

Consider Your Ways What Are Your Priorities

by Tim Conway

This sermon from Haggai emphasizes the importance of aligning our priorities with God's will. It highlights the need to consider our ways, repent, and focus on the Lord's work. The message encourages believers to seek first the kingdom of God, be zealous for good works, and trust in God's presence and blessings. It challenges listeners to take inventory of their lives, make necessary changes, and be proactive in serving the Lord.

Scripture: Haggai 1:2, Haggai 1:5, Haggai 2:6, Haggai 2:18, Hebrews 12:26, Ephesians 2:19, Malachi 3:10, Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:6

Topics: "Aligning Priorities with God's Will", "Zeal for Good Works"

Description

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Transcript

Let's focus in on Haggai here. Here's the situation. Foundation was laid, 15 years, nothing had happened.

That makes total sense of verse two. Thus says the Lord of hosts. These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of Lord.

You see what's happening? Well, we're being persecuted. And so first year, it's not time to rebuild. Second year, not time to rebuild.

Fifth year, not time to rebuild. 10th year, not time to rebuild. Still the 15th year, they're saying it's not time to rebuild.

You see, that's what they're saying. Thus says the Lord of hosts. These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Look at verse four. Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your handled houses while this house lies in ruins? I mean, you see what's happening. Now, folks, I know this.

When I come to the New Testament, New Testament tells me this. All these things have been recorded for us for our instruction. You can learn how God views things.

You can learn about your God and you can learn about yourself from things like this. Priorities. I said, brethren, this is not totally distant from where we find ourselves.

Because listen, we have likewise been assigned things that God wants us to accomplish in our lives and our day. And you know, we can do the same thing. Well, it's not time yet to do the Lord's work.

The Lord calls us to do things, but priorities and our lives always prove what is a priority to us, our lives. You can look at your life. Look, I can, if I basically had a camera follow you around for the next two weeks, I can tell you what's priority in your life.

Basically, if you just show me your credit card statements, I know you don't do checkbooks over here, so I won't say checkbook ledger, but I just did. And the fact is whatever your monetary statements are, you show me what you've spent money on over the last month, I'll tell you what your priorities are in life. That's just a reality.

We can do that. We can look at our bank statements. We can look at what we use time on, priorities.

And what I want you to be very careful about is I want you to notice something. You just can't get away from this reality. And if any of you are quick to say, well, I think that's Old Testament, I'm gonna disprove you and show you it's New Testament as well.

But notice something. Look at Haggai 1.5. You see, the thing is, and we can't get away from this reality. Even among those of you that are saved, you can't say I'm saved so it doesn't matter what I do.

Don't talk that way. Because I'll tell you, these are the people of God. And undoubtedly the way they respond is very positive here.

And the way you all respond today, I hope will be very positive. And it'll say volumes about, oftentimes we get into a place, we can be truly God's people and we get into a place where we're not in a good place. We're not in the right place.

But what does God do? God brings us back. How does he do it? By his word. That's how he does it.

Now, what you can't get away from is this, that the Lord blesses or withholds blessing based on our faithfulness. There is a scriptural principle there. If you deny it, you're denying what is very plainly taught in scripture.

Now notice this, Haggai 1.5. Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. And that's what I want us to do today. Consider our ways.

You have sown much and harvested little. So you see where he's going to. These 42,000 people had come back to Jerusalem, come back to Judea.

They basically had settled back. They were undoubtedly trying to find the land that had belonged to their family and their tribe, their possessions. They'd come, they've resettled certain places and they began to build their homes again.

And they began to plant crops again. And over these 15 years, when Cyrus had sent them back specifically to rebuild the temple, and now they've gone back and there was no temple rebuilt, but their own houses had been rebuilt, their own farms reestablished. And what was happening? God says, you sowed a lot of seed out there in those fields, but you know what? You harvested little.

And guess what God's saying? It's got something to do with where your priorities are in the fact that you neglected my work. And he says this, you eat, but you never have enough. You drink, but you never have your fill.

You clothe yourselves, but no one's warm. He who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. Thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.

This is the second time he said, that is key in Haggai, consider your ways. Go up to the hills, bring wood, build the house, that I may take pleasure in it. He's talking about his house, his temple.

He's telling them, get your priorities straight. Go up, harvest the timber to rebuild the temple that I may take pleasure in it. And that I may be glorified, says the Lord.

In other words, you guys are giving yourselves to things that are not chiefly for my glory. That's what he's saying. You looked for much and behold, it came to little.

When you brought it home, he's talking about their harvest. He's talking about their crops. He's talking about their animals and their livestock.

I blew it away. That's really, that's key. I blew it away.

I did this. You see what God's saying? I see where your priorities are and I blew it away. It didn't happen by chance.

Don't say the devil did it. I did it. I blew away.

There were consequences to you having your priorities wrong. And you can see that there. I blew it away.

And so he says, why declares the Lord of hosts? Because of my house that lies in ruins. Now, even though, listen, even though God is not calling us to rebuild his temple today, not a physical temple, there's undoubtedly he's called us to a work. You can't read the New Testament without seeing that the Lord Jesus Christ calls us to very specific tasks as being his people.

You can't get away from that. Just as those people were called to that task in that day, God's people had their responsibility then, we have our same responsibilities now. You can't get away from that.

So he says, because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own stuff, his own house. Therefore, the heavens above you have withheld the dew. The earth has withheld its produce.

And I've called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, and what the ground brings forth on man and beast and on all their labors. Now, listen, I know that some preachers could take the huge opportunity right now and twist your arm for money. And they could make this into a big thing.

