

“Sticker-Shock Stewardship”

Luke 14:28

April 6, 2014

I. **Introduction:** *“I’m Going To Love You With Truth”*

II. **Big Idea:**

Unholy haggling hurts & hinders
the Church!

III. **Major Points:** T. R. O. U. B. L. E. D.

T/S: I’m troubled because God’s house is filled with cursed, self-indulgent, persistently defiant thieves.

- A. ***Truth in Love*** – 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- B. ***Reality & Roles*** - Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1
- C. ***Offensive*** – Luke 14:28-30
 - 1. Pre-Context
 - 2. Post-Context
 - 3. Full-Context = Time, Talent, Treasure
- D. ***Underestimated*** – (Tithes, Offerings, Perspective)
- E. ***Balked At!*** – Malachi 3:8 & Acts 5 (holding back)
- F. ***Like vs. Love*** – Jesus with the multitudes
- G. ***Excuses*** – Haggai / Zerubbabel
- H. ***Decision:***

1. Your house or His House
2. Spend or Invest
3. Now or Later
4. Lips or Lives
5. Like or Love...

IV. Summarize: Count the cost... ..Luke 14:33!

V. Close: *"It's Time to Do Something"*

Count the Cost:

28 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

- Luke 14:28-30

CONTEXT is CRITICAL!

1. Look to the message Jesus lays out before this text...
2. Look at the message Jesus lays out after this text...
3. NOW... ask: "What is this text saying to ME?"

This parable represents the absurdity of those who undertook to be disciples of Christ, without considering what difficulties they were to meet with, and what strength they had to enable them to go through with the undertaking. He that will be a true disciple of Jesus Christ shall require no less than the mighty power of God to support him; as both hell and earth will unite to destroy him. - **Adam Clarke**

Intending to build a tower. See [Matthew 21:33](#). A tower was a place of defence or observation, erected on high places or in vineyards, to guard against enemies. It was made high, so as to enable one to see an enemy when he approached; and strong, so that it could not be easily taken.

- **Barnes Notes on the New Testament**

Puritan Matthew Henry's Perspective:

It is better never to begin than not to proceed; and therefore before we begin we must consider what it is to proceed.

Satan shows the best, but hides the worst...

Our Saviour here illustrates the necessity of it by two similitudes, the former showing that we must consider the expenses of our religion, the latter that we must consider the perils of it.

Our Saviour here illustrates the necessity of it by two similitudes, the former showing that we must consider the expenses of our religion, the latter that we must consider the perils of it.

(1.) When we take upon us a profession of religion we are like a man that undertakes to build a tower, and therefore must consider the expense of it ([v. 28-30](#)): Which of you, intending to build a tower or stately house for himself, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost? and he must be sure to count upon a great deal more than his workmen will tell him it will cost. Let him compare the charge with his purse, lest he make himself to be laughed at, by beginning to build what he is not able to finish. Note,

[1.] All that take upon them a profession of religion undertake to build a tower, not as the tower of Babel, in opposition to Heaven, which therefore was left unfinished, but in obedience to Heaven, which therefore shall have its top-stone brought forth. Begin low, and lay the foundation deep, lay it on the rock, and make sure work, and then aim as high as heaven.

[2.] Those that intend to build this tower must sit down and count the cost. Let them consider that it will cost them the mortifying of their sins, even the most beloved lusts; it will cost them a life of self-denial and watchfulness, and a constant course of holy duties; it may, perhaps, cost them their reputation among men, their estates and liberties, and all that is dear to them in this world, even life itself. And if it should cost us all this, what is it in comparison with what it cost Christ to purchase the advantages of religion for us, which come to us without money and without price?

[3.] Many that begin to build this tower do not go on with it, nor persevere in it, and it is their folly; they have not courage and resolution, have not a rooted fixed principle, and so bring nothing to pass. It is true, we have none of us in ourselves sufficient to finish this tower, but Christ hath said, My grace is sufficient for thee, and that grace shall not be wanting to any of us, if we seek for it and make use of it.

[4.] Nothing is more shameful than for those that have begun well in religion to break off; every one will justly mock him, as having lost all his labour hitherto for want of perseverance. We lose the things we have wrought ([2John 8](#)), and all we have done and suffered is in vain, [Galatians 3:4](#).

