

Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”

*Haggai 1:5-6 NIV*

# Building on Our Own



Pieter Bruegel (modified)

WHEN A CHILD OF EARTH is self-centered, he is only behaving in a way natural to him. But when a child of God behaves in the same manner, he has lost his way.



Everyone has heard the ridiculous old chestnut, “The Lord helps those who help themselves.” The chronically uninformed claim it is found “somewhere in the Bible.” In truth it is attributable to Aesop, or Benjamin Franklin, or Abraham Lincoln, but it is found nowhere in God’s word.

The prophet Haggai, speaking for the Lord Himself (not Aesop), offers contrary counsel. The people of Judah had returned to a destroyed Jerusalem from Babylonian exile to rebuild the temple of Yahweh. After restoring the altar and laying the foundation for the temple, however, they met with opposition from the Samaritans. So instead of pushing ahead with the building of the Lord’s house, they spent the next ten or twelve years building their own houses, planting crops, tending the grapevines, and making money. In other words, taking care of themselves, rather than serving the Lord. And all the while the foundation for the temple lay vacant.

The prophet went on to explain to the Jews precisely *why* their self-help wasn’t working—why the harder they worked, the less they had.

“*You* look for much, but behold, *it comes* to 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. Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. 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.”

*Haggai 1:9-11*

God was doing just the opposite of what the world claims He would do. Instead of helping those who were helping themselves, He was actively working *against* what they were doing. Why? Because they were glorifying themselves, rather than the Lord God.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,” says the Lord.

*Haggai 1:7-8*



We cannot throw any stones, for we too are a people consumed with self. It is in our DNA to look after ourselves, to enrich ourselves, to glorify ourselves before anyone else—much less a God we cannot see or touch.

But the lesson repeatedly emphasized in His written word is that when we try do it on our own, failure or an unforeseen consequence is inevitably the result. By contrast, when we seek God not after we have failed, but *first*; when we bow before His superior wisdom and will; when we acknowledge Him as Lord, seeking His good, His exaltation, His glory rather than our own—when we are safely in the will of our heavenly Father, then the Lord opens His generous, loving heart to meet our every need.

“Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

*Matthew 6:31-33*