See, this is why God doesn't bless you. You're not giving enough. That's not the issue, folks.

The issue is this, as New Testament saints, we're called to a work, just like they were called to a work. And we need to consider our ways. Are we giving more of our time, more of our attention to our own self and our house and our stuff, just like they did back then? And there's consequences, that's it.

These people were specifically sent back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. That was their chief responsibility. Christian, if I were to ask you, what is your chief responsibility? Well, I would say this.

We have responsibilities everywhere where God has given us responsibilities. If you're a husband, you have a responsibility to love your wife, love your children, raise your children. If you're a wife, you have responsibilities towards your husband, towards your children.

If we're church members, we have responsibilities towards one another. We have responsibility towards the brethren that we meet with, towards other Christians. We have responsibility towards the lost world.

We have a responsibility. Brethren, if you just open your ears to what Jesus taught us, we have responsibilities when it comes to worshiping God in spirit and truth, seeking him in prayer, seeking him in fasting. Scripture talks about that.

And yes, in giving. Not giving so that the pastor can get a new car, but giving to the poor, giving to the widow, giving to the orphan. He was even talking yesterday about the fact that maybe when Christmas comes, what we ought to do is try to reach into some of the institutions in this city and perhaps have meals.

You know what Jesus taught us? When you have a meal, don't invite your family and friends. He said, invite those that are needy, that can never repay you back in this world, and you'll be paid back in another time. And brethren, you know how Jesus spoke.

You know what he spoke about ought to be our chief objectives. There's no question about it. These people were chosen for a task.

They were redeemed for a task. For what? What have we been chosen and redeemed for? You know what we're told? To be zealous of good works. Good works.

And oh, you've heard this enough times, but you know what Jesus said. Jesus went about doing good. What did he do? He went about touching people in their misery and seeking to relieve it.

Now, we may not have the ability to raise the dead or to cure leprosy on the spot, but we can touch people's lives just the same way that he did. And in fact, brethren, you know what he said. The works I do, you will do in greater works.

And that is what we've been called to do. We have been called to be the people that are salt and light in this world, and you'll never be salt and light in this world unless you're rubbing shoulders with the world. That doesn't mean that you're worldly, but it means that you have to come in contact with the world, with your message, with the message of Christ, with your life.

How's the world gonna know that we belong to Christ by the love we have for one another? Which means that ought to be a really special thing. And folks, we have a temple to build. The fact is that the true temple, the true dwelling place for God is people.

It is the church. And we have a responsibility to build it, do we not? Did Jesus not give us a task to make disciples of all the nations? You cannot get away from that reality, that that is our task. We've been told to go to the nations and make disciples.

I mean, even among the mothers, you have a responsibility to impart the truth to your children, fathers to your children. And we have responsibilities in our family. Oh, many of you, you're Christians in a family that nobody else is a Christian, or just you and a few, a handful perhaps, are Christians in your whole family, but it's a family of darkness.

If there's anybody in that family that's gonna communicate truth, it's gonna be you. Many of you are in workplaces or in schools or wherever you are, you're in a place where it's darkness. If anybody's gonna be the one that's gonna share the truth, it's gonna be you.

And if you go silent, then there's going to be silence. It's not like every third person in your workplace is a professing Christian. It's a lot of times we're the only ones that are there.

And they were told to consider their ways. And this is what I want us to do. We need to consider our ways.

This little prophecy is a call to all of us to think, because if you're gonna consider, what do you have to do if you're gonna consider your ways? It means you gotta stop and you gotta think, what are my ways? What am I doing? Just look at Haggai 1.5. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. Look at Haggai 1.7. Therefore, it says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. Look at 2.15. Now then, consider from this day onward.

You go to 2.18, consider from this day onward. Look at the last word in Haggai 2.18, consider. You know what they've begun to do? Say this.

These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord. They began to make excuses. God thought it was time.

God thought it was past time. It's been 15 years. Nope, nope, not time to be about the Lord's business.

And see, we can consider your ways. You see, this can be just the same. Well, you don't know.

My house isn't done yet. My garden's not done yet. My garage isn't done yet.

Don't you know this is a very inconvenient time for you to be pressing me about doing things that have to do with Christ's kingdom. We're building our own homes. We're tending our own lives.

Don't you know? Don't you know? We just came back from the Persian Empire. Don't you know that our walls were broken down and we didn't really have any place to live? Don't you know that we had to reestablish the crops and we had to fertilize out there? And we had to dig wells again because you know we need water. And it's important that we seal up all those roof leaks because the rain comes like it came last night in the middle of the night.

We don't wanna get our beds all wet. And you see the situation. God says that people have plenty of time for themselves.

And they also accompany that plenty of time for themselves with plenty of excuses. Well, it's not time yet. Plenty of excuses as to why it wasn't time to devote themselves to God's service.

They obviously had some money and they obviously had some time and they obviously had some resources because they're building their own houses. But they had money for those things. But you know what? They claimed it wasn't yet time to use any of that for the Lord.

And what is that? That's backward priorities. Folks, God did not save you simply to have bigger houses and nicer cars. He saved you to basically carry on the very work that Christ did.

That's why Christ says the works I do, you will do in greater works. He sent his spirit upon the church and that spirit that he sent is a missionary spirit. What happened? Spirit of God came upon the church.

What did the church do? They began to proclaim the works of God to all the people that were gathered there at Pentecost, to all the people of the nations. And the churches began to go and they began to scatter and they began to go out and the people of God were scattered. And we see what they did.

