

Be Strong and Work

Haggai 1:12-2:9

The returned exiles had prioritised comfort over rebuilding the Temple. They had pushed God to the margins and life was unravelling. God's word cut through their spiritual apathy and stirred them to action. But it also encouraged them to keep going when things got hard. We all need that kind of encouragement.

Worship then Work

The people grasped the vision of what God was doing and went for it. But there was an order to their response: they 'obeyed', 'feared', and then 'worked' (v12, 14). There are many reasons why people work or serve in the name of God. But God is not glorified by wrong motives. He is glorified when we do something because we want him to look great.

The Lord stirred their hearts to work. So God equips us to do the things he calls us to do.

Dealing with Discouragement

One month into the project people were becoming discouraged. In life things can be exciting at first, but then reality sets in. The builders realised that what they were building was nothing in comparison to the previous Temple. Into this despondency God says, 'Be strong'. But God does not encourage us so we do nothing. What follows 'be strong' is 'and work'.

But where does that strength to work come from? God tells them that he is with them. The temple may be a pile of rubble, but the greater reality is God's presence. He is greater than any situation you find yourself in.

The Unshakeable Kingdom

God tells them that he will shake the heavens and the earth. It is the language of God coming to rescue or judge. The writer of Hebrews quotes Haggai and links it to when God delivered Israel from slavery and gave them the law. So God is promising to come down and rescue his people as he did in the Exodus. Out of that shaking something unshakeable will arise: Christ's unshakeable kingdom.

The treasures of the nations helping fund the rebuilding of the temple were a foretaste of the nations coming in to Christ's kingdom. So God tells them that though what they are doing may seem very small, its shockwaves will spread around the globe. We have no idea what God can do with small things, or with a group of people who understand what God is up to in the world, and work, pray and give to see his church built and his kingdom come.

Glory from Rubble

When God talks about the glory of this temple being greater than the previous temple, he means his presence. And yet the cloud of his presence never filled this temple. But it was into this temple that Christ came 500 years later: the glory of God returned to the temple.

So out of the rubble of the destroyed temple, God brought even greater glory. That is always his way. Out of the rubble and destruction of the cross, came the resurrection. Whatever the rubble of your life looks like, God can bring something glorious. It is the power of Christ's resurrection working in you.