(2.) When we undertake to be Christ's disciples we are like a man that goes to war, and therefore must consider the hazard of it, and the difficulties that are to be encountered, [v. 31,32](#). A king that declares war against a neighbouring prince considers whether he has strength wherewith to make his part good, and, if not, he will lay aside his thoughts of war. Note,

[1.] The state of a Christian in this world is a military state. Is not the Christian life a warfare? We have many passes in our way, that must be disputed with dint of sword; nay, we must fight every step we go, so restless are our spiritual enemies in their opposition.

[2.] We ought to consider whether we can endure the hardness which a good soldier of Jesus Christ must expect and count upon, before we enlist ourselves under Christ's banner; whether we are able to encounter the forces of hell and earth, which come against us twenty thousand strong.

[3.] Of the two it is better to make the best terms we can with the world than pretend to renounce it and afterwards, when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, to return to it. That young man that could not find in his heart to part with his possessions for Christ did better to go away from Christ sorrowing than to have staid with him dissembling.

This parable is another way applicable, and may be taken as designed to teach us to begin speedily to be religious, rather than to begin cautiously; and may mean the same with [Matthew 5:25](#), Agree with thine adversary quickly. Note, First, Those that persist in sin make war against God, the most unnatural, unjustifiable war; they rebel against their lawful sovereign, whose government is perfectly just and good. Secondly, The proudest and most daring sinner is no equal match for God; the disproportion of strength is much greater than that here supposed between ten thousand and twenty thousand. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? No, surely; who knows the power of his anger? In consideration of this, it is our interest to make peace with him. We need not send to desire conditions of peace; they are offered to us, and are unexceptionable, and highly to our advantage. Let us acquaint ourselves with them, and be at peace; do this in time, while the other is yet a great way off; for delays in such a case are highly dangerous, and make after-applications difficult.

But the application of this parable here ([v. 33](#)) is to the consideration that ought to be exercised when we take upon us a profession of religion. Solomon saith, With good advice make war ([Proverbs 20:18](#)); for he that draws the sword throws away the scabbard; so with good advice enter upon a profession of religion, as those that know that except you forsake all you have you cannot be Christ's disciples; that is, except you count upon forsaking all and consent to it, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, and yet continue to live godly.

count the cost. The multitudes were positive but uncommitted. Far from making it easy for them to respond positively, He set the cost of discipleship as high as possible ([vv. 26, 27, 33](#))—and encouraged them to do a careful inventory before declaring their willingness to follow. Cf. [9:57-62](#).
- **The MacArthur Bible Commentary.**

which of you intending to build a tower - That is, and whoever of you intends to follow me, let him first seriously weigh these things. - **Barnes**

Two parabolic illustrations involving building ([vv. 28-30](#)) and going to war ([vv. 31-32](#)) both warn against making a hasty decision to follow Jesus. Potential disciples must first **count the cost** to see if they will persevere in the faith (cf. [8:15](#); [21:19](#)).
- **ESV Study Bible**

When a builder doesn't count the cost or estimates it inaccurately, the building may be left uncompleted. Will you abandon the Christian life after a little while because you did not count the cost of commitment to Jesus? What are those costs? Christians may face loss of social status or wealth. They may have to give up control of their money, their time, or their career. They may be hated, separated from their family, and even put to death. Following Christ does not mean a trouble-free life. We must carefully count the cost of becoming Christ's disciples so that we will firmly hold to our faith and won't be tempted later to turn back.

- **Life Application Study Bible**

Stewardship via Tithing AND Joyful, Sacrificial Giving

1. Start with 2 Timothy 3:16-17...
 - Key = sets the standard
 - Key = forces focus on definitions
2. Connect 2 Tim w/ Gen. & Jn. 1:1
3. What is a "tithe?"
4. What is an "offering?"
5. Why are they said together?
6. Look at biblical stewardship...
7. Malachi 3:8ff (rob... curse...)
8. Address Old vs. New Covenant people...
9. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it...
10. Explain what aspects of the Law (heart issues) continue under the New Covenant...
11. Acknowledge Paul's words to the Corinthians about giving what your heart wants to joyfully give...
12. Key: insert the principle point of the compatibilist position (any theological position that forces the rejection of another orthodox position must be rejected).
13. Go to Matthew 23:23

