

# False Comparison (Part 1)

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We'll start chapter 2 of Haggai tonight. Chapter 2 contains the next prophecy, but remember! where we left off at the end of chapter 1. We saw the people obey God and begin work on the temple rebuild.

In tonight's text, the people begin to feel overwhelmed. Despite their rekindled willingness to obey God, the difficulty of the task begins to dawn on them. Rebuilding the temple is going to be a long and difficult process. On top of that, their every decision will be scrutinized by negative people from within the nation and from the surrounding nations. Our text for tonight is the first nine verses of chapter 2, but we're only going to get through the first five. Even though we'll only get through the first five, let's read all nine verses so you get the context.

In 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 Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehoshadak, 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. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehoshadak, 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 with 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.

Despite daunting circumstances, God promises both his presence and his provision to accomplish his purpose. That's the main idea for tonight and for next week. Despite daunting circumstances, God promises both his presence and his provision to accomplish his purpose. God never promises that his work will be easy. He does promise that he will be with us to help us accomplish the work that he has for us to do. We're going to divide tonight's text into only two sections, starting with verses 1 through 3. And in Haggai 2, 1 through 3, we see discouragement. So discouragement is your first blank. Let's go ahead and read verses 1 through 3 again. In 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 Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, 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? The date helps us grasp the context. The 21st day of the seventh month in the Jewish calendar sets the date as October 17, 520 BC. We saw last week that the official beginning of the rebuild occurred on September 21st, so nearly a month had passed with what seemed to be very little progress on the rebuild. The seventh month of the Jewish calendar has three feasts. Stopping for those feasts would have slowed down the progress of the rebuild.

[ 4 : 1 2 ] The Feast of the Trumpets was on the first day of the month. The Day of Atonement, also known as Yom Kippur, occurred on Day 10. The Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the Feast of Booths, occurred during the 15th through the 22nd days of the month. That means the prophecy in our text tonight happened on the next to last day of the Feast of Booths. We could spend a lot of time looking at the significance of each feast, but you have the biblical passages in your handout that reference the first two feasts. What I'd like to do tonight, for now, is spend a little time considering the Feast of Booths. God gave Moses the requirements for the Feast of Booths in

Leviticus 23, verses 33 through 43.

Leviticus 23, 33 through 43. And here are those verses. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and for seven days, is the Feast of Booths to the Lord. On the first day shall be a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. For seven days you shall present food offerings to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall hold a convocation, a holy convocation, and present a food offering to the Lord. It is a solemn assembly. You shall not do any ordinary work. These are the appointed Feast of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the Lord food offerings, burnt offerings, and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day, besides the Lord's Sabbath, and besides your gifts, and besides all your vow offerings, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the Lord. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the Feast of the Lord seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest, and you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. You shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in Booth for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in Booth, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in Booth when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

You can see from these verses that the requirements for the Feast of Booth included a feast and several ritual sacrifices. All this was done while the Israelites were living in temporary shelters that God required them to build each year. Let's try to get a sense for what the people probably were feeling. Imagine for a minute that our church's sanctuary roof collapses in the middle of October. A few weeks before Thanksgiving Day, we start rebuilding the roof ourselves. Meanwhile, we still have our own lives, including several major holidays, to handle as well. How do you think we would feel when the sanctuary still needs so much work by the time Thanksgiving Day arrives? Then the situation will be similar on Christmas Eve when we meet for the candlelight service. We'll have to be wearing hard hats because of the construction zone, and we'll see very little progress relative to the total scope of the task. To get an even better sense for what the Israelites must have been feeling, we need to add one more element to our imaginary scenario. We all must spend the week between Christmas Day and New Year's Day camping outside in shelters that we built ourselves. Fast forward then to New Year's Eve. Very little progress would have been made since Christmas Eve, and most of us would be somewhat dejected by then.

[ 8 : 23 ] If you can imagine how our church sanctuary scenario would make us feel, that must have been a bit like what the Israelites were feeling. The lack of progress on the project, coupled with the enormity of the task yet to come, may have been accentuated by the frustration of celebrating a third feast in the middle of unsightly ruins. Some of the people may have been thinking that they had no need to commemorate how their ancestors had lived in the wilderness, because after all, they were essentially reliving it. They had left their homes in another country too. The people of Haggai's day were seeing that scenario every day of their lives. Most of them had left Babylon to come re-establish Jerusalem.