They went everywhere and they were proclaiming the truth and they were proclaiming the gospel. Listen, our time is short and God did not save you simply so that you can be all relaxed and you can get better jobs and bigger bank accounts and have a nicer retirement. Folks, that's not it.

And any more than these people were sent back by Cyrus who was stirred up by God to go back and rebuild the temple. God has saved you to be zealous of good works, not simply to sit and get fat in your gardens. And we just have to come to grips with this.

And listen, God says, consider your ways because God is watching. And listen, what would you do if you were one of these guys? Would you get back yourself in the corner? I got a family to take care of. Lord, you told me to love my wife as Christ loves the church.

It's not a very loving thing if I don't have a paneled house. And if I don't have that thing and just live the right condition, my wife wants a new sink in the bathroom. I just, what do you mean? What do you, yeah, we recognize emissions is a good thing and we need to be about making the cycles all on all the nations.

But, you know, the gas and electric prices, the energy prices just went very inconvenient time to talk to me about getting more emissions or giving to something like that. It's that there's too many things, there's too many things, inverted priorities. And you know what it is? It's when we put ourself in front of the Lord's glory.

Because remember, that's really what this was about. You go up to the woods and you begin to harvest some wood up there and come build my house for my glory. And the house he's called us to build is even greater for his glory.

It's the house that's made up of the living stones. That's what happens when we harvest souls. And it's getting, you know what? Jesus said this, by much fruit, my father is glorified.

He wants our lives to be abundant in fruit. They put self before the Lord. And you know what? When we do that, the Lord takes notice.

The Lord takes notice. He always does. And you know what? It's the same for New Testament believers.

Because what did Jesus tell us? His first address in Matthew, which we went through just recently. What did he tell us? Seek first what? What was the context? You see, the context was clothes, food, even more basic than just a house. See, in Haggai, it's a house.

Over in the Sermon on the Mount, it was food and clothing. And what did Christ say? Christ said this, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And all these things will be added.

Isn't it the same truth we're getting in Haggai? Because what he's saying is this, if you don't seek the kingdom first, what's the obvious conclusion? Then he will not add all these things. In fact, he is in the business of seeing to it that you have a bag with holes if your priorities are wrong. And I'll tell you that bag with holes oftentimes isn't just financial things.

Oftentimes it's spiritual things. I mean, you can get to a place where spiritually you're empty, spiritually you're cold, spiritually you're joyless, spiritually you lack assurance. Why? Because you're not about the Lord's business.

And so often he has a way of correcting us. We know this, we know it. If you're his child, he's a good father and he's faithful to chase in his children.

Why does he chase in them? You know, folks, the New Testament talks in ways like don't quench the spirit. We quench the spirit. What happens when you quench the spirit? Well, think about what the spirit does.

The spirit bears witness with our spirit. The spirit is the joy giver. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace.

You say, oh, I lost my peace somewhere along the line. I lost my joy. Why? Well, because you've grieved the spirit.

How do we grieve the spirit? Well, obviously things like this, misplaced priorities. You give yourself to the wrong thing. You're not seeking first the right thing.

You're not seeking first the kingdom of God. Listen, we were saved not just simply to get better at our hobby or just to collect more toys. That's not ever it.

And God says, I blew it away. I blew it away. Listen, brethren, this is how scripture talks.

Give, and I wouldn't just apply this to monetary things. Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap.

For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. I believe that there is truth in that, be above and beyond financially. Oh, it works financially.

If you give financially, be sure. God sees who is faithful with little, and he tends to be in the business of giving you more because if you're faithful with little, you'll be faithful with much. But there is a spiritual law that if you sow much, you reap much.

If you sow little, you reap little. And I think so often we can even draw out spiritual realities. You know, there's a reality in the New Testament, Jude, that says, keep yourself in the love of God.

Or there's like a statement that says, we know that we've had what we ask for because we keep his commandments. But then James comes around and says, you ask and you don't receive because you ask amiss. Why? To heap it upon your passions or your lusts.

Folks, that's what these guys were doing. See, they wanted the stuff that had to do with their own good, their own passions, their own desires. Work on my house.

It's all about my car. It's about my holiday. It's about inverted priorities.

It can become your home, your family, your shop, your garden, your garage, your things, your food, yours, yours, yours. And you know what Jesus said when he said, seek first the kingdom? He said, the Gentiles are the ones who are seeking all the stuff of the world. More comfort, more retirement, more stored up, more fun, more holidays, more toys.

And you know what happens? People are wretchedly unsatisfied. And we expect them out there to be. But you know what? God will see that there is a dearth in the soul of his people when they seek fulfillment in the wrong places.

And one of the reasons that some Christians get into a place where there's doubt, there's despair, there's darkness, there's depression is simply because you have become selfish and self-absorbed. And that's what happened to these people. And God will see to it spiritually that your spiritual bag has a bunch of holes in it.

And we know people piling up hopes and dreams and plans into a bag that's supposed to bring joy and happiness. And God sees to it that those bags just have holes. So what's the solution? Well, the solution is obvious here.

It's obedience. There's only one thing to say, obedience. I mean, the song that says trust and obey, there's no other way.

There's reality there, folks. Why does he say consider your ways? Because it's their ways that were the issue. What were their ways? Well, they weren't doing what God wanted them to do.

What did God want them to do? He got one in the rebuild that temple. That's what God tells each of us. Consider your ways.

