

Building on a United Foundation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 May 2024

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] Turn in your Bible to Ezra chapter 3.

Verses 8 through 13. Would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together? Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Yeshua the son of Josedach made a beginning together with the rest of their kinsmen and priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity.

They appointed the Levites from 20 years old and upward to supervise the work of the house of the Lord. And Yeshua with his sons and his brothers and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God along with the sons of Hinnadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers.

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals to praise the Lord according to the direction of David, king of Israel.

And they sang responsibly, praising and giving things to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.

[1 : 50] And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping.

For the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? It's hard to move forward with people who are stuck in the past.

My first position in the church was as a youth pastor, and I was taking over for a guy who was well-liked and well-loved by the students and the parents alike.

His name was Adam. And many of them early on would tell me things like, we're so glad the church hired you because you remind us of Adam.

[3 : 16] And I thought, well, Adam must be a great guy. Adam. But before long, my attitude towards Adam changed.

Adam and how he did things became the measurement, the standard by which my older students and their parents judged me and everything that I did.

And I'd hear comments like, well, when Adam was here, or that's not how Adam did it, or we miss Adam.

And I started thinking, you know, Adam doesn't seem like such a great guy anymore. No matter what I did with that older group of kids, it never seemed to measure up to Adam.

Usually we accuse older people of living in the past, but young people do too. Though it was hard for me to connect with my older students, that wasn't the case with my younger students, my middle schoolers.

[4 : 25] They were in the youth ministry when Adam was the youth pastor, and so I was the only pastor they ever knew. And as a result of that, Danny and I were able to develop deeper relationships with them.

Or maybe you've been in a similar situation, stepping into a new job or a new position at work, and you're compared or you were compared to your predecessor, hearing statements like, well, that's not how such and such would do it, or we've tried that before, and it didn't work.

Maybe it's a comparison to an older sibling who seemed to do everything right when they were your age. Maybe for you married couples, you've made the mistake of comparing your spouse to your parents and how they used to do things for you in the past.

It's hard to move forward with people and feel connected to people in the present when they're stuck in the past.

The Bible has a lot to say about how we should view the past. For example, we are to learn from past failures and the consequences of disobedience.

[5 : 43] In Deuteronomy 9, 7, Moses tells the Israelites, Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness.

From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord. We are also encouraged to remember God's faithfulness in the past. In the past, Psalm 77, 11.

I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your wonders of old. We should especially as Christians remember God's goodness in the past to send Jesus Christ to save us from our sins.

Ephesians 2, 11 through 13 says, Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands. Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

[6 : 49] But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. So we should remember the past to avoid sinning in the present.

We should also remember the past by reflecting on God's graciousness to save us, to forgive us, and to keep us. But the Bible also speaks about the past and how we view it in another sense.

The Apostle Paul ends Philippians 3 by saying, But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

In the preceding verses, Paul listed his many religious qualifications achieved in his past, accomplishments that a Jewish person would be extremely proud of.

However, Paul says in verse 8 that those past achievements no longer matter to him compared to his present pursuit of knowing Christ more.

[8 : 02] In Philippians 3.8, he says, Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

Paul makes the point that human accomplishments do not compare with knowing Jesus savingly. He desires in the present to know him more and more.

He looks forward, not backwards. When Paul talks about forgetting what lies behind, the Greek word he uses for forgetting means no longer caring for, neglecting, refusing to focus on.

Our memories store millions of pieces of information gained through our senses since birth. Some of those experiences are impossible to forget.

Some of those memories we wish we could forget. Some of those memories we wish we could go back and repeat and relive. Some of those memories exaggerate the truth.

[9 : 17] Paul is not advising for some kind of memory wipe. He is telling us that it is better to focus on the present and the future rather than the past.

Jesus said something similar in Luke 9, 61 through 62. Yet another said, I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.

And Jesus said to him, no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. Jesus was making the point that following him means complete dedication to the present task at hand.

It is impossible to follow Christ with a divided heart. It is impossible to serve Jesus well in the present when you are attached to things of this world, which I believe includes unhealthy attachments to past things because few things hinder present service quite like being mired in another time.

That's the case that we see as we come to the close of Ezra chapter 3. If you remember, Yeshua and his fellow priests together with Zerubbabel and his associates led the people.

[10 : 40] They came together as one man to rebuild the altar that stood adjacent to the temple. They came together as one to restore worship of God in the way that God commanded them to in his word.

The altar was just the beginning. The next step in restoring worship of God was rebuilding the temple. Ezra chapter 3 verses 6 through 7 describes the preparations that they undertook in order to make that next step.

And now there's about a seven-month gap between those verses and where we pick up in verse 8. It's now the second year. It's springtime in Jerusalem.

The materials, the masons, the carpenters, they've all arrived. It's time to rebuild the temple. Interestingly, construction of this temple took place at about the same time of year as the original temple.

This was a time of new beginnings. Six months isn't much time to accomplish a great deal, but by the spring, everything was in place to rebuild the temple's foundation.

[11 : 57] The main idea for this morning's sermon is that God blesses his people when they unite to accomplish his will. That's what we see through most of these verses that God blesses his people when they unite to accomplish his will.

Ezra chapter 3 teaches us that when God's people unite in obedience to God's word to pursue his will, they will accomplish great things for God, his glory.

However, as we come to the end of the chapter, we see how an unhealthy attachment to the past discouraged, distracted, and divided God's people from pursuing his will in the present.

Why does this matter? Well, if you're an unbeliever and you're listening to this sermon, if you're here with us this morning, very thankful, very happy that you are here. And what you most need to understand is that if you're not united to God by faith in Jesus Christ, then you are united with this world ruled by the devil in opposition to him.

Jesus' desire is to save you, to redeem your past life of sin and to set you free from its eternal consequences.

[13 : 22] He desires to forgive you in the present and give you a future full of hope. And I pray that in the present you will turn to him in faith and be saved today.

As a believer, why is this important? Well, until Christ returns, there is work for you to do. He has work for you to do. But unhealthy attachments to the past will prevent your present desire to advance God's kingdom and his purposes.

It will discourage those in the body of Christ whom Jesus has united you to. It may lead you to idolize the past in a way that negatively affects your present service and worship and attitude. You don't want to be a hindrance to the work God is doing in the present, do you? Do you desire unity within the church instead of division?

if unity, then will you commit yourself to pursuing the aspects of unity we see in this text that God blesses when his people unite together to achieve his purpose, his will.

[14 : 45] And so there's three aspects of unity amongst this community in Ezra which God blessed to achieve his will. And a church that desires to not only survive but thrive in the present and the future must incorporate these aspects in ways that unite them to obey God's word and to pursue God's will.

And if we unite in these ways God will bless the work. So the first aspect of their unity that we notice comes through verses 8 and 9 and that's that they are united in purpose.

They were united in purpose. I want to read verse 8 again. Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem in the second month Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Yeshua the son of Josedach made a beginning together with the rest of their kinsmen the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity and Yeshua with his sons and his brothers and Cadmiel and his sons the sons of Judah together supervised the work in the house of God along with the son of Hinnadad and Levites their sons and brothers.

Now there's a couple at least a couple important things to notice here. First that Zerubbabel the man appointed by Cyrus who was also a descendant of King David was the one who represented the state and he made a beginning together with Yeshua who was the high priest.

So you have this unity between the local governing authority and the local religious authority who are united in purpose to promote obedience to what is written in scripture.

[16 : 38] Do you think that our nation would be blessed if our church leaders and our political leaders shared the same purpose of pursuing God's will and obedience to God's word?

Well I do. I don't understand how you couldn't. Now we live in a different time. We live under a different form of government but we should support and we should vote for people who promote the things of God which we know will benefit society.

As it pertains to the church notice that there isn't one primary leader here. Zerubbabel and Yeshua made a beginning together and they appointed other leaders to help them supervise the project. There's organization here. There's a cohesiveness a clear chain of command. Not only did the leaders recruit others to lead in specific ways but it also says in verse 8 all who had come to Jerusalem from captivity took part in the project.

This was not a one man show. The New Testament model for church leadership is a plurality multiple leaders a plurality of elders.

