

Pray

Read Haggai 2:10-19

¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Haggai: ¹¹ 'This is what the Lord of Armies says: Ask the priests for a ruling. ¹² If a man is carrying consecrated meat in the fold of his garment, and it touches bread, stew, wine, oil, or any other food, does it become holy?' The priests answered, 'No.' ¹³ Then Haggai asked, 'If someone defiled by contact with a corpse touches any of these, does it become defiled?' The priests answered, 'It becomes defiled.' ¹⁴ Then Haggai replied, 'So is this people, and so is this nation before me – this is the Lord's declaration. And so is every work of their hands; even what they offer there is defiled.

¹⁵ 'Now from this day on, think carefully: Before one stone was placed on another in the Lord's temple, ¹⁶ what state were you in? When someone came to a grain heap of twenty measures, it only amounted to ten; when one came to the winepress to dip fifty measures from the vat, it only amounted to twenty. ¹⁷ I struck you – all the work of your hands – with blight, mildew, and hail, but you didn't turn to me – this is the Lord's declaration.

¹⁸ From this day on, think carefully; from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid; think carefully. ¹⁹ Is there still seed left in the granary? The vine, the fig, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yet produced. But from this day on I will bless you.'

Introduction

□ leper walks towards Jesus. • Lepers are not supposed to walk towards anyone. They are meant to stay away. Because defilement spreads. ●●

↳ But this man comes towards Jesus anyway. • He doesn't care. He is desperate. • He falls before Christ. And cries out, *If you are willing, you can make me clean*. ●●

P Jesus does not step back. • He stretches out His hand. And touches him. And says, *I am willing. Be clean*. ●●

on How can we be made clean? ●●●

∂ The remnant of Israel was faced with that same question 600 years before Christ. • The people of Israel had returned from exile. They are rebuilding the temple. • They are religious. They are working hard. But nothing was going their way. ●● And then Haggai came with a shocking message from the Lord. • You cannot catch holiness. But defilement? That spreads like a plague. • And you are unclean. ●●●

R Let's how Haggai proves it with a legal test in Haggai 2:10-14. ●●

1) Why are your hands still dirty (Haggai 2:10-14)

“Y¹¹ The Lord of Armies instructs messy men how to worship. • Ask the priests for a ruling. Here is the question.¹² If a man is carrying consecrated meat in the fold of his garment, and it touches bread, stew, wine, oil, or any other food, does it become holy? •• This is Leviticus. • The priests answered correctly. No. Holy meat cannot transmit its holiness by touch. • You can carry it. You can brush against it. But nothing will happen. Holiness does not spread like that. What is holy stays holy. What is common stays common. • There is no accidental sanctification. ••

ð¹³ Then Haggai asked a second question. • If someone defiled by contact with a corpse touches any of these, does it become defiled? • The priests answered, ‘It becomes defiled.’ • The Law is clear. Numbers 19. Anything an unclean person touches becomes unclean. • Defilement spreads. Contaminates everything it meets. Is aggressive. Is contagious. • You carry a corpse, you become unclean. Then you touch a jar, it becomes unclean. You touch a person, they become unclean. • Defilement cannot be contained. It spreads. And corrupts. ••

˘ Then Haggai drives the point home. •¹⁴ So is this people, and so is this nation before me. So is every work of their hands; even what they offer there is defiled. • Here is what the people likely thought. • We are rebuilding God’s house. Surely that holy work will rub off on us. Somehow cleanse us. • This is their ah-ha moment. • You cannot catch holiness like a cold. But defilement? That spreads like plague. • Past indifference defiled these people. ••

□ You cannot get holy by proximity. You cannot become holy by attending church. Joining a ministry team. • But you are defiled by proximity. •• The rotten company you keep. The perverted movies you watch. The bad games you play. The corrupt music you stream. • The fallen world bleeds into you through these. Contaminates you through these. Defiles you through these. • So that even your worship, offerings, and work, become defiled. •••

Å Holiness does not transmit. Defilement does. • These people are defiled. Their work is defiled. Their offerings are defiled. • They cannot cleanse themselves. • They cannot scrub themselves clean. •••

