

Zechariah 8:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. After declaring what God will do (verses 1-8), He now commands human response: "**Let your hands be strong**" (techezaqnah yedeikhem, תְּצִקְנָה יְדֵיכֶם)—literally "let your hands be strengthened" or "made firm." This idiom means take courage, be resolute, work diligently. Weak, fearful hands must become strong, capable hands (compare Nehemiah 6:9, where enemies tried to "weaken our hands"; also Hebrews 12:12, "lift up the hands which hang down").

The exhortation targets those who "**hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets**"—the current generation receiving Zechariah's messages. He references "**which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid**", connecting to Haggai's ministry when temple rebuilding resumed (Haggai 2:18, dated to the 24th day of the 9th month, 520 BC). Both Haggai and Zechariah prophesied encouragement during temple construction: Haggai addressing discouragement over the temple's modest appearance (Haggai 2:3-9), Zechariah providing visionary confirmation of God's

purposes.

The purpose clause "**that the temple might be built**" (le-hibnot ha-heikhal, **לִהְיבּוֹת הַהֵּיכָל**) states the immediate goal. Yet the temple's completion represents more than physical construction—it symbolizes covenant restoration, divine presence returning, and God's kingdom advancing. Paul later applies building imagery to the church: "Ye are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9), and Peter writes that believers are "lively stones... built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). The exhortation to strengthen hands for building work applies to all kingdom service.

Historical Context

Temple rebuilding had a troubled history. The foundation was laid around 536 BC (Ezra 3:8-11) amid celebration and weeping—older people who remembered Solomon's temple wept at how inferior this one appeared. Soon after, opposition from Samaritans and other groups led to a royal decree halting construction (Ezra 4:1-24). For about 16 years (536-520 BC), the temple sat unfinished while returnees built their own houses (Haggai 1:4).

In 520 BC, God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to challenge this prioritization. Haggai confronted the people: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Haggai 1:4). Both prophets called for resumed work. The people responded, and on the 24th day of the 6th month, 520 BC, they began rebuilding (Haggai 1:15). Yet discouragement remained—the work was hard, resources limited, opposition persistent.

Zechariah's oracle comes months into renewed construction (approximately early 518 BC). His message: strengthen your hands, keep working, because God promises comprehensive blessing and certain success. The temple was indeed completed in the 6th year of Darius (516 BC, Ezra 6:15), vindicating the prophets' encouragement. This historical pattern teaches that God's work often faces opposition and discouragement, but His promises guarantee success when His people persevere in faith-driven obedience.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 – Judging others

Study Questions

1. What causes your "hands to hang down" in ministry or obedience, and how does God's promise of blessing strengthen them?
2. How does remembering God's past faithfulness (like laying the foundation) encourage perseverance when current work seems difficult or fruitless?
3. In what ways is building the church today analogous to building the temple then, requiring both divine blessing and human effort?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	אָמַר	יְהִי הָ	זֶה אָזֶן	תִּתְחַזֵּק	מִידִיכֶךָ
H3541	Thus saith	of the LORD	of hosts	be strong	Let your hands
	H559	H3068	H6635	H2388	H3027

בְּאֵת בְּיַמִּים הַשְׁמֻעִים
H428 H853 H428
ye that hear in these days these words

לְהַבְּנָה בֵּית יְהוָה אֶצְבָּא וְתַּהֲרֵיכָל of the house of the LORD of hosts that the temple might be built

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 35:4 (Parallel theme): Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

1 Chronicles 22:13 (References Lord): Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.

Haggai 2:21 (Parallel theme): Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;

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