

“Consider Your Ways”

INTRODUCTION: On the 18th of December, 520 B.C. The Word of the Lord came to Haggai a third time in four months ...

1. ... twice in one day!

- a) *On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, (Haggai 2:10)*
- b) *The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, (Haggai 2:20)*
- c) Perhaps: a morning and evening message (?)
- d) **Joyce Baldwin**: *Haggai: TOTC; pp. 49-50*

(1) *The new date (18 December by our calendar) marks a two month interval since Haggai's previous sermon (2:1). The early rains began in mid-October round Jerusalem, and once the ground had become sufficiently soft, seed was sown and ploughing begun. By the middle of December this work would have been completed, with all the accompanying hopes of a good year, free from drought and pests. This was exactly what God was planning to give because they had put Him first (verse 19).*

(2) *Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.” (Haggai 2:19)*

(3) *Zechariah had begun his ministry in Jerusalem a few weeks previously.*

2. Remember the Lord's first two “words” to Haggai and the people of Jerusalem.

- a) **First Sermon**: Your crops (economy) are struggling because you've put your own personal interests over those of the Lord!

(1) *“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.” (Haggai 1:7-11)*

(2) *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matt. 6:33)*

- b) **Second Message:** Don't only see the smallness of what you are doing in the Lord, but have faith to believe that God will make your work great and glorious, in due time.

(1) *'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? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations 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 latter 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.'*" (Haggai 2:3-9)

(2) *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58)*

3. **Herbert Wolf:** *Haggai & Malachi: Rededication and Renewal*; p. 41

- a) *In spite of the stirring promises of Haggai 2:1-9, the small nation was still living with the consequences of their prolonged sin. Harvests had been pitifully small, so that food remained scarce. But from now on, God assures them, all this will be changed. His blessing will rest upon them, and future crops will be plentiful.*

- b) A promise given *exactly* three months after they resumed their rebuilding of the Temple.

And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. (Haggai 1:14-15)

- c) About two months after the *Feast of Tabernacles* in the Fall: a remembrance of God's provision in the wilderness for 40 years.

4. Remember Haggai's favorite phrase: "*Consider your ways*"

- a) *Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. (Haggai 1:5)*

- b) *"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. (Haggai 1:7)*

- c) *Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the Lord, how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. (Haggai 2:15-16)*

- d) *Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider: (Haggai 2:18)*

5. It is a good and necessary thing to *consider* our lives in the course of what God is doing. Solomon puts it this way ...

- a) *Consider the work of God:*

who can make straight what he has made crooked?

In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him. (Ecc. 7:13-14)

- b) Good times ... bad times ...
 c) *The day of prosperity ... the day of adversity ...*
 d) Jeremiah would agree with Solomon ...

*Who has spoken and it came to pass,
 unless the Lord has commanded it?*

*Is it not from the mouth of the Most High
 that good and bad come?*

*Why should a living man complain,
 a man, about the punishment of his sins? (Lam. 3:37-39)*

6. In other words: The *Sovereign God* sends prosperity upon mankind and discipline/ judgements upon people. Why?

- a) Sometimes because of his *common grace* toward all ...

*The Lord is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

*The Lord is good to all,
 and his mercy is over all that he has made. (Psalm 145:8-9)*

*The eyes of all look to you,
 and you give them their food in due season.*

*You open your hand;
 you satisfy the desire of every living thing. (Psalm 145:15-16)*

- b) At other times God responds to the *obedience* of His saints.

“And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. (Deut. 28:1-6)

- c) And then, at other times, God is *punishing* the sinful and unfaithful actions of rebellious people ...

But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit

of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. (Deut. 28:15-19)

7. Sometimes we wonder: *Why is this happening to me? To us? To our nation?* The Lord, through Haggai, exhorts us to **“consider your ways ... consider ...”**

- a) To **think** about God, yourself and the conditions of your life.
- b) And to ask yourself, *“Could all this _____ be a result of my actions?”*
- c) Not to ask God, *“Why is this happening to me!”* (For that is really a question which is intended as an accusation that God has let you down!)
- d) But rather to think like this: *My life and my actions have serious consequences for God, for me, for others. How have my actions been interpreted by God? Do I deserve this? Is this what I brought on myself? Or is this God’s sovereign doing, which may not make sense to me right now?*
- e) Moses reminds us of this precarious balance between what we know and what remains a mystery to us. In the midst of his message about Blessings and Cursing Moses says this –