Ⓞ You cannot catch holiness. •• But they are already defiled. • So they try to scrub up. You serve. You show up. You rebuild the temple. •• But still, something is wrong. Still, your hands stay dirty. Why? • Why do your efforts keep failing? Why does everything you touch seem to wither? •• Is God absent? Is He angry? Or is something else happening? •• The answer is harder than you think. The Lord of Armies Himself has been striking you. •••

2) Why are your best efforts failing (Haggai 2:15-17)

í ¹⁵ think carefully. • Before one stone was placed on another in the Lord's temple, ¹⁶ what state were you in? • When someone came to a grain heap of twenty measures, it only amounted to ten; when one came to the winepress to dip fifty measures from the vat, it only amounted to twenty. •• Empty bins. Empty vats. Blight on the crops. Mildew on the vines. Hail from the sky. Everything you touch withers. •• You thought it was bad luck. You thought the economy was struggling. You thought the harvest failed because the season was poor. •• You thought wrong. ••

í ¹⁷ I struck you. •• I did it. •• The Lord of Armies declares it. I struck you with blight, mildew, and hail. All the work of your hands. • I did it. •• Deuteronomy 28 warns of these curses. Leviticus 26 threatens them. • This is not random misfortune. This is covenant discipline. • This is the hand of the Father. • He was not absent. He was actively disciplining His children because He loved them. • The same God who enforces the curses is the same God who lifts them. • He is not capricious. He is covenantally consistent. ••

í But you didn't turn to me. • Repent. • Change your mind. So completely that your behaviour changes too. •• You were walking one way. Repentance means you stop. • You turn 180 degrees. And you inevitably walk the other way. •• It is not just sorrow. It is not just regret. It is not feeling bad because you have been caught in the act and you are facing consequences. • It is a change of mind that results in a change of behaviour. ••

P Think of a father whose son has begun running with the wrong crowd. • The boy stays out late. He lies about where he has been. He laughs at warnings. •• So dad takes the car keys away. Grounds him. • The son fumes. He thinks his father is cruel. He thinks the old man just wants to spoil his fun. • But the father is not cruel. He is loving. • He is not angry in the way the son thinks. • His discipline intends him good, not harm. •••

That is what God did. •• Empty granaries were not bad luck. They were the Father taking the keys. •• Blasted vines were not a poor season. God's children were being grounded. •• Hail was not random weather. It was the hand of a loving Father proactively calling them to turn. •••

R You thought it was bad luck. God calls it discipline. •• He took your keys. He grounded you. And still, you did not turn. •• So what now? •• Can anything change? •• Yes. Think carefully. ••

3) How everything changes (Haggai 2:18-19)

Haggai says it again. ¹⁸ From this day on. From the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. From the day the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid. • Not the walls. Not the roof. Just the stone foundation. The work has begun. • This is not merely construction. This is the visible fruit of obedience. Repentance looks like something. In this case, it looks like stones stacked in the dirt. It looks like sweat on the brow of workers. Repentance looks like something. •••

Å So God's people have repented. • But look around. ¹⁹ Is there still seed left in the granary? No. • The storehouses are empty. The vine, the fig, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yet produced. • Their circumstances have not changed. The fields are still barren. The vats are still dry. The economy is still shattered. Nothing in the barn. Nothing on the tree. Nothing in the press. • How will they survive? • How will they eat? • How will they make it through the coming months? • There is nothing left. •• It is going to take a miracle. •••

P Then the Lord speaks. But from this day on I will bless you. •• Not because the foundation is beautiful. Not because their work is perfect. Not because they deserve it. But because He has chosen this day. • He has chosen to reverse His declaration of judgment and replace it with a declaration of blessing. • By His own gracious initiative. • He is not capricious. He is covenantally consistent. • The same God who enforced the curses now lifts them. •••

Remember Elijah at Zarephath. The widow had nothing. A handful of flour. A little oil. The end. •• But the word of the Lord came. The jar of flour will not be exhausted. The jug of oil will not run dry. Not because she deserved it. Because God spoke it. • And God kept His word. •••