14. Show compatibilist relationship between Paul & Jesus
15. Show the lack of compatibilist relationship if tithing is rejected
16. Ask about the meta narrative AND the micro narrative of Scripture when it comes to giving/money/life-stewardship...
17. Look at the encounter Jesus had with the "Rich Young Ruler"
18. Go to Acts 5 and study the details of the couple who literally sold their home and gave big big bucks to the church, as members of the church, for the betterment of the people who were the Church.
19. Now ask yourself... how does all this relate to Jesus' model for us... His commands to us (ie. "be My witnesses," "be salt & light," "if you will not pick up your cross daily. & follow Me you cannot be My disciple," "whoever loses his life for My sake will find it," "if you love Me you will obey My commands," etc.
20. Now go back to Matthew 23:23, & 2 Corinthians 9:6-7... Ask yourself this question: "When it comes to tithing, giving offerings and biblical stewardship overall, what position best, & biblically, affirms AND obeys God's macro & micro Word

Malachi:

Malchi = 4 chapters (47 of 55 verses = God speaking directly to us)

47 of 55 = highest percentage of “direct God-talk” in Bible
Message of book = “Message of LOVE”

Love

Promise

Consequences

Wrath

3 meta-narrative Q’s to ask:

1. Do you know this promise? (John 3:16)
2. Will you accept God’s love? (“gift” of grace & cross carry)
3. Where are you at with SIN? (differ... head & heart!)

*** What is SIN?

*** REPENTANCE is the only right response...

6 Major sins explored in Malachi:

1. ***Doubting God*** (O.T. theme & modern day disease!)
 - a. Where’s the Messiah?
 - b. Where’s the “love” of God in this mess?
2. ***Disrespecting God*** (taking Him for granted)
3. ***Dividing*** (vs. koinonia)
4. ***Disillusionment*** (relativity)
5. ***Disobedience*** (blatant & bold disobedience)
6. ***Dis-grace*** (to mock & reject God’s grace)

Malachi reads like a “good old fashion talking to” by dad/Waltons...

1. Love
2. Promise reminded...
3. Warning of consequences
4. Wrath-promising (out of love)

Malachi 1:1-5 =

v.2 = I have loved you, said the Lord, but you doubted Me and asked: How do you love us..."

Malachi reminds us that we don't want to be on the wrong side of God's wrath!

v.4 = (the other side of God's wrath)... God will demolish what people try to build out of His wrath.

John 3:16 = universal invitation & conditional application!

"God hated Esau"

- This is a "contrast" term vs. absolute...
- Like Jesus when He talks about family relations...

Tozer: (Sovereignty / Free-will Question)

- Ship going from N.Y to London (sovereignty)
- On board, passengers are free to move around (free)

We need to have a HEART after God, not just our behaviors.

D.L. Moody & Spurgeon (Sovereignty / Free-will Question)

S = "There will no doubt about Him having chosen you when YOU chose Him.

M = "The elect are the who-so-evers that will accept Christ"

LOVE WARNS of LINGERING WRATH!

The same God who warns of wrath in Malachi pays the price of that wrath at calvary!

Either get right, or get ready for wrath! - JDP

Malachi 1:6ff

“Are you READY?” (talking about Disrespecting God)

- The people did not fear God
- The people disrespected out of doubt

Zerubbabel, Ezra, & Haggai

Ezra 3:10-11... the people were excited and truly enthused about the building of the temple's foundation... (i.e. Church Plant)

Haggai 1:1-15 (key in on vv.2-12)

God rebukes the returning remnant for their misplaced priorities.

1. (1) Introduction.

In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying,

a. **In the second year of King Darius:** The prophecy of Haggai gives us specific chronological marking points (Haggai 1:1, 1:15, 2:1, 2:10, 2:20). The prophecy begins in September, 520 B.C.

i. This makes Haggai the first among the *post-exilic* Minor Prophets. Of the 12 Minor Prophets, the first 9 spoke *before* Judah was carried away captive, exiled to Babylon. The last 3 Minor Prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) each spoke to those who returned from the 70-year exile.

ii. “Gone was the glory of the former kingdom and temple. Gone was the great population. All that was left was the rubble of Jerusalem, the remnant of the people, and the task of restoration.” (Boice)

iii. In 538 B.C. Cyrus King of Persia allowed the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem after 70 years in captivity. Two years later (536 B.C.) construction on the temple began, led by Zerubbabel. The work stopped after two years (534 B.C.). After 14 years of neglect, work on the temple resumed in 520 B.C. and was finished four years later... (Ezra 6:15)

iv. We notice the dates are reckoned by a pagan king because there is no king over Israel. Yet the date is still important to God. “There is a set time for each of his messages to come to men, and God would have them give heed to every message as soon as it is delivered to them. If they do not, he keeps count of the days of their delay.” (Spurgeon)

b. **The word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet:** In the difficult years of the return from exile God spoke to His people through the Haggai.

