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## Preface

### **Preface:**

The captivity in Babylon gave a very remarkable turn to the affairs of the Jewish church both in history and prophecy. It is made a signal epocha in our Saviour's genealogy, Mt. 1:17. Nine of the twelve minor prophets, whose oracles we have been hitherto consulting, lived and preached before that captivity, and most of them had an eye to it in their prophecies, foretelling it as the just punishment of Jerusalem's wickedness. But the last three (in whom the Spirit of prophecy took its period, until it revived in Christ's forerunner) lived and preached after the return out of captivity, not immediately upon it, but some time after. Haggai and Zechariah appeared much about the same time, eighteen years after the return, when the building of the temple was both retarded by its enemies and neglected by its friends. *Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them* (so we read Ezra 5:1), to reprove them for their remissness, and to encourage them to revive that good work when it had stood still for some time, and to go on with it vigorously, notwithstanding the opposition they met with in it. Haggai began two months before Zechariah, who was raised up to second him, that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established. But Zechariah continued longer at the work; for all Haggai's prophecies that are recorded were delivered within four months, in the second year of Darius, between the beginning of the sixth month and the end of the ninth. But we have Zechariah's prophecies dated above two years after, Zec. 7:1. Some have the honour to lead, others to last, in the work of God. The Jews ascribe to these two prophets the honour of being members of the great synagogue (as they call it), which was formed after the return out of captivity; we think it more certain, and it was their honour, and a much greater honour, that they prophesied of Christ. Haggai spoke of him as the *glory of the latter house*, and Zechariah as *the man, the branch*. In them the light of that morning star shone more brightly than in the foregoing prophecies, as they lived nearer the time of the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and now began to see his day approaching. The Septuagint makes Haggai and Zechariah to be the penmen of Ps. 138 and Ps. 146, 147, and 148.

## Chapter 1

In this chapter, after the preamble of the prophecy, we have, I. A reproof of the people of the Jews for their dilatoriness and slothfulness in building the temple, which had provoked God to contend with them by the judgment of famine and scarcity, with an exhortation to them to resume that good work and to prosecute it in good earnest (v. 1–11). II. The good success of this sermon, appearing in the people's return and close application to that work, wherein the prophet, in God's name, animated and encouraged them, assuring them that God was with them (v. 12–15).

### Verses 1-11

It was the complaint of the Jews in Babylon that they *saw not their signs*, and there was *no more prophet* (Ps. 74:9), which was a just judgment upon them for mocking and misusing the prophets. We read of no prophets they had in their return, as they had in their coming out of Egypt, Hos. 12:13. God stirred them up immediately by his Spirit to exert themselves in that escape (Ezra 1:5); for, though God makes use of prophets, he needs them not, he can do his work without them. But the lamp of Old-Testament prophecy shall yet make some bright and glorious efforts before it expire; and Haggai is the first that appears under the character of a special messenger from heaven, when the *word of the Lord* had been long *precious* (as when prophecy began, 1 Sa. 3:1) and *there had been no open vision*. In the reign of Darius Hystaspes, the third of the Persian kings, in the second year of his reign, this prophet was sent; and the word of the Lord came to him, and came by him to the leading men among the Jews, who are here named, v. 1. The chief governor, 1. In the state; that was *Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel*, of the house of David, who was commander-in-chief of the Jews, in their return out of captivity. 2. In the church; and that was *Joshua the son of Josedech*, who was now *high priest*. They were great men and good men, and yet were to be stirred up to their duty when they grew remiss. What the people also were faulty in they must be told of, that they might use their power and interest for the mending of it. The prophets, who were extraordinary messengers, did not go about to set aside the ordinary institutions of magistracy and ministry, but endeavoured to render both more effectual for the ends to which they were appointed, for both ought to be supported. Now observe,

I. What the sin of the Jews was at this time, v. 2. As soon as they came up out of captivity they set up an altar for sacrifice, and within a year after laid the foundations of a temple, Ezra 3:10. They then seemed very forward in it, and it was likely enough that the work would be done suddenly; but, being served with a prohibition some time after from the Persian court, and charged not to go on with it, they not only yielded to the force, when they were actually under it, which might be excused, but afterwards, when the violence of the opposition had abated, they continued very indifferent to it, had no spirit nor courage to set about it again, but seemed glad that they had a pretence to let it stand still. Though those who are employed for God may be driven off from their work by a storm, yet they must return to it as soon as the storm is over. These Jews did not do so, but continued loitering until they were afresh reminded of their duty. And that which they suggested one to another was, *The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built*; that is, 1. "Our time has not come for the doing of it, because we have not yet recovered, after our captivity; our losses are not repaired, nor have we yet got before-hand in the world. It is too

great an undertaking for new beginners in the world, as we are; let us first get our own houses up, before we talk of building churches, and in the mean time let a bare altar serve us, as it did our father Abraham." They did not say that they would not build a temple at all, but, "Not yet; it is all in good time." Note, Many a good work is put by by being put off, as Felix put off the prosecution of his convictions to a more convenient season. They do not say that they will never repent, and reform, and be religious, but, "Not yet." And so the great business we were sent into the world to do is not done, under pretence that it is all in good time to go about it. 2. "God's time has not come for the doing of it; for (say they) the restraint laid upon us by authority in a legal way is not broken off, and therefore we ought not to proceed, though there be a present connivance of authority." Note, There is an aptness in us to misinterpret providential discouragements in our duty, as if they amounted to a discharge from our duty, when they are only intended for the trial and exercise of our courage and faith. It is bad to neglect our duty, but it is worse to vouch Providence for the patronising of our neglects.

