

PUTTING WAGES INTO A BAG WITH HOLES

[Haggai 1:6](#) “And he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.”

² “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying: This people say, ‘The time has not come, the time that the Lord’S house should be built.’”

³ Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,

⁴ “Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?”

⁵ Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts: “Consider your ways!

⁶ Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe yourselves, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.”

⁷ Thus saith the Lord of hosts: “Consider your ways!

⁸ Go up to the mountain, and bring wood and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified,” saith the Lord.

⁹ “Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I blew upon it. Why?” saith the Lord of hosts. “Because of Mine house that is laid waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

How irritating it often is to find a hole in the pocket. For all practical purposes that pocket has become useless, temporarily. Then we begin to wonder how much money was lost because of the worn pocket. Before the pocket is mended we often put more money into it from force of habit and our loss continues. The sensible thing to do is have the pocket repaired as soon as possible.



“Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”

Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but 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 1:4-6

Would anyone deliberately put wages and earnings into a bag with holes in it? Would anyone jeopardize the needs of his family and loved ones by

being careless with his hard-earned wages? If so, that would be a rare exception indeed.

Yet that is what many of us are doing in life with our earnings and money. We shall learn about this from the prophet Haggai.

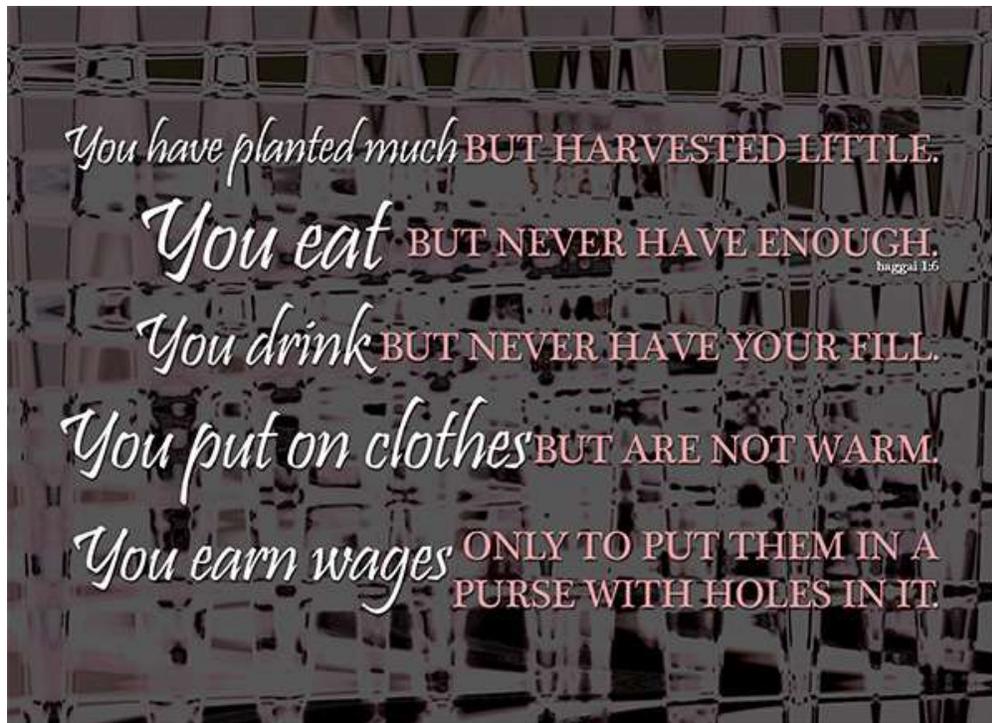
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1. HOW THIS IS DONE

After the return from the Babylonian captivity the people neglected the building of the house of God. This displeased the Lord very much. Of course, with their own houses it was a different story, their dwellings had ceiled or paneled walls and decorations. “Nothing but the best” was the motto for their own homes, no expense was too great for their own selfish interests. The prophet complained of this in v.4, “is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?”

So the building of the temple of God was delayed because other things and interests had to come first. Money, time, and labor that could have been used to erect the house of God was used for extra decorations and refinements in their own homes, and, we might add, for other luxuries and enjoyments. It is no sin to build fine houses and to enjoy the blessings of life which the Lord has given us. But it is sinful, it is idolatrous, when we short-change God, when we selfishly spend our money for luxuries while God’s cause goes begging. We are stewards, not masters, of the resources entrusted to us.