And I just ask you this, if you think about everything that Christ wants you to do with your life, would you actually say, now, maybe you don't know. And if you can't, if you say, well, right offhand, I'm not really sure. Well, then you should be pouring through your New Testament.

You should be pouring through the four gospels. You should be looking at what Christ did. Christ calls us to learn of him.

One thing you can't get away from is Christ wants you to do what he did. Christ wants you to follow him. Christ wants you to be to this world.

He's the light of the world, and we're also called lights of the world. And what God is calling us to do is consider our ways. Are any of our priorities misplaced? Because you know what Christ did.

He commends people that go to the prisons to visit people. They go to the hospitals and to the sick to visit people. He commends those who find the hungry in the world, who find the thirsty, who find the naked, who take the homeless.

Sometimes we lack spiritual passion. We lack joy. We lack a sense of God's nearness.

Why? Just simply, it is possible to begin to grieve the spirit. It's just this kind of this low level where you wouldn't say, well, your life is void of blessings, but it's just like, why isn't my life just as robust as I want it to be? Why am I not experiencing a closeness? There comes a time to consider your ways. There comes a time to say enough, and that's what they did here.

That's clearly what happened. There's always an excuse. Well, we can't have those people over.

We can't have those people stay. They may mess up our house. I can't just use my spiritual gifts in the way that would be most beneficial to the church right now.

Don't you know how busy my life is? Don't you know my kids are in school, and I got this thing going over here, and I got that over there. This isn't a proper time for me to talk. It's not a proper time to rebuild the temple.

It's not a proper time to speak to people at my work about the Lord Jesus. Don't you know I might get fired? There's too many personal obligations. These people say the time has not yet come.

Brethren, I'm not making this stuff up. This is how God sees you and me, just as well as how he sees them. Now notice, notice the last four verses in chapter one.

Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, Joshua, the son of Jehoshaddak, the high priest, with the remnant of the people, so it's all of them. The remnant of the people is this 42,000 that came back. They obeyed the voice of the Lord their God.

That's it. Obedience. And the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him.

And the people feared the Lord. Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message. I am with you, declares the Lord.

And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Jehoshaddak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and they worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the 24th day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. What happened? The word struck home.

That's what happened. We saw recently, you remember when we were looking at Zephaniah, we kept considering Josiah, and how in Josiah's day, the prophet of God was just pronouncing doom. Why? Because Josiah repented and he brought reformation, but by and large, the hearts of the people were not on the same page.

But here, it's different. We often think about the revival that took place in the days of Josiah. Let me tell you something.

The revival that took place in the days of Zerubbabel was the real deal, because it was all the people. And you see it, and God's speaking to all of them. He's not condemning any of these people.

Here in the Haggai, it's a wholesale turning. The lives of all the people seem to be genuinely changed. All the people are obeying the voice of God.

All the people are fearing the Lord. They considered their way. And upon considering, they repented, and they gave themselves to the work of the Lord.

Notice how God responds. Look at verse 13. I am with you, declares the Lord.

And the thing is, I want you to be sure that you catch the timeline. Look at the timeline. Look at 1.1, verse 1.1. Second year of Darius, six month, first day.

Look at verse 15. 24th day, six month, second year of Darius. Now, it's inverted in the order that the month, the day, the month, and the year are given.

But the fact is, in verse one, it's the first day. In verse 15, it's the 24th day of the exact same month. In other words, how many days went by? 24 minus one? 23 days went by.

Just a little over three weeks. Between what? Between when the prophet said, you guys need to consider your ways, and when they went to rebuilding. That was quick.

That was quick. I mean, they did a full turn. They did an about face.

The word of God hit home with these people. These people are convicted, and you can tell what happened. Immediately, they're all talking among themselves.

Get your lives in order. In three weeks, we're going to work. And that's what they did.

Brethren, this is no small thing, because I got to thinking about this. I got to thinking about my own life. You know what, as a Christian, there have been numerous days when I have been struck by the word of God, considering my own ways, and I looked at the word of God, considered my ways, word of God, considered my ways, and I said, you know what? My ways are not lining up with what he says in his word, and you draw a line in the sand, and you say, that's enough.

That's it. The question is this. Do you have dates like this in your life? Because they had it in their life.

They heard the word of God 23 days later. And you can understand that. I mean, there had to be.

You got to get your act together. You got to sign. You got 42,000 people.

We need some kind of order here. If all of a sudden, the people are all going to pull away from their farms, and all the working people are going to come out, you know, they just still do have families at home. They get, somebody's got to protect them.

There's enemies all over the land. You got to get your act together. And but it's, brethren, what I ask you is this.

Do any of you, can any of you say 23rd day of September, 2018, I determined before the Lord to stop doing that and start doing this. Do you have that kind of day, those kinds of seasons in your life? And I mean specific day, even right down to perhaps the hour. Do you have dates like that? When you heard God's word, you considered your ways.

God's word preached. You came across it. When you're doing your devotions anyways, it struck home.

And you said, that's it. No more, no more. I'm not doing that anymore.

I mean, sometimes it's a way you talk to your wife, or sometimes you do this or you do that. And you say, no more. Or you've let family devotions get away.

Your kids are little and they're growing up and you're not opening up the word of God. And you say, that's it, no more. Or you say, the church gathers together on Wednesday nights to pray.

And I make it like one or two times out of every, but that's it, no more. This has to be a priority in my life. I gotta get my priorities right.

Or you can fill in the way, the church is going downtown and they're taking the gospel out on the streets or they're doing this. And I recognize. And even though that may not be the thing for you to do, it's not like any, brethren, the thing is none of us should make one another guilty for not doing exactly the same thing we do.

We've all got different gifts, but the fact is it might've been bugging you. You might've felt this little tinge on your conscience that you needed to reach out to your uncle or you needed to take the gospel up and down your street, or you needed to talk to that guy at work and you've just avoided it. Not convenient time to do that.

Or you say, just enough. Or maybe it's a guy that you just, you recognize you've gotten sloppy with your eyes. You're looking at women when you ought not to be in a way you ought not to be.

And you just get to a place, enough. Christ said to gouge out the eye and I'm gonna do it. Enough of that.

You draw the line in the sand, whatever it is. You say, I've been loose with my mouth. I've maybe gossiped too much.

I talk about other people too much. I use my voice. I use my tongue to rail on and tear down my husband.

Enough, I'm done with that. I'm not doing it. And you don't do it in your own strength, but you look to the Lord and you say, Lord, give me the ability.

And then that's it, that's it. I'm talking about days in your life when you just suddenly, suddenly the truth of God just breaks in upon your heart, upon your mind, upon your soul, and you determined to get your priorities straight. And I'm not talking lip service where you just say something and two weeks later, it's not that way.

Like the vast majority of the world make New Year's resolutions. And by the 28th day of January, the thing is all gone. I'm talking, you actually do what these folks did.

And these folks went to building on that temple for four years. This wasn't just some fly by night thing where they kind of got their act together for a month or six weeks. This is the kind of thing where you determine, I'm gonna get my act together.

I'm a Christian. I walk in the power of the cross. I can do this.

I'm talking about that, where you're not like these, you were making excuses before, just like these people, but you say enough, enough. Folks, people that are gonna really be victorious in this life are people that talk like this and act like this and think like this. And all of us should be having these kinds of days where there's breakthroughs, where we talk to ourselves.

Oh, I love that about Lloyd-Jones. He always talked, you know, in spiritual depression, he said, one of the big things we have to do is talk to ourselves. And that's one of the things you need to do.

Talk to yourself. You need to have times when you say, hey, self, you know what? You actually have not been lining up with what Christ said in his word. You know what Christ said? Christ said, when you have a meal, don't invite your family and friends.

You ought to invite people that are blind, that are lame, that are crippled, that are this or that. I would ask you this. Have you ever done that? Christ said, you ought to sell your possessions and give to the poor.

Have you ever done that? I mean, there comes a place where you draw the line in the sand and you say, I'm gonna start doing that. And the truth is that, you know, there's, you start to look at Christ and he's, you know, his example, his teachings, he calls us to live a certain way. I mean, you have to say to yourself, what is it? How does Jesus tell me to live? You know what, self? If you really lived all out like Jesus told you to live, then you'd probably be doing a lot more of that thing and a whole lot less of that thing.

And you gotta talk to yourself like, there's gotta be, I mean, there's gotta be honesty with yourself. You gotta come to that position where you just say enough, enough. And that's what they did.

It's like they heard the word of God and they realized, hey, you know what? God wants me to do this. And let me tell you, if Jesus is speaking to you out of scripture, telling you that there's a way he wants Christians to live, well, that'll be just as fresh to you as if Haggai spoke to these people back in that day. That'll ring just as loud in your ear, where you just say, I'm gonna put God and his work first.

I'm gonna seek first the kingdom of God. Because I haven't been seeking first the kingdom. I've been seeking my business or I've been seeking that or this or the other thing.

My family, my holiday, my this, my that. And then look at this, the former glory. Look at chapter two, verse one.

In the seventh month, on the 21st day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. Speak now to the Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehoshaddak, the high priest, and all the remnant of the people, and say, who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? Now, you don't have to turn here, but just listen to what it says in Ezra. In Ezra three, it says, many of the priests and Levites and heads of the father's houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of the new temple was laid before their eyes.

They wept. The younger people, it's many of them, shouted aloud for joy so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people. For the people shouted with a loud shout and the sound was heard afar off.

Now, why were they weeping? The old guys might've been weeping because it was a crying of thankfulness that it's being rebuilt. And it may have been also based on the truth in Haggai that the glory of the new was as nothing compared to Solomon's. And here's the thing.

Here's the thing. God says to the old boys, they figure it was about 70 years since Solomon's temple had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. And so there were some old men and old women that had seen the first one.

And God says, in your eyes, isn't it as nothing? I'll tell you, this was actually, like I felt like a burst of sunshine from that passage because basically you had guys that saw the glory of Solomon's temple. And

God says, what's this like in your eyes? Isn't it as nothing? Now, God isn't saying it's nothing. He's just saying in your eyes, doesn't it look very inferior? Doesn't it look that? Doesn't it look like it lacks the lavish magnificence of what Solomon's temple had? You remember David amassed gold and silver and he passed that on for the temple.

And then here comes Solomon. Solomon, you know what silver was like in his days and gold was like. He had so many resources and there were no enemies.

And he's basically got all the foreigners and he's using them as hired labor. And this is just a massive undertaking, the resources Solomon had. And the fact is the old folks bemoaned how unimpressive the new work was.

And I thought about that. I thought, you know what's interesting? Last year, I went to the Reformation Revival Conference and there was a guy there after he heard me give my testimony. He was really excited.

He's in Wales. He said, would you please come to Wales and would you give your testimony there? He said, there's a bunch of people and it's like they remember the 1904, 1905 Welsh Revival. And it's like nothing is real if it's not the 1904, 1905 Revival.

It's like the thing by which they measure everything. And if it doesn't measure up to that, then it's nothing. It says nothing.

