

Hope in Discouragement

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[0 : 00] And we're now going to do what we do as part of our service. We believe prayer is a very key part of what it means to be part of the body of Christ, to be the church.

And so I'm going to enter into the time what we call our pastoral prayer. And really what this prayer time is, it's not a time for you just to kind of zone out because you've had a long week. But actually let me encourage you right now to actually re-center your minds. To re-center your minds and to close your eyes and we're going to pray together to the living God and to realize what a privilege this is.

So don't just listen to what I'm saying, but actually in your heart and even verbally, you can just pray with me and amen what I'm going to pray. So let's bow our heads and pray to our Father.

Father, we were made for you. In your presence there is fullness of joy. And the one thing that we ask, and this is what we seek, that we may dwell in your house, that we may learn to have you and your presence at the center of our community, at the center of our individual lives, at the center of our families, at the center of our schedules, at the center of every part of our lives.

[1 : 22] We want you to be the number one in that. Because you're the fountain of life, Lord. You're the source of all goodness. You're the one who sees the end from the beginning. You're the first and the last.

The galaxy is in your hands. Our political situation is in your hands. Our economic situation is in our hands. Our relational situations are in your hands. And you are good.

And you are faithful. So we come to you this morning asking for more of you. We want your face, not just your hand. We're asking that you would teach us what it means to truly live by faith.

Rather than having one hand on you and one hand on our plans, one hand on the comforts that we seek, one hand on all the other things we chase after. Lord, we want you to recenter us on you.

We want to pray right now for those who are discouraged. Who feel discouraged by even your own choices and responses in this last week. Discouraged by your lack of faith.

[2 : 28] Discouraged that you gave in to porn again. Discouraged you got angry again.

Discouraged that in your family relationships, there's still things that haven't been solved.

Discouraged that sickness is still present in your body or in those you love. Father, lift our eyes up to see you.

You're the God who lifts up the downcast. Give us godly grit to get back up and see that you're the God of all hope, who fills us abundantly with all hope.

We also want to pray, Father, for sons and daughters and their bazaar that's going on this week.

Lord, thank you so much for the 36 ladies who attended just the other day. And Father, we ask for more.

We ask for those women who are so broken in so many ways that they would experience your love through this time in a far deeper and richer way than just through receiving some clothes, Lord.

[3 : 25] Would you melt their defense mechanisms? Would you open them up to see new hope in you? Would you use Julie and the team to be a light to them over the coming days and weeks?

And would you develop really significant relationships even through this week? Father, we want to pray for the Nepalese community in our city.

We live in a divided city which is divided along political lines, but it's also divided ethnically and racially. And we ask that you would restore a unity in this city. We pray for the churches in Hong Kong, that we would demonstrate and reflect the fact that in your gospel you bring together people from every tribe, language, people group.

And Father, we thank you that in VBS this week we have 10 Nepalese kids coming who don't know you. Lord, we pray that you would be their hope. We pray that they would come and see you this

week and them and their families would turn to you and find hope in the living God.

And Father, we want to pray and thank you for Janet and Charlie who got married just this last week. We ask your blessing on them. We pray that you would work through the challenges and the trials with the visa process going through.

[4 : 41] And Lord, we thank you for Dina and Hernando that you have provided both of them with visas. Lord, thank you that in the wait you are faithful and we can trust you and you are good.

And we ask all these things knowing that you are a gracious, faithful God. Amen. So this morning we have a very exciting thing that's going to happen this morning because we have somebody who is going to be speaking to us for the first time.

Gary is going to come and speak to us. And part of one of the things that, yeah, let's have a, woo! One of the things that as a community we want to be doing, we're all about making disciples who then make other disciples.

And we want to be raising up other people within the congregation to both preach and lead in all kinds of different ways. And so this morning is just a great opportunity and just really excited about Gary to do this.

Gary, if you don't know Gary, you should know Gary because he's an amazing member of our community. He's got two amazing kids, one of whom has just been sent off, Russell, to university in Canada.

[5 : 57] He's been very involved with helping out, serving with youth and with hospitality in a whole load of different directions. So I'm just really excited for Gary to come and bring God's message to us this morning.