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. (Deut. 29:29)

8. This is the *Deuteronomic Covenant* God made with Israel. If they were loyal to God they would be blessed (i.e., showered with joy) in the Promised Land; if they were disloyal to God they would be removed from the Promised Land and “cursed” (i.e., visited with sorrow)

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.” (Deut. 30:19-20)

9. **Listen carefully:** Many Christians will say, “This OT Covenant no longer applies to us. We’re under grace.” (Meaning: Whether we obey God or not, because of Jesus God is *obligated* to bless us ... always!)

- a) Really? *Is this the message of the Bible?* No!
- b) **First:** These OT saints were saved by and lived under the Covenant of Grace as much as we do.
- c) **Second:** God has *always* put before mankind this rule of life: If we obey Him we are blessed; if we don’t we are in trouble:

(1) *The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen. 2:15-17)*

(2) *The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” (Gen. 4:6-7)*

- (3) *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8)*
- (4) *Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, but sin overthrows the wicked. (Prov. 13:6)*
- (5) *“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (Isa. 1:18-20)*
- (6) *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.” (Luke 6:46-49)*
- (7) *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)*
- (8) *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9-10)*
- (9) *“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” (Rev. 22:12-13)*

10. There it is – from Genesis to Revelation – for Adam, Cain, Moses, Joshua, Solomon, Isaiah, Jesus, Paul and John ...

- a) In the OT Law, History, Wisdom and Prophetic Books ...
- b) In the NT Gospels, Epistles and the Book of Revelation ...
- c) **The First Law of Life** unfolds: Obey God and be blessed; disobey God and be unhappy.

11. Haggai sets forth *two sermons* concerning this truth ...

- a) The Blessings of Holiness (2:10-19)
- b) The Blessing of God in Christ (2:20-23)

c) Blessings start now ... Blessings are completed in Christ!

I. BLESSINGS START NOW: The Reward of Holiness (Haggai 2:10-19)

On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: 'If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?'" The priests answered and said, "No." Then Haggai said, "If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered and said, "It does become unclean." Then Haggai answered and said, "So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the Lord, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean. Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the Lord, how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the Lord. Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider: Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you." (Haggai 2:10-19)

1. Sermon #1 – The “Morning Message” ...

- a) *Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you." (Haggai 2:19)*
- b) Key: *"But from this day on I will bless you ..."*
- c) Blessings start **now!**

2. Haggai begins by asking the Priests two questions:

- a) *On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: 'If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?'" The priests answered and said, "No." Then Haggai said, "If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered and said, "It does become unclean." (Haggai 2:10-13)*
- b) i.e. if a person who is *ceremonially unclean* touches sacred sacrifices (“holy meat,” bread, stew, wine, oil) then the sacrifice becomes unclean.
 - (1) i.e., unfit to be offered to God
 - (2) nor may he, as a Priest, eat the holy portion due to the priests
 - (3) *"If the man who is unclean does not cleanse himself, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, since he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. Because the water for impurity has not been thrown on him, he is unclean. And it shall be a statute forever for them. The one who sprinkles the water for impurity shall wash his clothes, and the one who touches the water for impurity shall be unclean until evening. And whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean, and anyone who touches it shall be unclean until evening." (Numbers 19:20-22)*

(4) Unclean men make holy things unclean

- c) But, it **never** works in the reverse: A sanctified person cannot make unclean things holy.
- d) Sin is contagious (uncleanness); holiness is cultivated, person by person (cleanness)

3. Application: Haggai points to their spiritual “uncleanness” and how it affects *all* they do:

- a) *Then Haggai answered and said, “So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the Lord, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean. Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the Lord, how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the Lord. (Haggai 2:14-17)*
- b) Gist: If the people’s hearts are not right with God then all they touch becomes unclean.
 - (1) the Temple they are building
 - (2) the offerings they bring to the alter
 - (3) the works of their hands: farming, etc.
- c) “Why?” They would ask, “aren’t we building the Temple?”
- d) Answer: *The holiness of the Holy Place won’t rub off on you; you must nurture love for God within you – in the heart!*

4. The unbuilt Temple (an unholy act) contaminated all they did (their shops and farms, and material prosperity), because the unbuilt temple pointed to an “**unwanted resident**” ...

