Be Strong

It's Time to Finish #1 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 1, 2026 - Zechariah 4:1-14

INTRO: Church, we've come a long way since those seven people met in our living room 35 years ago. And if there's one thing we've learned, it's this:

God's work is accomplished by God's power and strength, not ours!

That's exactly what the prophet Zechariah told Zerubbabel and the people rebuilding the temple. So let's open our Bibles to Zechariah 4:6–10 for today's message entitled "Be Strong."

NEED: Have you ever noticed that it's often easier to start something than it is to finish it? When we begin something new, we're excited. The vision is fresh. Our enthusiasm is high. We're ready to go! But somewhere along the way, things get difficult. Obstacles arise. Progress seems slow. Life gets busy. And sometimes we just get tired and discouraged.

That's true in marriage, parenting, our careers, and even our walk with Christ. It's one thing to begin with great enthusiasm. It's another thing to remain faithful over the long haul.

And it's certainly true when we make a commitment that requires sacrifice over several years.

Maybe you started with great excitement, but now you're feeling weary. Or perhaps things haven't worked out the way you expected. You've encountered some mountains you didn't anticipate.

Or maybe you're new to Eastgate, and you're wondering how you can contribute to something that began before you arrived.

Trans: Here's what we all need to remember: **God doesn't call us to accomplish His work in our own strength.** We may have limited resources, limited energy, and limited ability. But our God is unlimited in His power! The question isn't whether we're strong enough to finish. The question is whether we're depending on the One who is.

That's exactly the encouragement God gave to the prophet Zechariah for His people. And I believe there's a word of encouragement here for us today, too…

BODY: In the book of Zechariah, the Lord gave the prophet a word to strengthen Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, to lead the returning exiles in finishing the rebuilding of the temple. We can be strengthened in the Lord to finish the work He has called us to do. How can we be strengthened in the Lord to finish the work He has called us to do? The text gives three reasons we can be strong in the Lord to finish well.

Read text: Zechariah 4:1-14 (ESV) 1 And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. 2 And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. 3 And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." 4 And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" 5 Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." 6 Then he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. 7 Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'" 8 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 9 "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. 10 For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. "These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth." 11 Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" 12 And a second time I answered and said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?" 13 He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." 14 Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

WE CAN BE STRONG IN THE LORD TO FINISH WELL…

1. Because God's Spirit empowers us.

EXP: (6-7) Zechariah 4 contains the fifth of Zechariah's eight night visions (Zech. 1:7–6:8). The prophet received a vision of a golden lampstand supplied with oil from two olive trees. The vision communicates God's provision for the work He has commanded. An angel explained the vision to Zerubbabel: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (6).

"**Word of the LORD**" (6, 2x) (דְּבַר־יְהוָה, *dāḇār Yahwēh*) - saying, word. Used in prophetic formulas, refers to God's authoritative communication.

"**Zerubbabel**" (6) (זְרֻבָּבֶל, *zᵉrubāḇel*) - "Sown in Babylon." Grandson of King Jehoiachin and leader of the first group of returning exiles from Babylon.

"**Might**" (6) (חַיִל, *ḥayil*) - strength; ability, inherent strength, might.

"**Power**" (6) (כֹּחַ, *kōaḥ*) - strength, power, often human strength.

"**My Spirit**" (6) (רוּחַ, *rûaḥ*) - wind, breath, spirit; Spirit of God, 3rd person of the triune God. Holy Spirit.

"**Great mountain**" (7) (הַר־הַגָּדוֹל, *Har haggādōl*) - great mountain. What mountain?

1. **Political opposition**: Ezra 4:4-5 (ESV) Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.
2. **The enormous task itself**: "*The whole process of temple restoration seemed like a mountainous job to the few exiles who returned from captivity.*" — Constable, studylight.org
3. **Discouragement by small beginnings**: Ezra 3:12 (ESV) 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.

"**Plain**" (7) (מִישׁוֹר, *mîšôr*) - level country, plain. The Lord will remove the obstacles standing in the way.

"**Top stone**" (7) (אֶבֶן, *even hārō šāh*) - top, topmost, head, headstone; capstone.

"**Grace, grace to it**" (7) (חֵן, *ḥēn*) - favor, grace. NLT: May God bless it! May God bless it!'

ARG: **Our ability to finish any work comes from the Lord, He is our supply:**

Psalm 127:1 (ESV) Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

We trust in our God who can do abundantly more than we can imagine, as we read last week:

Ephesians 3:20 (NIV) Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

ILL: **The Vision** (Zech. 4:1–5, 10b–14). In Zechariah's 5th vision, he saw a golden lampstand with seven lamps, continually supplied with oil from two olive trees.



The angel identifies the "seven lamps" (2) with the "seven… eyes of the LORD" (10), which signifies God's omniscient presence with His people. He identified the trees as "the two anointed ones" (14). These represented Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest, whom God had appointed to lead His people. The oil symbolized the Holy Spirit, continually supplying the power they needed.

Just as the lamps couldn't burn without oil, Zerubbabel and Joshua couldn't accomplish God's work without His Spirit. And neither can we! **God's work requires God's power!**

APP: Joshua represented the priesthood. Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, represented the royal line. These two offices ultimately come together in Christ, our great High Priest and promised King (Zech. 6:12–13). Through His death, resurrection, and exaltation, He has poured out the Holy Spirit upon His people. The same Spirit who empowered God's servants then now dwells in every believer in Christ!