During this time, we learn from verse 2 that some whiners emerge. Look at verses 2 and 3 again. God tells Haggai, Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, 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? Do you see the allusion to the whiners there? Look at the questions God tells Haggai to ask. Some of the older people who had seen the original temple apparently were saying that compared to the original temple, the rebuilt temple would be about the same as having no temple at all.

Those types of comments only served to crush the morale of the people who were simply trying to do something that honored God. Have you ever worked extremely hard on something, but when you show it to someone else, that person only points out flaws by comparing it to something even better?

Well, that apparently happened in Haggai's day. People were working hard only to have others say, Yeah, well, if you think this new one is going to be nice, you should have seen the original.

That place was really nice. Comparing something to the good old days, regardless of when we think those days were, rarely serves a useful purpose. God tells Haggai to call out the whiners, and that's where the lesson title comes from. The whiners were guilty of making a false comparison.

[ 10 : 44 ] They were thinking about what used to be. What they needed to be thinking about and what they needed to be comparing was where they currently were with what was yet to come. The questions God asked were designed to make the people realize the futility of yearning for the good old days.

The questions God asked were designed to make the people aware of their sin as well. The former glory of the temple and the lack of progress with the temple has clearly shown their failure to honor God with their actions, so that means they were in sin. With the questions, Haggai prevents the audience from distinguishing the present temple structure with the past structure.

He makes a comparison between the glory of the two houses. This is a subtle reminder that the temple is the same structure as Solomon's. The only difference is the current glory. And when he's referring to glory there, he's referring to the material elegance of the building. We can honor the past without making an idol of it. And we can and should learn from the past, but we must focus on the future. When you're tempted to think about the good old days, whenever you define those to be, remember that during those days, there always would have been someone else who said, Yes, but you should have seen what things were like back in my day. Those were really the good old days. Our scenario of needing to rebuild our own church during the holiday season can help us get closer to what the people of Haggai's day must have been feeling. But two more things would have added to their discouragement. The Feast of Boost is also known as the Feast of Ingathering, and it was one of the three opportunities for the three opportunities for tithing in Israel. This function added to the frustration of the people when they brought in their meager tithes. They would have been reminded of their lack of resources because of the bad harvest. The date of this prophetic message corresponds to another important event in the history of Israel. During this festival over four centuries earlier, Solomon dedicated the temple. And the many allusions to the great Solomon temple in this prophetic message show clearly that Haggai and the people have this event in mind so that comparisons with the earlier project may have led to even more discouragement. Even if somebody wasn't talking about the good old days, they were constantly being reminded that there used to be another temple standing in the same spot.

As God's people are overwhelmed by their external circumstances and their own internal expectations, that's when Haggai is moved to deliver his second prophecy. Like the first prophecy, God tells Haggai to proclaim this new prophecy to the leaders first. Haggai is told to speak to Zerubbabel, who was the governor, and Joshua, who was the high priest. After he speaks to them, then he speaks to all the people.

[ 13 : 43 ] Now that we've spent time on the discouragement section of the passage, let's move to the second section of the lesson. And in verses four through nine, we see encouragement. So encouragement is your second blank. So we've got discouragement and encouragement today. As we read verses four and five again, we're going to see three commands. So keep an eye out for those three commands. Here are verses four and five. Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehoshadak, 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. Do you see the three commands in those verses?

One of those commands is repeated three times, too. One of the commands, obviously, is be strong. One of the commands is work. And the third is fear not. The English makes the structure a little more difficult to see. But the controlling imperative there is work. And that draws on the description of the response of the same people to Haggai's first message in verse 14 of chapter one. This central command focusing on the external action of the people is surrounded by two commands focusing on internal motivational issues. To work, they will both need the positive motivation to be strong and the negative motivation to avoid fear. Be strong and fear not are two commands we see often in the Bible, including many times in the Old Testament that the people would have had in Haggai's day.

A quick online search for be strong came up with 25 verses that contain either those exact words or words very close to them. By expanding the results to include verses that convey a similar meaning in a little bit different words, the count jumps to 89 verses that talk about being strong.

For the term fear not, one site claims that the term is used 365 times in the Bible. I didn't go through and count all of those, but if you want to before next week, be sure to let me know because this is a two-part lesson.

