

Haggai 2:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:

Analysis

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: After confronting the people's discouragement about the rebuilt temple's inferior appearance compared to Solomon's temple, God issues a threefold call to strength. The Hebrew "be strong" (חִזְקָה/chazaq) appears three times, addressed to civil leader (Zerubbabel), religious leader (Joshua), and all the people—emphasizing that courage and perseverance are needed at every level of leadership and community.

"And work" (וְעַש/va'asu) is the imperative response to divine encouragement. Strength isn't passive feeling but active obedience. God doesn't remove the challenges—the temple still appears inferior, resources remain limited, opposition hasn't vanished—but He commands them to work anyway. Faith isn't waiting for perfect circumstances but obeying despite difficult circumstances, trusting God's presence more than visible outcomes.

"For I am with you" (כִּי-אָנִי אַתָּכֶם) provides the foundational reason for courage and work. God's presence is the ultimate resource, surpassing wealth, military might, or ideal circumstances. This promise echoes throughout Scripture—God's assurance to Joshua (Joshua 1:9), to Gideon (Judges 6:12), and Jesus's final

promise to His disciples (Matthew 28:20). Divine presence transforms weakness into strength, fear into courage, impossibility into possibility.

"The LORD of hosts" (צְבָאֹת יְהוָה/YHWH Tzeva'ot)—the LORD of armies—emphasizes God's sovereign power over all earthly and heavenly forces. When the Almighty Commander declares "I am with you," no opposition can ultimately prevail. This isn't triumphalism ignoring real hardship but confidence grounded in God's character and covenant faithfulness. The work may be difficult, the results may seem small, but God's presence guarantees ultimate victory.

Historical Context

The people had just been confronted with the reality that this second temple couldn't match Solomon's temple in glory, wealth, or magnificence (Haggai 2:3). Some who remembered the first temple wept at the comparison (Ezra 3:12). This discouragement threatened to derail the rebuilding project—if they couldn't match past glory, why bother?

God's response addresses this comparison trap. He doesn't promise they'll immediately achieve former glory but assures His presence, which is greater than architectural splendor. The second temple may have been physically inferior, but God's presence made it sacred and significant. Later, this very temple (expanded by Herod) would be where Jesus Himself taught, walked, and cleansed—the incarnate presence of God. As Jesus said, "Something greater than the temple is here" (Matthew 12:6).

This passage encouraged not only Haggai's generation but all subsequent believers facing discouraging circumstances. When the church appears weak, when ministry seems fruitless, when opposition looms large, God's presence remains the decisive factor. The book of Acts repeatedly demonstrates that despite persecution, limited resources, and opposition, the early church thrived because God was with them (Acts 7:9-10, 18:10).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. In what ministry, calling, or obedience are you tempted to give up because results seem small or inferior to what you hoped?
2. How does focusing on God's presence rather than visible outcomes change your motivation and perseverance in difficult work?
3. What would it look like to 'be strong and work' in your current season, trusting God's presence more than perfect circumstances or guaranteed success?
4. How does Jesus Christ fulfill God's promise of presence in ways the Old Testament believers could only anticipate (Immanuel—God with us)?

Interlinear Text

וְעַמְּךָ תִּזְבְּבֵל לֵאמֹךְ תִּזְבְּבֵל
H6258 Yet now be strong H2388 O Zerubbabel H2216 for I am with you saith H5002 the LORD H3068

וְעַמְּךָ תִּזְבְּבֵל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן יְהוֹצֵדֶךְ כֹּהֵן הַקָּדוֹשׁ
H2388 Yet now be strong H3091 O Joshua H1121 son H3087 of Josedech H3548 priest H1419 the high

וְעַמְּךָ תִּזְבְּבֵל כָּל יְהוָה עַל כָּל הָרָקֶד
H2388 Yet now be strong H3605 all ye people H5971 of the land H776 for I am with you saith H5002 the LORD H3068

וְעַמְּךָ תִּזְבְּבֵל אַתָּה כִּי תַּעֲשֶׂה
H6213 and work H3588 H589 H854 for I am with you saith H5002 the LORD H3068 of hosts H6635

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 28:20 (References Lord): And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

Zechariah 8:9 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

Joshua 1:9 (References Lord): Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

2 Samuel 5:10 (References Lord): And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.

Deuteronomy 31:23 (Parallel theme): And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee.

2 Timothy 2:1 (Parallel theme): Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Acts 7:9 (Parallel theme): And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

Ephesians 6:10 (References Lord): Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Mark 16:20 (References Lord): And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Exodus 3:12 (Parallel theme): And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.