So I'm going to invite, first of all, before Gary speaks to his Jefferson to come and read God's word and then we'll hear from Gary. The scripture reading comes from Haggai chapter 2.

Please follow along and your bulletins are on the screen. The seventh month on the 21st day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet.

Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Sheatiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadech, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory?

How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord.

[7 : 10] Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadech, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt.

My spirit remains in your midst, fear not. For thus says the Lord of hosts, yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.

And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in. And I will fill this house of glory, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place, I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts. This is the word of law.

Wow, what a privilege to be able to share God's word with you today. But before I start, I just want to open with a word of prayer, so please pray along with me.

[8 : 31] Our God, I just thank you for your word. Your word, which is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago.

And I just pray that as your word comes to us today, that I may not stand in the way of your word, but that our hearts and our minds will be open to receive your word.

Speak to us now, I pray. In your precious name, amen. So, the Old Testament, if you're like me, you might want to read the Bible and you read the Old Testament, you read the New Testament, and sometimes you like the New Testament a little bit better than the Old Testament.

Why is that? Well, a lot of the times, the New Testament's very easy to understand. Little concepts just seem to come straightforward, and you understand it pretty straightforward.

But even if you read the Old Testament, you sort of see stories, and you see things and some words, and, you know, you might not see that things come to you right away. But what I've learned is the Old Testament actually has its way of speaking to us.

[9 : 41] It takes a little bit more work, a little bit more thought, and that's what we're going to see today. We're going to continue on. Last week, we started a four-week sermon that Chris started on

the book of Haggai.

And again, that's in the Old Testament. And the book of Haggai focuses last week's message about rebuilding the temple of God. And last week, Chris preached about how God's people are sort of busy with rebuilding their own temples, their own houses, focusing on their own priorities as opposed to building the temple of God.

So last week, hopefully we were challenged and thought, well, let me not focus on my individual things, my individual security, my individual success, my individual reputation, but instead on God's temple, which really is God's presence.

So hopefully last week, we got challenged. And maybe some of you felt that challenge and said, okay, I want to really focus this week on having more of God's presence in my life.

Whether that means opening my Bible and doing a little bit more reading, or maybe that's spending a little bit more time in prayer, or maybe just realizing and realizing God's presence is around us.

[10:59] A lot of times, we start with good intentions. And I think that's the way the human body is. We have great intentions. We get motivated. We hear something exciting.

We get on fire. And then we want to do something. The problem is, it's sometimes hard to sustain it. Because human nature, it's very difficult to keep on sustaining that momentum.

Sometimes we'll start off, but we don't finish. We start off high, and we start to drop after that. And what you're going to see this week, in just chapter two, you're going to see Haggai, who talked last week, as Chris shared with us, excited the people.

Let's start building the temple of God. And literally, in Haggai, from Haggai 1, chapter 1, to Haggai chapter 2, one month later, you start to hear rumblings of saying this discouragement.

And they wanted to get excited about building God's temple, but now it's starting to rumble and say, I don't know if it's going the way we thought it was going. So, let's, God knows this.

[12:05] The good thing about God is He knows our human nature, and He knows this, which is why He gave us Haggai chapter 2. The thing is, Satan also knows this. And Satan's two most, I call, tactics that he uses to disrupt our relationship with God, to separate us from God, are pride and discouragement.

Pride in terms of just puffing us up, or discouragement and bringing us down. And that's why God gave us chapter 2 to really help us overcome discouragement.

And when we talk about discouragement, it really is a feeling. Here's the thing, I actually struggle with feelings. Why? Because I grew up in a Chinese home.

In our Chinese home, we don't talk about feelings very much. I don't know of your homes now. It might be different nowadays, but when I was growing up as a child, my parents never said, I love you, son. Right?

They were more focused. I don't care how you feel. I care about what you do, what you accomplish. That's what we care about, not how you feel. And feeling's a difficult subject because, you know, everybody's different.

[13:13] We handle feelings different. You have people who are shy. You have people that are outgoing. You have people that are sensitive. You have people that are hard as rock. So feelings are sometimes difficult to talk about with people because you don't know how they respond.

But I want us to take a look at this picture about feelings. What do you sort of feel when you see these pictures? And today, we're going to be talking about discouragement.