II. What the judgments of God were by which they were punished for this neglect, v. 6, 9–11. They neglected the building of God's house, and put that off, that they might have time and money for their secular affairs. They desired to be excused from such an expensive piece of work under this pretence, that they must provide for their families; their children must have meat and portions too, and, until they have got before-hand in the world, they cannot think of rebuilding the temple. Now, that the punishment might answer to the sin, God by his providence kept them still behind-hand, and that poverty which they thought to prevent by not building the temple God brought upon them for not building it. They were sensible of the smart of the judgment, and every one complained of the unseasonable weather, the great losses they sustained in their corn and cattle, and the decay of trade; but they were not sensible of the cause of the judgment, and the ground of God's controversy with them. They did not, or would not, see and own that it was for their putting off the building of the temple that they lay under these manifest tokens of God's displeasure; and therefore God here gives them notice that this is that for which he contended with them. Note, We need the help of God's prophets and ministers to expound to us, not only the judgments of God's mouth, but the judgments of his hands, that we may understand his mind and meaning in his rod as well as in his word, to discover to us not only wherein we have offended God, but wherein God shows himself offended at us. Let us observe,

1. How God contended with them. He did not send them into captivity again, nor bring a foreign enemy upon them, as they deserved, but took the correcting of them into his own hands; for his mercies are great. (1.) He that *gives seed to the sower* denied his blessing upon the *seed sown*, and then it never prospered; they had nothing, or next to nothing, from it. *They sowed much* (v. 6), kept a great deal of ground in tillage, which, they might expect, would turn to a better advantage than usual, because their land had long *lain fallow* and had *enjoyed its sabbaths*. Having sown much, they looked for much from it, enough to spend and enough to spare too; but they were disappointed: *They bring in little*, very little (v. 6); when they have made the utmost of it, *it comes to little* (v. 9); it did not yield as they expected. Isa. 5:10, *The seed of a homer shall yield an ephah*, a bushel's sowing shall yield a peck. Note, Our expectations from the creature are often most frustrated when they are most raised; and then, when we look for much, it comes to little, that our expectation may be from God only, in whom it will be outdone. We are here told how they came to be disappointed (v. 10): *The heaven over you is stayed from dew*; he that has

the key of the clouds in his hands shut them up, and withheld the rain when the ground called for it, the former or the latter rain, and then of course *the earth is stayed from her fruit*; for, if the heaven be as brass, the earth is as iron. The corn perhaps came up very well, and promised a very plentiful crop, but, for want of the dews at earing-time, it never filled, but was parched with the heat of the sun and withered away. The restored captives, who had long been kept bare in Babylon, thought they should never want when they had got their own land in possession again and had that at command. But what the better are they for it, unless they had the clouds at command too? God will make us sensible of our necessary and constant dependence upon him, throughout all the links in the chain of second causes, from first to last; so that we can at no time say, "Now we have no further occasion for God and his providence." See Hos. 2:21. But God not only withheld the cooling rains, but he appointed the scorching heats (v. 11): *I called for a drought upon the land*, ordered the weather to be extremely hot, and then the fruits of the earth were burnt up. See how every creature is that to us which God makes it to be, either comfortable or afflictive, serving us or incommoding us. Nothing among the inferior creatures is so necessary and beneficial to the world as the heat of the sun; it is that which puts life into the plants and *renews the face of the earth* at spring. And yet, if that go into an extreme, it undoes all again. Our Creator is our best friend; but, if we make him our enemy, we make the best friends we have among the creatures our enemies too. This drought God called for, and it came at the call; as the winds and the waves, so the rays of the sun, obey him. It was universal, and the ill effects of it were general; it was a drought *upon the mountains*, which, lying high, were first affected with it. The mountains were their pasture-grounds, and used to be *covered over with flocks*, but now there was no grass for them. It was *upon the corn, the new wine, and the oil*; all failed through the extremity of the hot weather, even *all that the ground brought forth*; it all withered. Nay, it had a bad influence upon men; the hot weather enfeebled some, and made them weary and faint, and spent their spirits; it inflamed others, and put them into fevers. It should seem, it brought diseases upon cattle too. In short, it spoiled *all the labour of their hands*, which they hoped to eat of and maintain their families by. Note, Meat for the belly is meat that perishes, and, if we labour for that only, we are in danger of losing our labour; but we are sure *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord* if we labour for *the meat which endures to eternal life*. For the *hand of the diligent*, in the business of religion, will infallibly *make rich*, whereas, in the business of this life, the most solicitous and the most industrious often lose the labour of their hands. *The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*. (2.) He that gives *bread to the eater* denied his blessing upon the bread they ate, and then that did not nourish them. The cause of the withering and failing of the corn in the field was visible—it was for want of rain; but, besides that, there was a secret blast and curse attending that which they brought home. [1.] When they had it in the barn they were not sure of it: *I did blow upon it, saith the Lord of hosts* (v. 9), and that withered it, as buds are sometimes blasted in the spring by a nipping frost, which we see the effects of, but know not the way of. *I did blow it away*; so the margin reads it. When men have heaped wealth together God can scatter it with the breath of his mouth as easily as we can blow away a feather. Note, We can never be sure of any thing in this world; it is exposed, not only when it is in the field, but when it is housed; for there *moth and rust corrupt*, Mt. 6:19. And, if we would have the comfort and continuance of our temporal enjoyments, we must make God our friend; for, if he bless them to us, they are blessings indeed, but if he blow upon them we can expect no good from them: they *make themselves wings and*

