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Dear Friends,

*Hello and welcome to another very fast paced **New Year – 2013!** Can you believe how quickly each year appears to fly past at such pace? We have no sooner begun the year, and we are making preparations for the next Christmas - New Year celebrations, with our family and friends. And, in the mix, we have all of those - “would you believe it”, and, “what **New Year resolutions** are you going to make?” - conversations. They have all taken place in our family, and I am sure in yours.*

*Just this week, I read the wonderful little book called Haggai, in my bible. It was whilst reading that account of the prophet Haggai, that I was prompted by the Lord to write you, and share some of the thoughts that I gathered from that study. The prophet Haggai could be easily overlooked, or dismissed, as not necessarily being of much, if any significance to us, today, on a daily basis; compared to some of the other writings of other prophets; who spoke of things such as: - repentance and salvation, and how to love our neighbour. However, as I researched his brief interlude here in scripture, I found some significant **New Year resolutions**, which we could well take up, on a serious level; in our day to day experiences.*

*There is a saying, **“if you want your tomorrows to be different to your yesterdays, then you need to make different decisions, today”**. Think about that for a moment. I believe that is the real reason for our obsession with the **New Year Resolutions syndrome!** Because, we all have an internal dialogue going on, where, we would like so much to see our **New Year** bigger, better, and brighter than our **Old Year!!!** So, as I read Haggai, I noticed twice in the first eleven verses, where God specifically states: - **“Consider your ways (your previous and present conduct), and how you have fared”**.*

The Lord had given instruction approximately eighteen years earlier, for His house, the place of Prayer and Worship, to be rebuilt, or repaired. But, due to **disobedience**, it was not accomplished, and here the Lord is asking some tough questions, and, **withdrawing His blessings from their everyday life, as a consequence of their disobedience**. Let's read a few of these verses together from the Amplified version:-

Hag 1:4 Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house [of the Lord] lies in ruins?

Hag 1:5 Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: **Consider your ways and set your mind on what has come to you.**

Hag 1:6 You have sown much, but you have reaped little; you eat, but you do not have enough; you drink, but you do not have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages has earned them to put them in a bag with holes in it.

Hag 1:7 Thus says the Lord of hosts: **Consider your ways (your previous and present conduct) and how you have fared.**

Hag 1:8 Go up to the hill country and bring lumber and rebuild [My] house, and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified, says the Lord [by accepting it as done for My glory and by displaying My glory in it].

Hag 1:9 You looked for much [harvest], and behold, it came to little; and even when you brought that home, I blew it away. **Why?** says the Lord of hosts. **Because of My house, which lies waste while you yourselves run each man to his own house [eager to build and adorn it].**

Hag 1:10 Therefore the heavens above you [for your sake] **withhold** the dew, and the earth **withholds** its produce.

Hag 1:11 And **I have called for a drought** upon the land and the hill country, upon the grain, the fresh wine, the oil, upon what the ground brings forth, upon men and cattle, **and upon all the [wearisome] toil of [men's] hands.**

But, the verses to follow, are by far much better, and way more encouraging to read, because - there were a couple of leaders and a group of people who decided to make a **New Year's resolution**; and actually listen to and obey the prophet Haggai's instruction; since by now they had worked out that God had sent him to them, for an obvious reason. Verse twelve reads:-

Hag 1:12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people [who had returned from captivity], **their listened to and obeyed the voice of the Lord God [not vaguely or partly, but completely, according to] the words of Haggai the prophet, since the Lord their God had sent him,** and the people [reverently] feared and [worshipfully] turned to the Lord.

Haggai was the person God used to talk to these rebellious, disobedient people, who were doing things a bit tough; **with the withdrawal of "The Blessing"**. Chapter two goes on to share what the Lord promises to return to these people, **if and when** they take His instruction seriously.

Hag 2:5 According to the **promise that I covenanted with you** when you came out of Egypt, so **My Spirit stands and abides in the midst of you; fear not.**

Hag 2:9 The latter glory of this house [with its successor, to which Jesus came] shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; **and in this place will I give peace and prosperity**, says the Lord of hosts.

These are awesome promises from our awesome God. That should be enough to make you shout! But, further along in this second chapter, **the Lord asks us to decide**, on this particular question; just as He asked them, at that particular period in time; ...in short, part A ... **“is holiness infectious?”** And they answered Him, **“No, it is not”**. (verse 12). Then, He asked them, part B ... **“is unholiness infectious?”** ...and they answered Him: - **“Yes”**. (verse 13).

Hag 2:12 If one carries in the skirt of his garment flesh that is holy [because it has been offered in sacrifice to God], and with his skirt or the flaps of his garment he touches bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, **does what he touches become holy [dedicated to God's service exclusively]?** And the priests answered, **No! [Holiness is not infectious.]**

Hag 2:13 Then said Haggai, If one who is [ceremonially] unclean because he has come in contact with a dead body should touch any of these articles of food, **shall it be [ceremonially] unclean? And the priests answered, It shall be unclean. [Unholiness is infectious.]**

The Lord, our God, wanted them to be so blessed, He sent Haggai the prophet to teach them. He wants for us also, to walk in - **“The Blessing”** - His blessing; just the same!!! We can read of the wonderful ending to this precious little two chapter book, by reading verses 17-19 of chapter two:-

Hag 2:17 I smote you with blight and with mildew and with hail in all [the products of] the labors of your hands; yet you returned not nor were converted to Me, says the Lord.

Hag 2:18 **Consider, I pray you, from this day onward**, even from the day the foundation of the Lord's temple was [re]laid, **consider this: - ...**

Hag 2:19 ... **From this day on I will bless you!!!**

Wow! What a promise! But remember our letters from last year, where we shared plenty about the **choices we make**, and how **all the Lord's instructions to us are prefixed with an “if”**. Here, at the end of this story, we find the big question about - **Holiness verses Unholiness!** How **blessed** we are in this life, depends on the seriousness of our obedience to Jesus Christ, and his instructions for Holy living. That requires a **CHOICE** of our own **freewill**. No coercion going on here. God isn't into twisting your arm behind your back, to get your approval – kind of stuff. No! He made it quite clear on many occasions in the scripture that - **we get to choose**.

One of these scriptures is in Deuteronomy:-

*Deu 30:19 I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you that **I have set before you life and death, the blessings and the curses; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live***

*Deu 30:20 And may love the Lord your God, **obey His voice, and cling to Him. For He is your life and the length of your days, that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.***

Therein resides the very reason for our **New Year's resolutions!** If we want for our New Year - 2013, to be bigger, brighter, and better than 2012, then we need make that **freewill choice**; our own **New Year's resolution** - **to make Jesus Christ the Lord of our Life**; and to want to walk and talk the life of **HOLINESS - which is not infectious**. We cannot catch it from somebody else. **We must choose it for our self.** But on the contrary, **Un-holiness, (the opposite of), is very infectious; very catching. Therefore, choose Life! For He is your life!** Choose the **giver of life**; the gifts, or **blessings**, simply follow. **They are the positive consequence of your New Year's resolution - obedience!** Amen and Amen!

Till next month

From my house to yours

Blessings of the abundant kind!

Leila Nord.