And really, discouragement is the loss of confidence, the loss of enthusiasm, being disappointed, being disheartened, or even depression.

depression. The World Health Organization states that they believe there's about 300 million people in the world that actually struggle with depression. So how do we overcome this discouragement? How do we overcome this depression? How do we press on? How do we keep going? Well, there's three main points. I'm going to be covering three main points today.

[14:15] And those three main points is, first of all, be honest with yourself and our situation. Then as our scripture says, be strong. And in be strong, there's three minor points.

Remembering that God is faithful. I am with you and by my spirit. And three, the third one is, be aware that a future house more far glorious is awaiting us.

So let's get started. The first point in overcoming discouragement, being honest. What does it mean to be honest with yourself? Well, if you look at verse 3 in our scripture passage today, it says, Who of you is left who saw the house in its former glory?

How does it look to you now? Does it not seem like you to you nothing? So Haggai is asking these questions to the people of Israel who were, again, looking at rebuilding this temple. Now you've got to remember what they were thinking about. They just came from seeing Solomon's temple that was built and where they had God's presence and that was destroyed. Solomon's temple stood there for 400 years in Jerusalem.

[15:28] And during that time, over half of the Old Testament was written while they had the Solomon of Temple, the Temple of Solomon. And if you see, it was like the crown jewel.

If you read the scriptures, it talked about Solomon's temple being built with the cedars of Lebanon. Gold-plated, adorned, huge, something to be marveled at.

At one point, there was 153,000 skilled laborers working on Solomon's temple. So you can imagine how amazing it was to have God's presence in Solomon's temple and where they were worshipping God in that temple.

And then all of a sudden, these people were rebuilding the new temple. And they saw the footprint and they started to compare. And they said, well, this temple is not as glorious, not as beautiful, not as impressive as what we used to have.

And those older people that saw the past temple that were comparing it to this new temple were starting to say, what is the point of even building this temple? And really, how many of us get discouraged because we compare to things that we used to have or think that we should have or things that we've done or things that we should do?

[16:51] Discouragement can come in just because we compare. And if we look at our hearts, we have to see, are we comparing? And because we're comparing and thinking we should have more or thinking we should do more, we sort of get discouraged as to what's the point of even trying.

If we also think of not just comparing and how the power of comparing can prevent us from doing the things that God has called us to do, but also being honest with ourselves, sometimes we get discouraged by the speed and the progress of things or the results that we see.

Now, speed is very important, especially we talk about here in Hong Kong. Everything moves fast in Hong Kong. That's one thing I learned coming here 11 years ago. You walk a little bit faster. You sort of, when you sit down in a restaurant, you expect the service to come a little faster.

When you're waiting in the queue for the ATM, you expect the person to punch in his code very quickly. You know, so I understand the speed is very important, but you can also imagine if we are serving God, and especially when these people were in fire to build God's temple, they might be concerned about how fast that is being done.

The construction of this temple was being done during the seventh month, and during the seventh month, there were a lot of festivals at that time. And one of the rules of during the festival time, you cannot do work during festivals.

[18:21] There was the Feast of Trumpets on the tenth day of Atonement. They also had on the fifteenth day the Feast of Booths, where the whole population of the Israelites would move out of their homes and move into leafy shelters and for about that, in memory of the Exodus wanderings.

And for that whole month, about half of the month that they had, they probably could not do any work on the temple. So you can imagine how some people were probably frustrated because they want to build this temple.

They were on fire. They said, let's build this temple again. And for half the month, they couldn't work on it. And they look at it and say, wow, it's not being, it's not progressing very quickly. And sometimes, ourselves, we get discouraged because of the speed of how things are happening. Right? The rest of our life, sometimes, the rest of life gets busy. We get on fire and we take up this ministry and we want to do this good work, but the rest of life gets so busy and we don't have time to do it.

Whether it's our family or work, and suddenly you get discouraged about the work that you've taken on, just nothing seems to be accomplished. If we look at that, maybe individually, we are praying and earnestly wanting God to change us, but we don't see that happening very quickly.

