

Building a Good Foundation

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Date: 11 February 2023

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[0 : 00] asked me to read the word tonight, I told him that in all the 45 years I've been here, I've never read the word of God. But I did ask him if I could maybe sing it. But he didn't agree to that. So the reading tonight from God's word is from the book of Haggai, and it's chapter one.

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Thus says the Lord of hosts. These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses while this house lies in ruins? Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. You have sown much and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough. You drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. Thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.

Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why, declares the Lord of hosts, because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors. Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord. Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message. I am with you, declares the Lord. And the

Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people.

[2 : 31] And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the 24th day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. May God bless just the reading of his word.

Thank you. Well, good evening, everyone. It's good to be here. My accent hasn't changed too much to a London accent yet, praise God.

The boys, on the other hand, are sounding far too cockney for my liking. But it's really good to be here. I hope you know how special this place is.

I mean, in all seriousness, there's not a day which goes by where I don't pray for this church. Pray for you, Pastor Daniel, the elders. Pray for you guys as a church.

This is a transition in your face. But I want you to know this. I'm not just preaching something like that just to, in one sense, give you a nice little encouragement.

[3 : 31] I really seek God. What is God trying to say to you? So there might be some things when you think, Ooh, that's a bit hard-hitting here. All right? So please hear the spirit behind that. I hope you know me well enough by now.

And I've really been praying, God, really speak to the people. I really don't want this to be about, Oh, Gavin's coming home. I really don't. Please hear that. I want this to be about Jesus.

So if there's anything of me, may that Lord go to the sand. Forget that. And if there's anything of God, even if there's just one sentence, it's been worth it.

So I'm going to pray because I need God's help. Father, I just simply recognize, Lord, apart from you, I can do nothing. And Lord, I just want to pray for a fresh filling of your Holy Spirit now, Lord. Lord, that people don't see God, but see Jesus. Because it's all about him. Lord, I just want to thank you for this church. I thank you for all that it means to me. And all that it means to all of us that are gathered here tonight, wherever online or in person.

[4 : 38] And we want to pray, Lord, just that as we come to your word, the living word, we ask Jesus that you'll speak to us. But Lord, we don't just want to pray that you'll speak to us.

Lord, may we act on what you're saying to us individually. May we act on what you're saying to us corporately. But more than anything, I pray, Lord, that this sermon will be done for the glory of God and the glory of God alone.

So Jesus, please be the center of this speaker's lips tonight, I pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. So what I was going to say, one thing that's good about being back in Edinburgh is that normally I could go to the football.

But I can't even go to the football this weekend, A, because a certain team called Hearts knocked Hibs out of the cup, but we won't talk about that. I even got to miss the rugby.

But at least I got chicken stuffed with haggis. You can get haggis in England. But one of the best things about when you come home is that you get to see your grandparents. My grandparents are now 92 and 89.

[5 : 49] So you always enjoy time with them. And my grandfather, in his working life, he wasn't a brickie. He was a stonemason.

He was very particular on that. And I had a memory when I went to visit him today. I said, Granddad, how many houses have you built this week?

And his answer was, none. And of course, when you're four or five years old, you think, that's a bit strange. Imagine not being able to build a house. So I came back the following Wednesday.

Because every Wednesday, we went to see granny and granddad. Granddad, how many houses this week? None, son. Again, the third week. Granddad, how many houses this week?

He said, son, you have to remember, unless the foundation's right, the rest won't be right. In many ways, Haggai is on a building project.

[6 : 48] He's calling people to go about that act of rebuilding the house of the Lord. Remember, Haggai's context of that act is really, really important.

The people of God, in many senses, they've been in exile, remember? 70 years. They've been delivered from exile. God was faithful.

God was good. Even in exile, after exile, he raises and he calls up prophets, like Haggai, remember? Who we read about, he was a prophet. To call God's people to go about and rebuild the house of the Lord.

20 years after exile, the people had started rebuilding in the past, but then they had given up because of discouragement.

But we know there's several things in the context. The people were facing uncertainty because of political uncertainty. They were facing financial uncertainty because, dare I say, the rich were exploiting the poor.

[7 : 54] Does that sound familiar, anyone? Not making any comments there, but I'm just saying it's a fact of life. Sounds similar today, doesn't it? Also, one of the other things was you could see that people were, they had the opportunity there where people were, some people were financially prosperous, but you can be spiritually prosperous, but materially, sorry, you can be materially prosperous, but spiritually bankrupt.