R That is the main idea. • From the day the temple's foundation was laid, even though their circumstances look hopeless, scarcity will be replaced by promised abundance. • The ground is still bare. The blessing is already spoken. • Despite the people's ongoing defilement, God will reverse their curse and bless them. • Not because they cleansed themselves. Not because their obedience earned anything. But because He is gracious. •• The foundation is laid. The curse is lifted. The promise stands. •••

o But how can a holy God bless a defiled man like you? • That is the question. And the answer is coming next. ••

Connect to the gospel

∅ Here is the main idea of this passage. Despite the people's ongoing defilement, God reversed their curse and blessed them. • There's hope there. • But there is also a problem. • How can a holy God bless defiled people without compromising His own holiness? • The law was clear. Numbers. Anyone who touches a corpse is unclean for seven days. • Defilement spreads. Holiness does not. So how does God cleanse the unclean? •••

∩ Look to Jesus. • A synagogue leader named Jairus fell at His feet. My little daughter is dying. • Even as Jesus was on His way, messengers came. Your daughter is dead. Don't bother the teacher anymore. • But Jesus just kept on walking. He entered the house. Heard the weeping. Said, The child is not dead but asleep. • They laughed at Him. He put them all outside. And went to where the corpse lay. •• And Mark says, He took the child by the hand. •••

P Jesus touched the dead corpse. • According to the law, He should have been defiled. •• But instead, death was defeated. The girl stood up. She walked. She ate. •• Holiness did what the law could never do. It reversed the curse. •••

P That is a picture of what Jesus did for you at the cross. He touched your corpse. Your sin, your death, your defilement. •• How much more can the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience from dead works? •• Jesus is the One whose holiness not only remains uncontaminated but actively cleanses. He took your defilement upon Himself. He gave you His righteousness in exchange. •• Not because you deserved it. Because He is gracious. •••

R So here is my argument. • Christ bore our defilement that we may be clean. •• The gospel does not replace Haggai's point. It explains how it is possible that we who repent may be made clean, and experience blessings from above rather than curses. •••

∩ The foundation is laid. The curse is lifted. The promise stands. •• But what does this mean for you? •• You who still feel the weight of your ongoing sin. You who wonder if God's blessing is really yours. • You who have tried to scrub yourself clean. How does this change the way you live? •• And what do you do with a defilement you cannot cure? •• Trust the Lamb who touched your corpse and made you clean. •••

Believers

P Christ bore your defilement. • You are clean. Not partly. Fully. Forever. ••

^ So now, offer your whole life back. •• Not just Sunday. Not just the easy parts. All of it. A living sacrifice. •••

^ Young adult, you stand at the start. Your future beckons. Offer it now. Your career plans. Your longing for a spouse. Your singleness. Your friendships. Do not wait. • Present your ambition as holy. • Give God your energy, your dreams, your body. That is worship. •••

P Old saint, you have walked long. The road is heavy. Your legs are tired. Offer that fatigue. •• Your faithful prayers when words feel dry. Your enduring love for a difficult spouse. Your quiet witness in the retirement village. • Your best days are not behind you. You offer a seasoned faith. That is holy. •••

P New convert, the joy is fresh. The sins still raw. •• Offer that first love. Let it shape your days. Turn from old habits daily. •• Read the Word with hunger. Serve where no one notices. Your repentance is a sacrifice. It pleases Him. •••

^ Mature believer, the danger is drift. •• Routine feels thin. Offer your ordinary. The emails you write. The children you parent. The thoughts you think in the dark. Fight the drift by offering every moment. Do not coast. •• You are clean. Live clean. Not to be cleansed, but because you are cleansed. •••

P The foundation is laid. The blessing is spoken. Go. Offer your ordinary days to God. •••

Unbelievers

∂ You have tried. • Midnight prayers. Resolutions. Church attendance. •• But holy meat cannot cleanse. And your good works cannot save. • You are still carrying a corpse. You know it. • Stop scrubbing. Stop pretending. •••

R The same God who spoke through Haggai now speaks to you. • Your religious efforts cannot remove your defilement. • But Christ bore your defilement. He became unclean for you. • He touched your corpse. He took your curse. •••

^ Today, do not harden your heart. •• Look to Him. • Cry out, Lord, make me clean. • Not a performance. A desperate plea. •• He hears. He has never refused. •• Turn. Cry. Be clean. •••