[19:43] Or corporately, in our church, maybe we get excited by the 2020 vision of 225, and we try to share the gospel, but we look around our sanctuary and we still see empty pews, and we don't see the results, and we sort of get discouraged and say, what's the point of keep on trying?

But again, what we're going to see is that if we first want to overcome this discouragement, we have to be honest with ourselves and see what's the present situation. What's in our hearts?

What are we feeling? What are we comparing? And what are we actually looking at? That's the first point, being honest with ourselves. The second point, then, is to be strong.

And when, in the scriptures, it says, be strong, the first part I want to cover is remember that God is faithful. Verse 4 says, but now be strong, Zerubbabel, declares the Lord.

Be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the lands, declares the Lord. So when the Israelites heard this from Haggai, they would have recognized the call to be strong.

[20 : 53] Now, the call to be strong is quite unique because it's mentioned three times. And it parallels a passage that we have seen before in the past because in 1st Joshua, verses 5 to 9, it also reads the same where it says, the Lord was speaking to Moses after he died.

Speaking to Joshua. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous because you will lead these people to inherit the lands I swore to their ancestors to give them.

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Keep this book of the law always on your lips. Meditate it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. These were the words that God spoke to Joshua to be strong and courageous before the Israelites were going to enter into the promised land.

So the Israelites would have recognized that call to be strong three times. They would have seen that parallel. And what they would have remembered is how the Israelites were about to enter into the land of Canaan.

[22 : 11] And they would have remembered how the report said that Canaan is beautiful flowing with milk and honey. But the people there are big. They're strong. They're giants.

Their cities are fortified. They have high walls. So if we're going to go into Canaan it's going to be very difficult. They're going to remember the stories that were told to them of what happened to the Israelites when they went into the land of Canaan.

A few weeks ago Kevin talked about how the grandfathers would sit together with everybody over dinner and talk about the stories of what the Israelites went through. And they would have shared the stories of David and Goliath.

How a shepherd boy could defeat a giant in the Philistine army. They would have shared the stories about the fall of Jericho. How the Israelites marched around the city of Jericho.

A fortified wall six times. And on the seventh time blew some trumpets and made a lot of shouting. And suddenly these great walls sort of crumbled and fell. they would have remembered how God was faithful to them and how God helped them through their most difficult time.

[23 : 22] It's so easy though to forget God's faithfulness because it's easy to forget and let discouragement creep in. It's human nature.

It's human nature to forget about things that we know and to just focus on what we're feeling and dealing with right now. And a lot of times we can sort of think well the Israelites should have known. They were just let out of Egypt. They saw the plagues. They saw the sea wide open. Why should they be discouraged? All the stories that they went through they should know that God should be faithful.

Aren't these Israelites silly to forget that? But again I think we can also fall into that same trap because if we look at everything we know from the scriptures today how Jesus died on the cross and how he was risen again don't you think the God that can overcome death can help us in all of our situations?

Don't we think the God who died on the cross and freed us from all sin can overcome sin even in our lives today? So it's very easy for this discouragement to take over.

[24 : 32] Sometimes we just don't remember God's faithfulness. We don't remember what is written in the Bible. but sometimes we don't also just need to rely on what's written in the Bible. Even if we look at our own lives I'm sure we have our own stories.

Our own stories of God's faithfulness in our life. How maybe someone's lost their job and God was faithful and gave them another job or had an even better opportunity for them.

Maybe how we were discouraged and we didn't know how we were going to pay this bill but all of a sudden we've got some money from somewhere and we were able to overcome that.

Again there's many stories in our lives in our friends lives in our family's lives where God has shown that he is faithful that we can remember. But you know this call to be strong is not just the call to just toughen up.

It's a call it's a fight to remember God's faithfulness and to persevere so that we can continue to do what he called us to do. And that call is to worship him and to serve him.

[25 : 45] Point number B to be strong is I am with you. Verse 4 says be strong all you people of the land declares the Lord and work for I am with you declares the Lord Almighty.

Do we remember who this God is that says he is going to be with us? This God is the creator the almighty powerful God the designer of the universe who says he will not forsake us.

