

Title: **EVERY WORK UNCLEAN**
 YET BLESSED

Text: Haggai 2:10-19

Subject: *Haggai's Message to Israel's Priests*

Date: Sunday Evening — August 10, 2008

Tape: Haggai #10

Readings: *Darvin Pruitt and James Jordan*

Introduction:

In Haggai 2:10-19 the Holy Spirit has recorded for us the sermon God sent his prophet Haggai to deliver to his priests. This message was designed and directed specifically for God's priesthood. It was delivered to those who spent their lives in or around God's house, serving him in the temple day and night. — I take it as a message from God to me personally, because Christ Jesus has made me a priest unto God. If you profess faith in Christ, you should read Haggai's words as the Word of God addressed to you. This is God's message to you who are his "*royal priesthood.*" God's prophets in those days did not give titles to their messages. So I have titled Haggai's message to us — **EVERY WORK UNCLEAN** — **YET BLESSED.** Hear now the Word of the Lord by his prophet Haggai.

(Haggai 2:10-19) "In the four and twentieth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, (11) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests *concerning* the law, saying, (12) If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. (13) Then said Haggai, If *one that is* unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. (14) Then answered Haggai, and said, So *is* this people, and so *is* this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so *is* every work of their hands; and that which they offer there *is* unclean. (15) And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: (16) Since those *days* were, when *one* came to an heap of twenty *measures*, there were *but* ten: when *one* came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty *vessels* out of the press, there were *but* twenty. (17) I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye *turned* not to me, saith the LORD. (18) Consider now from this day and

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upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth *month*, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider *it*. (19) Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless *you*."

BLESSING BEGINS

What a solemn, alarming message this is, condemning every work of our hands as unclean. — And the prophet is talking here about our very best works, our religious services, our worship, our sacrifices to God! Yet, the very last word he gives in this message is a promise of pure, free grace. — The Lord God says, "*From this day will I bless you!*" When I read those words, I could not help asking, "From what day?" So I went back and read the sermon again to see if I could find out the day, and I did. Let's read the sermon again. What is the day in which the Lord God here promises to open heaven and pour out his blessing upon his people?

The day we discover that our best works, our most holy deeds are of no more profit to our souls before God than our most vile and obscene lust, from that day the holy Lord God promises to bless us!

(Haggai 2:10-12) "In the four and twentieth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, (11) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests *concerning* the law, saying, (12) If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No."

In the day we are made to see that our best deeds of righteousness are filthy rags, that every work of our hands is unclean, that we pollute God's altar with our sacrifices, from that day he begins to manifestly pour out his blessing upon us! — Oh, may God cause you to see that everything touched by your dead body is unclean!

(Haggai 2:13-14) "Then said Haggai, If *one that is* unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. (14) Then answered Haggai, and said, So *is* this people, and so *is* this nation before me, saith the

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LORD; and so *is* every work of their hands; and that which they offer there *is* unclean.”

In that day that our will is broken before God and we are made to see and acknowledge our obstinate rebellion, when we are compelled by his grace to acknowledge the justice of his judgment upon us, the rightness of our condemnation, and confess our sin, from that day the Lord God says he will bless us!

(Haggai 2:15-17) “And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: (16) Since those *days* were, when *one* came to an heap of twenty *measures*, there were *but* ten: when *one* came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty *vessels* out of the press, there were *but* twenty. (17) I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye *turned* not to me, saith the LORD.”

In the day that the Lord God graciously forces us to see and acknowledge that we are utterly, completely, totally helpless before him, incapable producing one good thing, in day he begins to pour out upon our souls unceasing blessedness!

(Haggai 2:18-19) “Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth *month*, *even* from the day that the foundation of the LORD’S temple was laid, consider *it*. (19) Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless *you*.”

Haggai used the symbolism of uncleanness, as it is used throughout the law of Moses, to set forth the filth and pollution of our souls by nature. Oh, the uncleanness of my soul! Only Christ can take it away! The smiting, blasting and mildews are expressive of the sorrows, disappointments and troubles that are ours because of sin. These are always the consequence of wickedness. But, from the day the Temple of God is erected in our souls, from the day that Christ sets his throne in our hearts, everything is changed! Temporal, spiritual and eternal blessings are ours! God the Father comes to bless with his grace in the unspeakable gift of his dear Son; and he blesses us with all spiritual

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blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). Christ is made to be our Portion. Having Christ as our Portion, we have all things in him and with him. Christ is our Portion to live upon in time and to all eternity! Oh, may God make him your Portion!

The Spirit of God gives us a very short, but superb commentary on Haggai's sermon in Titus 1:15. Let's look at it together.

(Titus 1:15) "Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."

In every congregation of God's saints, in every temple of God, wherever sinners gather to worship Christ there are both the pure and the defiled, sheep and goats, wheat and tares, those who know God and those who only "*profess that they know God.*" By the preaching of the gospel our Lord separates the one from the other.

(Titus 1:15) "Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."

Let me explain the text to you and you decide whether you are among the pure or the defiled. Do not try to decide which category your neighbor falls into, but which one you fall into.

