

# Consider Your Ways

Haggai 1:5-9, 12-13



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**FOCAL Read Responsively** Haggai 1:5-9, 12-13<sup>KJV</sup>

Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. (6) **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.** (7) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. (8) 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. (9) **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. ... (12) Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD. (13) Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I [am] with you, saith the LORD.**

Israel, God's "firstborn" and His first chosen, was once more in bondage. This nation, once the greatest of all, a nation that was born from the soil of Egyptian slavery, a nation that God brought triumphantly across the Red Sea while destroying the vastly superior army that chased it, had now been years in bondage. God had blessed this nation, magnified it, and as long as she honored her Savior she could not be defeated. The Lord told His

Israel when they were confronted by a superior enemy:

**Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he [it is] that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.**

The key to Israel's prosperity and peace was that God was with her. As she grew in size and as a world influence, Israel began to think along the lines of “numbers” and “size”. Though God had refused, time and time again, to allow His people to rely on their own strength, this people, blessed beyond measure, began to rely on their own power. They began to forget the God Who saved them. They forgot God's warning:

**Job 8:11-15<sup>NASB</sup> "Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh? Can the rushes grow without water? "While it is still green and not cut down, Yet it withers before any other plant. "So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the godless will perish, Whose confidence is fragile, And whose trust a spider's web. "He trusts in his house, but it does not stand; He holds fast to it, but it does not endure."**

If Israel would remember God, glorify God, magnify God in every household then she would be blessed. But if Israel forgot her Savior, forgot Who brought her out of Egypt, forgot Who caused her to defeat a numerically

NASB New American Standard Version of the Bible

superior enemy time and time again – then God would withdraw her blessing.

The strength of a house, of a family, of a government, of a nation is not in itself – but it is in God. Israel suffered first under the Philistines, then under Babylon, and now are in captivity to Persia. Though in captivity, the Lord has caused the Persian empire to be kinder to Israel than her other captors. Darius<sup>1</sup>, the title of the King of Medo-Persia, has allowed Israel a degree of liberty. Gill states in his commentary that this was during the reign of Darius Hystaspis, and this great King had allowed Israel to have a certain amount of freedom. Though she was still in captivity, she was given status as a colony. Zerubbabel, a descendant of the line of David, was given the position of governor of Israel – an amazing proof of God's Grace, for the Persians usually put their own man in this position. Israel also had a High Priest named Joshua the son of Josedech<sup>2</sup>.

Israel stood at a crossroad. She was not in as bad a state as she was when she was in Babylonian captivity. And yet Israel was yet in captivity. She could be freed, she could be restored to her former greatness. Before she would be restored, though, she would have to:

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1 Jamieson – Faucett – Brown states "Hystaspes, the king of Medo-Persia, the second of the world empires, Babylon having been overthrown by the Persian Cyrus. The Jews having no king of their own, dated by the reign of the world kings to whom they were subject. Darius was a common name of the Persian kings, as Pharaoh of those of Egypt, and Caesar of those of Rome."

2 Not the same as "Joshua the son of Nun" who first led Israel into the Promised Land.

**FOCAL** Haggai 1:5 .... **Consider**<sup>3</sup> **your ways**<sup>4</sup>.

These are not the words of mere mortal man. These are the words of **the Lord of Hosts**<sup>5</sup>, the **Eternal God of the Armies of Heaven**. The name that God uses for Himself is one of His *power names*. By using this name He reminds Israel that her freedom relies on His good will, not on their prowess. By using this name God reminds Israel that her prosperity is based, not on *luck* or her *government*, but on the Government of God.

Let us focus on these three words, **consider your ways**. God *repeats* these words in **verses 5 and 7** to emphasize their importance. **Consider your ways**. We're going to look at this from *three perspectives*:

1. **CONSIDER Your Ways**, that is, we will consider the state of America and compare it to the state of ancient

3 Cal Imperative of H7760, שִׁים שִׁים, sùm síym, *soom, seem*, A primitive root; to *put* (used in a great variety of applications, literally, figuratively, inferentially and elliptically): - X any wise, appoint, bring, call [a name], care, cast in, change, charge, commit, consider, convey, determine, + disguise, dispose, do, get, give, heap up, hold, impute, lay (down, up), leave, look, make (out), mark, + name, X on, ordain, order, + paint, place, preserve, purpose, put (on), + regard, rehearse, reward, (cause to) set (on, up), shew, + steadfastly, take, X tell, + tread down, ([over-]) turn, X wholly, work.

