

A Call to Cleanness of Life: From Defilement to Devotion *Haggai 2:10-19*

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Introduction: We come this morning to the third of Haggai's messages. Following Ryrie's outline, last week we considered the call to construction (1:1-15) & the call to courage (2:1-9). This morning we will look at Haggai's call to cleanness of life (2:10-19) & then tonight the call to confidence in the future (2:20-23). Haggai's third message is dated "*in the four & twentieth day of the ninth month in the second year of Darius*" which equates in our calendar system to December 18, 520 B.C. (& the same date for the final message in this prophecy – 2:10 & 2:20). This message speaks of contamination but with a call to cleanness of life, or what I see as "from defilement to devotion." Note here with me in these verses the picture of defilement (:10-14) & the prospect of blessing (:15-19).

I. The **picture** of defilement (:10-14)

A. A **question**: "Can holiness (sanctification) be transferred?" (:11-12)

1. "*If one bear holy flesh*" ? > meat offered in sacrifice upon the altar is consecrated.
2. "*In the skirt of his garment*" ? > garment bearing the consecrated meat.
3. "*And with his skirt do touch bread...*" ? > does the garment make anything it touches holy?

Summary: The answer is "No." "Even though the garment is holy (set apart) because of the sanctified meat, this holiness can't be imparted to other objects by the garment" (Wiersbe).

B. A **question**: "Can defilement be transferred?" (:13)

1. "*Unclean by a dead body*" ? > see Numbers 19:11, "*He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.*"
2. "*Touch any of these...*" ? > see Leviticus 22:4-6.

Summary: The answer is "Yes." "*It shall be unclean.*" In other words, "you can transmit defilement from one thing or person to another" (Wiersbe).

Application (:14): Holiness (or sanctity) cannot be transmitted but defilement can be. "A healthy man cannot communicate his health to his sick child, but the sick child can communicate its disease to the father" (Feinberg). Compare COVID 19.

Principle: Because of their disobedience (defilement), whatever they "touched" was defiled – unblessed by God. Though they continued their sacrifices upon the rebuilt altar there in Jerusalem, those sacrifices were not accepted by God & did not receive His blessing. "All their former work partook of their spiritual uncleanness" (Feinberg).

II. The **prospect** of blessing (:15-19)

A. The **previous** withholding of blessing (:15-17)

1. **Results** of the curse (:15-17a):

- a. This was before their obedience to Haggai's message – see 1:14.
- b. Their grain production was reduced by 50% & wine (grape juice) by 60%.
- c. The drought, mildew, & hail were chastisements from God.

Summary: The people were challenged once again to "*consider*" – a command to self-judgment, an assessment – their disobedience, with the implied challenge not to return to their former disobedient ways.

2. **Response** (previously) to the curse (:17b):
 - a. In spite of God's chastisement the people did not turn to the Lord in repentance.
 - b. "How little thought man gives to the vital & important relationships of life, especially those which they sustain toward the Lord of all" (Feinberg).

Illustration: Judgment does not always result in repentance (consider 9/11). "It seems that judgment only hardens; it rarely produces repentance. What finally touches the negligent heart is God's Word" (Phillips). See 1:13-14.

B. The promise of witnessing blessing (:18-19)

1. **Blessing** is to come because of their obedience (:18):
 - a. There is a "re-dedication" of the Temple's foundation?
 - b. There is a repeated call to "*consider*" – self-judgment; self-assessment.
2. **Lessons** to learn because of their obedience (:19):
 - a. The previous results of their disobedience (:19a) >
 - (1) "*Is the seed yet in the barn?*" – no seed for future planting.
 - (2) No fruit of the vines nor trees.

Application: Though we do not offer physical sacrifices upon an altar, we are commanded to offer up spiritual sacrifices (Hebrews 13:15-16 & I Peter 2:5). If we are defiled by our disobedience, our spiritual sacrifices will not be accepted or blessed by God. Just going through the motions of worship – singing, praying, giving, listening to God's Word – without heart-felt obedience & devotion will not be blessed by God.

- b. The promised result for their obedience (:19b) >
 - (1) "*From this day will I bless you*" – from the day of their obedience (1:14).
 - (2) "*He who withheld the blessing can as sovereignly bestow it in answer to faith & obedience*" (Feinberg).

Reminder: Repentance does not immediately change one's material circumstances. The man who loses an eye in a drunken bar-room fight does not get his eye back when he comes to faith in Christ. Sin has consequences: the converted alcoholic may still suffer liver damage; the promiscuous one may still suffer a diseased body. "God does not always remove the consequences of sin, although He forgives the guilt & gives grace to live with the abiding thorn" (Phillips).

Conclusion: A call to cleanness or from defilement to devotion. Do you truly want the blessing of God upon your life? Upon this church? Are you here today just going through the motions of worship? Is there something this morning between your soul & the Savior? Are you guilty of any disobedience? Is their sin in your life that needs to be confessed? Do you struggle with impure thoughts – with pornography? Are you neglecting your spiritual duties such as prayer, Bible reading, witnessing? How about in the service this morning? Are you guilty of not thinking of the words you sang? Guilty of not praying along with the one leading in prayer? Did you begrudge the little or lot you gave in the offering? Have you listened to the preaching/teaching of God's Word with a critical spirit rather than a heart that says, "What will you have me to do Lord with what I have heard?"

If any of this describes you, why not come forward this morning & ask forgiveness for your disobedience &/or indifference. Will you seek the Lord's blessing upon your life & upon this church? Might we all prayerfully & honestly sing with our lips & from our heart, "Search me O God."