*fly away.* [2.] When they had it upon the board it was not that to them that they expected: "*You eat, but you have not enough,* either because the meat is washy, and not satisfying, or because the stomach is greedy, and not satisfied. You eat, but you have no good digestion, and so are not nourished by it, nor does it answer the end, or you have not enough because you are not content, nor think it enough. *You drink,* but are not cooled and refreshed by it; *you are not filled with drink;* you are stinted, and have not enough to quench your thirst. The *new wine is cut off from your mouth* (Joel 1:5), nay, and you *drink your water* too by *measure and with astonishment;* you have no comfort of it, because you have no plenty of it, but are still in fear of falling short." [3.] That which they had upon their backs did them no good there: "*You clothe yourselves, but there is none warm;* your clothes soon wear out, and wax old, and grow thin, because God blows upon them," contrary to what Israel's did in the wilderness when God blessed them. It is God that *makes our garments warm upon us,* when he *quiets the earth,* Job 37:17. [4.] That which they had in their bags, which was not laid out, but laid up, they were not sure of: "*He that earns wages* by hard labour, and has it paid him in ready current money, *puts it into a bag with holes;* it drops through, and wastes away insensibly. Every thing is so scarce and dear that they spend their money as fast as they get it." Those that lay up their treasure on earth put it into a bag with holes; they lose it as they go along, and those that come after them pick it up. But, if we lay up our treasure in heaven, we provide for ourselves *bags that wax not old,* Lu. 12:33.

2. Observe wherefore God thus contended with them, and stopped the current of the favours promised them at their return (Joel 2:24); they provoked him to do it: *It is because of my house that is waste.* This is the quarrel God has with them. The foundation of the temple is laid, but the building does not go on. "Every man *runs to his own house,* to finish that, and to make that convenient and fine, and no care is taken about the Lord's house; and therefore it is that God crosses you thus in all your affairs, to testify his displeasure against you for that neglect, and to bring you to a sense of your sin and folly." Note, As those who seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof shall not only find them, but are most likely to have other things added to them, so those who neglect and postpone those things will not only lose them, but will justly have other things taken away from them. And if God cross us in our temporal affairs, and we meet with trouble and disappointment, we shall find this is the cause of it, the work we have to do for God and our own souls is left undone, and we *seek our own things more than the things of Jesus Christ,* Phil. 2:21.

III. The reproof which the prophet gives them for their neglect of the temple-work (v. 4): "*Is it time for you, O you! to dwell in your ceiled houses,* to have them beautified and adorned, and your families settled in them?" They were not content with walls and roofs for necessity, but they must have for gaiety and fancy. "It is high time," says one, "that my house were wainscoted." "It is high time," says another, "that mine were painted." And God's house, all this time, *lies waste,* and nothing is done at it. "What!" says the prophet, "is it time that you should have your humour pleased, and not time you should have your God pleased?" How much was their disposition the reverse of David's, who could not be easy in his *house of cedar* while the *ark of God* was *in curtains* (2 Sa. 7:2), and of Solomon's, who built the temple of God before he built a palace for himself. Note, Those are very much strangers to their own interest who prefer the conveniences and ornaments of the temporal life before the absolute necessities of the spiritual life, who are full of care to enrich their own houses, while God's temple in their hearts lies

waste, and nothing is done for it or in it.

IV. The good counsel which the prophet gives to those who thus despised God, and whom God was therefore justly displeased with. 1. He would have them reflect: *Now therefore consider your ways*, v. 5 and again v. 7. "Be sensible of the hand of God gone out against you, and enquire into the reason; think what you have done that has provoked God thus to break in upon your comforts; and think what you will do to testify your repentance, that God may return in mercy to you." Note, It is the great concern of every one of us to consider our ways, to *set our hearts to our ways* (so the word is), to *think on our ways* (Ps. 119:59), to *search and try* them (Lam. 3:40), to *ponder the path of our feet* (Prov. 4:26), to apply our minds with all seriousness to the great and necessary duty of self-examination, and communing with our own hearts concerning our spiritual state, our sins that are past, and our duty for the future; for sin is what we must answer for, duty is what we must do; about these therefore we must be inquisitive, rather than about events, which we must leave to God. Many are quick-sighted to pry into other people's ways who are very careless of their own; whereas our concern is to *prove every one his own work*, Gal. 6:4. 2. He would have them reform (v. 8): "*Go up to the mountain, to Lebanon, and bring wood*, and other materials that are wanting, *and build the house* with all speed; put it off no longer, but set to it in good earnest." Note, Our considering our ways must issue in the amending of whatever we find amiss in them. If any duty has been long neglected, that is not a reason why it should still be so, but why now at length it should be revived; better late than never. For their encouragement to apply in good earnest to this work, he assures them, (1.) That they should be accepted of him in it: *Build the house, and I will take pleasure in it*; and that was encouragement enough for them to apply to it with alacrity and resolution, and to go through with it, whatever it cost them. Note, Whatever God will take pleasure in, when it is done, we ought to take pleasure in the doing of, and to reckon that inducement enough to set about it, and go on with it in good earnest; for what greater satisfaction can we have in our own bosoms than in contributing any thing towards that which God will take pleasure in? It ought to be the top of our ambition to be *accepted of the Lord*, 2 Co. 5:9. Though they had foolishly neglected the house of God, yet, if at length they will resume the care of it, God will not remember against them their former neglects, but will take pleasure in the work of their hands. Those who have long deferred their return to God, if at length they return with all their heart, must not despair of his favour. (2.) That he would be honoured by them in it: *I will be glorified, saith the Lord*. He will be served and worshipped in the temple when it is built, and sanctified in those that come nigh to him. It is worth while to bestow all possible care, and pains, and cost, upon that by which God may be glorified.