And you know, we can do that. We can get to the place where it's like, we hear about a work that was done in England back in the days of Wesley and Whitfield or we hear about what happened over there in 1904, 1905 or in 1949 up in the Hebrides Islands. We can hear about these things or even me.

I was thinking about how often since I've come here, how I compare in my own mind, just what I saw God do in San Antonio and how he worked there and even recently, I was listening to the pastor I used to be under. He was talking about 1989 and how God came. And it's like, you know, you can get to where you measure everything.

And what I recognize is this, the rebuilding of the second temple may seem in our eyes as nothing, but it wasn't nothing. Think about what it was. What was it? Aren't they actually rebuilding the temple? They are.

A temple that for 70 years had lied in ruins and here it is, the worship. Already the altar has been rebuilt. Already the sacrifices have been restored.

But the thing is this, in Solomon's day, they basically were bringing these raw materials and having them quarried, having lumber floated in from Lebanon. The thing is, when was the temple ever built upon the rubble of an old temple? When was the temple ever built with enemies all around? When was the temple ever built in days like this where they were being threatened, where they basically did not have all the resources, where basically a pagan king like Cyrus had to rise up and give them license to go back and resources that were being provided by a Persian empire. When did that ever happen before? Well, it never happened before.

And it really, as I was looking at it, it's like, it wasn't nothing. It was just a new thing. It was a different thing.

And it was like, okay, that really needs to be our mindset all the time. You know what? That needs to be your mindset. Even those of you that are old timers at Grace Fellowship Manchester, even if you were here 10 years ago, the reality is God may be doing some new thing now that he wasn't necessarily doing back then.

It's a different thing. And I recognize that even coming from San Antonio. When I came over here, I recognized, well, I admit, I really desired to see what I saw there replicated here.

And I recognize in something like this that, you know what? It's not for me to look back there and be depressed or discouraged or weep tears if I don't see happening here, what happened there. If I don't see the same glory in a certain sense, because the glory is different. I don't think it's a matter that there isn't any glory.

It's only glory externally to the eyeball. Yes, was there a magnificence in Solomon's to the external eye? Yes, but God was doing a different thing, not nothing. And God, the thing about all of this is God commanded it.

They were doing the work of the Lord. And God said, I'll be with you. And that's huge.

The truth is God is in the midst of this. And so, you know what can happen? We become discouraged. Why? Because God doesn't work.

It's not only when we look back in history, like 70 years ago and see something glorious that happened say in Lloyd-Jones day. Or we look back even further in Spurgeon's day. And wow, the church was full of 5,000 people.

Or you look at what's happening in Los Angeles. And you look at a John MacArthur and you look at just the tens of thousands of people. And you say, what is God doing here? Why doesn't God do what God used to do? Well, God is still at work.

And doesn't God tell us he's with us? God says, I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. And he says, lo, I'm with you to the end of the age.

The fact is he's with us. And so he tells us to work. That's why, that's the basis upon which they're working.

You guys go to work because my spirit's with you. I am with you. I am gonna bless you.

That's it. And our own work can seem as nothing in our eyes when we compare it to something maybe that happened in the past or happened somewhere else. Things can always seem greener.

And you know what happens? The devil comes right along and says, well, because your work isn't like that work, well then you might as well give up. You might as well just be discouraged. You might as well just go home and quit.

God said, look, God says, I know to your eyes, this doesn't seem like the same thing. This doesn't seem as glorious. I know that, but I'm with you.

And you know what? This temple doesn't need to be as outwardly glorious as that one was, but this is my work today. This is what I want you to do. Brethren, if there's anything more, there's nothing more important than that.

What does God want us to do now? That's the real issue. Because God didn't want them to build one so grand and glorious as Solomon's. God wanted them to do what he wanted them to do at that time.

And he was doing a new thing. Solomon didn't have all those enemies circling around like they did. And you remember Nehemiah's day, when they went to build the wall, they actually had to have a sword in one hand and a hammer in the other hand.

Well, see, it's different days. I mean, the word to us is be strong. I'm with you.

And he keeps on repeating that all the way through here. Haggai 1.13, 2.4, 2.5, 2.19. I'm with you. I'm with you.

My spirit's with you. And you know what? We need these assurances, don't we? We need them repeated. It's the presence of God that makes God's people strong.

It's us realizing, hey, God is with us. And even if, you know what? We don't have to compare ourselves to what's happening over here, over there in past times. The fact is God's with us and we can be strong and we can go forth.

You know how many times the Lord has called the Lord of hosts through here? They had a host of enemies, but they had the Lord of hosts with them. And that's where we're at. There's lots of enemies.

There's lots of enemies. No, brethren, we've got the Lord of hosts with us. God doesn't tell them, you just go out and give this your own best shot.

The truth is, folks, those people back then were not equal to the tasks they were called to do and neither are we. We would have no victory unless God is with us, but God does tell us he's with us, just like he told them that he was with them. So Haggai 2.6. Now we're just about done, folks, but hang with me.

The coming glory. 2.6, for thus says the Lord of hosts, yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth. Now this is quoted over in Hebrews chapter 12.

And undoubtedly, this is looking forward. As with so many of these prophetic utterances, undoubtedly, throughout the prophets, many of the prophecies had two meanings. They had an immediate meaning and they had a long-term meaning.

Again, this comes down to the shadow aspect of the Old Testament. Very often, the things that happened at one time are that they're a small display of a greater reality that is yet going to happen. And when this text is actually quoted in Hebrews 12, we see that it's looking forward to actually the second coming of Christ.