- a) i.e., God!
- b) **J. Alec Motyer:** *The Minor Prophets: E&EC; vol. 3; p. 996-997*
 - (1) *To the unaided human mind, the situation demanded procedural reform. The gross national product was insufficient, and even what was produced did not seem to go as far as the producer envisaged. Then, as now, these are problems for the farmer, the economist, and the business owner. But to Haggai the problem was spiritual. The missing factor was not efficiency and knowhow but the blessing of God. By now we know how to interpret references to the building of the temple. It is the divinely required precondition of the indwelling of God among his people; the unbuilt house speaks of the unwanted resident.*
 - (2) *I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the Lord. (Haggai 2:17)*
 - (3) *The heart of their problem was that they acted as if life could be run without reference to God and as if grace would be theirs even though they neglected the means of grace.*
- c) The Temple was a **means of grace**: a place the Spirit of God indwelt in order to save and sanctify the people of God who came there in both faith and love (i.e., obedience)

5. For us in the NT that place where the **means of grace** are found is in the *local church*.

- a) *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, (Acts 2:41-46)*
- b) means of grace: The Word, prayer, fellowship, worship and the sacraments (esp. the Lord's Supper)
- c) a place where the people of faith learn how to love God and obey Him.
- d) *Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. (John 14:23-24)*

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:10-11)
- e) Faith + Love + Obedience = Abiding in God and God abiding in us ...
- f) ... and this gives us *full joy* (Blessing!)

6. **J. Alec Motyer:** *The Minor Prophets: E&EC; vol. 3; p. 998*

- a) *He is asserting a matter of pure spiritual essence: the first call to the people of God is to love the Lord their God with all their heart and to do all that he requires, whereby he will live at peace in their midst. This is the key to blessing.*
- b) God would rather that they loved Him and because of that built a House of Worship (Temple) so that they could fellowship with God ...
- c) ... than build God a Temple and separate the rest of their lives (farms) from Him.
- d) i.e., **God prefers love to duty, but never just one or the other.**
- e) God prefers obedience (out of love) to mere sacrifice (duty)

*And Samuel said,
"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
as in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to listen than the fat of rams. (1 Samuel 15:22)*
- f) But with the love He also wants our sacrifices.

*I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.*

*What shall I render to the Lord
for all his benefits to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people. (Psalm 116:1-2, 12-14)*

*O Lord, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the son of your maidservant.
You have loosed my bonds.
I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the Lord.
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people,
in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord! (Psalm 116:16-19)*

7. Here's the situation: *The people were building the Temple out of a sense of duty and to earn God's favor, but not because they loved God and put His interests first. So God says, "I want you not only to renew your efforts to build but also to reform your hearts to enjoy Me."*
8. God does a **gracious** thing here. He encourages them with these words:
 - a) *Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider: Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you." (Haggai 2:18-19)*
 - b) "Consider from this day onward" – from December 18, 520 BC
 - c) The day they began to rebuild after a 17-year break (537-520 BC)
 - d) From that day on they could be *assured* of God's favor and blessings.
9. Look at verse 19 ...
 - a) *Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you." (Haggai 2:19)*
 - b) This was said in December; spring planting was 6 months away.
 - c) But the *seed in the barns*, not yet planted, was guaranteed by God to bring a full harvest.
 - d) "But from this day (Dec. 18, 520 BC) on, I will bless you."
 - e) i.e., "Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's Temple was laid."
10. When was this *foundation laid*? In 537 BC or 520 BC?
 - a) *Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward,*

to supervise the work of the house of the Lord. And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the directions of David king of Israel. (Ezra 3:8-10)

- b) “made a beginning ... laid the foundation (537 BC)
- c) Then a 17-year break, but in 520 BC ...
- d) *Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them. (Ezra 5:1-2)*
- e) The Hebrew verb *yasad* means “to found” or “to build,” but not necessarily to “lay a foundation”
- f) The people returned to Jerusalem in 538 BC
 - (1) In 537 they swept and cleaned the old foundation of Solomon’s Temple
 - (2) They repaired it in Ezra 3 and laid its first stones (*foundation stones/ cornerstone*)
 - (3) After a 17-year break they renewed building in 520 BC
 - (4) *Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the Lord, (Haggai 2:15)*
 - (5) “stone placed upon stone” (September 21, 520 B.C.)