#### **Verses 12-15**

*As an ear-ring of gold* (says Solomon), and *an ornament of fine gold*, so amiable, so acceptable, in the sight of God and man, is a wise reprovener upon an obedient ear, Prov. 25:12. The prophet here was a wise but faithful reprovener, in God's name, and he met with an obedient ear. The foregoing sermon met with the desired success among the people, and their obedience met with due encouragement from God. Observe,

I. How the people returned to God in a way of duty. All those to whom that sermon was preached received the word in the love of it, and were wrought upon by it. Zerubbabel, the chief governor, did not think himself above the check and command of

God's word. He was a man that had been eminently useful in his day, and serviceable to the interest of the church, yet did not plead his former merits in answer to this reproof for his present remissness, but submitted to it. Joshua's business, as high priest, was to teach, and yet he was willing himself to be taught, and willingly received admonition and instruction. *The remnant of the people* (and the whole body of them was but a remnant, a very few of the many thousands of Israel) also were very pliable; they all *obeyed the voice of the Lord their God*, and bowed their neck to the yoke of his commands, and it is here recorded to their honour that they did so, v. 12. Their father said, *Sons, go work to-day in my vineyard*, in my temple; and they not only said, *We go, sir*, but they went immediately. 1. They looked upon the prophet to be the Lord's messenger, and the word he delivered to be the Lord's message to them; and therefore received it *not as the word of man, but as the word of Almighty God*; they obeyed his words, *as the Lord their God had sent him*, v. 12. Note, In attending to God's ministers we must have an eye to him that sent them, and receive them for his sake, while they act according to their commission. 2. They *did fear before the Lord*. Prophecy was a new thing with them; they had had no special messenger from heaven for a great while, and therefore now that they had one, and but one, they paid an extraordinary regard to him; whereas their fathers, who had many prophets, mocked and misused them. It is sometimes so; when good preaching is most scarce it does most good, whereas the manna that is rained in plenty is loathed as *light bread*. And, because they so readily received this prophet, God, within a month or two after, raised them up another, *Zec. 1:1*. They *feared before the Lord*; they had a great regard to the divine authority and a great dread of the divine wrath, and were of those that *trembled at God's word*. The judgments of God which they had been under, though very severe, had not prevailed to make them fear before the Lord, until the word of God was sent to expound his providences, and then they feared. Note, A holy fear of God will have a great influence upon our obedience to him. *Serve the Lord with fear*; if we fear him not, we shall not serve him. 3. *The Lord stirred up* their spirits, v. 14. (1.) He excited them to their duty, and put it into their hearts to go about it. Note, Then the word of God has its success when God by his grace stirs up our spirits to comply with it; and without that grace we should remain stupid and utterly averse to every thing that is good. It is in the day of a divine power that we are made willing. (2.) He encouraged them in their duty, and with those encouragements enlarged their hearts, *Ps. 119:32*. When they heard the word they feared; but, lest they should sink under the weight of that fear, God stirred them up, and made them cheerful and bold to encounter the difficulties they might meet with. Note, When God has work to do, he will either find or make men fit to do it, and stir them up to it. 4. They applied to their work with all possible vigour: *They came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts their God*. Every one, according as his capacity or ability was, lent a hand, some way or other, to further that good work; and this they did with an eye to God as the *Lord of hosts*, and as their God, the God of Israel. The consideration of God's sovereign dominion in the world by his providence, and his covenant-relation to his people by his grace, should stir up our spirits to act for him, and for the advancement of the interest of his kingdom among men, to the utmost of our power. 5. They did this speedily; it was but on the first day of the sixth month that Haggai preached them this sermon, and by the twenty-fourth of the same month, little more than three weeks after, they were all busy working in the house of the Lord their God, v. 15. To show that they were ashamed of their delays hitherto, now that they were convinced and called they were resolved to delay no longer, but to strike while the

iron was hot, and to set about the work while they were under convictions. Note, Those that have lost time have need to redeem time; and the longer we have loitered in that which is good the more haste we should make when we are convinced of our folly.

II. How God met them in a way of mercy. The same prophet that brought them the reproof brought them a very comforting encouraging word (v. 13): *Then spoke Haggai, the Lord's messenger, in the Lord's message, in his name, and as from him, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord.* That is all he has to say, and that is enough; as that word of Christ to his disciples is (Mt. 28:20), "*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. I am with you,* that is, I will forgive your neglects hitherto, and they shall not be remembered against you; I will remove the judgments you have been under for those neglects, and will appear for you, as I have in them appeared against you. *I am with you* to protect you against your enemies that bear ill-will to your work, and to prosper you, and to give you success in it—with you to strengthen your hands, and bless the work of them, without which blessing those labour in vain that build." Note, Those that work for God have God with them; and, if he be for us, who can be against us? If he be with us, what difficulty can stand before us?

## Chapter 2

In this chapter we have three sermons preached by the prophet Haggai for the encouragement of those that are forward to build the temple. In the first he assures the builders that the glory of the house they were now building should, in spiritual respects, though not in outward, exceed that of Solomon's temple, in which he has an eye to the coming of Christ (v. 1-9). In the second he assures them that though their sin, in delaying to build the temple, had retarded the prosperous progress of all their other affairs, yet now that they had set about it in good earnest he would bless them, and give them success (v. 10–19). In the third he assures Zerubbabel that, as a reward of his pious zeal and activity herein, he should be a favourite of Heaven, and one of the ancestors of Messiah the Prince, whose kingdom should be set up on the ruins of all opposing powers (v. 20–23).

### Verses 1-9

I. The date of this message, v. 1. It was sent on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, when the builders had been about a month at work (since the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month), and had got it in some forwardness. Note, Those that are hearty in the service of God shall receive fresh encouragements from him to proceed in it, as their case calls for them. Set the wheels a going, and God will oil them.

II. The direction of this message, v. 2. The encouragements here are sent to the same persons to whom the reproofs in the foregoing chapter are directed; for those that are wounded by the convictions of the word shall be healed and bound up by its consolations. *Speak to Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the residue of the people*, the very same that *obeyed the voice of the Lord* (ch. 1:12) and whose spirits God stirred up to do so (ch. 1:14); to them are sent these words of comfort.