i. Haggai is also mentioned twice in the Book of Ezra, the priest who oversaw the work of rebuilding the temple:

Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them. (Ezra 5:1-2)

So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. (Ezra 6:14)

ii. The name **Haggai** is probably an abbreviated form of the phrase, “Festival of Yahweh.” Some speculate that he was born on the day of a major feast in Israel.

c. **Zerubbabel . . . Joshua**: Haggai introduces us to two leading figures in Jerusalem during these difficult days of rebuilding the temple. **Zerubbabel** was the governor of Jerusalem, and a descendant of the last legitimate ruler of Judah (Jechoniah). **Joshua** was the high priest.

2. (2) An excuse for not rebuilding the temple.

“Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: ‘This people says, “The time has not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” ’ ”

a. **The time has not come:** Haggai gave this first word in September, 520 B.C. At that time the exiles had been back in Jerusalem for 18 years - but the work of rebuilding the temple laid idle for the last 14 years.

i. The work started gloriously: *When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: “For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel.” Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. (Ezra 3:10-11)*

ii. Despite the glorious beginning, after two years the work stopped, mired in discouragement and derailed by a lack of focus. When Haggai prophesied the foundation to the temple was laid and the altar was rebuilt but the temple wasn’t yet rebuilt.

b. **This people says:** God's **people** - the citizens of Jerusalem - told themselves that it wasn't **time** to resume work on the temple. There were some good reasons why they might say this, and why the work of rebuilding the temple was hard:

- The land was still desolate after 70 years of neglect
- The work was hard
- They didn't have a lot of money (Haggai 1:6) or manpower
- They suffered crop failures and drought (Haggai 1:10-11)
- Hostile enemies resisted the work (Ezra 4:1-5)
- They remembered easier times in Babylon

c. **The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built:** The people made their excuse sound spiritual. They couldn't speak against the *idea* of building the temple, so they spoke against its *timing*. "It isn't God's timing to rebuild the temple."

i. Because of the great obstacles against the work, God's people began to rationalize and decided that it wasn't time to rebuild after all. "If it's so hard, evidently, God doesn't want us to do it - at least no time soon."

ii. They may have said "**the time has not come**" because they thought that the 70 years of captivity mentioned in Jeremiah

25:11-13 and 29:10 had not yet been fulfilled. According to Usher's chronology of these events, they were in the 69th year since the last siege of Jerusalem. Even in this, the people of God lacked faith. There were three "waves" of captivity - 605 B.C., 597 B.C., and 587 B.C. In Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9, he was bold enough to ask God to take the earliest starting point to determine the 70 years - and God did. Unbelief made these returned captives think that God's mercy might not come to Israel until 18 years later.

d. **This people**: We never like to hear God speak to His people this way - saying, "**This people**" instead of "My people." He said this because He saw their excuses and poor priorities and noticed that they were not living like His people.

i. We should remember that these weren't "bad people" - they were the remnant that returned from Babylon. Hundreds of thousands of people went into the Babylonian captivity and only about 50,000 returned. Those who did were the most committed to the LORD and to the restoration of Jerusalem.

3. (3-4) Haggai exposes their wrong priorities.

Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "*Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?*"

a. **Then the word of the LORD came:** God saw and heard their excuses and poor priorities - and He had something to say to them through **Haggai the prophet**.

b. **It is time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses:** The people said that it wasn't *time* to rebuild the temple, but their actions said that it was **time** to live in nicely rebuilt houses.

i. "Solomon first built a house for God, and then for himself." (Trapp)

c. **And this temple to lie in ruins:** This was the real problem - not that God's people lived in **paneled houses**, but that they lived in such personal comfort and luxury while the **temple** was in **ruins**.

i. The problem was simply wrongly ordered priorities. They were content to let the cause of the Lord suffer at the expense of their comfort. Instead, they should have felt no rest until the work of God was as prosperous as their personal lives, and been as willing to sacrifice for work of God as they were for their personal comfort and luxury.

ii. It is easy to see how this happened over 14 years. At first you stop the work because it is so hard and some obstacle in the construction prevents progress.

- "We can't get much done at the temple, and I'm tired of living in a wreck. Time to start the remodel at home."