For time's sake, we're going to resist the temptation to look at several cross-references for each of those terms. Suffice it to say that even with just the Old Testament scriptures they had at the time, the original people hearing Haggai's words would have known that this latest prophecy from God included two very familiar terms. So once again, we see the consistency of God's word.

[16:41] The encouragement to be strong is a renewal of hope in their midst. It's a reminder of potential during a growing awareness of sin. The reminder of sin is necessary to compel them to confession and repentance, but the reminder of grace is necessary to bring them hope. This statement is a reminder that God had not forgotten or given up on them. Yes, God says you have sinned, but there is hope yet.

And that's essentially the message that God has for them at this point. God's doing what he always does and what he always will do. He's encouraging them that even though they are sinful, his grace is greater than their sin. This is a glorious truth of the gospel. Be strong is more than just a command.

It's a beautiful reminder. Moving on to the command to work, let's focus on the two reasons the prophecy gives for why the people should work. Those two reasons come at the end of verse 4 and the beginning of verse 5. Here's that section again. Starting at the end of verse 4, it says, 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. The people should work because God is with them and because his spirit remains with them. Last week in verse 13 of chapter 1, we saw God remind the people that God is with them there too. When we looked at verse 13 in chapter 1, we covered several other times in the Bible where God used the same or similar words. If you need to refresh your memory on that, feel free to grab last week's handout. I believe we have some extra copies over there. In chapter 2 here, just a few weeks later, God says the same thing. This time though, he adds something to the promise when he repeats it. God says that he is with them according to the covenant he made with them when the people came out of Egypt. This is a reference to Exodus chapters 32 through 34 when the people rebelled by making the golden calf. Flip over to the book of Exodus. If you would, we're going to spend a little bit of time in Exodus 32 through 34 and we'll start in chapter 32.

While you're turning there, here's a summary of the first six verses of Exodus 32. Moses is on Mount Sinai meeting with God. When Moses takes too long to come down, the people become convinced that something has happened to him. And the people ask Aaron, the high priest at the time, to make them gods to lead them. Aaron complies by making a calf out of the people's gold. As you would expect, this greatly displeased God. And look at what God said to Moses starting in Exodus 32:7. We'll read through verse 10. Here are Exodus 32:7 through 10.

[19:45] And the Lord said to Moses, go down for your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. Pause for just a second. Notice how God says your people there. Once again, they're not his people, they're your people when they're doing something wrong. Picking it up in verse 8, God says, they have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people and behold, it is a stiff necked people. Now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them in order that I may make a great nation out of you.

In response, Moses pleads with God to remember the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Several significant events happened between that time and the time that Moses made the request and between the time that God makes the covenant referenced here in Haggai. So here are some of the key points. As Moses was getting down the mountain to return to the people, the people were getting down in another sense of the word. They were getting down in the party sense of things. Quite a party was happening around the golden calf. Moses became so angry that he broke the tablets with the Ten Commandments. Then he melted the golden calf and made the people drink the resulting gold dust.

Moses also had the faithful Israelites kill 3,000 men who had been involved in worshiping the calf. Then God disciplined the remaining people by sending a plague upon them.

In Exodus chapter 33, Moses intercedes for the people and Moses asked to see God's glory. So let's look at Exodus chapter 33, verses 19 through 23.

Exodus 33, Exodus 33, have God's response to Moses' request to see his glory. And here are those verses. This is the Lord speaking.

[ 21 : 58 ] And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But he said, you cannot see my face for man shall not see me and live. And the Lord said, behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock. And while my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

Then I will take away my hand and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen. Moving on to Exodus chapter 34, the early part of Exodus 34 documents when God made replacement tablets containing the Ten Commandments. Following those verses, Exodus 34, 10 and 11 have the covenant that's referenced in tonight's Haggai passage. Here are Exodus 34, 10 and 11. Again, this is God speaking. And he said, behold, I am making a covenant before all your people. I will do marvels such as not been created in the earth or in any nation and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. God references the Exodus events in Haggai to tell the people, I remember my promise made to your ancestors. Just like those people saw great things, you will see great things too. So in other words, God is saying, if you thought the former temple had glory, you ain't seen nothing yet. I normally use the ESV, but that last quote was from the OPV in case you're wondering. OPV, by the way, stands for the

Oki paraphrase version. The golden calf narrative interrupted the account of the temple construction. And now in the rebuilding of the temple, Haggai comforted the people by reminding them of God's promise after the rebellion in the desert. And God promised his presence with them there as well.