III. The message itself, in which observe,

1. The discouragements which those laboured under who were employed in this work. That which was such a damp upon them, and an alloy to their joy, when the foundation of the temple was laid, was still a clog upon them—that they could not build such a temple now as Solomon built, not so large, so stately, so sumptuous, a one as that was. This fetched tears from the eyes of many, when the dimensions of it were first laid (Ezra 3:12), and still it made the work go on heavily—that the glory of this house, *in comparison* with that of the former, was *as nothing*, v. 3. It was now about seventy years since Solomon's temple was destroyed (for that was in the nineteenth year of the captivity, and this about the nineteenth after the captivity), so that there might be some yet alive who could remember to have seen it, and still they would be upbraiding themselves and their brethren with the great disparity between this house and that. One could remember the gold with which it was overlaid, another the precious stones with which it was garnished; one could describe the magnificence of the porch, another of the pillars—and where are these now? This weakened the hands of the builders; for, though our gracious God is pleased with us if we do in sincerity as well as we can in his service, yet our proud hearts will scarcely let us be pleased with ourselves unless we do as well as others whose abilities far exceed ours. And it is sometimes the fault of old people to discourage the services of the present age by crying up too much the performances and attainments of the former age, with which others should be provoked to emulation, but not exposed to contempt. *Say not thou that the former days were better than these* (Eccl. 7:10), but thank God

that there is any good in these, bad as they are.

2. The encouragement that is given them to go on in the work, notwithstanding (v. 4): *Yet now*, though this house is likely to be much inferior to the former, *be strong, O Zerubbabel! and be strong, O Joshua!* Let not these leading men give way to this suggestion, nor be disheartened by it, but do as well as they can, when they cannot do so well as they would; and let *all the people of the land be strong too, and work*; and, if the leaders have but a good heart on it, it is hoped that the followers will have the better heart. Note, Those that work for God ought to exert themselves with vigour, and then to encourage themselves with hope that it will end well.

3. The grounds of these encouragements. God himself says to them, *Fear you not* (v. 5), and he gives good reasons for it.

(1.) They have God with them, his Spirit and his special presence: *Be strong, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts*, v. 4. This he had said before (ch. 1:13), *I am with you*. But we need to have these assurances repeated, that we may have strong consolation. The presence of God with us, as the *Lord of hosts*, is enough to silence all our fears and to help us over all the discouragements we may meet with in the way of our duty. The Jews had hosts against them, but they had the Lord of hosts with them, to take their part and plead their cause. He is with them; for, [1.] He adheres to his promise. His covenant is inviolable, and he will be always theirs, and will appear and act for them, *according to the word that he covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt. Though he chastens them for their transgressions with the rod*, yet he will not make his faithfulness to fail. [2.] He dwells among them by his Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy. When he first formed them into a people *he gave his good Spirit to instruct them* (Neh. 9:20); and still the Spirit, though often grieved and provoked to withdraw, remained among them. It was the Spirit of God that stirred up their spirits to come out of Babylon (Ezra 1:5), and now to build the temple, Hag. i. 14. Note, We have reason to be encouraged as long as we have the Spirit of God remaining among us to work upon us, for so long we have God with us to work for us.

(2.) They shall have the Messiah among them shortly—*him that should come*. To him bore all the prophets witness and this prophet particularly here, v. 6, 7. Here is an intimation of the time of his coming, that it should not be long ere he came: *"Yet once, it is a little while, and he shall come*. The Old-Testament church has but one stage more (if we may say so) to travel; five stages were now past, from Adam to Noah, thence to Abraham, thence to Moses, thence to Solomon's temple, thence to the captivity, and now yet one stage more, its sixth day's journey, and then comes the sabbatism of the Messiah's kingdom. Let the Son of man, when he comes, find faith on the earth, and let the children of promise continue still looking for him, for now it is but *a little while* and he will come; *hold out, faith and patience, yet awhile, for he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*." And, as he then said of his first appearance, so now of his second, *Surely I come quickly*. Now concerning his coming it is here foretold, [1.] That it shall be introduced by a general shaking (v. 6): *I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land*. This is applied to the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, to make way for which he will *judge among the heathen*, Ps. 110:6. God will once again do for his church as he did when he brought them out of Egypt; he shook the heavens and earth at Mount Sinai, with thunder, and lightnings, and earthquakes; he shook the sea and the dry land when lanes were made through the sea and streams fetched out of the rock. This shall be done again, when, at the sufferings of

Christ, the sun shall be darkened, the earth shake, the rocks rend—when, at the birth of Christ, Herod and all *Jerusalem are troubled* (Mt. 2:3), and he is *set for the fall and rising again of many*. When his kingdom was set up it was with a shock to the nations; the oracles were silenced, idols were destroyed, and the powers of the kingdoms were moved and removed, Heb. 12:27. It denotes *the removing of the things that are shaken*. Note, The shaking of the nations is often in order to the settling of the church and the establishing of the things that cannot be shaken. [2.] That it shall issue in a general satisfaction. He shall come as *the desire of all nations*—desirable to all nations, for *in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed* with the best of blessings—long expected and desired by the good people in all nations, that had any intelligence from the Old-Testament predictions concerning him. Balaam in the land of Moab had spoken of a star that should arise out of Jacob, and Job in the land of Uz of his living Redeemer; the concourse of devout men from all parts at Jerusalem (Acts 2:5) was in expectation of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom about that time. All the nations that are brought in to Christ, and disciplined in his name, have called him, and will call him, *all their salvation and all their desire*. This glorious title of Christ seems to refer to Jacob's prophecy (Gen. 49:10), that *to him shall the gathering of the people be*.

