

HAGGAI AND HIS BAG OF HOLES

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And he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a hag with holes (Hag. 1:6).

Haggai was a prophet who ministered to people who returned from Babylon. The early enthusiasm which was evident under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah had waned: the nation had become decadent. They abandoned the repair of the temple and gave attention to the erection of their homes. They said. There is plenty of time to build the sanctuary: we must first attend to our needs" Their attitude displeased God and the prophet. Apathy was always the enemy of enthusiasm. Haggai watched as they worked ceaselessly to earn money and said. `You are putting your money into a bag filled with holes working hard and getting nowhere!'"

The prophet bequeathed to posterity a text worthy of consideration. Much more than money may fall through holes in our pockets! I remember staying in an Australian home where the host was continually losing cash. He had a hole in his pants, and as fast as he put money into his pocket. it dropped to the floor. He appeared unimpressed when, day after day. I returned what I had found. It is not difficult to discover in the Scriptures people who had holes in their pockets. Treasures lost in this manner may never return. It is better to repair the pocket than to suffer immeasurable loss.

The Pocket of Affection

The church at Ephesus was among the greatest New Testament assemblies. The work done there by Paul had returned excellent dividends., for in every aspect of Christian endeavor, the members excelled.

Unto the angel of the church at Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience. and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted (Rev. 2:1-3).

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During persecution the members had been patient and through difficulties, persistent. When false teaching threatened to undermine the faith, courageously they had obeyed the truth preached by Paul. The meetings were filled with devoted worshipers. and apparently they were all that could be desired. It was surprising and unexpected when the Savior said they had left their first love. The labor for Christ had been spoiled by a hole in their pocket of affection.

When a person falls in love for the first time. a special combination of devotion, admiration, and enthusiasm produces ecstasy that exhilarates the soul and transforms behavior. That initial love increases the determination to please. but unfortunately. it often disappears quickly. Even Christians may allow increasing labor to decrease their time for a closer relationship with Christ. To work hard for the Lord is very essential, but unless the labor is inspired by a glowing heart, service can become mechanical and ineffective.

The Pocket of Attraction

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And it came to pass in an eveningtide. that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon (2 Sam. 11:2).

David was a man of moods. He reached heights of devotion and depths of defeat and failure. He exultantly cried, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4). At another time he lusted after a beautiful woman, murdered her husband, and in bitter remorse said. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:1-3).

No person could question David's sincerity. but unfortunately he pleased himself, and this was evident throughout his entire life. He always repented, but his remorse came too late to undo the damage done, His love for the Lord, the service rendered to God's cause, and the serenity of his immortal sonnets fell through holes in the pocket of his soul. He was very wealthy and yet was too poor to purchase a moment of happiness.

It is never wise to be enamored with impurities. A desire for illegitimate pleasures of Egypt usually produces a longing to dwell there! Demas. the companion of Paul. lusted after the things of the world, and his craving became so intense, it ruined his service for Christ. Paul wrote: "Whatsoever things are true. whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just. whatsoever things are pure. whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise. think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Solomon said: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). David's son was given great wisdom by God, but unfortunately he forgot to mend the hole in his pocket and became extremely foolish (see I Kings 11:1-4).

The Pocket of Appreciation

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country. and there wasted his substance with riotous living (Luke 15:13).

What a happy home is to a family, the church should be to the Christian. It has often been claimed that one never misses the water until the well runs dry, and that fact can be seen everywhere. It took a long time before the pigs became deplorable substitutes for the love of the prodigal's father. Sometimes it takes years before backsliding Christians recognize the privilege of belonging to the family of God. The best the world offers cannot satisfy the hungry souls of people who for a variety of reasons abandon the church. Occasionally. the church leaves much to be desired, but in spite of its problems. there is no place like home.

It was never revealed why the prodigal son desired to leave his family. Was he rebellious against his older brother? Did he dislike his father's attitude? Did he believe he could do better controlling his own destiny? The more he thought of his grievances. the larger became the hole in his pocket. Ultimately. he became so hungry and poor he began to steal the pigs' food. Only when he was impoverished, did the despised home appear

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to be the best place on earth. Someone said. "Sense bought is better than sense taught!" but that is a lesson hard to learn. If the prodigal son had known its truth, he might have repaired the hole in the pocket of his soul!

The Pocket of Attention

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown (Rev. 3:11).

A stillborn child is one of the greatest tragedies in life. Similarly, a person who professes to be a Christian but never becomes active can only be a disappointment to God. Unfortunately, after spectacular evangelistic crusades many of the converts disappear. After widely publicized meetings in Los Angeles, workers who visited homes reported to the organizing committee. One said he had visited a certain family to encourage the converts to associate with a local church. He was disappointed when the man said, "Oh, no, we have done it, but that is enough. We do not wish to join a church, or have anything to do with the movement." According to the statistics compiled, many of the people who responded had holes in their pockets! Something of eternal value had fallen into oblivion.

Any soldier who enlists in the armed services and then disappears is accountable to the government. A person who professes to be a Christian and then ignores his responsibility leaves much to be desired, Conversion means commitment, and both the soldier and the Christian convert should know this fact. Jesus said. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

No athlete ever won a crown when he quit the race before reaching the finishing post. I first learned that lesson when as a schoolboy I raced against another lad. I had the race won, but, believing I had a commanding lead, slowed down a few feet from the end of the race, My opponent overtook me and won by inches. "He that endureth to the end" is the man who obtains his crown. The Christians of Galatia made a similar mistake, for Paul said, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal, 5:7).

The Gospel of Christ not only offers pardon for the guilty; it promises crowns for the victors, When the Savior sent His message to the Christians in Philadelphia. He emphasized three vital issues.

1. A thought-provoking promise "Behold I come quickly"
2. A tremendous plea "Hold fast that which thou hast"
3. A terrible possibility "That no man take thy crown"

The Lord could not have been promising an early return to earth. He was urging His followers to be faithful because their opportunity would soon end. Christ was reminding them of approaching death when service upon earth would cease. The time was short!

The Christians in Philadelphia had already earned a great reputation. Their work for the Lord had been wonderful. The Savior seemed to be warning them against "holes in their pockets," Neglect can be dangerous. The Lord was not suggesting they might lose their salvation. He had already said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28). It would be tragic to stand in the presence of Christ and be reminded of holes in the pockets! That should be something demanding immediate attention, Procrastination has always been the thief of

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time!

1. Ivor Powell, "Haggai and His Revival Crusade," Bible Gems (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1987), 87-88.

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