The strength to finish what God has called us to do doesn't come from how much money we can raise, how many people we have, or how gifted our leaders may be. Our strength comes from the Lord. That's why we're beginning this 21-day journey in prayer, asking Him to work first in us and then through us.

2. Because God's promises assure us.

EXP: (8-9) The Lord gives Zerubbabel a specific promise: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it" (9).

"**Laid the foundation**" (9) (יָסַד, *yāsaḏ*) - to found, fix, establish, lay foundation



"**His hands shall also complete it**" (9) (בָּצַע, *bāṣa*ʿ) - to finish, complete. The repetition of "his hands" shows that the same hands that started this whole thing will finish it. This is a promise that the temple will be completed under Zerubabbel's leadership. The project took 20 years to complete (536 BC - 516 BC). For 16 years the foundation laid undone until the Word of the Lord came through Haggai and Zechariah.

"**Then you will know**" (9) (יָדַע, *yāḏa*ʿ) - to know. God's Word will be validated by the completed work.

ARG: **God's faithfulness to keep His promises give His people confidence to persevere:**

Hebrews 10:23 (ESV) Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

God promises to finish what He began in us through Christ.

Philippians 1:6 (ESV) I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

ILL: **In February 2002, I was ready to quit.** My mother had passed away, we were experiencing disunity in the church, and I was tired and discouraged to still be without a home for our church after 10 years of labor. I took a 3-day personal retreat to ask God two questions: 1) Can I quit being a pastor? And 2) If I can't quit the ministry, can I at least quit WCC and be on staff at another church? God used this very passage to answer me. In fact, after fasting for 3 days, I had a third question: When can I quit fasting? (Answer: ch.7).

APP: Some of you made faith commitments back in 2025. Thank you for your faithfulness. Keep trusting the Lord as you seek to complete what you prayerfully committed to give.

And if your financial situation has changed, don't respond with shame or guilt. Bring your circumstances before the Lord and prayerfully consider what faithfulness looks like today.

For those who have joined our church family since the initiative began, you have an opportunity to participate in what God is doing among us.

We're not claiming that God gave our church the same specific promise He gave Zerubbabel. But we are trusting the same faithful God as we seek to obey Him.

Our confidence to finish well rests in God's faithfulness, not the certainty of our own plans.

3. Because God's perspective encourages us.

EXP: (10) Look at v.10: "For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice." Some people had looked at the rebuilding effort and seen little reason for excitement. Compared to Solomon's glorious temple, the new work may have appeared insignificant. But God saw something they couldn't yet see. He had a better perspective. The people who had despised the small beginnings would rejoice as they saw Zerubbabel take up the "plumb line" to finish the work.

"**Whoever has despised**" (10) (בּוּז, *bûz*) - to despise, hold in contempt, hold as insignificant. Remember the old people who had seen Solomon's Temple wept at the rebuilt foundation (Ezra 3:12).

"**Day of small things**" (10) (קָטָן, *qāṭān*) - young, small, insignificant. "The day of small things was not only that of the foundation of the temple, but of its continued building also." *(Albert Barnes)*

"**Shall rejoice**" (10) (שָׂמַח, *śāmaḥ*) - to rejoice, be glad.

"**Plumb line**" (10) (אֶבֶן, *'eḇen*) - capstone, ceremonial stone, plummet, plumb line

ARG: **God's higher perspective:**

Isaiah 55:8–9 (ESV) [8] For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. [9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

God chooses the small to do great things in His power:

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (ESV) [27] But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; [28] God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, [29] so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

ILL: Who could imagine what started in my living room with 7 people, would become the church Eastgate is today? God could. That's who! So don't despise the day of small beginnings.

APP: This is especially important as we begin talking about the Generosity Ladder.



Some people hear about a $1.6 million commitment and immediately think, "What difference could my gift possibly make?"

But the goal isn't for everyone to give the same amount. It's for everyone to take a faithful step toward becoming more generous.

Maybe you've never given before. Your next step might be to become an Initial Giver.

Maybe you've given occasionally, whenever you had a little extra. Your next step might be to become a Consistent Giver, setting aside a portion of your income to give regularly.

Those steps may seem small to you, but they can be significant steps of spiritual growth.

And for those already giving faithfully, the Lord may be leading you toward a new level of intentional or sacrificial generosity.

The important question isn't how your gift compares with someone else's. It's whether you're growing in faithfulness with what God has entrusted to you.

Every step of faithful generosity matters because God is forming us into the people He has called us to be.

CONCLUSION: Church, as we begin our It's Time to Finish journey, let's remember that our goal is more than completing a $1.6 million faith commitment. Our greater goal is to grow together as faithful, generous disciples of Jesus.

So let's take these next 21 days asking, **"God, what do You want to do in me and through me?"**

And remember, we can be strong to finish well because …

1. God's Spirit empowers us,
2. His promises assure us, and
3. His perspective encourages us.

But I want you to notice one more thing. In verse 7, when Zerubbabel brings forth the capstone of the temple, the people shout, "Grace, grace to it!"

They recognized that the work was accomplished by God's grace, not their own strength.

And isn't that the message of the gospel?

Jesus Christ came to accomplish a work we could never accomplish for ourselves. He lived the sinless life we couldn't live, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again to give us eternal life.

And from the cross He cried, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

Our salvation is not something we can earn by our works or our generosity. It is God's gift of grace, received through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8–9).

And it's His grace that saves us, strengthens us, and enables us to live generously for His glory!

So let's be strong in the Lord and finish well. And when all is said and done, may we give Him all the glory, shouting together:

"Grace, grace to it!

Let's pray.