(3.) The house they are now building shall be filled with glory to such a degree that its glory shall exceed that of Solomon's temple. The enemies of the Jews followed them with reproach, and cast contempt upon the house they were building; but they might very well endure that when God undertook to fill it with glory. It is God's prerogative to fill with glory; the glory that comes from him is satisfying, and not vain glory. Moses's tabernacle and Solomon's temple were filled with glory when God in a cloud took possession of them; but this house shall be filled with glory of another nature. [1.] Let them not be concerned because this house will not have so much silver and gold about it as Solomon's temple had, v. 8. God needs not the silver and gold to adorn his temple, for (says he), *The silver is mine, and the gold is mine*. All the silver and gold in the world are his; all that is hid in the bowels of the earth (for *the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*), all that is laid up in the exchequers, banks, and treasuries of the children of men, and all that circulates for the maintaining of trade and commerce; it is all *the Lord's*. Every penny bears his image as well as Caesar's; and therefore when gold and silver are dedicated to his honour, and employed in his service, no addition is made to him, for it was his before. When David and his princes offered vast sums for the service of the house of God, they acknowledged, *It is all thy own, and of thy own, Lord, have we given thee*, 1 Chr. 29:14, 16. Therefore God needs not sacrifice, for *every beast of the forest is his*, Ps. 50:10. Note, If we have silver and gold, we must serve and honour God with them, for they are all his own, we have but the use of them, the property remains in him; but, if we have not silver and gold to honour him with, we must honour him with such as we have, and he will accept us, for he needs them not; all the *silver and gold* in the world are his already. *The earth is full of his riches, so is the great and wide sea also*. [2.] Let them be comforted with this, that, though this temple have less gold in it, it shall have more glory than Solomon's (v. 9): *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former*. This was never true in respect of outward glory. This latter house was indeed in its latter times very much beautified and enriched by Herod, and we find the disciples admiring the stones and buildings of the temple, how fine they were (Mk. 13:1); but it was nothing in comparison with Solomon's temple; and, besides, the Jews own that several of the divine glories of the first temple were wanting in this—the *ark*, the *urim* and

*thummim*, the *fire from heaven*, and the *Schechinah*; so that we cannot conceive how the glory of this latter house should in any thing exceed that of the former, but in that which would indeed excel all the glories of the first house—the presence of the Messiah in it, the Son of God, his being presented there *the glory of his people Israel*, his attending there at twelve years old, and afterwards his preaching and working miracles there, and his driving the buyers and sellers out of it. It was necessary, then, that the Messiah should come while the second temple stood; but, that being long since destroyed, we must conclude that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, is *he that should come*, and we are to *look for no other*. It was also the *glory of this latter house*, *First*, That, before the coming of Christ, it was always kept free from idols and idolatries, and was never polluted with those abominable things, as the first temple often was (2 Ki. 23:11, 12), and in this its glory excelled all the glory of that. Note, The purity of the church, and the strict adherence to divine institutions, are much more its glory than external pomp and splendour. *Secondly*, That, after Christ, the gospel was preached in it by the apostles, even all the words of this life, Acts 5:20. In the temple Jesus Christ was daily preached, Acts 5:42. Now the ministration of righteousness and life by the gospel was unspeakably more glorious than the law, which was a *ministration of death and condemnation*, 2 Co. 3:9, 10. Note, That is the most valuable glory which arises from our relation to Christ and our interest in him. As, where Christ is, *behold a greater than Solomon is there*, so the heart in which he dwells, and makes a living temple, behold it is more glorious than Solomon's temple, and will be so to eternity.

(4.) They should see a comfortable end of their present troubles, and enjoy the pleasure of a happy settlement: *In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts*. Note, God's presence with his people in his ordinances secures to them all good. If God be with us, peace is with us. But the Jews under the latter temple had so much trouble that we must conclude this promise to have its accomplishment in that spiritual peace which Jesus Christ has by his blood purchased for, and by his last will and testament bequeathed to, all believers (Jn. 14:27), that peace which Christ himself preached as the prophet of peace, and gives as the prince of peace. God will *give peace in this place*; he will give his Son to be the peace, Eph. 2:14.

### **Verses 10-19**

This sermon was preached two months after that in the former part of the chapter. The priests and Levites preached constantly, but the prophets preached occasionally; both were good and needful. We have need to be taught our duty *in season and out of season*. The people were now going on vigorously with the building of the temple, and in hopes shortly to have it ready for their use and to be employed in the services of it; and now God sends them a message by his prophet, which would be of use to them.

I. By way of conviction and caution. They were now engaged in a very good work, but they were concerned to see to it, not only that it was good for the matter of it, but that it was done in a right manner, for otherwise it would not be accepted of God. God sees there are many among them that spoil this good work, by going about it with unsanctified hearts and hands, and are likely to gain no advantage to themselves by it; these are here convicted, and all are warned thereby to purify the hands they employ in this work, for *to the pure only all things are pure*, and from the pure only that comes which is pure. This matter is here illustrated by the established rules of the ceremonial law, in putting a *difference between the clean and the unclean*, about

which many of the appointments of the law were conversant. Hereby it appears that a spiritual use is to be made of the ceremonial law, and that it was intended, not only as a divine ritual to the Jews, but for *instruction in righteousness* to all, even to us upon whom the ends of the world have come, to discover to us both sin and Christ, both our disease and our remedy.

