

Placed on Hold

While calling on the telephone, have you ever been placed on hold? e.g., you call a company about a bill or to obtain specific information, and a voice answers, "All operators are busy now, so would you wait for a moment?" Then you hear an ominous click and music begins to play that you are not particularly impressed with. YOU HAVE JUST BEEN PLACED ON HOLD!

Have you wondered why everything seems to be going wrong? Could it be that God has "placed you on hold" until you remember Him and your direction is corrected?

THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY!

Consider the book of Haggai.

42,360 exiles, which were living in Persia, entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Their commission was to rebuild the temple of worship that had been destroyed 50 years earlier by Nebuzaradan, a captain in the army of King Nebuchadnezzar. Immediately after their arrival, they quickly restored the altar of sacrifice and laid the foundation of the temple, and then it appears that the people took a fourteen year leave of absence from doing the will of God and pursued their own thing. Guess what happened? Your right! God PLACED THEM ON HOLD!

The prophets Zechariah and Haggai were sent (Ezra 5:1, 2) to them with a special message that went like this: "Consider you ways! You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes...Consider your ways!" (Hag. 1:6,7).

"You look for much, but behold, it comes too little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts, Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house" (Hag. 1:9).

"Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands" (Hag. 1:10,11). Since the last stone had been laid for the temple foundation, fourteen years had passed by, fourteen years of misery and want. The fields had been planted with skill and even in the years that it rained, the crops failed to produce enough. There was not enough food, not enough wine, not enough clothing, and not enough wages!

Why? Because of God's intervention. It was not the devil causing the loss. IT WAS GOD! God was blowing away the profit and leaving only the "little" for the people to survive. I ask again, WHY? The prophets gave the reason, "Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house." The people forgot to do the will of God. They were under orders to build the temple of worship, but after partially completing the building, they decided to build their own houses. In contemporary English, they were doing their own thing! The people had PLACED GOD'S PURPOSE ON HOLD, subsequently God PLACED THEM ON HOLD!

The prophets pointed to circumstantial evidence as being the reason for their poverty.

Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, "Obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for the Lord." The prophets pointed out the reasons for the existing poverty and misery. After hearing the words of God, instead of stoning the prophets, the people responded correctly. God stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people; and they came together to build the temple. For the next four years the prophets were with them, supporting them until the temple was completed.

Much can be learned about a true prophet's ministry from this context. Not only does a prophet point out the problem according to the word of the Lord, but also he encourages and supports the people in response to that word.

I want to clarify this point. Adverse circumstances are not always the result of being out of the will of God. Circumstances sometimes are meant to be tests or maturing tools of God, thus a communion with God is needed at all times to sort out what is happening around us, things that are coming against us, or things accusing us. There are false prophets wearing shining angelic clothes, who are intent on destruction, and they must be detected. However, the context in Haggai substantiates this fact: if a people have forsaken the will and purpose of God for their lives, God will bring them into poverty and misery until the problem is corrected. There is a need for spiritual discernment!

THE PROMISE OF PROSPERITY!

"But now take courage (reach out and grip it by faith), Zerubbabel, declares the Lord, take courage also, Joshua, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage, declares the Lord, and work; for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag. 2:4).

"TAKE COURAGE AND WORK FOR I AM WITH YOU," is the message from God. We can work because of the presence of God, in spite of any existing condition. The promise of His presence is true. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," promised Jesus before he departed into heaven. Again this promise is repeated, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

"As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear" (Hag. 2:5)!

Jesus declared that He would not leave us as orphans, but would send the Comforter to us, which is the Holy Spirit. He did just that! The Holy Spirit can only speak to us those things He hears in heaven and that from the Lord Jesus Christ, who loves us and gave Himself for us!

"And I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations; and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag. 2:7).

After fourteen years of trauma and tragedy, the people repented of their negligence, accepted the promise of His presence and abiding Spirit, and began to work which eventually turned around their existing circumstance. Two months after they began to work on rebuilding the temple, God spoke through the prophets, "Yet from this day on I will bless you" (Hag. 2:19).

Prosperity and happiness had been placed on hold for fourteen years, but abruptly the music stopped on the other end of the line and a voice stuns them with these words, "From this day forward you will live in my blessings!"

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