in your desire of him in your walk with him it goes on in Haggai to talk about the

defilement of sin of a people defiled yet purified and blessed of a place filled with his own glory

Haggai warns of the contamination of sin he urges the people to a consecration Haggai warns of sin as easily manifested and defiling yet the book closes with some encouraging words in verse 19 of chapter 2 he says I will bless you God wants to be a blessing to you he wants to bless you that's not talking about necessarily material or physical things but to bless you in what really counts spiritual blessings verse 23 at the close he says of Sarah Bubble I have chosen you I have chosen you and how can we apply this of course today we're not building some actual temple of bricks and stone and water but there is a temple and it's the glorious church that he's building in the preparation for his coming the building up of a spiritual temple of people who love him who are his a people brought together by his spirit to belong to him to be his temple the people said it's not time yet it's not time yet to build the temple it is time it's time now now is the time it's time to take stop to consider your ways it's time to attend to the spiritual things that we've neglected consider your ways God says it twice in the book consider your ways let's not put our hopes and dreams energies and aspirations into a bag full of holes what a waste it's time to get to it it's time to do God's work consider your ways what satisfies you consider your priorities will it be occupying yourself with yourself and your selfish interests and things filling your time with selfish things or will it be filling your priorities with spiritual things what stirs you what really stirs you do you get more stirred up about some soap or some story made by man or will it be his story that stirs you up will it be his word that stirs you up that gives you something to be passionate about something spiritual what strengthens you will it be in your own strength that you face that shaking to come and things will be shaking all around you and you're not saved yet let your strength be in him let it be in him that you find your resource because without him you can do nothing all of this talk of doing something of attending of working is in vain if you don't know him let Christ be your source of strength and power I urge you today consider your ways