Conclusion

P A leper walked towards Jesus. Defiled. Desperate. • And Christ did not step back. He stretched out His hand, touched him, and said, I am willing. Be clean. •••

R Here is the argument. • Christ bore our defilement that we may be clean. •••

Why are your hands still dirty? •• Because holiness does not spread. You cannot catch it by proximity. You cannot scrub yourself clean. •• But defilement spreads. It clung to you. •• And your best efforts kept failing. Empty bins. Dry vats. You thought it was bad luck. It was the Father's hand. He struck you to turn you. •• Still, you would not turn. • But then, from this day on, everything changes. • The foundation was laid. The curse was lifted. The blessing spoken. • Not because you cleansed yourself. Because He is gracious. •••

Believer, you are clean. Not partly. Fully. Offer your whole life back. •• Unbeliever, stop scrubbing. Stop pretending. • Your religious efforts cannot remove your defilement. •• Cry out, Lord, make me clean. He hears. He has never refused. •••

P The hand that touched the leper and the corpse was nailed to a cross for you. •• That is how everything changes. •• Turn. Cry. Be clean. •••

P Amen. •••

Close in prayer

Homiletic indicators

- The operative word in the sentence is underlined.
- R – Instruction
 - **Body:** Natural, one hand gestures.
 - **Voice:** measured, firm.
- ^ – Uncion
 - **Body:** Forward, expressive.
 - **Voice:** Raised, faster.
- ð – Fear
 - **Body:** Narrow eyes, still shoulders, lift your chin slightly (exposed posture).
 - **Voice:** Breathly, higher pitch, quick shallow breaths. Speak into the back of the throat.
- O' – Anger
 - **Body:** Jaw forward, stable feet (no shifting weight), sharp hand strikes (karate chop motion).
 - **Voice:** Hard attack on consonants. Drop pitch slightly, but increase volume on key syllables. Staccato.
- P – Happiness
 - **Body:** Relax shoulders, soften the brow. Open palms, wider stance.
 - **Voice:** Rise in melody at the end of phrases. Bright, forward resonance (smile while speaking).
- Å – Sadness
 - **Body:** Heavy eyelids, slight forward slump, hands still or clasped low.
 - **Voice:** Lower volume, monotone descent (each phrase ends lower than it started). Use mostly single-syllable words.
- □ – Disgust
 - **Body:** Wrinkle nose, pull back your head, sharp turning away from the pulpit.
 - **Voice:** Nasal, sharp, with a "negation cadence" (rising then falling sharply on the sin's name). Hard glottal stops.
- o – Surprise
 - **Body:** Eyebrows up, slight backward step or open-mouth inhale.
 - **Voice:** Bright, high onset. Use a sudden upward interval (a leap in pitch on the unexpected word).
- • – Pause
 - **What it does:** Allows the last sentence to land, convict, or heal.
 - **Length:** 1 second (colon), 2 seconds (period), 3+ seconds (after a weighty statement or call to worship).
 - **Body:** Stop moving. Hold eye contact. Do not smile or nod. Let the silence be uncomfortable.
 - **Delivery note:** A pause feels longer to you than to them. Trust it. Hold one more beat than you think is comfortable.

The priests of the law confirm that holiness is not contagious, but defilement is, in application the people's half-heartedness makes their work defiled before God.

¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Haggai:

¹¹ 'This is what the Lord of Armies says:

a.) Ask the priests for a ruling.

[Q] ¹² If 1.) a man is carrying consecrated meat in the fold of his garment,
2.) [S] and it touches bread, stew, wine, oil, or any other food,
3.) does it become holy?'

[A] The priests answered, 'No.'

b.) ¹³ Then Haggai asked,

[Q] 'If 1.) someone defiled by contact with a corpse
2.) touches any of these,
3.) does it become defiled?'

[A] The priests answered, 'It becomes defiled.'

¹⁴ Then Haggai replied,

1.) 1.) [I] 'So is this people,
2.) [S] and [I] so is this nation before me – this is the Lord's declaration.
2.) [S] And [I] so is [I] every work of their hands;
[I] even what they offer there is defiled.

The prophet calls them to remember their past expectations which were met with scarcity that the Lord had sent to call them to repentance, yet they did not return.