When we follow him and things get difficult whether it's sharing the gospel with your colleagues or friends or even family members or even your parents maybe it's parenting and you have kids and you see it's this is impossible I don't see how my children are not listening to me we're arguing all the time I'm ashamed of what the words that flow out in our discussions and we don't see any hope maybe it's in health or sickness and we have somebody who's overcoming a sickness and we just seem like there's no hope and it gets so difficult and we say what are we supposed to do?

You don't understand the amount of pain the amount of suffering that I'm going through how can I not be discouraged? Well I remember a poem and again growing up in the 80s and being a Christian there was a poem and there was a thing called Sands in the Footprint and this poem talked about one night that a person had a dream and across the dark sky flashed scenes of my life for each scene I noticed there was two sets of footprints in the sand one belonging to me and one set of footprints belonging to my Lord I looked back at the footprints in the sand and I noticed that at many times along the path of my life especially at the very lowest and saddest times there was only one set of footprints this really troubled me so I asked the Lord about it I don't understand God when I needed you the most you said you would never leave me he whispered my precious child I love you and will never leave you never ever during your trials and testing when you saw only one set of footprints it was then that I carried you so during the most difficult times sometimes all we are going to get is I am with you I am with you the almighty God is with us isn't that enough isn't this creator of the universe saying that he is with us through the most difficult the most troubling time isn't that enough but you might say then do I still just have to grin and bear it Gary be strong I know God is faithful I know he is with me do I just grin and bear it point three or see it says by my spirit verse five says this is what

[29 : 03] I coveted with you when you came out of Egypt and my spirit remains among you do not fear the Holy Spirit is with us we don't need to fear but you might wonder what does it mean what does it look like to have the Holy Spirit with us what does it mean that the spirit is with us well we get some glimpses of that from the scripture again Acts chapter 2 talked about the Holy Spirit coming down from heaven onto the disciples and onto the people and they're talking in different tongues and being able to be on fire and just so motivated we get some glimpses of that but I think the real picture of when the Holy Spirit is with us is when we realize that we are weak that we can find strength in God and not in ourselves through our weakness when we fix our eyes on him and meditate on God and see the type of God who is with us and how he can face and we can face any situation in front of us and that's how we have the hope and power to keep on going

Zechariah 4.6 says this is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel not by might nor by power but my spirit says the Lord of hosts now this verse is supposed to be comforting I know but I also find it difficulty in it because our human nature is to be self-sufficient this verse says not by power not by might but by my spirit but when I look at situations guess what I want to do I don't want to use the spirit I want to use my might I want to use my control my ability my reasoning how can I solve this problem how can I overcome this right but maybe God is putting us through this so that we can learn to depend on him to depend on his spirit we don't have to do this with our own strength God's going to give us his spirit and when we focus and fix our eyes on him and that strength is with us he will really allow us to trust in him to lean on him to really give him control and not to control things ourselves and isn't it comforting to know that this creator this almighty God can redeem any situation do we doubt his intent his power this is the same

God that created us our bodies if you want to see how good and powerful a creator is can you imagine designing and building something today like the human body just think about the digestive system how complex the way having the enzymes having the different parts the pancreas and its role the stomach and then when you think about the nervous system how did God design the

nervous system synapses that we're able to transfer everything through from feeling up into the brain think about DNA talk about programming by Pascal or by object oriented programming God programmed with DNA DNA and how he is able to encode how every each cell is going to respond based on that DNA this is the God that we are are worshipping he's in control he can design things there's nothing that he cannot do if we ever in doubt think about the universe think about how it's spinning out of control and how fast it's traveling

God is in control of all of this so we can be confident in God because in verse 8 it says the silver is mine and the gold is mine declares the Lord of hosts what that means is all the resources in the earth are his they're at his disposal for us to help us overcome any situation to help us persevere because they are his even though they may be in the possessions of kingdoms governments business people they ultimately belong to our God and they are at his disposal this is why we want to be strong and persevere so that we can place God and the worship of him at the center of our lives and this is what the temple in the Old Testament is all about this idea of just it's not more than it's a lot more than just the building we persevere because this is what

