

Part 1: Building a Gospel Legacy

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Today is a big day here at Sovereign Hope because we are going to be sharing a little bit about what lies ahead of us in regards to our location and our fundraising efforts for a new building.

I'm sure most of you woke up on this beautiful spring morning and said to yourself, "You know what would make this day all the better, a sermon on a building fund." But what I hope you hear today is how transformative we believe the gospel to be at Sovereign Hope. We refuse to believe that the gospel is something you come to know, and then you get to move on with your life.

The gospel is something that has a shaping influence on our lives, our worship, our relationships and our building. Forty days after Easter, Jesus ascended up into heaven where he now sits at the right hand of God. Which means that there is not physical Jesus that our world can look to, Jesus instead has given that role to the church.

The church is the body of Christ before a watching world. In 1 John 4:12, John says this, "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." The church and her love for Jesus is how God is made visible to a dying world. Which means just as Christians are a holistic unity of the invisible spirit and the physical body, so too are the invisible and physical aspects of the church important when it comes to both our worship and our witness.

God has woven into our present big decisions and ominous obstacles, and yet he is calling us to move forward. So what we are going to do today is looks at a **theology that carries us forward**, and then we are going to see some **practical steps that move us forward**.

One spring break when I was in college some friends and I went hiking in Zion National Park. One of the hikes we did was a hike that had no trail, but instead it was a steep and narrow slot canyon that we had to boulder and climb through on our own.

It just so happened that I was the unfortunate one to be in the front of our little party when we came to a really steep slope which led to an immediate cliff. After surveying the options, I thought it best to go crab style across it since I'm rather top heavy. The problem was that there came a moment when I was on all fours, when the pitch became so steep and the sandstone underneath me was so loose, that I came to a terrible conclusion: If I so much as moved any one of my hands or my feet, I would lose enough surface area to send me careening down the rock face and off the cliff.

And there I sat for what seemed to be an eternity, crab style, baking in the hot sun, in a precarious situation, while all my friends watched from afar, and I had no idea what to do next. I needed to move, but didn't know which move would lead to me living, and which would lead to me dying.

Have you ever been so overwhelmed by something that you didn't know what it would look like to move forward? Where like I was, you are paralyzed by fear or indecision? In our relationships, our career choices, our parenting we know what it's like to have to consider these types of decisions.

And I imagine that Timothy in the Bible knew the weight of this too. He was after all left by the apostle Paul himself to build and pastor the church in the town of Ephesus. This was no small task, Paul had helped plant this church, and had spent a significant amount of time in Ephesus, writing several books of the Bible while living there. It was an influential town, a political hotbed, a modern day Los Angeles with a thriving entertainment industry.

And it was a place where Paul himself was run out of town by an angry riot. A town where false teachers began to prey on the newly formed Christian community. It was a church which Paul loved and even wrote the book of Ephesians to as a letter to the church while imprisoned. And now, here is Timothy in a town hot with secular momentum, ripe with worldly distractions, preyed on by false teachers, and Paul, Timothy's father in the faith is once more in prison writing a letter to his spiritual son preparing him for the apostles eminent martyrdom.

And amidst all of these trials Timothy is called to build the church in Ephesus, to preach the word of God, to appoint faithful elders, and establish dutiful deacons. A young, but famous church, living in a loudly hostile and distracted culture, competing with trendy new false doctrines, and preparing for the death of their spiritual leader; this is a job posting most of us would avoid, but which a young Timothy was given.

And in 2 Timothy Paul writes to Timothy with all of this drama coming to bear and Paul opens the book with rich encouragement to this young pastor and the church which God had established in Ephesus. And what I want to do now is read for us Paul's introduction to Timothy and notice the two primary ways Paul encourages Timothy and calls him forward. **2 Timothy 1:3-14.**

Here in his last first word, Paul encourages Timothy to move forward despite what lies ahead by calling him to do two things: **Enflame your affection for God** and **Consider the power of the gospel.**

Look at the metaphor Paul uses when speaking about Timothy's affection for God: **2 Timothy 1:5-6.**

Paul says, remember your salvation, remember when I myself prayed for you and affirmed what you believed and sent you out on mission: fan that ember into a flame.