4 H1870, דֶּרֶךְ, derek, *deh'-rek*, From H1869; a *road* (as *trodden*); figuratively a *course* of life or *mode* of action, often adverbially: - along, away, because of, + by, conversation, custom, [east-] ward, journey, manner, passenger, through, toward, [high-] [path-] way [-side], whither [-soever].

5 Yahweh & H6635, צְבָאָה צְבָא, tsâbâ' tsebâ'âh, *tsaw-baw', tseb-aw-aw'*, From H6633; a *mass* of persons (or figurative things), especially regularly organized for war (an *army*); by implication a *campaign*, literally or figuratively (specifically *hardship, worship*): - appointed time, (+) army, (+) battle, company, host, service, soldiers, waiting upon, war (-fare).

Israel. Are there parallels in this text that warn US of impending judgment from **Yahweh Tsaba** the **Lord of Hosts**<sup>6</sup>, the **Eternal God of the Armies of Heaven**.

2. **Consider YOUR Ways**, that is, to whom did God address the warning? Who can correct the problem?

3. **Consider Your WAYS**, that is, what road or pathways must I take to be obedient to **Yahweh Tsaba**, the **Lord of the Armies of Heaven**? First,

**1. CONSIDER Your Ways**

God told Israel

**FOCAL** Haggai 1:5-6 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. (6) **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.**

If a nation will not honor God, God will not honor that nation. Can we say that we **sow much and reap much in**

6 Yahweh & H6635, צְבָאָה צְבָא, tsâbâ' tsebâ'âh, *tsaw-baw', tseb-aw-aw'*, From H6633; a *mass* of persons (or figurative things), especially regularly organized for war (an *army*); by implication a *campaign*, literally or figuratively (specifically *hardship, worship*): - appointed time, (+) army, (+) battle, company, host, service, soldiers, waiting upon, war (-fare).

America? Has the *value of a dollar* increased or decreased in America over the past few years. It might interest you to know that the **average American worker's wages amounted to around \$500-600 per year in 1913.**<sup>7</sup> This is about **\$11.54** per week! I have been told that an *entire sack of groceries - a paper sack*, mind you, not these plastic things they give out today - for around *fifty cents*. What about today? The **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities** reported on Friday, August 27, 2004<sup>8</sup> that

**Median household income stood at \$43,318 in 2003...**

We as Americans are earning much more than we ever have - and yet we have less. Many of our children have cell phones, four wheelers, and cars to drive - yet this is not true nationwide. The same report states:

**"The poverty rate among children under 18 jumped from 16.7 percent to 17.6 percent between 2002 and 2003, and the number of poor children rose by 733,000, to 12.9 million. This rise accounted for a majority of the increase of 1.3 million in the overall number of poor people, which climbed from 34.6 million in 2002 to 35.9 million in 2003. More than one in every three poor people in 2003 were children."**

It is as the Scripture says,

**he that earneth wages earneth wages [to**

7 The Saturday Evening Post Editorial, Guessing at Incomes, by George Lorimer; June 21, 1913, pg. 22

8 report found at <http://www.cbpp.org/8-26-04pov.htm>

**put it] into a bag with holes**

I know very few people who are happy with the price of gasoline in America today. Last year we saw the price of gasoline jump directly following the damage of Hurricane Katrina. This price is not expected to go down anytime soon. Those who are *not* in poverty are not satisfied with their lives. We always seem to want more and more. The prophet said:

**Ezekiel 7:19 They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumbling block of their iniquity.**

Iniquity has entered America like a cancer, and it is spreading like wildfire. Life is no longer seen as a *precious gift from God*. Abortion rates are still *very* high in America. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Abortion Surveillance Report - issued on November 25, 2005<sup>9</sup>- lists the following abortion rates:

9 Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Abortion Surveillance Report," November 25, 2005, accessed online December 9, 2005 at [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5407a1.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5407a1.htm)

Year	"Legal" Abortions Performed
1972	586,760
1980	1,297,606
1985	1,328,570
1990	1,429,247
1992	1,359,146
1995	1,210,883
1996	1,225,937
1997	1,186,039
1998	884,273
1999	861,789
2000	857,475
2001	853,485
2002	854,122

Total Abortions Since Roe vs Wade in 1973:  
47,282,923

The cheapening of life in America has resulted in an ever growing crime rate. Probe Ministries reports ...

