

glect, His cause there is no flourishing, and people think more of their own homes than of God's sanctuary, and of their own comforts than of the extension of His Kingdom.

Judged by this rule what was the condition of God's cause among the returned Jews in Haggai's time? The answer must be that it was in a sad state, and that very little interest was taken therein, for God's "house" was lying "waste." When they returned from the captivity a good deal of interest was taken in this matter. Just as soon as they returned they set to work repairing Jerusalem and making preparations for the public service of God. Soon the altar was reared and once more the daily sacrifices were offered in Jerusalem. A year after their return the foundations of the temple were laid. The beginning promised well; and it appeared as if the whole edifice would be completed in a short time. But through the opposition and the misrepresentations of bitter enemies who sent false reports to the Persian court—there came an interdict from the king, forbidding them to go on with the building of the temple and other works. For this they were not to blame. They desired to restore their waste temple, but the king's decree prohibited them. But sixteen years after the work of rebuilding had begun, another king removed the interdict. They were again at liberty to again go on with the work; yea, they were encouraged and valuable aid was given them for the purpose. But when the permission came they did not take advantage of it. There was no effort put forth to renew the work. They were engaged in building houses for themselves, in seeking their own comfort; and they eased their consciences by saying one to another—and perhaps to those who may have urged them in that direction—"The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." They would contend that the time was inopportune for them to build the Lord's house; that they were but beginners in the land; that they must build their own houses first; that they must establish their business or till their farms and vineyards; and that besides the times were hard, the crops failing, the