We live in Montana, we've all done this before. You've over estimated your ability to start a fire with nothing but a pinecone and sap. And now you have this small bit of burning embers on the smallest part of a piece of wood, and you get down on your hands and knees and you begin to blow. You cough a little bit, because at first the glow doesn't do much more, but the smoke does. But you know you've got to eat, so you blow some more. You're knees begin to ache from the rocks that you're kneeling on, but you blow some more, and soon the ember becomes flame, the log becomes engulfed, and you are made warm and full by the fire.

How many of us have had that kind of dedication when it comes to increasing our affection for God? At salvation it is God's grace that consumes the whole of our life on. But we know that it's not always a blaze. We can become busy, distracted and neglect to care for it. Life can bring downpours of sorrow which despite our faithfulness, damper the flames and make it hard to feel the warmth.

But because true salvation is given, held and endured by God, there will always be an ember. There will always be hope that God will again renew your heart with white hot affection for what he has given you in your salvation.

Paul is saying to Timothy, "You might feel that God has left you alone, but our God never abandons us. Fan into flame what God has given you by grace." When life is great we are often prone to neglect and when life is hard we are often prone to despair, but the promise of God is that for those who endure, for those who fan into flame the deposit that God has given, you have the promise that God will warm you again.

The old Anglican pastor J.C. Ryle pointed out once the observation that sickness is contagious but health is not. Meaning if you are one who wants the personal hope of the gospel to be large in your heart, you must do the work of submitting yourself to God's grace. It doesn't come natural, but it does come as we do the hard work of reminding ourselves of the good news of who Jesus is and what he has done. It comes as we commit to obey him and follow him even when the ember seems small. Because an ember, no matter how small, is a sign of God's loving grace towards you.

And this is where Paul then reminds Timothy of the power this gospel has. Look at what he says next: **2 Timothy 1:8-10**.

We can always hope that the ember can become a flame because the gospel really does work. It really saved you. Jesus really died for your sins. He really rose from the grave, defeated death and gave us eternal life.

And look at what stands at the middle of the power of the gospel: **1 Timothy 1:9**. God saved us not because of our works, but according to his purpose. There is a deep and often overlooked reality in this text when it comes to how we move forward in the Christian faith. That is that our works matter only when they are found inside of God's purpose and grace. We are not saved by our works, but Jesus' work empowers us for deeply meaningful work: **Ephesians 2:8-10**.

This might seem crushing to you, "I can hardly figure out what I'm doing in life, and now I'm disappointing God." But here is the hope in this text, God saved you for work, but your work is validated not by worldly standards. Worldly standards says, is my work flashy, effective, well received and profitable. Gospel work is work done, but gauged according to God's standards. We find peace in faithfully pursuing God's purposes, not by assessing our own ability to produce anything. We align ourselves with God's purpose to glorify him and love others, and we rest from the burden of results. This means every moment is an opportunity.

Just last week we looked at Jesus' Great Commission to his church, "Go forth and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you."

What a beautiful and life encompassing call. A call that brings clarity and purpose regardless of where you live, how much you make, or your relationship status. The Great Commission promises us that we can have clarity of purpose in every moment of our life because in all of our life we can go out with the good news of the gospel, and grow up in our understanding of the gospel.

But if you are committed to this commission, just like Timothy is, there will be times where you feel burdened, fearful, unable to move forward, and maybe even ineffective where God has placed you. Which is why you too must consider in your own hearts your affection for God, and the power of the gospel.

And these two things: white hot affection for God and a clear picture of the power and purpose of the gospel are what we want our church to be built on. This is what Paul is encouraging Timothy to endure in, and today at Sovereign Hope this is what God is calling us to endure in.

We cannot control much, but we can control our effort to fan into flame the gospel in our hearts, and to believe and trust in the power of God's purpose in the gospel.

This is the theological frame work we want to be committed to as we begin the public campaign for our church building fund. One year ago this week we celebrated our 50th anniversary as a church and launched what we have called, our 50/50 Legacy, a vision for the type of church we will be for the next 50 years. This is our second point today: **Practical Steps that Move us Forward.**

In 1968, this church was formed when gospel believing men and women took a brave stand to uphold the inerrancy of scripture and the missionary call of the gospel. Doing so resulted in a split from their denomination which left them without a pastor, without a budget, and without a building.