Now observe here,

1. What the rule of the law was. The prophet is ordered to enquire of the priests concerning it (v. 11); for their *lips* should *keep* this *knowledge*, and the people should *enquire the law at their mouth*, Mal. 2:7. Haggai himself, though a prophet, must *ask the priests concerning the law*. His business, as an extraordinary messenger, was to expound the providences of God, and to give directions concerning particular duties, as he had done, ch. 1:8, 9. But he would not take the priests' work out of the hands of those who were the ordinary ministers, and whose business it was to expound the ordinances of God, to teach the people the meaning of them, and to give the general rules for the observance of them. In a case of that nature, Haggai must himself consult them. Note, God has given to his ministers diversities of gifts, and calls them out to do diversities of services, so that they have need one of another, should make use one of another, and be helpful one to another. The prophet, though divinely inspired, cannot say to the priest, *I have no need of thee*, nor can the priest say so to the prophet. Perhaps Haggai was *therefore* ordered to consult the priests, that out of their own mouths he might judge both them and the people committed to their charge, and convict them of worse than ceremonial pollution. See Lev. 10:10, 11. Now the rules of the law, in the cases propounded, are, (1.) That he that has holy flesh in his clothes cannot by the touch of his clothes communicate holiness (v. 12): *If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment*, though the garment is thereby so far made a devoted thing as that it is not to be put to common use till it has first been washed in the holy place (Lev. 6:27), yet it shall by no means transmit a holiness to either meat or drink, so as to make it ever the better to those that use it. (2.) That he that is ceremonially unclean by the touch of a dead body does by his touch communicate that uncleanness. The law is express (Num. 19:22), *Whatsoever the unclean person touches shall be unclean*; yet this Haggai will have from the priests' own mouth, for concerning those things that we find very plain in our Bibles yet it is good to have the advice of our ministers. The sum of these two rules is that pollution is more easily communicated than sanctification; that is (says Grotius), There are many ways of vice, but only one of virtue, and that a difficult one. *Bonum oritur ex integris; malum ex quolibet defectu—Good implies perfection; evil commences with the slightest defect*. Let not men think that living among good people will recommend them to God if they are not good themselves, but let them fear that touching the unclean thing will defile them, and therefore let them keep at a distance from it.

2. How it is here applied (v. 14): *So is this people, and so is this nation, before me*. He does not call them his people and his nation (they are unworthy to be owned by him), but *this people*, and *this nation*. They have been thus before God; they thought their offering sacrifices on the altar would sanctify them, and excuse their neglect to build the temple, and remove the curse which by that neglect they had brought upon their common enjoyments: "No," says God, "your holy flesh and your altar will be so far from sanctifying your meat and drink, your wine and oil, to you, that your contempt of God's temple will bring a pollution, not only on your common enjoyments, but even on your sacrifices too; so that while you continued in that neglect all was unclean to you, nay, and *so is this people* still; and so they will be; on these terms they will still stand with me, and on no

other—that if they be profane, and sensual, and morally impure, if they have wicked hearts, and live wicked lives, though they work ever so hard at the temple while it is building, and though they offer ever so many and costly sacrifices there when it is built, yet that shall not serve to sanctify their meat and drink to them, and to give them a comfortable use of them; nay, the impurity of their hearts and lives shall make even that work of their hands, and all their offerings, unclean, and an abomination to God." And the case is the same with us. Those whose devotions are plausible, but whose conversation is wicked, will find their devotions unable to sanctify their enjoyments, but their wickedness prevailing to pollute them. Note, When we are employed in any good work we should be jealous over ourselves, lest we render it unclean by our corruptions and mismanagements.

II. By way of comfort and encouragement. If their hearts be right with God, and their eye single in his service, they shall have the benefit of their devotion. God will take away the judgment of famine wherewith they have been corrected for their remissness, and will restore them great plenty. This they are called to consider, and to observe whether God would not be to the utmost as good as his word, and by his providence remarkably countenance and recompense their reformation in this matter. To make this the more signal, let them set down the day when they began to work at the building of the temple, to raise the structure upon the foundations that had been laid some time before. On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month they began to prepare materials (ch. 1:15), and now on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month they began to *lay a stone upon a stone in the temple of the Lord*; let them take notice of this day, and observe, 1. How they had gone behind-hand in their estates before this day. Let them remember the time when there was a sensible waste and decay in all they had, v. 16. A man went to his garner, expecting to find *a heap of twenty measures* of corn, so much he used to have from such a piece of ground, or so much used to be left at that time of the year, or so much he took it for granted there was when he fetched the last from it, but he found it unaccountably diminished, and, when he came to measure it, *there were but ten measures*; it had run in and dried away in the keeping, or vermin had eaten it, or it was stolen. In like manner he went to *the wine-press*, expecting to draw *fifty vessels* of wine, for so much he used to have from such a quantity of grapes, but they did not yield as usual, for he could get *but twenty*. This agrees with what we had, ch. 1:9, *You looked for much, and it came to little*. Note, It is our folly that we are apt to raise our expectation from the creature, and to think tomorrow must needs be as this day and much more abundant, but we are commonly disappointed, and the more we expect the more grievous the disappointment is. In the stores and treasures of the new covenant we need not fear being disappointed when we come by faith to draw from them. But this was not all. God did visibly contend with them in the weather (v. 17): *I smote you with blastings*, winds and frosts, which made every green thing to wither, *and with mildew*, which choked the corn when it was knitting, *and with hail*, which battered it down and broke it when it had grown to some maturity; thus they were disappointed *in all the labour of their hands*, while they neglected to lay their hand to the work of God and to labour in that. Note, While we take no care of God's interest we cannot expect he should take care of ours. And, when he thus walks contrary to us, he expects that we should return to him and to our duty. But this people either saw not the hand of God in it (imputing it to chance) or saw not their own sin as the provoking cause of it, and therefore turned not to him. They were a long time incorrigible and unhumiliated under these rebukes, so that God's hand was *stretched*