God calls us to do to keep sharing the gospel to keep loving our CG members to keep meeting up with him to keep fighting sin because we know the power to change is in God's hand we can trust him because he's with us that's how we can be strong the last point is be aware be aware that a future house of glory verse 9 says the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former says the Lord of hosts this references the coming glory of the temple and we're talking about the temple we know the temple yes it's talking about an old building where God's presence used to be but in John chapter 2 Jesus references the temple as Jesus' body himself when Jesus clears the temple in John he says in chapter 2 verse 19

[34 : 56] Jesus answered them destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up the Jews said it's taken 46 years to build this temple and you will raise it up in three days but he was speaking about the temple of his body so when they were building this lowly temple compared to Solomon's temple could they have ever imagined that 500 years later Jesus was going to come and be the next temple that was going to be rebuilt and with his temple his body that was going to be broken and with that bringing the forgiveness of sins and the repairing of the relationship with God because in the past before Jesus' body and the temple they just had a physical building where God's presence was in and in order to come to God to have communion with God they had to have the high priests come in and they had to have sacrifices and the Christians at that time or the Israelites at that time could only look from the outside and see God was there but they couldn't really get close to him but then because they had the need of the high priest because they had to have the atonement but this new glory was going to be so much better than that former in most religions normally you have a God that is far apart and you have worshipers you don't have a God that comes down and reaches and comes down to the people or you have to do things to prove you're worthy of that God the worthy to be in his presence worthy to be able to be a part or worship him or to have him as our God but when we talk about our religion this Israel

Israel did not God himself instead of saying up in heaven came down in the form of Jesus to give full access to him Jesus temple at that time no one could have imagined what was about to happen in the future can you imagine even the disciples with him seeing Jesus seeing him crucified could not imagine the future glory of his temple look at today if you remember we were at a small building being rebuilt thousands of years ago to today what's God's temple look like today we have churches all around the world worshipping in all types of languages just like this today look at how glorious his temple has become from a small building to where now people can worship God and to have communion with God all around the world and to be able to draw strength with God isn't that a beautiful sight fast forward to where we think it's going there's even more of a glorious temple that is waiting for us because God didn't want his people to be discouraged he wanted to give access to him so that we don't have to be discouraged but we can feel his presence with us always but here's the funny thing so we had a temple we had

God in our presence then you had sort of Jesus come and be with us and then we had him crucified and then we had the Holy Spirit so then we had Jesus with us but you know what the new temple is the funny twist of things that are happening now that we could have never imagined is now we become the temple of God because Jesus comes inside of us it says we are now the location of God's presence can you imagine what that means just think about that before this God that used to be in heaven so separated then he came down in a physical building then he came in the form of

Jesus and now he resides in each and every one of us we suddenly become this temple of God and when we carry God's presence wow what's the impact of that carrying

God's presence in each and every one of us does that change how we think about things I don't know if we can even comprehend that because our thinking is so limited because God's presence would motivate us to do different things you can imagine how your daily walk with God can change if you realize that God's presence is in you when you realize you are carrying God's presence do you feel more not fearful to share his gospel and his word would you not feel challenged when difficulties come your way do you not feel you will not feel ashamed when you know you carry God's presence in you with you all the time I just think we don't understand and realize the ramifications of what it means to carry God's presence with us but again there's still this is what Colossians we read we had a sermon series on Colossians it says Christ in you the hope of glory

Christ is inside of us and this is the hope of the future glory and finally when we see Christ a new creation in the temple he also talks that one day we're going to see Christ face to face just like throughout these whole thousands of years we could not understand how God's presence was when he was in heaven when he was with us in the garden Eden when he was in heaven when he was in the temple when he was in Jesus when he is in us now to when one day we're going to see him face to face to worship him face to face again this is another future glory that I think we cannot comprehend right now we cannot understand being face to face buddy buddies with God can you imagine that this is what the future glory we have to look forward to so I know we all have different stories

[41 : 18] I want to talk about my story a little bit because I think this Christian journey it's going to be filled with ups and downs we know that but throughout that journey we want to never lose fact that we have a calling the calling to worship God and the calling to serve him no matter how difficult the situation can be because we do run through I hear difficult stories that sometimes it's easy to forget that calling we don't want to worship God we don't want to serve him and I can understand situations get difficult I look at my life and the most difficult situation I ever had to face the most difficult situation where I had no control was when we wanted to have children Kathy and I we wanted to have children so we thought yeah it's the natural thing so we got pregnant and then five months into pregnancy when I'm at work you get that call