But what we've got here is this. I will shake all nations so that the treasures of all nations. Now, some of your Bibles say the desire of nations.

It's interesting, the desire there or the treasure there is plural. And it really is best to see this as the treasures of the nations. Because the truth is to say that some people see Christ here, the desire of the nations.

Not so sure that the nations do desire Christ, but I don't think that, you find that most of the translations have gotten away from saying the desire of the nations here just simply because it likely... Let me tell you.

Likely what the picture is here is God is looking at the temple that is going to have greater glory. And it's the temple... You know what the New Testament teaches? That we are the temple of God.

We are the dwelling. We are the church being built together into this dwelling place for God. This is how the New Testament speaks.

And it says, the treasures of the nation shall come in and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. The later glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts.

And in this place, I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts. Now, just watch this. This rebuilt temple, centuries would go by and Herod the Great would come in and turn this into a magnificent edifice.

Based on this Zerubbabel's rebuilt temple, he would basically expand this thing into this massively glorious edifice. And not only that, Christ, the very Son of God, would enter this temple and cleanse it. Let me tell you something about the glory even of that house.

In 70 AD, it was wiped out. And Christ said in Matthew 23, your house is left empty. That house, the glory had departed.

And so I don't think you simply wanna stop with that because the New Testament speaks this way. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens. This is speaking to Gentile Christians, which there's a whole bunch of in this room.

So this is very personal to you. You are no longer strangers and aliens. You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

The New Testament says this, you are the temple of the living God. I will dwell in them. Peter talks, you yourselves like living stones are being built up into a spiritual house.

The New Testament, you know what? Paul says this, that that had glory, that old covenant. And I would include the temple that belonged to the old covenant. It had a glory, but the glory of the new covenant and the temple of the new covenant surpasses.

And so the ultimate glory here, the ultimate glory is in, you know how it is. You break out into those last chapters of revelation as scriptures are coming to an end. The dwelling place of God is with man.

We are that temple. And when God says the silver and the gold is mine, he's talking about all the wealth of the nations coming in. Folks, it's the silver and the gold is probably not speaking about coinage.

It's speaking about the people that are harvested out of all the nations that come to make up these living stones. Now, Haggai 2.18, and I end with this. Consider them this day onward.

In light of what God's doing, you see what all that glory was about? Is you guys, this may appear to your eyes like nothing, but you need to realize that in the midst of all of this, something is happening that you cannot see that is glorious beyond imagination. That's the issue here. Things are at work and things are transpiring and things are moving towards a culmination that is just absolutely utterly beyond anything.

Don't you shed a tear over Solomon's temple. Don't shed a tear over the fact that we don't live in the days of Spurgeon or the days of that revival or another revival or what's happening in another church, because it's all going somewhere that's altogether glorious. He says 2.18, consider from this day onward.

And what was this day onward? Well, the day when they determined whatever's happening in Solomon's day, whatever was happening 15 years ago, we're done with that. We're done with making excuses. And God says from the 24th day of the ninth month, since the day of the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider.

Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, fig tree, the pomegranate, the olive tree have yielded nothing. That's how it was for those 15 years. But from this day on, what day? From when they determined we're going back to do the Lord's work.

God says, there it is. From that day, I'll bless you. The day they repented.

And I just ask you this, are we bold enough to take that kind of challenge? Are we ready to say enough? From this day forward, it's all out for the Lord's work. I mean, we have to ask ourselves, if you're gonna really live a progressive, making progress in the Christian life, you've gotta have days like this. You've gotta do spiritual inventory like this.

If you're going to avoid stagnation spiritually, you've gotta get to the place where you say, am I lining up with scripture? Am I doing it? Am I all out for the Lord's work? Am I seeking first the kingdom of God? Am I seeking the glory that surpasses? Do I have faith to believe that the Lord Jesus, that my God and father in heaven is going to bless me? Because that's what God says from this day forward. Look, my curse, you've had bags with holes up till now, but it's because you haven't been giving yourself to my work first. But you make that determination and you put your hand to the plow and don't look back.

My blessing will be upon you. And oh, folks, the blessings we want more than anything is not more money in your bank account. It's great to have more.

It's great to give, give, give, give, and then have God give you more to give more. But what I'm talking about, we ought to want more than anything, is the sweet communion where God says, I'll bless you with my presence. I'll come close.

You'll know manifestations. You'll know the power of God in your midst. You know my help.

Is this your Christianity? Or do we simply withdraw into our nice little theology and our theologic camp and left to ourselves? And we like to live there counting our five points of Calvinism or whatever other thing and live some little religious Calvinism. And all the time God is saying, what I want from you is not that you hone your doctrine. Yes, we need to know our Bibles and we need to know them well and we need to know the doctrine of our Bibles.

And on that, we need to live. On that is the substance of our faith. But what God is actually calling us to is a Christianity where he wants us to live beyond this little religious thing, this act where we just kind of play church once a week.

And he wants us to change our priorities. And what are our priorities? One of the first priorities, as much as possible, do good to all men, but especially those of the household of faith. We need to be people that give ourselves.

And you know what? God is not afraid to be put to this kind of test. We're gonna see it in Malachi as well. God is not afraid to be put to the test.

From this day forward, I will bless you. And I just wonder what would happen to this. You know, one of the questions I wonder is how do we lack? What hasn't been done? What has not come to fruition among us? Because you haven't used your spiritual gifts as you ought.

