

Haggai 2:10-19

Two sections: Israel's defilement and God's promise of blessing.

A healthy man can't heal a sick man through touch. A sick man can make a healthy man sick through touch. Haggai uses obvious truths from Jewish ceremonial law to make Israel's desperate situation clear.

God had proclaimed Israel holy - but with a condition: "if you obey me fully and keep my covenant." (Ex 19:5-6) After their return from exile the Israelites had given up their work on the temple after only a short while and spent their effort on their own houses. They falsely thought continued observance of the law with regard to sacrifices would set them right in God's eyes.

Israel had become defiled by putting individual priorities before God's priorities. We are stewards of what God has given us. Do we put God first, or is he an afterthought?

Israel also falsely thought it could buy its way to divine acceptance. In the same way, we often wrongly think our good actions compensate for our shortcomings before God. Even worse, we often have no idea of God's holiness nor of sin's ugliness. We don't know the extent of the trouble we're in.

Israel's best efforts are equivalent to cleaning off filth by scrubbing with filth - **Israel's only hope, and our only hope, lies in God making us holy.** Hebrews 10 expands on how all the sacrifices in the world cannot take away sin, and how **God has done through Jesus what those sacrifices were unable to do.** It is through grace - but grace is no excuse for passivity.

Haggai is speaking at the beginning of their sowing season. His main point is that from the moment Israel had a change of heart and acted on it, great blessing will follow.

God often waits for a change of heart before blessing someone. Similarly, salvation from our sin is a gift of grace, but it requires a change of heart in us. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The wages of sin is death, but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us, and the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. **And if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life sets us free from the law of sin and death. **Repent, and come to Jesus.**

Works cannot save, but faith and works always go together (Haggai 2:4, Hebrews 10, James 2). **Works that express a right faith are works that bring glory to God** (just as building a temple for him brought him glory): obeying Jesus' commands (John 14), loving one another (John 15), mutual edification (Romans 14, Ephesians 4), bearing each other's burden (Galatians 6). This isn't an exhaustive list!

Blessing will follow this faith in action: not necessarily material prosperity, but certainly "**joy and good fruit**" (John 15). Let us seek to enjoy God's presence individually and as a community!

Summary:

God is a holy God. Just like the Israelites, we are sinners and can't help ourselves, and our priorities are wrong as a result. We are missing out on God's blessing for that reason.

It takes a change of heart and God's grace to cleanse us and to restore his blessings to us, and we must return to living as if God existed and mattered. **God is holy, God forgives, God loves us, and it means our life to us.**