1.) ¹⁵ 'Now from this day on, think carefully:

[Q] Before one stone was placed on another in the Lord's temple, ¹⁶ what state were you in?

1.) a.) When someone came to a grain heap of twenty measures,

b.) it only amounted to ten;

2.) a.) when one came to the winepress to dip fifty measures from the vat,

b.) it only amounted to twenty.

[A] a.) ¹⁷ I struck you – all the work of your hands – with blight, mildew, and hail,

b.) but you didn't turn to me – this is the Lord's declaration.

But, from the day the temple's foundation was laid, even though their circumstances look hopeless, scarcity will be replaced by promised abundance.

a.) 1.) ¹⁸ From this day on, think carefully;

2.) from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month,

3.) from the day the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid; think carefully.

1.) ¹⁹ Is there still seed left in the granary?

2.) 1.) The vine, 2.) the fig, 3.) the pomegranate, 4.) and the olive tree have not yet produced.

b.) [A] But from this day on I will bless you.'

This is how I indicate the function of conjunctions:

- I put a letter in square brackets before a clause to indicate a logical relationship.
 - [S] - SERIES, Each proposition makes an independent contribution to the whole (and, moreover, furthermore).
 - [P] - PROGRESSION, Each proposition is a further step toward a climax (then, and, moreover, furthermore).
 - [A] - ALTERNATIVE, Each proposition expresses an opposite possibility arising from a situation (or, but while...).
 - [W] [Ed] - WAY-END (ACTION-MANNER), Statement of an action and one which tells more explicitly what is involved in carrying out this action (in that, by).
 - [I] [I] - COMPARISON, Statement that clarifies an action or idea by showing what it is like (even as, as...so).
 - [-] [+] - NEGATIVE-POSITIVE, The relationship between two alternatives in which one is denied so the other is enforced, implicit in contrasting statements (not...but).
 - [Gn] [Sp] - GENERAL-SPECIFIC, Statement of a whole and one or more statements which set forth parts of the whole.
 - [Ft] [In] - FACT-INTERPRETATION, Statement and clarifying statement; does not set forth a distinguishable part of the preceding whole.
 - [G] - GROUND, Statement followed by the argument or reason on which it stands; supporting proposition follows the supported proposition (for, since, because).
 - [I'] - INFERENCE, Supporting statement followed by the conclusion drawn from it; supporting proposition precedes the supported proposition (therefore, wherefore, consequently).
 - [C] [E] - CAUSE-EFFECT (ACTION-RESULT), One action and another action which results from the first as an automatic consequence (that, so that, with the result that).
 - [C?] [E] - CONDITIONAL, Like cause-effect except existence of the cause is only potential (if...then, if, except...).
 - [M] [Ed] - MEANS-END (ACTION-PURPOSE), One action and another that is intended as the goal or purpose of the first (in order that, that, lest, to the end that).
 - [T] - TEMPORAL, Proposition and the occasion when it occurs (when, after, before).
 - [L] - LOCATIVE, Proposition and the place where it can be true (where, wherever).
 - [Adv] - ADVERSATIVE, Main clause that stands despite a contrary statement (although, yet, but, nevertheless).
 - [Q] [A] - QUESTION-ANSWER, Statement of question and answer to that question (question mark ?).
 - [S] [R] - SITUATION-RESPONSE, The relationship between a situation in one clause and a response in another.
 - [B] [L] - BILATERAL, A proposition which supports propositions in both directions, rarely used.

This is how I use colour highlighting:

- **Orange**: structure indicator, conjunctions, and prepositions.
- **Yellow**: verbs, Greek, and Scripture reference.
- **Green**: keywords.
- **Red**: repeated words.
- **Pink**: imperatives.
- **Blue**: main idea.

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: Haggai 2:10-19

1. How has the author organised this passage? a) *An outline*, b) *Tools*, c) *The emphasis*.

- a) 1) The defilement which ruined their work (Haggai 2:10-14).
 - 2) The judgment they refused to heed (Haggai 2:15-17).
 - 3) The circumstances which would turn around (Haggai 2:18-19).
- b) I identified Haggai 2:10-19 as discourse. I traced the logical flow using the repeated temporal markers (on the twenty-fourth day, from this day on, before one stone was placed). The question-answer structure with the priests establishes the principle of defilement. The contrast between past judgment and future blessing is marked by the repeated imperative think carefully and the temporal pivot from this day on.
- c) From defilement that spreads to blessing that comes by divine initiative.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? a) *Literary*, b) *Historical*, c) *Cultural*, d) *Biblical*.