Does that make sense? I see that all the time where I live, you know, the houses, if you've got 800,000, you can give it to me and I could buy a three-bedroom semi where I am in London, all right?

But the reality is that people are spiritually dead. You know, they know nothing. They know nothing about the things of the gospel.

But into that context, God's people have got a call to ask God, will you rebuild the house of the Lord in our generation? And I think, dare I say, in our context here, it might just be me, but hasn't the last few years with the pandemic been bonkers?

That's a good theological term, by the way. All right? There, there's been a profound time where God's people have felt disorientated. And it's actually not just for God's people, but society.

[9 : 19] Dare I say, mental health is through the roof. The cost of living crisis. You know, how do we respond to that? You know, I'm making food bank referrals every week in the community that I live in.

Every week. And it's interesting, even in our food bank, 80% of people who go to our local food bank are in two-parent households where families are working.

But into that context, how does God's people respond to that? You could say, oh no, this is such a time of disorientation. Oh, this is so difficult.

But Haggai would say, consider your ways. Consider your ways, God's people. Now's the time. Now's the time for you to go about rebuilding the house of the Lord.

See, the people of God, some of them were in luxury. And he says, you know, look at what you've done. You've sown much, but you have harvested little.

[10 : 30] Little. I find that terrifying. You know, we can do all the right things, can't we? We can do, dare I say, we can do all the right Christian things, we can do all the right Bible studies, we can do all the right sermons, and hey, I'm all for preaching and I'm all for teaching.

Don't misunderstand me. But remember, it's God that brings the increase, isn't it? It's not us. It's him.

It's him that builds his church. What was the granddad said again? Unless the foundation's right, the rest won't be right.

Jesus, be the center of your church. Jesus, you know, in many ways, the church in the United Kingdom is in a crisis point.

Let's make no mistake about it. But even in the crisis point, God longs for us to build and rebuild the house of the Lord in a way which is glorifying to God.

[11 : 42] Amen? Not glorifying to man, but glorifying to God. That's our chief aim. That's our chief objective.

Can I say to you, I've said this to all three churches that I've pastored. I would rather us get smaller and be faithful than big and unfaithful.

And so often we can look at the outward sides, the outward sides. I'm blessed to be part of a growing church where the church is growing. People are coming to faith.

You know, some of our ministries have grown from 6 to 48 in the last three months, right? And I don't mean that in a big-headed way, but God is really doing some amazing things.

We're seeing refugees coming to faith. We're seeing Muslims coming to faith. We're seeing messy church got 80 kids coming every month. It's amazing.

[12 : 39] But now I'm saying, guys, let's not get complacent. Because actually, we are called to build the house so that God takes pleasure in it.

And that God is glorified in it. Because he needs to be the foundation of his church. Lord of the church, we pray for our renege.

you know, Jesus, when he walked the earth, remember, he gave our commission. I will build my, say it, I will build my church.

And the gates of what? Hell shall not prevail against it. So even in uncertain times, the Christian can have absolute confidence.

It's Christ who builds his church. It's not the pastor. It's not the elders. God uses these people. It's not even the congregation members.

[13 : 45] It's God who builds his church. We must never, ever forget that. See, for Haggai, when he calls God's people to rebuild the house of the Lord at first, he says, remember, you've harvested very little.

Actually, he tells them, you know, there's going to come a time where he's going to bring judgment on the nation of Israel, the people of God. There's a sober warning there, friends.

Can I tell you what a sober warning is this? See, when Christians often talk about judgment, we talk about the people out there. They're the people that are going to face the judgment of God. And you know what?

That's absolutely true. Everyone will give an account of their lives before God. Amen? Well, let's look a wee bit inwards. The Bible says that judgment belongs first to the household of God.

It's easy to point the finger out there. I remember a time where I pointed my finger at my dad. Big mistake, I tell you. Sorry, dad, if you're watching tonight, by the way.

[14:53] I pointed the finger and he said, remember, son, there's three more pointing back at you. I'm going to say church, not Western Hills Baptist Church, church in the United Kingdom.

Now's the time to build. And we have to build on God's ways and God's priorities. God's priorities. You know, I remember in a minister's gathering, I probably shouldn't say this, I'll get in trouble. But that's all right, I get in trouble every day of the week. But this minister came out to me and said, Gab, you know, do you kind of preach the holiness stuff in your church? You know, talk about holiness.