Consider your ways. I mean, I wonder how many times at just such a time as we ought to be about the work. You know one thing about you British people, you're on holiday all the time.

I mean, Ruby and I went two years one time without any vacation, which is what we call them there. We didn't have it. Now it about killed me when we finally got one.

Yes, it was needed. And listen, folks, there is a time to rest and there's a time we need to get away. But I'll tell you this.

The British like their holidays. And sometimes there's a place, you know what? You can use your vacation time. You can use your holiday time to do the Lord's work.

You don't always have to go far away and do another place and go do all these things. And I wonder how many times are people traveling away when they ought to be about the Lord's work? How many times are you making priorities about something? You know, Sonny was talking about Wednesday about how the emphasis downtown, he felt like it's decreased. But I ask all of you, consider your ways.

Consider your ways. To those of you that formed the ministry, right down to those of you that maybe have attended it just one time, consider your ways. And I'm not saying that that necessarily is what you ought to be doing.

I would love to see the church very diverse. Some people going over there and some people doing that. Some people tending this need.

But we need to be ministering people. We need, listen, we are to be a people that as much as possible are doing good to all men in this world, especially to those that are of the household of faith. We need to be active.

We need to be proactive. We need to be about the Lord's work. And it's no mystery in the scriptures what he wants us to do.

One of the things he wants us to do is love one another and serve one another right in this church and do it. And I wonder how many things have been hindered or halted simply because people have been too selfish or too greedy with their money. They haven't been committed to this church as they ought to be.

They haven't been committed to the ministries of the church they ought to be. They haven't been committed to the ministries of the Lord Jesus Christ the way they ought to be. They haven't been committed to the things that they know Christ stresses in scripture.

You just kind of read across it and say, well, I'm too busy for that. Or they can't really apply to me. Well, that sounds so far out there and left field that Jesus can't possibly expect that I'm supposed to live like that.

I mean, brethren, we gotta be like these. This Haggag is just a wonderful book for us to consider our ways because we only get one shot at this. Brethren, I'll tell you this.

I want Grace Fellowship Manchester to be the kind of people in the book of Acts that turn the world upside down. Be the kind of people to make a difference in the world. And we can't be the kind of people to make a difference in the world if we just kind of do this, you know, this little religious thing now and then.

That's not what God wanted from his people in Haggai's day. He wanted all, I want you to give yourself to my work. And that's what he wants today.

And if you do, all these things will be added unto you. You should see where the priority is. This place priorities, brethren, it's a killer in the fruitfulness of the church.

And if what's this challenge to you directly, are you willing to take the challenge? Consider your ways. We're all, you know, every one of us have our own life. Every one of us are in a different place.

Some of you might be walking a whole lot better. Some of you might have strayed. We all, you know, our lives are kind of up and down, up and down.

There should be this progression till the fullness of day, as the Proverbs says. But we know there's valleys and there's peaks and there's valleys and there's peaks. Some of you may be in the bottom in the valley.

Some of you may be at the peak. Some of you may be in between. Some of you may be new Christians.

Some of you are older Christians. But brethren, we all come to the same place. We live in the sight of God who sees our priorities.

And he says, consider your ways. I have to do that just as well as you. Take inventory.

And I've been taking inventory. And I have to confess this. For two years, I've been living on the glory that I saw in San Antonio.

And in coming to this book, I said, okay, I'm done with that. I'm done with that. I'm done with comparing.

I'm done with looking. I'm considering my ways. And yes, I'm thankful to God that he allowed me to be involved in that, but I'm not here anymore.

I'm here and I'm plugged in here. And now I'm about whatever God's new thing is. And so I'm, okay, Lord, it's all in here.

And we'll see what God will do. And I want to put them to the test. And I want to see what kind of blessing is poured out.

Because I know this, God's not doing nothing here. God's doing something. God's doing new things.

And I'm kind of watching. I'm waiting. We need to continue to pray.

We need to continue to be a mouthpiece for the Lord Jesus Christ and proclaim that truth. We need to press on. Brethren, we need to be radical in the way we press on.

That's normal Christianity is radical Christianity. You can't, because what? It's people sold out for good works. It's people sold out to be like Christ.

It's people sold out to be about the Lord's will and to seek first the kingdom of God. That's what it's all about. And that's what we're called to.

We can't run from that. Father, I pray, give us grace to be. Oh, we see it.

Not just the leaders, not just like in Josiah's day. We see it. It's Reuben Bell and Joshua and the fullness of the remnant of the people.

In fact, we don't even see an exception. It says they feared you. They obeyed you.

They went about your work. They completed that temple in just four years time. And Lord, I pray that you'd have us to consider our ways as a church.

Have we been distracted? Can we say that there are misplaced priorities? Father, I pray that you'd help us to be like people that on that 24th day of the month, they went about the work. They heard the word of God. They felt it's convicting power and they changed.

They feared, they acted, they reacted. And Lord, I pray that the same would be here. I pray that you'd make us to be a people that are consistently doing inventory, consistently drawing the line in the sand, consistently saying enough, consistently reorienting our lives.

Lord, we need that. We need you to just periodic times and probably more often than not, we need corrective word from you. We need to be brought back to setting our sight on the right goal ahead.

And we pray, Lord. I pray that this day might be that kind of day where we take up the challenge, where we draw the line in the sand, even as they had certain dates where they went, they got their lives back on track. Lord, I pray that there would be days like that in our lives.

And I pray that today might be a day like that for some of us. In Christ's name, we ask you, please have mercy upon us. Amen.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/sECnsev65Ko.mp4>

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