out still, for the people turned not to him that smote them, Isa. 9:12, 13. They might easily observe that as long as they continued in neglect of the temple work all their affairs went backward. But, 2. Let them now observe, and they should find that from this day forward God would bless them (v. 18, 19): "*Consider now* whether when you begin to change you way towards God you do not find God changing his way towards you; from *this day*, when you fall to work about the temple, *consider it*, I say, and you shall find a remarkable turn given for the better to all your affairs. *Is the seed yet in the barn?* Yes it is, and not yet thrown into the ground. The fruit-trees do not as yet bud, *the vine, and the fig-tree, and the olive-tree*, have not as yet brought forth, so that nothing appears to promise a good harvest or vintage next year. Nature does not promise it; but now that you begin to apply in good earnest to your duty, the God of nature promises it; he has said, *From this day I will bless you*. It is the best day's work you ever did in your lives, for hence you may date the return of your prosperity." He does not say what they shall be, but, in general, *I will bless you*; and those that know what are the fruits flowing from God's blessing know they can desire no more to make them happy. "*I will bless you*, and then you shall soon recover all your losses, shall thrive as fast as before you went backward; for *the blessing of the Lord, that maketh rich*, and those *whom he blesses are blessed indeed*." Note, When we begin to make conscience of our duty to God we may expect his blessing; and this tree of life is so known by its fruits that one may discern almost to a day a remarkable turn of Providence in favour of those that return in a way of duty; so that they and others may say that *from this day they are blessed*. See Mal. 3:10. And *whoso is wise will observe these things, and understand by them the lovingkindness of the Lord*.

### **Verses 20-23**

After Haggai's sermon *ad populum—to the people*, here follows one, the same day, *ad magistratum—to the magistrates*, a word directed particularly to Zerubbabel, *the governor of Judah*, who was a leading active man in this good work which the people now set about, and therefore he shall have some particular marks put upon him (v. 21): *Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah*, speak to him by himself. He has thoughts in his head far above those of the common people, as wise princes are wont to have, who move in a higher and larger sphere than others. The people of the land are in care about their corn-fields and vineyards; God has assured them that they shall prosper, and we hope that will make them easy; but Zerubbabel is concerned about the community and its interests, about the neighbouring nations, and the revolutions of their governments, and what will become of the few and feeble Jews in those changes and convulsions, and how such a poor prince as he is should be able to keep his ground and serve his country. "Go to him," says God, "and tell him it shall be well with him and his remnant, and let that make him easy."

I. Let him expect to hear of great commotions in the nations of the earth, and let them not be a surprise to him; behold, he is told of them before (v. 21, 22): *I will shake the heavens and the earth*. This he had said before (v. 6, 7), and now says it again to Zerubbabel; let him expect shaking times, universal concussions. The world is like the sea, like the wheel, always in motion, but sometimes in a special manner turbulent. But, Blessed be God, if the earth be shaken, it is to *shake the wicked out of it*, Job 38:13. In the apocalyptic visions earthquakes bode no ill to the church. Here the heavens and the earth are shaken, that proud oppressors may be broken and brought down: *I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms*. The Chaldean monarchy, which had

been the throne of kingdoms a great while, was already overthrown; and the powers that are, and are yet to come, shall in like manner be overthrown; their day will come to fall. 1. Though they be ever so powerful, yet the *strength of their kingdoms* shall be destroyed. They *trust in chariots and horses* (Ps. 20:7), but their *chariots* shall be *overthrown*, and *those that ride in them*, so that they shall not be able to attack the people of God, whom they persecute, not to escape the judgments of God, which persecute them. 2. Though there appear none likely to be the instruments of their destruction, yet God will bring it about, for they shall be brought down *every one by the sword of his brother*. This reads the doom of all the enemies of God's church, that will not repent to give him glory; it seems likewise designed as a promise of Christ's victory over the powers of darkness, his overthrow of Satan's throne, that *throne of kingdoms*, the throne of the god of this world, the taking from him all the armour wherein he trusted and *dividing the spoil*. And all opposing *rule, principality, and power*, shall be put down, that the *kingdom* may be *delivered up to God, even the Father*.

II. Let him depend upon it that he shall be safe under the divine protection in the midst of all these commotions, v. 23.

Zerubbabel was active to build God a house, and therefore God makes the same promise to him as he did to David on the like occasion—that he would *build him a house*, and establish it, *even in that day* when heaven and earth are shaken. This promise refers to this good man himself and to his family. He honoured God, and God would honour him. His successors likewise in the government of Judah might take encouragement from it; though their authority was very precarious as to men, yet God would confirm it, and this would contribute to the stability of the people over whom God had set them. But this promise has special reference to Christ, who lineally descended from Zerubbabel, and is the sole builder of the gospel-temple. 1.

Zerubbabel is here owned as *God's servant*, and it is an honourable mention that is hereby made of him, as Moses and David *my servants*. When God destroys his enemies he will prefer his servants. Our Lord Jesus is his Father's servant in the work of redemption, but faithful as a Son, Isa. 42:1. 2. He is owned as God's elect: *I have chosen thee* to this office; and whom God makes choice of he will make use of. Our Lord Jesus is chosen of God, 1 Pt. 2:4. And he is the head of the chosen remnant; in him they are chosen. 3. It is promised that, being chosen, God will make him *as a signet*. Jeconiah had been as the *signet on God's right hand*, but was *plucked thence* (Jer. 22:24); and now Zerubbabel is substituted in the room of him. He shall be near and dear to God, precious in his sight, and honourable, and his family shall continue till the Messiah spring out of it, who is *the signet on God's right hand*. This intimates, (1.) The delight the Father has in him. In him he once and again declared himself to be *well pleased*. He is set as a *seal upon his heart, a seal upon his arm*, is brought near unto him (Dan. 7:13), is *hidden in the shadow of his hand*, Isa. 49:2. (2.) The dominion the Father has entrusted him with. Princes sign their edicts, grants, and commissions, with their signet-rings, Esth. 3:10. Our Lord Jesus is the signet on God's right hand, for all power is given to him and derived from him. By him the great charter of the gospel is signed and ratified, and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen.