One Small Step – Part 1

# That One Thing

# (Zechariah 4:6-10)

Welcome, I’m so glad to have all of you with us today as we kick off a brand-new, four-part message series called “One Small Step.” What I really love about this time a year is that so many people have a heightened sense of optimism. It just seems like there’s so much more hope that things in our lives could actually be different. For some of you, 2019 means you’re going to eat better, get fit, maybe become more spiritually focused, get a better grip on your spending, or quit some annoying habit. I don’t know what it might be for you, but there’s something about starting a New Year that just brings hope and I suppose it’s all psychological, but we need all the encouragement we can get because sometimes we set goals that can be kind of intimidating. If you’re anything like me, I find myself comparing my weight, my fitness goals, my life, my family, or my situation to others and can find myself overwhelmed because I can’t even grasp the big changes that I would need to make to get those kinds of results.

One of the big challenges we face today with social media is that we look at people’s posts and we only see what they want us to see, because they present their best side, the best view, with the best background, and yet we’re all too familiar with our behind-the-scenes and so we get discouraged. Even in the Bible, we look at people like David taking down that giant warrior Goliath and we’re encouraged because we want to take down the giants in our lives too. But what we forget is that prior to that one great event, for many years David was learning to be faithful with little things. You know, he was tending sheep, courageously protecting them, and preparing himself until that time when God knew he could trust him with bigger things.

Or even Daniel, we consider his unwavering faith as he refused to stop praying to his God and found himself thrown into a lion’s den. But God protects him, shutting the mouth of a lions, and the next day King Darius rescues Daniel, retrieving him from the lion’s den. And so, we want to be like that, we want that kind of confidence, but we forget that three times a day, year after year, Daniel stopped whatever he was doing, knelt down and sought the Lord in prayer. You see, it’s those little things that no one sees that make a big difference, and that’s where we’re going to go for the next few weeks, we’re going to focus on three important areas as someone once said,

“Watch your thoughts, they become words; watch your words, they become actions; watch your actions, they become habits; watch your habits, they become character; watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.” [1977 October 31, Canandaigua Daily Messenger, Words of Wisdom, (Freestanding quotation credited to Frank Outlaw), Quote Page 4, Column 2, Canandaigua, New York. (NewspaperArchive)]

And so, in the upcoming weeks we’re going to focus on our thoughts, our words, and our habits. This is important, because as we take one small step, focusing on that one thing we’ll find ourselves making small changes in the way we think, in the way we speak, and in the way we behave. And it’s these small changes, these little things that no one notices, that will bring about the results that we want. So, in the next few weeks we’re going to focus on that one thing that we want, rather than looking at the impossibilities, or worrying about the difficulties and the hardships, but like the apostle Paul said,

“One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal…” (Philippians 3:13-14).

And so, that’s what we’re going to do, and today as we lay the foundation for this series, we’re going to start in Zechariah, chapter 4. To give you a little context, this was written at a low point in the history of Israel, God’s people were in captivity, the temple had been destroyed, and so they didn’t have a place to worship, they were exiled in a foreign land and they were discouraged. But in the year 537 BC, a man named Zerubbabel led a remnant of people back to Israel, back to the land where they were supposed to be to rebuild the Temple and worship God. It was at this time that God spoke to the prophet Zechariah and there were three things God told Zechariah to pass on to Zerubbabel about his work, three things that apply to you, me and everyone else. And so, let’s start in Zechariah, verse six, as we begin reading in chapter 4, this was the message of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Zechariah said,

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6).

Basically, what the Lord was telling Zerubbabel is that the temple was not going to be built in any way that he gets credit for it, but that it’s going to be by God’s Spirit. And in the same way, you and I can try to change in our own power and we might make some improvements, but if we tap into the power of the Holy Spirit, a power greater than that which we possess, by God’s Spirit he can transform us. And so, first of all, I want you to see that God wants you to do something bigger than you are.

## 1. Something Bigger Than You

You see, most of us are well aware of our limitations. We have a pretty good idea of which battles we can win and which battles we'll lose; and we tend to chart our course accordingly. Now, I've heard so many people say, "I’d love to be this or that, but I don't think I could get started. I don’t think I can stick to it. I just don’t think I'm capable of getting there." And while it's good for us to be aware of our strengths and weaknesses, it's much more important to be aware of the unlimited power of God and his ability to do great things in us. And especially when it comes to kingdom work, because for those who have the mind of Christ, who seek to do great things for the glory of God, they’ll accomplish it by the power of God. That’s exactly what God told Zechariah to tell Zerubbabel. He said,

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit…” (Zechariah 4.6).

Somebody once said that we should attempt things so big that if God doesn't act on our behalf, we're sure to fail. Now I know that sounds rather risky, but if you’re walking in the will of God that’s a pretty good strategy. You see, when we attempt something bigger than we are, we force ourselves to rely on a power greater than ourselves, and therefore we’re constantly mindful that we can’t do it on our own. In fact, David said it this way,

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7).

And today, God is calling us to step out in a life of faith; not faith in ourselves or our own abilities, but faith in his might and his power. This is what God wants to do in you, and yet some of you, you’ve tried for years to change something, to improve something, and that dream has always been just beyond your grasp, beyond your ability to achieve. But this year, I’m believing this is the year that you’ll succeed, but it won’t be by your might, it won’t be by your power, but it will be by his Spirit. You see, God wants your life to become a testimony to his power that is at work within you. And that’s why God said, “I’m going to give you my power to rebuild this temple” and in verse seven he said, speaking to those obstacles before Zerubbabel,

“What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'” (Zechariah 4:7).

Today there are some of you who are standing before mighty mountains, but if you’ll dare take them on, by the power of the Holy Spirit they’ll become level ground, because when God calls you to do something that’s bigger than you, there’s no force on earth that can stop the power and the will of God through you. And I love this, notice that before the construction even starts, God already sees the end, and he’s already blessed it. And so, number one, God is calling you to do something that’s bigger than you; and then number two, God wants you to finish what you start.

## 2. Finish What You Start

Finish what you start, because God’s already blessed it. Before you even attempt to do what God puts on your heart, he knows what the result can be if we surrender to the power of his Spirit. Zechariah continues in verse eight saying,

“Then the word of the Lord came to me: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you” (Zechariah 4:8-9).

Now, the book of Ezra gives us greater detail into this time and it tells us that there were people visiting the construction site who were mocking the workers, their aspirations, and the progress they were making, but there were others who came and actually cried. These were those who knew the former glory of Solomon’s temple and as they looked at the temple site and the foundation they were grieved because it was so unimpressive. They felt like it wasn’t ever going to amount to anything, they were embarrassed that it was so small, and the reality is that we all feel that way sometimes.

Maybe you’re going to the gym, you’re on the treadmill, and you’ve got a goal, but you’re thinking, “I’ve got to lose all this weight and I’ve only lost 1 pound. I’ve been working so hard, I’ve got all these changes to make, I don’t seem to be accomplishing anything, and it’s already been three days.” And so, it’s Friday and we find ourselves becoming disappointed, we’re embarrassed by the small beginnings and ready to give up. And all of us will face this at some point in our lives, you’ll get discouraged by the lack of progress, and you’ll be presented with a backdoor, an easy way out. And every student has faced this, every married person, every missionary, every pastor, every volunteer, every person who’s ever had a dream or has ever dared to take one small step in faith has been tempted to walk away.

But God says, “You started it. I want you to finish it.” And you might say, "But God, I didn't know that it would be so difficult, that there’d be so many obstacles, I’d fail so many times, people would criticize me and quit on me, it would cost so much, it would take so long. I just didn’t know!” And there will come a time when walking away from your dream, your goal, your marriage, your ministry, will never look more appealing. But when you face this temptation, you must remember the words that God spoke to Zechariah: “Zerrubbabel laid the foundation… his hands will also complete it.”

You see, God didn't give you that dream so that you would quit. He didn't give you that opportunity in your life so that you would fail. He didn't call you to start, he didn't call you to get half way there, he called you to get it done. God called you to finish what you started. And so, this is where we can count on this first principle to go to work for us. We put our trust in someone greater, something bigger than ourselves, and we allow God's Spirit to reboot and refresh our souls so that we can continue in his power. That’s the promise given to Isaiah in chapter 40, he said,

“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:30-31)

God said, “Zerubbabel began this project, he will complete it,” and he’s saying the same thing to you today. “I want you to finish what you started, soaring on wings like eagles, being swept along by the power of God, making up your mind to keep on going, completing the task, staying in the race and crossing the finish line. And then the third thing I want to show you today is that God wants you to start where you are with what you have.