Sacrifices were made. Affections ran hot. And we today are proof that the gospel has power, that works done in purpose and grace have enduring value.

Like our church 51 years ago, we have a clear picture of our doctrine and how that shapes the life of our church. But also like 51 years ago we need a building. It had been our understanding with railroad company that our lease which expires in July 2020 could be renewed for another long term period whenever we wanted. However the railroad donated this land to the City and now the City has plans to develop this land, including the space our building is located on.

Let me be really clear here though, the City is not persecuting us. In fact we like a lot of what the City wants to do with our land, it's just that it comes at our cost. They want to help us as much as they can, but they have told us they are not interested in renewing our lease as of July 2020.

One thing we are very excited about is that Missoula is growing, and as much as it may be inconvenient to our roads and private space, we rejoice that God is bringing more people to our city. Because those are more people with whom we can share the gospel with. As God grows Missoula, so too is he growing your capacity to evangelize.

But this also means that property in Missoula is continually rising which is why our building fund goal is a large number: two million dollars. Because it is our hope that we would be able to purchase outright, if possible, our new location. Just as members of our church did 51 years ago, we are asking this congregation, at this time, to make a sacrifice for the generations yet to come. We want to lighten, and even eliminate, building rent or debt so that our church can maximize its budget for missions, discipleship and evangelism.

In fact if we can pull this off, it would save us an estimated \$150,000 a year as compared to what we are paying for our lease and what we would be paying for our lease moving forward. That means that even 10 years from now we could free up 1.5 million dollars of our budget to be used for gospel work in Missoula and around the globe.

Raising \$2 million by 2020 is a big goal. And one that will require sacrificial giving from ourselves and even gracious partnerships with our family and friends from other churches. You are going to be hearing more about our fundraising events and specific ways you can give over the next few weeks on both Sunday mornings and on our website (achurchbuilding.com) and social media.

A Church Building campaign is the next step in our 50/50 Legacy. And it is because we as a church have a deep affection for God and a trust in his power that we want to move forward in our 50 year plan and secure a building.

Our 50/50 Legacy carries with it desires to be a Healthy Church (growing in our ability to glorify God), a Missoula church (serving our community with the gospel of Jesus), and a Sending Church (participating in God's missionary call across our globe). And where we meet and what the building looks like will have real impact on all these goals.

In regards to a **Healthy Church**, our building will free up ministry flexibility as well as providing a better tool for our deacons and members. It will free up money and time as opposed to renting or leasing, allows us to provide Bible Study and classroom space that we don't have now, and creates access for more ministry opportunities throughout the week.

In Dubai, it is really hard for churches to get property, and most have to share rental space with other churches. But what we have seen over there is that those few gospel churches which are able to obtain their own building have a unique advantage when it comes to both going out with the gospel and growing up in it. Does the church move forward and grow in health without a building? Yes. But having a fixed building provides a ground zero for care and worship in an invaluable way.

A church building helps establish us as Healthy Church both financially and spiritually. But we are really excited about the unique opportunities a building can provide for us being a **Missoula Church**.

Owning a building will allow us to become, by God's grace a permanent fixture in the fabric of Missoula. It allows us to put down roots which will grow deeper with time in terms of how we serve the community we are in, and the relationship we have with our neighbors.

We often say here that being part of the church is so much more than showing up on Sunday morning, which also means that our church building plays a role beyond Sunday morning. Our goal is that our building will be used throughout the week by our members as they see specific needs in their own communities, and by our neighborhoods as they see us safe place for those who are hurting. We want to be able to provide office space to other ministries and non-profits that are looking to serve our community and share some of our essential values.

As property rates in Missoula go up, it's going to be harder and harder for churches to find space in town and we want to make that sacrifice now because we know the transformative power a church can have in a community when its healthy members are committed to living out the gospel in every area of their life.

In fact there are churches buildings across our world which have endured long past pastors and congregations as long standing witnesses to the truth of the gospel and the work of the church. Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia has stood as a gospel beacon since 1857. The Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, the church pastored by Charles Spurgeon, has been in the same place since 1861, and Capitol Hill Baptist Church, in D.C., hasn't moved since 1878.