And it was a presence that enabled the community to build the tabernacle. Haggai is telling the people that that same God is with the people of their day as well. The end of Haggai 2.5 gives additional encouragement from God just before the reminder to fear not. God says in Haggai 2.5, my spirit remains in your midst. This was a promise the people of Haggai's day, and they would have recognized that. And the people in the group who were familiar with the scriptures would have recognized something more. The promise of God's spirit being with them also tied with what was happening to Haggai's day, and it tied it to what happened to their ancestors during the Exodus and the wilderness wandering. The reference to the spirit in the context of the Exodus generation is a feature of two later interpretations of the Exodus and desert experiences by Nehemiah and Isaiah. In both Nehemiah and Isaiah, God's presence among the people is interpreted as the good Holy Spirit who resided among them. And we'll look at those cross-references now. So here are a few verses from the Levite speech in Nehemiah chapter 9. These verses are Nehemiah chapter 9 verses 17 through 20.

[ 25 : 38 ] And they say this about the Israelites during the Exodus. They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt.

But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and did not forsake them. Even when they made for themselves a golden calf and said, This is your God who brought you out of Egypt and had committed great blasphemies, you and your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness.

The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to lead them for the way in which they should go.

You gave your good spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. Verse 20 is the key verse in this passage. Listen to verse 20 again there.

You gave your good spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. This verse confirms that God's spirit was with the Israelites in the wilderness, and just a few verses later in the same speech come Nehemiah 9, verses 30 and 31.

[ 27 : 03 ] Listen to Nehemiah 9, 30 and 31. Many years you bore with them and won them by your spirit through your prophets, yet they would not give ear.

Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless, in your great mercies, you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

Now we'll jump over to Isaiah 63, and we'll see what Isaiah 63, verses 11 through 14 have to say about the Exodus. Again, we'll hear multiple references to the Spirit.

So here are Isaiah 63, verses 11 through 14. Then he remembered the days of old of Moses and his people.

Where is he who brought them out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put them in the midst of them his Holy Spirit? Who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses?

[ 28 : 10 ] Who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name? Who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble.

Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So you led your people to make for yourself a glorious name.

So notice again there, it talks about God gave the people his Holy Spirit and put his Holy Spirit in their midst. So how does God want the people of Haggai's day to respond to the knowledge that he is with them?

That's right, the answer comes in the third imperative. And that's the one we see at the end of verse 5. Mike is exactly right. The people are to fear not.

In our first lesson on Haggai two weeks ago, we saw that from a purely human perspective, the people had plenty of reasons to fear. Their greatest fear was of the mighty nations that surrounded them.

[ 29 : 14 ] This was a struggling little province on the edge of the great Persian Empire, and it was dwarfed by the empire and the stronger provinces that surrounded them.

Fear was evident in the early days of the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, but Haggai was commissioned to dissuade the people from such fear and to back this up with God's promise of direct action on their behalf.

Remember the main idea. Despite daunting circumstances, God promises both his presence and his provision to accomplish his purpose. You might be thinking, I see where God promised his presence to the people.

Where did he promise his provision to the people? Well, the promise of provision comes in verses 6 through 9. We won't cover those verses until next week in part 2 of this lesson, and those verses are some of the most difficult verses in Haggai.

If you look at various translations, you will see that scholars over the years have disagreed on how they should be translated. For example, listen to Haggai 2.7 in the ESV.

[ 30 : 24 ] Now listen to that same verse in the King James Version.

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. And one more, the New American Standard Version says, I will shake all the nations, and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

So is there an answer to which version is the most accurate? I think the answer is yes, there is an answer to which version is the most accurate.

The second question is, am I certain enough about which is correct to give you only one interpretation and only one version? The answer to that question is no. So next week, we will dig into the most likely interpretations and talk about the pros and cons for each.

You're going to hear my opinion then, but my goal is to give you enough information so that you can draw your own conclusions. And if you want to study ahead, be looking at verses 6 through 9 before we get to them next week.

[ 31 : 39 ] For now, let's think a little more about what tonight's verses tell us. We see that individuals and communities involved in kingdom activity are promised the presence of God.

And this presence is specifically identified in Haggai 2 as God's spirit who remains among them.

This is a huge and important development in the history of Revelation.

Haggai demonstrates that God's presence is experienced through his spirit. Old Testament believers, though, didn't experience the spirit on an individual level.

Rather, it was a gift to the community as a whole in their covenant leaders. Moses expressed a wish in Numbers 11.29 that all God's people would experience the spirit as he did.

And this passing wish became an expectation in Joel 2 when the prophet envisioned a day when the entire community would experience the spirit. Christ foreshadowed this era in his teaching on the spirit in John 14 and John 16.

[ 32 : 45 ] Jesus spoke of the spirit who would bring his presence to his people forever. The promise to be with his disciples in their kingdom work intersects with the climactic moment in redemptive history when God's spirit was poured out on the early church in Acts 2.

And that is when prophetic expectation turned to reality. Believers today have an even greater experience with the Holy Spirit than did the people of Haggai's day.

In John 14.26, Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit helps each believer. Here is John 14.26.

Jesus said, But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Paul says in Ephesians 1.13 and 14 that the Holy Spirit guarantees our salvation. Here are Ephesians 1.13 and 14.

[ 33 : 48 ] 1 Corinthians 12 reminds us that the Holy Spirit is the source of our spiritual gifts.

The Holy Spirit also unites the church. 1 Corinthians 12.13 says, For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one spirit. Those are just a few examples of how we have a greater experience of the Holy Spirit than did the people of Haggai's day. We could add more, including how the Spirit helps us to understand Scripture and how the Spirit intercedes for us when we are at a loss for how to pray.

We also see from Haggai 2.1-5 that even thousands of years later, human nature is unchanged.

We're more like the people of Haggai's day than we first might want to admit.

For example, think about how the people were beginning to feel overwhelmed by the task that God asked them to do. I'm pretty sure that you've experienced similar emotions, because I have, as we approach the task of the kingdom.

[ 35 : 18 ] We compare the present with the past and become dissatisfied or maybe even disillusioned with our present experience. We all get tempted to reminisce about the good old days.

Rather than romanticizing the past, though, and thinking about the good old days, we need to focus on each day as a good new day instead. We do need to honor the past where appropriate, but the present and the future are the only things that we can influence for God's glory.

The past is past, so we need to focus on what is now and what lies ahead. Think about how God motivated the people in Haggai's day. He motivated the people from the inside out, and he does the same thing with us today.

Rather than focus on the lack of work, Haggai's prophecy addressed the internal motivations and attitudes of the people. He said, Be strong and do not fear. Haggai's message went beyond external duty to the kingdom to the internal core attitudes that are essential for sustained commitment.

Haggai went for the heart where the passion for the kingdom is fostered. Perhaps the most important thing for us to see about this passage is that the people were successful when their focus was on the right thing.

[ 36 : 36 ] When the people focused on their circumstances, they became discouraged. When God redirected their focus to God and his promises to them, their circumstances remained the same.

Nothing had changed in their situation. The only thing that had changed was their attitude and how they were looking at their situation. And that's true for us as well.

Renewed vigor is discovered as our focus becomes God. Haggai makes it clear that the purpose of this work was God-centered. It was for the pleasure and glory of God.

Often we begin with this purpose in mind, but we neglect to allow this focus to guide our effort to accomplish it. Haggai reveals that a project with God as its purpose must also have God as a resource and as the resource on the way to completion.

Think about how that applies to our church. As our church continues to grow and as we consider what God would have us do in the next five to ten years, God's message to us would be the same as what he said to the Israelites more than 2,500 years ago.

[ 37 : 45 ] I'm pretty sure he would say, Be strong, all you people, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts. God's word gives many reasons why we will be blessed by

following God, but none is more significant than the promise of God's presence.

We seldom will long for the good old days if we desire instead to have a day like the one described in Psalm 84, 10. Listen to Psalm 84, verses 10 through 12.

Again, this is Psalm 84, verses 10 through 12. Speaking to God, the sons of Korah wrote, Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the reminder tonight that no matter what task you have for us, when it truly is your task, you promise both your presence and, as we will see next week, your provision to help us accomplish that task.

Help us be mindful of that when we feel overwhelmed while facing new challenges. Help us use those things to encourage other people when they might feel overwhelmed as well. Continue to be with us and guide us as we strive to do what you would have us do.

[ 39 : 24 ] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.