- “God wants me to give attention to things at home - home comes first.”
- “I would fund more construction at the temple but all my money is tied up with my home renovation.”
- “I’m not living extravagantly - look at the other houses in my neighborhood! Look at the chariots in their driveway!”
- “Someone should get to work on the temple. I hope someone steps up to the job - I’ve got to finish paneling my living room.”
- “The temple hasn’t been open for business for well more than 50 years - a little while longer won’t matter.”
- “This isn’t the right time - later will be better.”
- “The altar is there and we can at least sacrifice to the LORD. We’re getting by.”

iii. The excuses sound familiar - but God saw through them in the days of Haggai, and He sees through them today. The prophet Haggai was like an alarm clock - unwelcome but necessary.

iv. “Many Christians are like those ancient Hebrews, somehow convincing themselves that economy in constructing church buildings is all-important while at the same time sparing no expense in acquiring their personal luxuries.” (Alden)

d. **Houses:** “It seems to intimate some of them had more than one house, a city and a country house, and whilst God’s house lay waste; they thus lavish out their wealth on private worldly conveniences, but grudge their charge against God’s house . . . Do you owe so much to yourselves, and so little to your God?” (Poole)

4. (5-6) Consider your ways - and the result of them.

Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts:

“Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes.”

a. **Consider your ways!** The Hebrew figure of speech for this phrase is literally “put your heart on your roads.” Haggai asks God’s people to consider what direction their life is headed, and if they really want it to continue that way.

b. **You have sown much, and bring in little:** The cause of their financial difficulties was their wrong priorities. They suffered setback after setback because the blessing of God wasn’t on their pocketbook.

i. Haggai describes a double curse. Instead of much, little was reaped; and the little that was brought home melted away without

doing any good (**earns wages to put into a bag with holes**). “I do not know of any passage in the Bible that better describes the feverish yet ineffective activity of our own age.” (Boice) This all has the idea of, “The faster I go, the behinder I get.”

ii. These judgments are a fulfillment of promises God made hundreds of years before in the time of Moses (Deuteronomy 11:16-17). The people of Israel were being judged and they didn't even know it - they probably wrote it all off as bad luck or tough economic times, but God was trying to tell them something.

iii. Sometimes our priorities are out of order and we seem to suffer no financial hardship. In such times we should never presume on the mercy of God - we should turn to Him and re-order our priorities before He needs to use crisis to get through to us.

c. **You drink, but you are not filled with drink:** If our priorities are wrong, nothing will satisfy us. Each accomplishment soon reveals that there must be something more, something that can really satisfy, Nothing fills the God-shaped void in our life except putting Him first.

i. “Had your little been as the righteous man's little, you might have lived on it, and rejoiced in it; but it had not such a blessing upon it; it was blasted, and so was weak, and empty, and profited little.” (Poole)

5. (7-11) What they must do: rebuild the temple.

Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the LORD. *You* looked for much, but indeed *it came to little*; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says the LORD of hosts. “Because of My house that *is in ruins*, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of *your hands*.”

a. **Go up to the mountains and bring wood:** God calls them to *work*. Sometimes God’s cause needs *work*, work that is supported by prayer, not work that is neglected because of pretended “spiritual” service.

i. It was work to be embraced by individuals without thinking, “Someone else will do it.” When David Livingstone applied to a missionary society in Scotland because he wanted to bring Jesus to Africa they told him, “Young man, when God sees fit to evangelize Africa He will do it without your help.” This is not the case at all - God *will* do it, and He *wants* and *often will wait* for our participation.

b. **That I may take pleasure in it and be glorified:** It was time for God's people to start being concerned with pleasing Him instead of themselves. In their nice houses and prosperous lives they took pleasure and were glorified; now it was the LORD's turn.

i. God is also telling them to do it with the right kind of heart; a heart that wants to please and glorify God

c. **You looked for much, but indeed it came to little:** When God was neglected, nothing worked right. They were able to accomplish some things (like building their own houses), but it didn't bring the satisfaction that it should have.

d. **For I called for a drought on the land:** We can imagine the people of God depressed and discouraged because of the drought. They thought it was all an attack of Satan, and they prayed fervently against "Satan's plot." All the while it wasn't Satan's doing at all, but it was the LORD who **called for a drought on the land**. The problem wasn't Satan, but their priorities.

e. **On the grain and the new wine and the oil:** Because they neglected the LORD, He neglected to bless their three basic crops.

B. The response to Haggai's prophecy.

1. (12) They obeyed God and feared His presence.

Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD.

a. **Then Zerubbabel . . . and Joshua . . . with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD:** Obedience had to begin with the leadership. This wasn't a sermon just for the *people*, but also for the highest leaders among God's people.

b. **The voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet:** "For the word of God is not distinguished from the words of the Prophet, as though the Prophet had added anything of his own." (Calvin)

i. In pointing out both, Haggai is distinguishing between the author of the doctrine, and its minister

c. **The words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him:** Their respect for Haggai was based on his office (**prophet**) and his commission (**God had sent him**).

d. **The people feared the presence of the LORD:** Their fear of God prompted obedience. This was more than basic respect; it was recognition that God is a judge who deals with us righteously.

2. (13-15) God responds to His people.

Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, "I *am* with you, says the LORD." So 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 sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

a. **I am with you, says the LORD:** God was there to encourage them, and to strengthen them for the work. He always empowers and encourages us to do what He commands.

b. **So the LORD stirred up the spirit:** Would to God for such a stirring of spirit among His people today! This stirring begins with the leadership (**Zerubbabel . . . Joshua**) and extends to the people (**all the remnant of the people**).

c. **They came and worked on the house of the LORD:** The stirring of spirit didn't come and go just as a spiritual experience. The stirring of spirit flourished into a stirring of the work.

Definitions:

STEWARDSHIP

Utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation.

Old Testament Stewardship: Stewardship permeates the pages of the Bible because how we respond to God is at the heart of the Book. Often, stewardship is thought of only in terms of finances, but the Bible teaches that stewardship is a far greater concept, involving how we respond with all of our life to Him who is the giver and sustainer of life? When God created humans, He made them to have “dominion” over all of the earth ([Gen. 1:26](#)). Dominion was not intended to be domination or exploitation. Dominion was God’s call for human beings to be good and gracious managers of God’s creation. Unfortunately, the sin of humanity interrupted God’s plans for His world. Humankind became selfish, seeing the world as a means to its own self-centered ends. The things of the world were now seen as possessions with humans as owners, not as God’s stewards. God’s intention for His world did not change. He still desired that people see God as the Lord of everything and themselves as the managers of God’s creation.

New Testament Stewardship: The call to absolute commitment to Christ is the central theme of the New Testament ([Mark 8:34-36](#)). Jesus asked for obedience to God’s original intention for the world. Jesus was calling for a radical reversal of the world’s values (profit) and a revolutionary return to God’s purpose (lose life for My sake). Jesus never seemed to be satisfied with a slice of the pie of our obedience. He did not rejoice in the tithe or a big offering as much as He did in the sacrificial, complete giving of a widow. but Jesus called all disciples to absolute surrender of ourselves and our substance to Him.

The early church certainly saw all that it had as a gift from God for the good of each other. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” ([Acts 4:32](#)).

Of course, our economic system and sheer numbers of people today prevent this kind of complete sharing, but the amazing thing was the attitude of the church members to what they possessed. They saw none of it as their own. All of it came from the loving heart of God. That is why the sin of selfishness of Ananias and Sapphira was so bad ([Acts 5](#)). The apostle Paul preached and taught a single-minded commitment to Christ. He reminded the Philippians that the source of thanksgiving was not in things but in our relationship to God in Christ ([Phil. 3:13-14](#)). Thus, the New Testament concept of stewardship centers in our commitment to Jesus Christ. When He becomes our Lord, He becomes Lord of our time, talents, finances, and everything. We realize that we are not our own, but we are bought with a price. - **Charles Bugg**

SACRIFICE AND OFFERING The physical elements the worshiper brings to the Deity to express devotion, thanksgiving, or the need for forgiveness.

The first-century church lived in a culture that sacrificed to their gods. Paul and Barnabas at Lystra were thought to be the gods Zeus and Hermes. The priest of Zeus sought to offer sacrifices to them ([Acts 14](#)). The church at Corinth was embroiled in a controversy over whether or not it was permissible for Christians to eat meat offered to idols ([1 Cor. 8-10](#)). Paul’s preaching of the gospel at Ephesus disrupted the business and worship of the goddess Artemis ([Acts 19](#)).

When the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., the Jews' sacrificial system ceased. By this time, however, the church had begun to distance itself from Judaism. The biblical view of sacrifice changed as well. In the Old Testament and in the beginning years of the New Testament, sacrifice was the accepted mode of worship. With the death of Christ, however, physical sacrifice became unnecessary. As the temple and priest of God, the believer now has the responsibility for offering acceptable spiritual sacrifices.

- **Scott Langston**
(Holman Bible Dictionary)