## 3. Start with What You Have

Now, the mistake that many new companies make is that they try to be like Wal-Mart, Amazon, or some other industry leader. You know, they think, "We want to be successful like that and so we've got to operate in a big way." Even pastors and ministry leaders do the same thing, because we go to conferences or we’re browsing online, and we see what’s going on at Elevation, Northpoint, LifeChurch, Gateway, and Willow Creek Church. We listen to Craig Groeschel, Steven Furtick, Andy Stanley, and countless others who are doing everything in a big way and we think, “We’ve got to do everything just like them, you know, the biggest churches in the nation, we’ve got to be just like them.” But that’s not true, in verse 10, God said to Zechariah,

“Do not despise these small beginnings for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin” (Zechariah 4:10, NLT).

And so today, I hope this will encourage some of you to take one small step, not to despise those small beginnings, those small things, those little improvements, because you’ve got to put down one stone before you can put down the next. You’ve got to start somewhere, and God rejoices to see you being faithful in the small things. And so, we don’t need to wait until we’re big enough, good enough, or have enough money, but we can start right now doing what God has called us to do and that’s exactly what he wants us to do. You see, Zerubbabel began rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, but there was just no way it could compare to the glory of the temple that had been destroyed by invading armies. And God said, "Don't worry about that. Don't despise these small beginnings. Just get started. I rejoice to see the work begin."

Some of you right now may be in the days of “small beginnings," you may be in a season where you’re taking one step forward and then slipping two steps back, and so what I’m going to challenge you to do is get as focused as you can. I’m not talking about New Year’s resolutions, but what I want you to do is take one small step, to seek God for one thing, one specific word and a verse to go along with it to direct your year to come. Just one small step, because this is not going to be by your might or by your power, but it’s by God’s Spirit that you’ll be empowered to move forward. By God’s strength you’re going to get started, you’re going to finish it, because you’re going to settle in for the long haul like Solomon encouraged us in Ecclesiastes chapter 9,

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might…” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

And so, what’s that one small step, that one thing, that one word going to be this year? You know, there may be things in your life that you know God wants you to do, and maybe you’ve been putting off getting started. But when you pray and seek God, you’re going to discover that when you hear God whisper, when he gives you that word, you’re going to have confidence, you’re going to have momentum, because you’ve got that one thing.

And so, I want to encourage you to take that word, whatever it is, “strength, faith, healing, giving, or serving” and just do a search. Go online and type that word into Google, you know, something like “serving in the Bible, faith in the Bible, whatever it is and there will be verses listed for you. And so, you just pick a verse you like, whatever verse speaks to your heart, and you write it down. You put it somewhere where you going to see it all the time, maybe on the refrigerator, your bathroom mirror, the dash of your car, you could even get it framed, but you put it somewhere where you’ll see it. Now, day after day, 365 days a year, there’s that word, that verse, that’s focusing you throughout the year.

Suddenly you find yourself making a little extra effort, you’re serving because you’re focused, your full of joy because you’re making a difference, and it’s just because you decided to be faithful in that one thing. And that’s so important because God loves when you’re faithful in the little things. In fact, he said in Matthew’s gospel,

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!” (Matthew 25:21).

Do you know what God would say to you today? “Start now, do something, take that first step, just one small step. I love the way Martin Luther King, Jr. said it, he said,

"You don't have to see the whole staircase now. Just take that first step in faith."

It’s like a staircase in the dark, you may not be able to see, but don’t be afraid, it’s just one small step, don’t despise these small beginnings. You see, it’s often the small things that no one sees that result in the big things that everyone wants. And so, here’s the principle to remember: one small step is all you need because when you allow yourself to be moved along by God’s Spirit, committed to finishing what you started, and starting with what you have, God can trust you with many things because you’ve been faithful with that one thing. That one small step.

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