- a) The people were stirred to begin work on the temple (Haggai 1:14-15). Subsequently, the Lord encouraged them that despite the temple's modest appearance, the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former (Haggai 2:1-9). This matters because in Haggai 2:10-19, the people are, doing work, but the consequences of their former neglect remain. The text resolves this when God's promises to bless them by His own gracious intuitive. The passage following addresses Zerubbabel, promising that God will overthrow the nations and make him like a signet ring (Haggai 2:20-23). This matters because the blessings promised in Haggai 2:18-19 are not merely agricultural prosperity, but connected to God's broader redemptive purposes through the Davidic line which culminate in the Messiah.
- b) The historical setting is precisely dated (Haggai 2:10, 18). Recently, through Haggai's preaching, construction on the temple has resumed. This matters because the people's question, if we are obeying God by rebuilding, why do we still experience scarcity? juxtapositions their obedience and their expectation of blessing. That God sovereignly chooses a specific day from which to bless, helps this discouraged people know that their obedience has not been in vain.
- c) The holiness/defilement principle (Haggai 2:11-13) reflects Israel's distinctive understanding of ritual purity. Holy meat cannot transmit holiness by contact, but a corpse renders anything it touches unclean. This matters because the people themselves were the source of defilement, their worship could not cleanse them. This cultural principle magnifies God's grace. Only He could reverse the judgment, not their efforts.
- d) Blight, mildew, and hail in Haggai 2:17 echoes Deuteronomy 28:22, the covenant curses for disobedience. The people's scarcity was not bad luck but covenantal discipline. This matters because it means the same God who faithfully enforced the curse can be trusted to faithfully deliver the promised blessing.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

Despite the people's ongoing defilement, God will reverse their curse and bless them.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The Law establishes that uncleanness spreads contagiously while holiness does not. This creates a typological pattern. People cannot spiritually cleanse themselves. Jesus Christ is the antitype. The One whose holiness not only remains uncontaminated but actively cleanses. Hebrews 9:13-14 makes this explicit. If the blood of goats and bulls... sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ... cleanse your conscience from dead works? The author's main point is that God sovereignly reverses judgment and blesses His undeserving people. The gospel connection solves the problem of how a holy God can bless defiled people without compromising His holiness. The answer is Christ takes the defilement upon Himself and gives His righteousness in exchange. The gospel does not replace Haggai's point, it explains how it is possible. My audience includes Christians who still feel the weight of their ongoing sin and wonder if God's blessing is really theirs. The gospel connection assures them that Christ's cleansing is once-for-all. For unbelievers, it exposes the futility of religious performance and drives them to the only One who can make the unclean clean.

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

Christ bore our defilement that we may be clean.

6. What applications will you make? a) *To believers*, b) *To unbelievers*.

- a) After the connection to the gospel. Christ has cleansed you, and now your life may be offer to God as a holy sacrifice. This week take time to examine how you can offer your family life, work life, rest life to God as a holy offering of worship.
- b) After the connection to the gospel. Your religious efforts cannot remove defilement. The same God who told Israel that holy meat cannot cleanse now tells you that your good works cannot save. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Look to Jesus Christ, who became unclean for you, and cry out, Lord, make me clean.

7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) *Sermon outline*, b) *Sermon title*.

b) From drought to harvest

- a) 1) Why are your hands still dirty (Haggai 2:10-14)
- 2) Why are your best efforts failing (Haggai 2:15-17)
- 3) How everything changes (Haggai 2:18-19)

On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:

1. How has the author organised this passage?

- a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
- b) Tools: Identify the text type, and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
- c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?

- a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
- b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
- c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
- d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ? a) The connection itself, b) How it functions in relation to the author's main point, c) Why it matters for your audience.

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

6. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

7. What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.

The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).

On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:

- o 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- o 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- o 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- o 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- o 4) must be found in the text.
- o 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- o 6) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5).
- o 7) should flow from 5) and relate to 6).