[18 : 02] One of those elders serves as the primary overseer which we call the senior pastor. But his responsibility is to govern the church with other elders.

His focus is primarily spiritual attending to matters such as edifying believers and equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. On a side note there are a lot of churches whose pastors take the role of overseer to an extreme that is not good for anyone.

Some pastors consider the title overseer as a command to have their hand in everything whether that's picking the songs for Sunday or picking out the drapes in the nursery.

Some church leaders act more like dictators than shepherds. that's unhealthy because it prevents others from using their God-given gifts in service to his church.

Also it demonstrates a desire for control, for ownership rather than stewardship. And in the end such leaders will wear themselves out and they will wear out their churches.

[19 : 24] God designed the church a certain way and we must follow that design. It's what's best for everybody.

But what's most important for us to see here is the purpose that united them. They were united in their purpose to worship God as it is written in his word.

Which they agreed that his word was the source of truth. The truth, God's word, must determine who and what we as a church align ourselves with or to.

It forms the basis of our unity. It's the glue that holds us together. Spurgeon said, to pursue union at expense of truth is treason to the Lord Jesus.

In John 17, 17, Jesus prayed for us, for his church, sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.

[20 : 34] And that prayer for us to be sanctified in the truth of his word precedes another one of his requests for us in John 17, 22 through 23.

The glory that you have given me, I have given to them that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you loved me.

I don't know if you've been following recent events surrounding the United Methodist Church. In 2020, they split over sexual orientation.

This past week, the group that approves of homosexuality removed language from their official teachings that were originally based on scripture, which they deemed offensive.

That portion of the United Methodist Church is no longer united, and its disobedience to God's word means they're no longer a church. Because the Bible says that the church is supposed to be a pillar and buttress of truth.

[22 : 00] And if we're not founded on the truth, and we're not upholding the truth, then we're not being the church. A church that unites in the celebration and approval of what the Bible calls sins may experience unity, but they experience it at the expense of truth.

If a sin, if they deem a sin is no longer a sin, no matter what the Bible says, then what need do we have for a Savior?

If we have no need for a Savior to save us from our sin, then why should we preach the gospel? Why preach anything in this book? what more could Satan want than that?

Truth comes before unity. It is the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves us, unites us, and it's the proclamation of that truth that we as the church are commanded to obey and to preach.

This is our purpose. So they were united in purpose, they were also united in praise. We see in verses 10 through 11, and when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the

priests and their vestments came forward with trumpets and the Levites and the sons of Asaph with cymbals to praise the Lord according to the directions of David, king of Israel.

[23 : 30] And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

We live in a very self-congratulatory society. Social media has provided a channel for people to broadcast, to showcase themselves and their accomplishments and give themselves in a way sort of like a little pat on the back.

Atta boy. it's not all bad. It's not all bad. It can be a good avenue to encourage someone for their achievement. Certainly we want to know about some of those things and encourage them, but it can also be a very prideful thing which people use to feed their egos with the amount of likes and hearts and smiley face emojis that people attach to their post.

Notice that in this section the only one who receives praise for the completion of this work is God. Only Him. There's no praise given to the leaders who organized and who oversaw the project. No mention of a plaque to adorn the outside of the temple once the walls were constructed with all the names of all the people who dedicated so much of their time and their money to the construction.

[25 : 06] No mention of anything like that. The people united in praise, not of themselves and their work, but the Lord, because they understood that without Him and His goodness and His faithfulness, His enduring love, that they'd have nothing and they'd have no reason to celebrate.

Their minds were probably drawn to Scripture and God's promise in the past which they felt blessed to have a role in fulfilling in the present. Jeremiah wrote of that, Jeremiah 31, 7-11.

For thus says the Lord, sing aloud with gladness for Jacob and raise shouts for the chief of the nations, proclaim, give praise and say, O Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel.

Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth. Among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman, and she who is in labor, together a great company, they shall return here.

With weeping they shall come, and with pleas of mercy I will lead them back. I will make them walk by brooks of water in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel and a frame is my firstborn.

[26 : 24] Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away. Say, he who scattered Israel will gather him and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.