And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. (Haggai 1:14-15)
 - (6) This is the date referenced in Haggai 2:18

Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider: (Haggai 2:18)

11. **Key Point:** As the people *begin* to move toward God, even if their hearts are not 100% “clean,” or their work on schedule, or their discouragement overcome, God promises them, “*The Blessings start now!*”

12. The Blessing begins with the *Presence of God!*

13. **Michael P. V. Barrett:** *The Next to Last Word; pp. 90-91*

- a) *The Lord announced the certainty of His blessing. Divine blessing and favor are not defined by stuff. To limit God’s blessing to tangible things generates a motive for service that is aimed*

at getting stuff rather than pleasing the Lord. That is materialism, just another form of the selfishness that caused their trouble in the first place. The announcement of commenced blessing, which was the evidence of divine favor, constitutes the essence of real blessing. To know that God is pleased beyond words to express.

- b) *Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk 3:17-18)*
- c) *Blessing is good when the blessing is the Lord. That is the essence of this conclusion of Haggai's third sermon.*

II. BLESSINGS WILL BE COMPLETED: The Reward of Christ (Haggai 2:20-23)

The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts." (Haggai 2:20-23)

1. For a second time, later on Dec. 18, 520 B.C., the Holy Spirit gives "a word" (message) to Haggai.
2. God repeats part of His second message to Haggai:
 - a) *For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations 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 latter 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.'" (Haggai 2:6-9)*
 - b) *"Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. (Haggai 2:21-22)*
 - c) Interpreted for us by the NT Apostles

See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be

grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, (Hebrews 12:25-28)

- d) “*an unshakeable Kingdom*” – The Kingdom of God, the City of God, the New Heaven and New Earth.
 - e) *For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (Hebrews 12:18-23)*
3. If Haggai’s 3rd Sermon was that *Blessings start now*, his 4th and final message is this: *The Best is yet to come!*
4. Haggai tells *Zerubbabel*, the governor and prince of Judah, that he will be a **signet ring** – a chosen one of God.
- a) *On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.” (Haggai 2:23)*
 - b) *signet ring*: The royal ring of a king used to endorse documents and seal royal decrees
 - c) **Joyce Baldwin**: *Haggai: TOTC*; p. 55
The vivid figure attested the renewed election of the Davidic line, represented in Haggai’s day by Zerubbabel. He too would be kept safe to fulfil his God-appointed destiny. Later generations thought very highly of Zerubbabel.
 - d) **Ecclesiasticus 49:11-12** (An Apocryphal Book; Rabbis)
*How shall we extol Zerubbabel?
He was like a signet ring of the right hand,
so too was Jeshua son of Jozadak;
they who in their days build the Temple,
and raised to the Lord a holy people,
destined to everlasting glory.*
 - e) **Hebrew Hymn** for *Hanukkah*: “... To His holy oracle He brought me, yet also there I found no peace, for the oppressor came and led me captive, because I had served strange gods. I had to quaff the wine of bewilderment; well-nigh had I perished. When Babylon’s end drew near through *Zerubbabel* I was saved after seventy years ...”
5. But we know that *Zerubbabel* was a *type* of Christ: both a forerunner to and a foreshadowing of Jesus the Redeemer.
6. **John Calvin**: *Commentaries: Vol. 15; Haggai*; pp. 387-388

If, then, the reason be asked why God had so much exalted Zerubbabel, and bestowed on him favours so illustrious, it can be found in nothing else but in the goodness of God alone. God had made a covenant with David, and promised that his kingdom would be eternal; hence it was that he chose Zerubbabel after the people had returned from exile; and this election was the reason why God exalted Zerubbabel, though this power at that time was but small.

God invites here the attention of the faithful to their election, so that they might hope for more than what the perception of the flesh could conceive or apprehend; for what he has decreed cannot be made void; and in the person of Zerubbabel he had determined to save a chosen people; for from him, as it has been said, Christ was to come.