THE PURE

Paul tells us that some people are pure. Some of you sitting here are pure, really and truly pure. You are not pure in your own eyes, but in the eyes of God and in the eyes of honest judgment of your brethren you are pure. — "*Unto the pure all things are pure!*" Who are these pure men and women?

- Not those who imagine they are pure – The Pharisee! — The harlot – "*I have done no wrong.*"
- Not those who try to make themselves pure by legal works and religious ceremonies.

"They alone are pure who are justified from all sin by Christ's righteousness, and are clean through the word or sentence of

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absolution spoken by him; and who are washed from their sins in his blood, and have that sprinkled upon their consciences, by which they are purged and cleansed from all sin; and have the clean water of sanctifying grace sprinkled upon them, and have clean hearts and right spirits created in them; and whose hearts are purified by faith, and have pure principles of grace and holiness formed in them”

John Gill

Be sure you understand these three things:

1. **Every believer has been made pure by the grace of God.**

- Made pure by having his sins blotted out in blood redemption (Eph. 1:7).
- Made pure by having the righteousness of Christ imputed to him in justification (2 Cor. 5:21).
- Made pure by having Christ’s righteous nature imparted to him in regeneration (Eph. 4:24; Col. 1:27; 2 Pet. 1:4).
- Made pure by the Word of God effectually applied to the heart (John 15:3).
- None but the pure will enter into glory (Rev. 22:11; Ps. 24:3-4).

2. **Every believer has been made pure by the grace of God, but no child of God in this world is absolutely pure** (1 John 1:8, 10).

(1 John 1:7-10) “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

The believer is a person with two opposing natures, the flesh and the Spirit, sin and righteousness, the old man of sin and death and the new man “*created in righteousness and true holiness.*” That makes the believer a person who lives with a constant warfare in his being (Rom. 7:14-24).

3. **Yet, in the core of his being, in the essence of his truest self, every believer is pure.**

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Grace has made us pure. Christ has purified us with his blood. He has redeemed unto himself a peculiar, pure people! Believers love purity, hate wickedness, speak the pure language of Canaan and hold the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. Believers are men and women who are pure...

- **In their doctrine** — Our doctrine honors God, — Improves manhood — Promotes godliness.
- **In their hearts** (Matt. 5:8). — Their affections — Their desires.
- **In their consciences**, “*Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience*” (1 Tim. 3:9). — A pure conscience is a conscience purged of guilt by faith in the blood of Christ.
- **In their minds** (2 Pet. 3:1). — Believers do not have their minds set upon and wrapped up in earthly things. They think on those things that are pure (Phil. 4:8).
- **In their actions**. — “*Keep thyself pure*” (1 Tim. 5:22).

God’s people are a people of pure religion. James calls it “*pure religion and undefiled.*” They follow the pure example of Christ and live by the pure rule of faith. If you know God, if you have a saving, experimental knowledge of the living God, if you have true, saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are pure. If you are not pure, you do not know God. You are...

THE DEFILED

Every unbeliever is defiled. Unbelief and defilement go hand in hand. Wherever you find the one, you find the other. I do not say that all unbelievers live in open, profligate defilement. Not at all! Outwardly, many unbelievers are as upright as any believer. Paul the Apostle was not one whit more pure outwardly than Saul the Pharisee.

Indeed, the people Paul is talking about in Titus 1:15 are outwardly religious people, people who profess to know, love, and live for God.

(Titus 1:16) “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

They are defiled...

- Originally defiled in the fall (Ps. 14).
- Naturally defiled from birth (Ps. 51:5).

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- Actually defiled in the deeds of transgression.

Paul says, “*Even their mind and conscience is defiled.*”

NOW, LISTEN TO ME — Religion cannot make you pure. Only Christ can. If you are without Christ, if you are an unbeliever, you are defiled.

- Your heart is defiled (Matt. 15:19).
- Your mind, your understanding is defiled (Rom. 3:11).
- Your conscience is defiled.
- Your life is defiled (v. 16).

THE COMMENTARY

Now, here is the Holy Spirit’s commentary on Haggai’s sermon. — “*Unto the pure all things are pure: But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.*” — What does that mean? Remember, in the contexts both Paul and Haggai are talking about religious activity. Paul is not saying, “If a man is pure in Christ and he is an adulterer his adultery is pure.”

When Paul says, “*Unto the pure all things are pure: But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure,*” He means for us to understand two things. Listen carefully. It is so very important that you understand Paul’s doctrine in this text.

1. **The Holy Spirit here teaches us that everything the believer is and does in worship and service to God is pure, because he is pure in Christ; and everything the unbeliever is and does is defiled, because he is defiled** (Pro. 15:8; Isa. 1:10-15; Hag. 2:14; Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6).

(Proverbs 15:8) “The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight.”

(Isaiah 1:10-15) “Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. (11) To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. (12) When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? (13) Bring no more

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vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting. (14) Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*. (15) And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.”

(Haggai 2:14) “Then answered Haggai, and said, *So is* this people, and *so is* this nation before me, saith the LORD; and *so is* every work of their hands; and that which they offer there *is* unclean.”

(Romans 14:23) “And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.”