The people did not actually refuse to build the temple, but they looked for excuses not to build at this time. V.2 says, “This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” Procrastination, putting off the day for building the temple, finding excuses to take care of their own selfish interests first, this was the sinful attitude of the people.



Because of this selfish attitude at the time of our text, the Lord withdrew many of His blessings from His people. The often fruits of the earth were withheld and the people labored in vain. We read in v.6, “Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm.” All this happened because the Lord did not bless their labor which was used mainly for selfish purposes.

Thus they put their wages into a bag with holes, there was no blessing of the Lord upon their labor. V.6 continues, “And he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.” As stated before, it would be a rare exception indeed for a person to deliberately put wages into an old bag with holes in it. Yet when it comes to the Lord’s work too many of us commit this folly. We often labor incessantly and get nowhere and have nothing, our money and labor is falling out of the holes in the “bag”.

By way of application we need answer only a few questions. How much money went into our homes for extra refinements and decorations which could have been given for the church and the wonderful mission program? How many “extras” on our automobiles cost more than we give for the Lord’s work in a year? Have we a different attitude today than was displayed by the people so long ago at Haggai’s time?

We do not maintain that it is a sin to enjoy life's blessings and gifts of God. We repeat, it is sinful when we use all, or nearly all our gifts and income for ourselves to the exclusion of the Lord's work. That is the sin then and now.

The Lord can, and may withdraw His blessings from us if we misuse our gifts and talents for selfish purposes only. Then we, too, will be putting our wages into a bag with holes.

Those words of Jesus ([Luke 16:8](#)) in the parable of the unjust steward keep ringing in our ears, "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." O how foolish we Christians are, at times, to divert our precious time and labor from the Lord's work to the silly toys and trinkets of this life!

All of us admit our sins in this respect, and we ask in all sincerity, "How can we avoid putting our wages into a bag with holes?"

2. HOW CAN THIS BE AVOIDED

The Lord Himself shows us the way of His blessings in v.7 and 8, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." Our Savior told us the same thing in [Matt. 6:33](#), "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The very moment the attitude of the people changed, from that moment on the Lord promised His blessings. "From this day will I bless you," [Haggai 2:19](#). There would be no more holes in the bag. The poor widow gave everything she had to the Lord. Did she starve to death, did the Lord forsake her? We know the answers.



But from this day onward

I will bless you.

Haggai 2:19

God is love, and His love sent His Son into this world to pay for all our sins on the cross. Through faith in Jesus our Savior, God has promised us eternal life. We who believe in Jesus are made partners with the Lord in carrying out His work of spreading the Gospel into all the world. Is there a greater honor and privilege in this world? Should not the love of God move us to greater zeal and devotion for His kingdom? Should we not always put the needs of His kingdom first in life?

Jesus tells us how to put our talents and life and wages into a bag without holes. In [Luke 12:33](#) He says, "Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." In other words, let us rededicate ourselves to Jesus and His work. Luther tells us in the second article, "That I should be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness."

The Lord challenges us, dares us, and asks us to prove Him, whether He will bless us or not when we give Him our whole heart and soul. In the prophet Malachi He issues this challenge ([Malachi 3:10](#)), “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that they may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Let a new day dawn for our church and for our homes. Let our homes be bright with the Lord’s blessings resting upon them, let new mission fields be opened, let all men hear of the wonderful news of salvation in the blood of Jesus. Then there will be no more putting wages into a bag with holes.

AMEN.

PRAYER. O Lord, forgive us all our sins for Jesus’ sake, especially our sins of selfishness. Give us Thy Holy Spirit that Thy work may be done, Thy temple built, and the Gospel of Thy dear Son be spread throughout the world. Create in us a new heart to help Thy kingdom come to all men. We thank Thee for the forgiveness of our sins in Jesus and we ask Thy blessings upon our feeble efforts in behalf of Thy holy Church. Hear us, O Father, Son, and Spirit, ever one God, world without end. AMEN