For the Lord has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. They united in their praise of God because they knew that God had fulfilled that promise to them.

God stirred the heart of Cyrus to permit them to return. God stirred their hearts and provided them with the resources that they needed to go and to do the work.

These Old Testament people embraced the truth that Paul wrote about in the New Testament, Philippians 2, 13. For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Paul writes similarly to the Corinthians who were divided into factions over who their favorite pastor, preacher was. 1 Corinthians 3, 6 through 9, he says to them, I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

[27 : 41] So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, they're united, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.

For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, God's building. We work hard to pursue God's will, but we never, we must never forget that our hard work would be nothing.

It would be nothing without his working through us, enabling us, sustaining us, motivating us to do what needs doing.

Leonard Ravenhill said, church unity comes through corporate humility. When we are united in truth, when we are united in purpose, when we humbly acknowledge that if it weren't for Christ, we'd have nothing and we'd be nothing, and we're united in praise, the Lord will build and will work in that church amongst those people.

So they were united in purpose, they were united in praise, and the third, they were united in prospect. Being a Southern Baptist pastor, I couldn't help but get that third fill-in to be a P.

[29 : 06] So by prospect, I mean their vision, their outlook for the future. Now up to this point, the people were united in purpose, and they were united in praise, but they weren't united in prospect.

Their outlook, their excitement for the future caused divisions to be created amongst them because a segment of them were stuck in the past, which negatively affected everyone who put, and it put a temporary end to the work which greatly displeased God.

In verse 12, we read about that, but many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy.

As the people united in praise to the Lord for the completion of the temple's foundation, a large portion of them recalled the former temple, Solomon's temple, and they became severely discouraged and overcome with despair.

The current structure was merely a foundation. You can imagine just like a flat, concrete slab. So really, there was no temple.

[30 : 45] It wasn't complete. There was no completed temple for them to see. But the size of the foundation brought the realization that this temple would not be as glorious-looking as the first.

There was no Ark of the Covenant. That had been lost. There was no mention of God's Shekinah glory coming and filling that place during this event.

These older folks, now in their 80s, recalled youthful memories of the former temple and their nostalgic remembrance of the past eventually sapped the people's joy and desire to continue with the work.

At this point, there is a cacophony of competing sounds, creating what's what I'm sure must have been this really strange noise. One group is weeping and wailing.

They're brokenhearted. The other is cheering. Their hearts are filled with joy. What a strange thing this must have been to behold.

[31 : 55] Given the numbers that returned in the existing population of Jerusalem, there could have easily been about 100,000 people gathered around this foundation, many of them weeping and wailing and brokenhearted, and many of them cheering with hearts filled with joy for the work that had been completed and for the future prospects.

What has been started will continue. And that kind of environment reminds me of a college football game. Imagine being at a college football game.

Let's say the teams are OU and Texas or OU and OSU. Let's go with OU and OSU. How about that? Your team has the ball on the gold line.

Your team has the ball on the gold line with enough time left on the clock, fourth quarter to run one last play to win the game. It's a tense moment.

This one play will determine the winner and the loser between two bitter rivals. Let's say your quarterback takes the snap, he drops back, he throws the ball to the back of the end zone.

[33 : 16] Your receiver catches the ball, brings it down, it's a touchdown. The crowd goes wild. At least the ones on your side go wild.

The other side is groaning, oh, oh, you know, pulling out their hair, ripping their garments or whatever they do. But then suddenly, the people who are with you cheering for your team stop cheering.

Because they've been alerted to the fact that in the backfield, there's a little yellow flag. Uh-oh, somebody made an oopsie, right?

There's a penalty, ball gets moved back, you've got to replay the down. Hey, but still, got a chance to win. But let's say this time the defense holds you down and you don't score a touchdown.

One moment filled with joy. The next moment, crushing defeat.

[34 : 25] And vice versa, depending on what team you're on. But again, say your team is the losing team. As you go to the parking lot and you're frustrated, how could we lose that game?

You might be tempted to think, you know what? Well, if such and such was still coaching this team, or if such and such was still quarterback, we would have won that game.