God didn't die for church buildings, but history has shown that healthy churches can produce buildings which outlive and extend the mission of the Christians who helped establish them.

And we believe that a permanent building will help us be a **Sending Church** because we really do believe this to be the last building we will ever own. We will never outgrow our new building. Not because we believe God won't grow our church, but because we believe God will bring growth, growth which we will use to plant churches in Missoula and the surrounding areas.

We want the money we save on the building and the building itself to be given over to serve the broader work of Jesus in our country and across the globe. We are praying that it will be a base camp for faithful members and missionaries to be sent out across the globe.

We understand that this is a big ask, an ask that only makes sense when personally have experienced the saving beauty of Jesus, are rich in affection for him, and when we have seen first-hand the power of the gospel to save.

We have the opportunity as we move forward as a church to see the gospel work divine wonders through faithfully ordinary ways. Why do we want a church building? Because there are more people in this city whom God wishes to save. And as we go out with the message of the gospel, people will be added to churches. As the gospel goes out in ordinary ways, it changes lives and communities.

Paul knew this too didn't he? Remember what he told Timothy? Timothy the man hand-picked by Paul to lead the most influential church in his day? **1 Timothy 1:5**.

Do you realize that the Ephesian church is one of the only churches in all scripture where we actually see its beginning, its middle and its end? We see Paul establish it, Timothy care for it, and in Revelation we see Jesus speak to it. And in 2 Timothy, in perhaps the church's most vulnerable time Paul points out some divinely ordinary truths.

This church will endure because a grandma loved her grandson, because a mother raised her son with the truths of scripture; ordinary graces, extraordinary legacy. If we are committed to personal affection for God and a faith in his gospel, we might not see radical changes in our life time. But if our lives are rich with the gospel, we can trust that God will use our daily and ordinary sacrifices for his eternal purposes.

Right now we have eight elders at our church and so this week I asked those elders some of the significant moments in their conversion. In 1980 KJ had a friend's mom share the gospel with him. In 1982 and in 2001, Rob and Rick were engaged by campus ministries while in college. In 1995, Paul's heart was won to Jesus in a small town church. In 2004 and 2009, Jonny and Daniel were given books which changed their lives. In 2006 a history teacher at my school offered a class on evangelism which connected God's work to my life. In 2007 Devan met a girl, who hung out with him, but wouldn't participate in his sin, and she shared the hope of the gospel.

You might not be able to save a city, but you can speak to your children's friends, you can invite a classmate to GCF, you can share the gospel with your neighbor, give a book to your friend, and provide a reason for your hope. And in God's kindness, these ordinary acts have worked to sustain this church today.

You do not know what God's purposes will accomplish through your works, but God has promised that it will bear fruit in his time. Remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18**? What history has shown is that God meant it.

The growth of his church might not look like societal renewal, but the church will grow as the gospel saves souls. The good news that Jesus did everything required to save sinners and restore us to God is the good news that we are on the right side of history.

And because of this, everything matters. We can give our lives to God's glory and know that every conversation matters. Every dime given matters. Every sin destroyed matters. Every word of encouragement, every imperfect and faithful presentation of the gospel, every broken prayer matters, and matters for all eternity.

Sovereign Hope Church, God hasn't promised to endure your church, but he has promised to build his church. Which means, we are playing with house money. We might fail, but God will not. So swing for the fences. Give your lives for a gospel legacy. Find your joy. And fan into flame the gift of God. May the creed of our church be: the gospel works, and so too will we.

We will be the church Jesus has called us to be as ordinary believers carry out the often overlooked work of following Jesus over the years of their life.

But as it relates to our building fund we have two simple steps for today:

First as you leave here, we have some packets available in the back. We are asking that every household take one of these and read it. Inside you will see all sorts of information on our building fund and our specific needs.

But second, we want you to join us this Tuesday night for a time of prayer and worship here at church. We know that unless God builds the house, we labor in vain. So join us from 6:30-7:30 here as we together praise God for what he has done, and humbly pray that he will continue to use us moving forward. This is how we want to begin to fan into flame our affections for God together.

So what I want to do now is pray for us in closing, but after prayer we have a video we are going to show, a video you are free to share online and with your friends as we begin this next step of our journey together, and then after the video we will take the Lord's Supper together.