**"In America, the crime clock continues to click: one murder every 22 minutes, one rape every 5 minutes, one robbery every 49 seconds, and one burglary every 10 seconds. And the cost of crime continues to mount: \$78 billion for the criminal justice system, \$64 billion for private protection, \$202 billion in loss of life and work, \$120 billion in crimes against business, \$60 billion in stolen goods and fraud, \$40 billion from drug abuse, and \$110 billion from drunk driving. When you add up all the costs, crime costs Americans**

a stunning \$675 billion each year."<sup>10</sup>

**CONSIDER your ways!** Are we doing well as a nation? We have *twelve million illegal immigrants* within our borders. Are we prospering as a nation? I think that even the most liberal among us would say, NO, we are not prospering.

## 2. Consider YOUR Ways

**FOCAL** Haggai 1:5-8 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. (6) 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. (7) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. (8) 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.

Just the other day I sat in one of our local restaurants and heard a man at a nearby table talking about the trials and troubles of America. This man blamed everyone but himself. He blamed the President, the Congress, the war in Iraq, and on and on. This man, however, never looked at the "man in the mirror". He was playing the **blame game**, pointing to everyone else but himself. This is typical of the hypocrite, but should not be typical of we

<sup>10</sup> Probe Ministries, *Crime in America*, Kerby Anderson

who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

Listen My Beloved – Satan always attacks humanity by attacking the family, by attacking the *home* first. God literally tells Israel **look to your own way of life**. If we are not satisfied with our way of life the problem, in most cases, has nothing to do with *someone else*. In America today it is sheik or *en vogue* to blame someone else for our problems. In New Orleans when so many families were trapped in the path of Hurricane Katrina – a terrible thing – the *local* government began to blame *Federal* government and racism. Was the Federal government slow in responding to the devastation of Katrina? Absolutely – we'll make no excuses for them. However I myself saw photos of literally *hundreds of school buses* that the local government could have utilized to move these people. These buses were *underwater*, unused, because those who were closest to the problem would not do anything about it.

### Consider YOUR OWN way of life.

If America will be reformed, its reformation must begin at the **person level**. Each one of us must ask ourselves **do I love God - and do I show that love by the way that I live my life**. The famous Scottish preacher Alexander Maclaren said:

**“For us all, as truly as for those Jews, the first thing, the primary, all-embracing duty, is to serve God, to obey, love, and live with Him. The same selfish and worldly excuses have force with us: ‘We have business to look after; men must live; we have no time**

**to think about religion; I have built a new mill that occupies my thoughts; I have found a new plaything, and I must try it; I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ So God and His claims, Christ and His love, are hustled into a corner to be attended to when opportunity serves, but to be neglected in the meantime. And the same result follows, not by miracle, but by natural necessity. Haggai puts these results in our text with bitter, indignant amplification. His words are all the working out of one idea — the unprofitableness, on the whole and in the long-run, of a godless life.”<sup>11</sup>**

God will not be pushed to the back of your lives. When He prepared to release Israel from Persian captivity, God expected His people to go back home and *make God welcome in their homes*. They were commanded to rebuild the Temple of God. Now I tell you this, God does not Himself *need* a Temple to live in, no more than He *needs* this Church building nor any one of us. God tells His people:

**Psalms 50:10-15 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. (11) I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. (12) If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. (13) Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? (14) Offer**

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<sup>11</sup> in his sermon *Vain Toil*, by Alexander MacClaren

unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: (15) And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

God owns all things. He spoke all things into existence *in the beginning*. He needs nothing - but *wants our loving obedience*. It was His love that made us in the Garden of Eden, and His love that promised to send us a Redeemer. The Bible tells us:

**Galatians 4:4-5 ... when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.**

If you know Jesus Christ as Savior, the Lord - **Yahweh Tsaba** - wants you to live for Him. In ancient times Israel needed the Temple and the Altar to make sacrifice to God. The altar, made of dirt or stone, had *four posts or horns* that the sacrifice was to be tied to. Did God need these sacrifices? Absolutely not! What the Lord seeks from His people is that they tie themselves to the horns of the altar, that His own people act as if they are the Temple of the Living God. This is why the Apostle wrote:

**Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto**

**God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

Revival in our land starts at the *person*, at the "*I Level*". We must begin by tying ourselves to the horns of the altar, and the cord that we use must be the love of God in us. He loved us so much that He gave Himself for us. He allowed Himself to be tied to the altar of Calvary - we who love Him should allow ourselves to be bound to Him as *living sacrifices*.