And maybe it can make you feel a little bit better in the present, but it doesn't change the outcome, does it? At least not in a positive way.

You know, it's likely that the prophet Haggai was present during this time to witness this strange reaction amongst God's people. His entire prophecy takes place during a four-month period in the year 520 BC, 17, 16, 17 years after this event recorded in verses 12 through 13.

During this time, the people had given themselves to rebuilding their own homes. And these were nice homes that they were building themselves while the work that they had started 16 years ago went unfinished.

[35 : 45] Nobody was doing anything. There was no work being done. Haggai says in chapter 1 verses 2 through 4, where the Lord says through him, thus says the Lord of hosts, these people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet. Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house, God's house, lies in ruins?

And what this tells us is that in time, those who mourn the present situation, in Ezra chapter 3 verses 12 through 13, because they were stuck living in the past, those people gained the upper hand on everybody else.

Older believers were probably heard saying discouraging things like, you know, it was just so much better in my day.

And this, this is nothing compared to that. And you know what? This will never be as good as what it was like for us in the past.

[37 : 03] And those words, that discouragement, that discouragement drained the energy of those who were enthusiastic about what God was doing in the present.

And as I see them weeping and mourning, and they hear those discouraging comments, you know what they must have thought? Why, why continue?

It's not good. It's never going to be as good. Let's focus our attention on something else. What's the point? Speaking of this passage, Derek Thomas says, such observations of the glory of the past are often exaggerated, done with the aid of selective recall, and occasionally poisonous intentions for the present regime.

The Bible is very firm about such behavior. Ecclesiastes 7.10 says, John Calvin said, the human heart is an idol factory, and sinful human beings can make an idol of just about anything.

And the past is one of those things that people can make an idol of. It is easier to glamorize the past than to be enthusiastic about the present and hopeful for the future, isn't it?

[38 : 45] To idolize the past is to show, though, disregard for what God is doing in the present. It demonstrates a spirit of ingratitude as well.

And you know, maybe the present thing God is doing seems small in comparison to what you saw God doing in the past. God's word has something to say about that, too.

Zachariah, writing about these events in Ezra, said in chapter 4, verse 10 of his book, for whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.

Yes, this temple wouldn't be as glamorous as the first. It was small in comparison to the original.

But in the future, God's presence would grace that place in the person of Jesus Christ.

That's not a small thing. Here in Ezra 3, God is at work. He is at work in the present to bring about the perfect time to send his only son, Jesus Christ, to be the Savior of the world.

[40 : 00] That's not a small thing. Worshiping the past makes us lethargic in the present, and it takes our focus off of what God is currently doing in preparation for the future return of his son, Jesus Christ.

And you know what believers are to be doing in the present day? 2 Peter 3.12 says that we are to be in the present hastening the day when the Lord will return.

The number of the returning exiles was small compared to the past. But when they united together to do God's will, he was present and he blessed their efforts. At this time, the attitude of despair brought the present work to a halt.

For 16 to 17 years. Does such an attitude exist within you?

And if so, why? There's one man I knew. He's with the Lord today, but there was a time.

[41 : 19] I understood why. Why he had this attitude where it seemed like anything new the church was going to do, he would come and he would pick it apart.

And he would tell us all the reasons why it wasn't going to work, all the reasons why we shouldn't do it. And he was vocal. And you know what? I appreciated that he would often have those conversations with me and give me the opportunity to explain.

But you know what happened is, is he was vocal and a lot of people who weren't as vocal, who weren't as courageous, I guess I should say, to share their opinions, well, they went to him.

And they would tell him, hey, what about this? What about this? What about this? And then he would be their mouthpiece. And you know, I understand, I understood why he did that, because at that time in his life, it gave him something to do.

And it made him feel important. But I'll tell you, it was very discouraging. It was very discouraging. [42 : 28] And it was hard to move forward. Does such an attitude exist within you? Does that kind of attitude remind you of Jesus?

You know, Jesus was always looking forward, wasn't he? He was always looking forward. He was always moving forward to what? The cross. And the glory that awaited him and us on the other side of it, having provided the atonement necessary to save us from our sins.