7. In Jesus Christ

a) Jesus Christ is the *Temple* of God, in which God “tabernacles” with men

(1) *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

(2) Literally: “*pitched His tent among us*” (tabernacled)

(3) *So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (John 2:18-22)*

b) Jesus Christ will *shake the nations*, as He builds His Kingdom of God (the Church), and then comes to judge all the living and the dead, and creates a New World ...

(1) *I saw the Lord standing beside the alter, and he said:*

*“Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake,
and shatter them on the heads of all the people;
and those who are left of them I will kill with the sword;
not one of them shall flee away;
not one of them shall escape.*

*“For behold, I will command,
and shake the house of Israel among all the nations
as one shakes with a sieve,
but no pebble shall fall to the earth.
All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword,
who say, ‘Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.’ (Amos 9:1, 9-10)*

(2) *“In that day I will raise up
the booth of David that is fallen
and repair its breaches,
and raise up its ruins
and rebuild it as in the days of old,
that they may possess the remnant of Edom*

*and all the nations who are called by my name,”
declares the Lord who does this.
“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord,
“when the plowman shall overtake the reaper
and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.
I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
I will plant them on their land,
and they shall never again be uprooted
out of the land that I have given them,”
says the Lord your God. (Amos 9:11-15)*

- c) Jesus Christ wears God’s *signet ring*: He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In Him all God’s promises are fulfilled and all God’s elect are sealed.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:13-14)

8. Our blessings begin with God’s *grace*; they are sealed in God’s *gospel* and they are fulfilled in God’s *glory* – all in Jesus Christ!

Conclusion: When God asks you to “*consider your ways*,” He is asking you to evaluate your life in the light of these three blessings from God ...

1. **First:** The *grace* of God in Christ ...

- a) Grace does not make us passive but quite the opposite; grace motivates and even enables us to love God, obey Him and serve Him with joy.
- b) Evangelicals allow grace to *paralyze* them out of fear of legalism, moralism, works-righteousness.
- c) Listen to the late **Dallas Willard** (not reformed, but right on this point) ... (*The Great Omission*; p. 58, 34)

As I often point out to folks, today we are not only saved by grace, we are paralyzed by it. We will preach to you for an hour that you can do nothing to be saved, and then sing to you for forty-five minutes trying to get you to do something to be saved. That is confusing, to say the least. We really have a problem with activity and passivity in our theology.

Grace is opposed to earning, not to effort. And it is well-directed, decisive, and sustained effort that is the key to the keys of the Kingdom and to the life of restful power in ministry and life that those keys open to us.

- d) When *grace enters our lives* we **do** try to please God, to obey Him, to serve Him. This is gospel truth ...

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12-13)

2. **Second:** The *gospel* of God in Christ ...

- a) The Gospel of God and about Christ brings us to the *obedience of faith* ...

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, (Romans 1:1-5)

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith (Romans 16:25-26)

- b) According to Jesus (and John) faith is not complete until it obeys Christ –

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (John 3:36)

- c) “*Trust and obey*” ... This is **not** adding moralism to grace, religion to the gospel, or words to faith.

- d) Faith is *vindicated* by our work of obedience:

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (James 2:18-26)

- e) The Good News is this: Jesus Christ has freed me from slavery to sin so that I am able to become a slave to obey Him.

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience,

which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:16-18)

3. **Third:** The *glory* of God in Christ ...

- a) God's grace through God's gospel leads me to a life of freedom, love, obedience and service to Christ so that I will someday be glorified when Jesus comes in glory!

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:16-17)

- b) Glorified in Christ by God's grace, but *because* of the good works I did for Christ.

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' (Matt. 25:23)

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (Matt. 25:34-40)

4. Don't be paralyzed by grace ...

discouraged by difficulty

distracted by worldly concerns

confused over grace and obedience

5. **Consider your ways:** God is faithful and Christ is good. Commit your ways to Him.

*"Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,*

*making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:6-11)*

*The Lord is my portion;
I have promised to keep Your words.
I sought Your favor with all my heart;
Be gracious to me according to Your word.
I considered my ways
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.
I hastened and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.
The cords of the wicked have encircled me,
But I have not forgotten Your law.
At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to You
Because of Your righteous ordinances.
I am a companion of all those who fear You,
And of those who keep Your precepts.
The earth is full of Your lovingkindness, O Lord;
Teach me Your statutes. (Ps. 119:57-64 NASB)*

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths. (Prov. 3:5-6)*