(Hebrews 11:6) “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

- The believer’s prayers are a sweet savor to God. — The unbeliever’s prayers are an abomination.
- The believer’s sacrifices are a delight to God. — The unbeliever’s sacrifices are repugnant.
- The believer’s service to God is acceptable, sweet, and honoring to God. — The unbeliever’s services to God are abominable and reprobate.

2. **This text is also a declaration that everything pertaining to spiritual life and godliness to the believer is pure, but to the unbeliever nothing is pure.**

- The Attributes of God.
- The Providence of God.
- The Doctrines of the gospel. — Election (2 Thess. 2:13). — Redemption (1 Cor. 6:19-20). — Distinguishing grace (David before the ark).
- The Worship of God.
- The Church of God.

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Those who are pure see purity in others (Phil. 2:1-5). Those who are defiled see defilement.

(Philippians 2:1-5) “If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, (2) Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. (3) *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. (4) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (5) Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

HAGGAI'S PURPOSE

Go back to the Book of Haggai. The prophet's purpose in delivering this message to the priests of Israel, God's purpose in giving us this message, is to rip every remnant of self trust from our hearts and to beat off every proud imagination of self-righteousness and personal holiness achieved by our good works.

(Haggai 2:12-14) “If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. (13) Then said Haggai, If *one that is* unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. (14) Then answered Haggai, and said, So *is* this people, and so *is* this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so *is* every work of their hands; and that which they offer there *is* unclean.”

- You cannot make yourself holy by handling holy things.
- Everything a dead man touches with his hands he pollutes and makes unclean.

I say to you who are lost, make it your determination in coming to the house of God, in reading the Word of God, in singing the praises of God, in calling upon God in prayer, make it your determination in all acts of religion to seek the Lord, not to oblige him! — What multitudes there are who, in everything they do in religion, eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning their need of a Substitute!

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How easily men and women lose themselves in a wilderness of duties! Those who foolishly imagine that they can oblige God by their works (prayers, alms, fastings, etc.) are digging for pearls in their own dung; and God says he will smear your dung on your face in his wrath (Mal. 2:3). Before God will accept our sacrifices, our worship, our service, we must be accepted in his Son.

ONE REMEDY

How can that be? How can vile, filthy sinners, like you and me, be accepted with God? How can we be made pure before him? I'm interested in that. Aren't you? Stay with me just a little longer, and I will show you how sinners can be made perfectly pure and holy before the Lord God. Turn back to Numbers 19. Here we have the laws of purification God gave to Israel. These ceremonial acts of purification were beautiful, instructive pictures of God's great operations of grace by which he makes sinners pure before him. Here, in Numbers 19, the Lord God tells us about five things that must be done to make us pure.

1. **We've got to bring God the sacrifice he requires; and the sacrifice he requires is one that only he can provide — A Red Heifer that is Spotless** (vv. 1-4).

(Numbers 19:1-4) “And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, (2) *This is* the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein *is* no blemish, *and* upon which never came yoke: (3) And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and *one* shall slay her before his face: (4) And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times.”

(Hebrews 9:22) “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

2. **The sacrifice slain must be burned without the camp** (vv. 5-6).

(Numbers 19:5-6) “And *one* shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: (6)

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And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast *it* into the midst of the burning of the heifer.”

What a picture this is of the intense agony and sufferings of our blessed Lord Jesus when he was made sin for us! — But a sacrifice is not sufficient.

3. **There must be a personal cleansing by the water of separation that comes from the sacrifice** (vv. 7-16). — This is talking about sanctification by the Spirit of God, the washing of our souls in regeneration.

(Numbers 19:9) “And a man *that is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay *them* up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: *it is* a purification for sin.”

(Numbers 19:13) “Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness *is* yet upon him.”

4. **If we would be pure before God, a sprinkling must take place** (vv. 17-18). — Here we have a picture of Christ’s blood being applied to our hearts and consciences by the Holy Spirit. It is this “*sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*” to which God’s elect are preserved. — “*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean!*”

(Numbers 19:17-18) “And for an unclean *person* they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: (18) And a clean person shall **take hyssop**, and **dip it in the water**, and **sprinkle it** upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave:”

(Hebrews 9:12-14) “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*. (13) For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: (14) How much more shall

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the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

(Hebrews 12:22-24) “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, (24) And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.”

5. Still, something else is required. — **The unclean must apply the sacrifice to himself** (vv. 18-22).

(Numbers 19:18-22) “And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip *it* in the water, and sprinkle *it* upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: (19) And the clean *person* shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. (20) But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he *is* unclean. (21) And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even. (22) And whatsoever the unclean *person* toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth *it* shall be unclean until even.”

You must take the hyssop in the hand of faith, dip it in the blood (the ashes of the burnt sacrifice) and water and sprinkle yourself; and this goes on for seven days, all the days of your life. You must your heart by faith. You must purify your soul by obeying the truth.

(Zechariah 13:1) “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”

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Illustration: Barnard and “Old Faithful”.

Now, this is God’s promise. —”*From this day will I bless you!*”

Illustration: “Glad the Lord saved you, Bro. Burke!”

Amen.