We spend way too much time playing the *victim* game, blaming others for our failures. Like Adam and Even we play at the "she made me do this" and "he made me do this" game. Hear me, My Beloved! I do not want to be found guilty of drawing black lines on a black page - let us be clear on this. What God expects of every believer is a *heart devoted to Him*, to love Him with all your hearts. I have no control over what you do - my control is over *myself*. Let us therefore each one of us **consider YOUR ways**, and not the ways of your neighbor. Jesus was going to spew Laodicea from out of His mouth because **they were neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3:15-16)**. God begs us to be hot toward Him and cold toward the world. Focused on His wants and rigid *indifference* to the whims of this unsaved age. America may eventually be destroyed by weight of it's own sin and iniquity. If it is, it is. I remind you, however, that the

Biblical record is that those who have remained *focused on the Lord* have, like the three **Hebrew children**, went through the storm and the fire and have come through unharmed. The Bible says:

**Psalms 34:18-19 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. (19) Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.**

If you will consider YOUR ways and I will consider MY ways, and in the consideration draw near to and love the Lord our God, then no matter what may come we will emerge victorious. When your flame is kindled from on High, when God burns brightly within your life, then like a burning coal the love of God within you will infect others. The Church was put in the world to be the **light of the world**, the **burning lantern of God** shining the love of Jesus so that others can see ..

**Matthew 5:14-16 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. (15) Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. (16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.**

and again,

**Galatians 6:7-10 Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows he will also reap, (8) because the one who sows to his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. (9) So we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. (10) Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.**

Consider YOUR ways. Do you love God? How do you show that love? Have you been baptized, or do you shirk this most basic of Christian duties? Do you pray daily and frequently, sensing God's Presence through faith. Do you pick up His Holy Scripture, researching and reading it? Do you show your love of God by giving back a portion of your income to the Church, or do you tip your waitress at the restaurant better than you do your Master? What of your time? Do you devote an time to the widows and orphans as the Scripture so commands (**James 1:27**).

You have all seen beautiful ornamental fountains that spew out water in beautiful patterns. The water surges from its center, spilling over bowls and vessels until it is recirculated and cast forth once more. The Lord has promised that from those who love Him and believe in

Him, that ....

John 7:38 .... **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.**

Finally,

### **3. Consider Your WAYS**

**FOCAL** Haggai 1:5, 12-13<sup>KJV</sup> Now therefore **thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. ... (12) Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD. (13) Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I [am] with you, saith the LORD.**

When Israel - each and every person - considered their own WAY OF LIFE then God promised to be with them no matter what would come. For each person in this place there must come a time in your life where you consider your own life and its relationship to Jesus Christ. Do you know Jesus Christ to be:

John 14:6 ... **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

as the Way unto God. Have you called on Him and believed that He has saved you? Then fix your faith *on Him and Him alone*. I heard the story once of a sailor who complained. He said, "My skipper gave me a blanket that was too short. When I pull it over my head, my feet are exposed to the cold. When I pull it over my feet, my head is exposed to the cold. I tried cutting a foot off the top and sewed it to the bottom, but it is no good!" Oh, how foolish such a man is. So it is with salvation and your relationship to God. Our Lord has provided a Way to reach Him, and that is by faith in Jesus Christ. You must believe that you were hopelessly lost and undone, lost in the cold of outer darkness, and that He gave Himself for you. You must believe that Jesus rose again for you, and that by believing on Him you are adopted into the royal priesthood and sonship of God. You belong to God! The Cloth that saved you - faith in Jesus Christ - is the Cloth that you must live by.

We do not, as that foolish sailor, keep cutting a foot from the top of our Cloth and our Covering and sewing that foot back on the bottom. No, no! The God Who saved me is the God I will follow. The famous **C.H. Spurgeon** said:

**“If the most important questions of your life are, “What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?” — if you seek first of all in this life merely these things, though they are**

**not in themselves evil, they will become idols, and so will be unclean, for every idol is a defiling thing to those who bow down before it.”<sup>12</sup>**

These are good words. I will trust my salvation to the Lord. I will tie myself to the horns of the altar, surrendering myself fully to Him. I will let the Lord live in me, controlling my steps. I will love Him and love my fellow man. I will hate the works of the devil and of the world, and show that hate by living my life for Jesus to the very best of my ability. One more quote, then I close:

**"The devil once met a Christian man, so I have heard, and said to him, "You call yourself a servant of God; what do you do more than I do? You boast that you fast, so do I; for I neither eat nor drink. You do not commit adultery; neither do I." The fiend mentioned a long list of sins of which he is incapable, from which he could therefore claim exemption. The saint at last said to him, "I do one thing which thou never didst; I deny myself." That is the point in which the Christian comes out; he denies himself for Christ's sake. Believing in Jesus, he counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord."<sup>13</sup>**

May God touch your hearts with these words.

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13 *An All Around Ministry* by C.H. Spurgeon, Chapter 6, *Light. Fire. Faith. Life. Love*, Page 14



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