And Jesus sent out his disciples into the world, didn't he? He said, go. Go and make disciples. Forward moving.

And nothing has changed. Let me read verse 13 again, Ezra chapter 3. So the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

To worship the past negatively affects our present unity, and it sends a mixed message to the world. What is going on?

[43 : 46] What is this noise? They couldn't distinguish. What was it? These people complaining, or are these people filled with joy? Can't be the case for us in the church.

And so how should we adjust our lives to this? Well, by pursuing unity in the present, because it produces joyful results in the future.

Pursuing unity in the present produces joyful results in the future. Now, in the New Testament, what is the one thing that the Christian life is always compared to?

The one athletic event. A race. Have you ever ran a race running backwards? Now, I'm not talking about some silly family reunion game, but have you ever run the race backwards?

What would happen if you did? You wouldn't finish first. I know that. You would stumble, and you would fall, and you would get hurt. What if it's driving a car?

[44 : 49] Have you ever driven a car, looking in your rearview mirror the entire time? I hope you haven't. Because if you did, you'd be with the Lord, wouldn't you?

You can't move forward looking at what's behind you. Brother, sister, how can you move forward with the Lord when you're stuck looking at what's behind you?

Maybe it's an unhealthy attachment to the past. Oh, God, things were so much better back then. I wish that we could just go back to that. And you lose sight on the focus, the present, of what God is doing now, and how he wants you now to be moving forward with his will until the day he calls you home.

Now, there might be another way. Look, as a believer, you can be, Satan, I think, will get us stuck looking in the past for that reason and for another, to consistently throw your sins back in front of your face.

You can't. You can't be doing that. You know who you are, and you've got to leave that behind too. If you know Christ, he's forgiven it. The slate is wiped clean.

[46 : 08] And what he tells you is, hey, put your hand in the plow. Look forward. The past has been redeemed. I have a present purpose for you and a future that is unimaginable.

Keep your eyes looking forward. You know, my goal for our church is that we will exist as a local body of believers when Jesus returns.

That when Jesus returns, Highland Park Baptist Church is still in existence. And we're still in existence because we were known as a people who were united in our purpose, our praise, and our future prospects.

That we were a people who invested our lives into one another, into our young people, the future generation of the church.

Committed in uncompromising, in biblical fidelity, sharing the gospel, making disciples, discipling disciples, and doing all the things that God commands us to in his word.

[47 : 23] And if we're obedient stewards, God will bless our present efforts and may he receive all the praise for it. You must be united to Christ.

Or your foundation, whatever it's built upon, it will crumble. It's sand. You will sink. You can't make it. You won't last.

But if Christ is your foundation as a believer and if Christ is the foundation for us as a church, oh, we'll stand. We'll stand. And God will be glorified in that.

Let's all pursue that goal in unity together. Let's pray. Lord, we know that it's good for us to reflect on the past for different reasons.

One, Lord, it reminds us of things to avoid in the present. Sins to avoid so that we don't have to endure the consequences for those choices.

[48 : 31] God, the past is also good to remind us of your faithfulness, your goodness, your presence, that in our times of greatest need, Lord, you were there and you helped.

And in those ways, Lord, it's good for us to remember you, to remember your word, remember what you've done so that we can live more effectively for you in the present.

But God, as we've seen in your word, there's a way of looking on the past that is unhealthy. And Lord, if we're not careful, it can be a source of discouragement that Satan uses to take our eyes off of you to keep us from moving forward.

And to have our wheels spin and not accomplish anything. God, I pray for all of us that you would lift our face and our eyes on you, that we would hasten the day, Lord, that we would work hard, not looking to receive any praise for it, but because we know that you're worthy and you're worth it, that you would receive all the glory for that.

God, I thank you for this church. I thank you for the ways that it has been united in all of these ways in the past. I pray, God, that we would continue to be united in these ways in the present and that our future would be one, Lord, where people continue to gather in this place and hear your word and committed to the truth, united in their effort to make Christ known far and wide.

[49 : 54] God, we pray for that. We ask for your help to accomplish it. In Jesus' name, amen. I'm I'm I'm I'm I'm