I said, oh yeah. He looked to me and said, why do you bother? I can tell you to know our ministers, I mean, kid you not, again, this is an hour minister, he said, do you call people to be born again by the Holy Spirit and give their life to the Lord Jesus Christ?

You know what he said to me? Stop with that religious nonsense, Gab. Ministers. Ministers. You know what I call them? False teachers.

[16:08] We have to be very careful, friends, that we build the house in the way that God wants.

And actually, can I say to you, I think it's going to become increasingly costly in the United Kingdom to build the church in his way. But can I say this to you?

I also equally believe this is a time where people have no preconceived ideas anymore. Let me tell you about, I'm going to speak in code, his name is M.

M. M. M. came to Stone Lee to live in a hotel. He's a refugee. He's originally from Iran and he sent me an email.

He said, Gavin, I want to meet with you to talk about the Bible. So me being an evangelist says, let's meet tomorrow. And I met with him. He said, I have no interest in giving my life to Jesus whatsoever.

[17:11] None. He said, that's fine. So I met with the guy in our cafe on a Tuesday morning. And he sent me an hour email. Gavin, I want to compare the difference between the Christian's view of the second coming of Christ and what the Quran teaches on the second coming of Christ.

Because Muslims believe in the second coming of Christ. Not many of you might know that, but they do. Ultimately, it has a different end up verdicts when they make that clear. So he said, that's fine. It might surprise some of you have read the Quran cover to cover as well.

All right? So I'm prepared for his questions. He said, I'm still not interested in Jesus, Gavin. Then he came and we sang the song Amazing Grace. And he said, my chains are gone, I've been set free. And he said, ah, he says, Gavin, I've learned something today. Christians believe that Jesus can set us free from the power of our past. Islam can never do that.

I turned around and said, you're right. He came to faith in the middle of December. Can I tell you, he told his family that he became a Christian.

[18:20] And he said, I don't want to know you anymore. You know what he said to me a few weeks ago? He said, I just don't get it. He says, you have prayer meetings, where are the Christians? Where are they?

Why wouldn't you want to be there? You go to church, well, I'll go to church when it's convenient. I don't get it. Why is it not a priority? Can I say to you, I think there's been subtle shifts which have come into the church.

Where they are, say, we're so often quick at pointing the finger at the apathy out there. I think God's saying, come on guys, let's, we have to take stock. Where are we in here?

What's the message Haggai says over and over and over again? Consider your ways. Actually, can I say to you on an anniversary date, it's a great opportunity.

It's not a criticism upon this church, it's not a rebuke on this church. I just think it's a great opportunity to say, actually, let's consider our ways, let's take stock. Where are we?

[19:24] What type of church are we? Where do we want to go? What do we perceive as the strengths in this church? Because there's so many strengths, isn't there? Isn't there? Are you blessed to be here?

You know, think about all the people's lives that this church has changed and transformed. I tell everyone about this church. They say, oh God, not Western Hills again. But why do I tell people about this church?

Because I love this church. church. But the call is now for the church here in Scotland to consider its ways.

Is Jesus truly the center of his church? See, Haggai comes and he comes hard hitting. He doesn't hold anything by it, does he?

doesn't preach a nice politically correct, comfortable Christianity message. Consider your ways. Then Zerubbabel and the high priests, and he calls all the people to go about the act of rebuilding. [20 : 35] And how did they respond? They obeyed the voice of the Lord. And what's really interesting is you see the religious leaders and the congregation, if you want to call them that, the remnant, they all obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of the prophet Haggai.

Can I say to you, if we want to go about the act of rebuilding, make this clear. If you remember one thing, remember this. Together, everyone achieves more.

Now, do you believe that in a church, that together, everyone achieves more? Do you think the church is really weaker if you're not putting your acts apart? Because mark my words, the church is weaker if you are not doing something.

And also, you're weaker if you're drifting along. We're weaker. We need to stand shoulder to shoulder together. You all know I'm football dad, so excuse the football illustration, all right? But how many of you remember Sir Bobby Robson? Anyone remember Sir Bobby Robson? Manager of England, we won't talk about that. Newcastle, that's still in Scotland, that's okay, right? [21 : 52] Barcelona, a few other clubs. he was awarded the BBC Life Achievement Award for football in the early 2000s.

