

HAGGAI: CALLING GOD'S PEOPLE BACK TO HIS WORK

III: The Need For Holiness For Ministry Blessing

(Haggai 2:10-19)

I. Introduction

- A. Haggai, the first prophet after the Babylonian Captivity, was assigned by God to direct Israel to get back to the work of rebuilding the temple after the work had been delayed for 15 years. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1306, "Introduction to the Book of Haggai")
- B. Sin is incredibly destructive not only in living, especially in serving the Lord in a ministry, and Haggai 2:10-19 clarified it in clear terms. We view the passage for our insight and application (as follows):

II. The Need For Holiness For Ministry Blessing, Haggai 2:10-19.

- A. Three months after Zerubbabel and Joshua had led Israel's people to heed Haggai's message about returning to the work of rebuilding the temple (Haggai 1:15 with 2:10), God's word came to Haggai, Haggai 2:10.
- B. The Lord's message dealt with the reality that one's much-needed holiness for blessing cannot be transferred, but that sin's defilement is as easily transferrable as a contagious disease, Haggai 2:11-13 (as follows):
 - 1. The Lord had Haggai learn from the priests if holiness was transferrable under the Law, Haggai 2:11-12:
 - a. Haggai was to ask the priests if according to the Mosaic Law one could transfer holiness from consecrated sacrificial meat to other objects that were touched by the meat, Haggai 2:11-12a.
 - b. When asked, the priests replied that holiness was not transferrable from the meat to other objects, v. 12b.
 - 2. The Lord then directed Haggai to learn from the priests if defilement was transferrable, Haggai 2:13:
 - a. Haggai asked the priests that if someone who was ceremonially unclean for having touched a dead body, that if he touched any other item, would it be ceremonially contaminated, Haggai 2:13a.
 - b. When asked, the priests replied that these objects if touched by the defiled person would be defiled, v. 13b.
- C. God's prophet Haggai then explained the Lord's application of this object lesson to Israel's people, teaching that their former disobedience to God in ceasing to work on the temple, being sin, had defiled all the works of their hands, and that that defilement had spiritually corrupted everyone in Israel's community ***through their all heeding the saying that it was not time to return to the work of rebuilding the temple***, Hag. 2:14 with 1:2.
- D. Thus, with the word "upward" being properly translated "backward" to indicate past time in Haggai 2:15 KJV (Ibid., fn. to Haggai 2:15), Haggai said that the people should consider that before they had obeyed the Lord in returning to the temple work, their grain harvest had suffered a 50 percent drop and their grape harvest had dropped 60 percent, Haggai 2:15-16. (B. K. C., O. T., p. 1543) The people had suffered blight and mildew in judgment for disobedience as warned for sin in the Mosaic Covenant in Deuteronomy 28:22 and destructive hail (cf. Isaiah 28:2; 30:30), catastrophic problems for agricultural societies like Israel, Haggai 2:17a; Ibid.
- E. Nevertheless, the people had not turned to the Lord to obey Him in returning to the rebuilding work, v. 17b.
- F. Also, the people were to consider that from the day that they had returned to laying the foundation of the temple three months before to that day three months later that the "drought of divine judgment had already affected the year's harvest so that their barns were already emptied of the sparse harvest. They had neither staples (seed, or grapes, or olives) nor luxuries (figs and pomegranates). To this too they were to give careful thought," meaning they were to realize how their disobedience in failing to keep at their ministry duty of rebuilding the temple had hurt the productivity of each of their livelihood endeavors, Haggai 2:18-19a; Ibid.
- G. Nevertheless, since they had persisted in the rebuilding effort, God said that from that day onward, He was going to bless them in all these realms where they had experienced a lack of divine blessing, Haggai 2:19b.

Lesson: *By sinning in ceasing to obey God's calling to rebuild the temple, that sin had corrupted everything else that the sinful hands of Israel's people had touched because sin is so very contagious and limits God's blessings. However, since the people had heeded the Lord's prophet to return to God's calling to rebuild the temple, and they had stuck to the work for three months, the Lord promised to provide them a restoration of livelihood blessings.*

Application: *(1) May we realize that God's directives on what we should do to serve Him are so important that starting to obey them only to cease doing so corrupts and hurts everything else we do, including our work to earn a living. (2) If we face widespread decreases in blessing in various realms of life, may we examine if we have failed to continue to obey the Lord in our calling from Him, and return to His calling as needed! (3) May we note that God blesses us if we obey Him in staying at the ministry assignment He gave us, not necessarily if we adopt a view of other believers to cease that effort, for God and other believers can greatly differ in their view of the ministry!*