Gary I'm at the doctor's office I don't know what to do something's wrong can you come so I rush out of the office go to the doctor's office and the doctor says sorry we can't find the heartbeat and as little kids we didn't know what we were supposed to do I don't know what we were supposed to do with this we were preparing to have our first child and it was very difficult that was the first that was the thing that I was normally in control of most things but this thing I could not control and it's so easy to doubt God's faithfulness so easy to question where are you God in this how is this glorious God right is this the calling you've called me to bring but God called me to persevere and that call of perseverance is remembering who he is this almighty God doesn't change throughout our circumstances he's the same

God no matter what our circumstances and I look back now if I would have fallen if I would have lost my calling if I would have not persevered there would have been so many different blessings I would have missed out not only in my life but in the impact of other people's lives and how they were impacted if I would have again got discouraged and fallen away it doesn't mean that our road's going to be smooth and our path is everything's going to go well but I know that I have the strength of God that this same God and his presence is with me to overcome and go through all these different situations I want to end with two points of application because every good sermon should have points of application not just theoretical so what are our application points well first of all as a church of community of believers and also as individual believers first as a community church don't be discouraged with the present building this present building that we're called into don't be discouraged whatever programs we have in our church today don't be discouraged God's presence isn't about the programs isn't about how good a sermon is God's presence is coming down that does not change is not defined by programs or by sermons his presence is with us and can impact us and empower us and change us the same as it has for thousands of years this call in our community to be strong calls us to really pale everything pales and compare these results that we see today will pale in comparison to the future glory even though we might be able to not see the results today this call is to call us to a community of worship and a community of service but also for the individual believer don't be discouraged when we struggle with our current situations

whether financial or whether with relationships or even our struggle with sin with our Christian walk and struggle with sin we can feel extreme discouragement extreme guilt we can be discouraged because we go into the Christian walk with good intentions we love God we want to follow him we want to obey him but our spiritual walk might seem like a Ferris wheel that goes round and round up and down it might seem like a sin cycle sin cycle of sin repentance forgiveness and then sin repentance forgiveness and it seems to go over and over again we can have a whole other sermon talking about the cycle of sin breaking the cycle of sin breaking the bondage of sin but for now all I can say is be strong be strong be strong be strong the same parallel three times be strong

[46 : 49] Satan's tactic is to break our confidence in God to doubt God's grace goodness to doubt who God is and to discourage us we just need to remember God is faithful he is with us his presence is with us we can do all things by his spirit and the future house is far more glorious his presence that awaits us is far more glorious than what we can see today that's how we can draw encouragement that's how we can overcome our discouragement and continue on persevering with our community of worship with our community of service to keep on enduring to keep on pressing on to keep on carrying on what

God has called us to do let's just end in a prayer our God Lord I know sometimes Satan wants to cloud our picture of you so that we don't see you clearly that we don't see Jesus clearly but you tell us in your scripture in John 10 verses 9 and 10 you say I am the door if anyone enters by me he will be saved and will go in and find pasture the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy I came that they may have life and have it abundantly God maybe sometimes we don't feel like we have life right now sometimes we don't feel like we have it abundantly right now but you do say in your scriptures that you came to give us this life and give it abundantly help us to seek this abundant life Lord help us to realize that you do give us abundant life that you want us to be strong and if we want to be strong Lord all we have to do is say to you Lord I want to be strong and you will hear us and you will give us your spirit and you will give us the strength you will give us the strength to overcome discouragement Lord so we pray if we are in that situation now struggling with discouragement that you would give us the strength God that you will speak to our hearts that you would move in us Lord to realize everything we know about you that is true everything that we know that you are the almighty God that is in control that loves us beyond we can ever imagine who knows us individually who sees our present situation and who is a God that is good and has a future glory for us more better than what we are experiencing today Lord speak to our hearts Lord help us to really see a clearer picture of you Lord help us not to have a distorted picture of you but to be able to truly experience you and see you who you are we pray for this Lord we pray that you speak to our hearts we pray all this in your name amen