I never forgot when he came and he was presented the award. He was a proud man from Durham originally, and he said his dad would have somersaulted from Durham to London to see him get this award, but it was his speech, which I've never forgot.

he said, you know, everyone talks about how great a manager I was. He said, that's simply not true. He said, behind every great team that I managed wasn't just great players.

There was coaches, there was the scouting staff who looked for the greatest new talent to help us. But more than that, there was other people who worked behind the scenes.

There was the physios who nursed people back from injury. There was the catering staff who made sure that the players had a healthy diet. It wasn't like pie and chips like it would have been in the 70s and 80s.

[22 : 58] He said, beyond every great team was everyone taking their part. Each person had a role. Can I say to you, the same is true in the church.

Behind every great church is more than a great pastor. Behind every great church is more than a good leadership team. I want you to think about your Sunday school teachers. Thank God for Sunday school teachers.

I thank God for my Christian mom. I thank God for her prayers. I want to thank God for the people like, I remember the first time I came in here with Daniel Wilson.

Daniel doesn't even profess having a faith in Christ. Everywhere I'm going ministry, I meet someone whose life's been touched by Daniel Wilson. Honestly, it's amazing. But I thank God for David and Elaine.

I thank God for people like Jim. I thank God for Peter Pitcairn. Can you hear me, Peter? Yeah, I can hear you.

[24 : 04] If you knew who Peter was, he was stone deaf. But can I tell you a story about Peter Pitcairn which you might not know? I met Peter Pitcairn at the age of eight at a BB display.

I remember it well. He came, he gave me a ride because I didn't do the BB handshake properly. And after that, he said to me, I'll pray for you. He prayed for me every day from when I was eight until I was 23.

And I was even in this church for seven years of that time. Every day. Because the church is more than a pastor.

Nothing against Pastor Daniel. I think Pastor Daniel was great. But I'm sure he would say this too. The ministry of the body is far more important than just the ministry of the pastor.

And can I say to you, I'm going to be blunt here. In pastoral vacancy, can I tell you? You're all going to need to get your hands dirty, friends. There's no one that's going to be left on the side or left on the bench.

[25 : 16] You're all going to have to scrub up your hands and say, Lord, what are the gifts, what are the things that you've given me to do? Because we want to rebuild the house of the Lord. I hope you're not going to just sit back in your vacancy and think, right, we'll just tick over until we get a

new pastor.

I hope you're not. Can I tell you, if you do, that's a cry in shame. The church will be weaker because of it. But see, it's an opportunity. But they obeyed the voice of the Lord together to go about that act of rebuilding the house of the Lord.

But there's also not just an encouragement that together they were going to do that. There was an assurance that came. Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message.

I am, what does it say? With you. I am with you. And that's the great thing when we go about the act of rebuilding the house of the Lord.

We remember he's with us friends. Amen? He'll never leave us. He'll never forsake us. I'm with you, Westerhills Baptist Church.

[26 : 34] I'm with you, I've been with you in the 50 years that have gone by. But I'll go with you in the future. When I got baptized in this, thanks about here, isn't it?

Where am I here? Right? Down there. Right, okay. I better not fall in there then. That's fine. Okay, 4th of March. I remember someone in this church gave me a poster. And I think about this poster I had up on my wall.

Every day as a teenage lad. And it just simply said the words, the task ahead of you is as never as great as the power behind you.

And I used to pray that every day I went to school. Lord, the task ahead of me being a witness for you is as never as great as the power behind me. And it's something I still pray every day when I go into ministry.

Lord, I know that the task ahead of me today is as never as great as the power behind me. And I want to say that same thing for you as a church.

[27 : 39] The call is still there to rebuild. The call is still there to build in the way that God prioritizes. The call is still there to use our gifts and our talents for the glory of God.

But the assurance, I'm with you church. I'm with you. I think there's no greater message to give us, isn't there? uncertain times.

No such thing for this. The only certainty is this. Jesus said when he gave us that commission, go and make disciples. I am with you always, always, even until the end of the age.

I'm going to come into land. You'll be glad to know. I've had my porridge or my chicken stuffed papagos. This is my conclusion and I'm going to be serious here.

What type of church do you want to be? Do you want to be a church where Jesus is glorified in? Shout out amen if you do. Do you want to use your gifts and your talents for the glory of God?

[29 : 02] in this community? Really? Do you really want to say, Lord, we want you to consider, we need to consider our ways before you?

Can I tell you, that's a hard prayer to pray when you pray that, can I tell you? We did that as a leadership team in lockdown. I wish we never did because it's meant real heart searching for me. a real heart searching for the leadership team. But can I say this and this with what I'll conclude? this is a time of great opportunity.

I have never seen a time in my life as a Christian, and I mean this, where I've seen so many people that are so open to share about faith in Christ. This is a time where it's ripe for opportunity.

This is not a time where people are thinking, oh no, people aren't interested in the church. Can I tell you, every single day of my life, I don't look for opportunities. They come.

[30 : 13] But remember when you go about that act of rebuilding together, are you going to rebuild the Lord now? Now, because this message, it doesn't just want to issue a call, but there has to be a response, doesn't there?

Haggai doesn't mince it, mince about. He says, you know, the people obeyed. And I'm going to say together, will you say Lord, choose the expression, we're all in.

We're going to say, Lord, again, we need you to be the vision. We need you to be the center. We need you to be the center of your church.

And we want to be a church. And I mean this in the nicest way I'm going to say. I hope next time, I came November last year, it's great to see so many more people since then.

But I hope next time I come back, whenever it is, I hope you're not the same church again. Please hear that. I hope you're not. I hope there's lots of visitors and there's lots of new people.

You are Holy, holy, holy Holy, holy, holy High and set apart Holy, holy, holy Holy, holy God that's who you are It's in the empty tomb It's on the rugged cross Your death defying love Is written in your scars You'll never quit on me You'll never quit on me You'll never quit on me You'll always hold my heart Cause that's the kind of God you are It's in the empty tomb It's on the rugged cross Your death defying love Is written in your scars You'll never quit on me You'll never quit on me You'll never quit on me

You'll always hold my heart Cause that's the kind of God you are Who you are When I was young you called my name I tried to run But still you came And you stepped into the dark Cause that's just the kind of God You are I love you Lord For your mercy never fails me

[43 : 04] All my days I've been held in your hands From the moment that I wake up Till I lay my head I will sing I will sing Of the goodness of God All my life you have been faithful All my life you have been so So good With every breath that I am made I will sing Of the goodness of God I love your voice You have led me through the fire

In darkest night You are close like no other I've known you as a father I've known you as a friend And I have lived In the goodness of God You have led me through the fire And all my life you have been faithful And all my life you have been faithful And all my life you have been so So good With every breath that I am made I will see of the goodness of God.

Your goodness is running after, it's running after me. Your goodness is running after, it's running after me.

With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now. I give you everything. Your goodness is running after, it's running after me.

Your goodness is running after, it's running after me. Your goodness is running after, it's running after me.

[45 : 48] With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now. I give you everything. Your goodness is running after, it's running after me.

All my life, you have been faithful. All my life, you have been so, so good.

With every breath that I am in, I will sing of the goodness of God.

Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God. You are here, moving in our midst.

I worship you. I worship you. I worship you. You are here, working in this place.

[47 : 35] I worship you. I worship you. I worship you.

I worship you. I worship you.

I worship you. You are here. Healing every heart. I worship you.

I worship you. Cause you are way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness.

My God, that is who you are. You are way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness.

[48 : 55] My God, that is who you are. That is who you are. That is who you are.

That is who you are. That is who you are. Even when I don't see it, you're working.

Even when I don't feel it, you're working. You never stop, you never stop working. Never stop, you never stop working. Even when I don't see it, you're working.

Even when I don't feel it, you're working. You never stop, you never stop working You never stop,

you never stop Even when I don't see it, you're working Even when I don't feel it, you're working

Never stop, you never stop working Never stop, you never stop Waymaker, miracle worker,

promise keeper Light in the darkness My God, that is who you are You are waymaker, miracle

worker, promise keeper Light in the darkness My God, that is who you are Waymaker, miracle

worker, promise keeper Light in the darkness My God, that is who you are That is who you are

That is who you are That is who you are. That is who you are.

[51 : 09] Another sleepless night. Pray and hope comes with a morning light. Right now you're feeling like you've lost this mind.

And fear is screaming out your name. When you say, God help me, you wonder if he's even listening.

The truth is I wonder the very same thing. So you don't have to feel the shame. Let me walk with you through this valley.

And tell you all that I've learned to be true. Don't lose heart. Don't you dare let go. I've been where you are. You are not alone.

No.