

WHERE THERE IS STRUGGLE, THERE IS STRENGTH

New Hope Baptist Church

Sunday, August 23, 2026

Primary Texts: James 1:2-4; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Psalm 126:5-6; Galatians 6:9; Galatians 6:2; Isaiah 40:31

Sermon Aim

To encourage New Hope that difficult seasons have not been wasted. God uses struggle to produce endurance, reveal His strength, deepen unity, and prepare His people for the harvest ahead. The message ends with a simple conviction: by the grace of God, we have got to make it - and we have a duty to help somebody else make it too.

Suggested 30-Minute Flow

- Opening and church encouragement - 4 minutes
- Point 1: Struggle matures us - 5 minutes
- Point 2: Weakness reveals God's strength - 5 minutes
- Point 3: Tears become seed for harvest - 5 minutes
- Point 4: Do not quit before due season - 4 minutes
- "I've Gotta Make It" / Help Others Make It - 4 minutes
- Final encouragement and invitation - 3 minutes

SLIDE 13 - MESSAGE: "Where There is Struggle, There is Strength"

Opening: Struggle Is Not the End of the Story

Church, there are some messages that are meant to correct us, and there are some messages that are meant to instruct us. But every now and then, I believe the Lord gives a message simply to strengthen the hands of His people. I believe this is one of those messages.

New Hope has known what it is to pray through hard seasons. We have known what it is to want growth and not see it as quickly as we hoped. We have known what it is to long for revival, to keep the doors open, to keep singing, to keep praying, to keep serving, and sometimes to wonder when the breakthrough was going to come. There are seasons when the work feels heavy and the fruit seems slow.

But I want to say something plainly this morning: a hard season is not necessarily a wasted season. Struggle does not mean God has abandoned the church. Difficulty does not mean God is finished with the church. A delay is not the same thing as a denial. Sometimes the very season we are asking God to remove is the season He is using to prepare us.

There is a difference between being punished by a struggle and being prepared through a struggle. If a weightlifter never faces resistance, strength never develops. If a seed never goes into dark soil, it never produces a harvest. If faith is never tested, we never learn what faith can carry. God can take pressure, delay, disappointment, and weakness, and use all of it to build something stronger in His people.

So the message today is simple: where there is struggle, there can be strength. Not because struggle is pleasant. Not because pain is holy by itself. But because when God gets involved, He can bring patience out of pressure, strength out of weakness, harvest out of tears, and testimony out of trouble.

SLIDE 14 - SERMON MOVEMENT: "The Road Through Struggle"

PULPIT CUE: Slow down here and preview the sermon movements so the congregation knows where the message is going.

Here is the road we are going to walk this morning. First, struggle can mature us. Second, weakness can become the place where the strength of God shows up. Third, tears can become seed for a future harvest. And finally, we must make it - and once God gives us strength, we must turn around and help somebody else make it too.

If we can understand those four truths, then we can stop asking only, "Why has this been so hard?" and begin asking, "Lord, what are You building in us through this?"

SLIDE 15 - JAMES 1:2-4

Point One: The Trial Is Not Wasted

James 1:2-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

James does not say trials are joyful because pain feels good. He says we can count it joy because we know something about what God can produce through the trial. The pain is not the point; the product is the point.

The text says the trying of your faith “worketh patience.” That word patience is more than sitting quietly and waiting. It is endurance. It is staying power. It is the spiritual ability to remain steady when the road is long. It is the ability to keep praying when the answer has not come yet. It is the ability to keep serving when applause is absent. It is the ability to keep trusting when the evidence has not caught up with the promise.

Some things can only be learned by going through. You can read about endurance, but struggle teaches endurance. You can sing about trust, but hardship tests trust. You can preach about faithfulness, but a hard season reveals whether faithfulness is real.

And that is why I want New Hope to hear this carefully: the years of struggle may have been producing something we could not see while we were in them. God may have been teaching us how to stay. He may have been teaching us how to pray without immediate evidence. He may have been teaching us how to worship without ideal circumstances. He may have been strengthening the spiritual backbone of this church.

A church that has never struggled can become fragile. But a church that has prayed through lean seasons, buried faithful saints, weathered disappointment, and still opens the doors with praise on Sunday morning has learned something about endurance. That does not make us better than anybody else. It makes us responsible for what we have learned.

James says, “Let patience have her perfect work.” In other words, do not interrupt the work God is doing by quitting too soon. Do not walk out of the

classroom before the lesson is complete. Do not leave the field before the seed has had time to grow.

SLIDE 16 - POINT ONE: “The trial is not wasted.”

PULPIT CUE: *Emphasize the line: “God may be building tomorrow’s strength through today’s pressure.”*

So if the church has been under pressure, perhaps God has been producing patience. If we have had to wait, perhaps God has been forming endurance. If we have had to keep believing without seeing, perhaps God has been strengthening faith. The trial is not wasted when we let God use it.

SLIDE 17 - 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10

Point Two: God’s Strength Shows Up in Weakness

Paul said the Lord answered him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Then Paul concluded, “for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

That sounds backwards to the world. The world says strength means control, resources, influence, numbers, and visible success. But God often does His clearest work in places where human strength has run out.

Weakness is uncomfortable because it removes the illusion that we can do everything ourselves. It forces us to admit that talent is not enough. Tradition is not enough. Money is not enough. Personality is not enough. Strategy is not enough. If the church is going to have spiritual life, we need the power and grace of God.

Paul prayed for the thorn to leave, but God gave him something different. God did not first remove the weakness. God promised sufficient grace inside the weakness. That means sometimes the answer to our prayer is not immediate escape. Sometimes the answer is sustaining grace.

And that should encourage us. Maybe we do not feel strong enough for the future. Maybe we do not think we have enough people, enough energy, enough resources, or enough momentum. But the question is not whether we are enough. The question is whether His grace is enough. And according to the Word of God, His grace is sufficient.

A church on its knees can be stronger than a church impressed with itself. A small group of believers filled with faith can be stronger than a large crowd with no dependence on God. The strength of New Hope will never finally be found in how impressive we look. It will be found in how deeply we depend on Christ.

SLIDE 18 - POINT TWO: "Grace is sufficient."

Weakness does not disqualify us from God's work. It may be the very place where Christ's power rests on us most clearly. The places that made us feel small may become the places where God shows Himself mighty.

SLIDE 19 - PSALM 126:5-6

Point Three: Tears Can Become Seed for Harvest

Psalm 126 says, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

I love the honesty of that text. It does not pretend that sowing is always cheerful. Sometimes you sow while crying. Sometimes you keep working while hurting. Sometimes you keep praying while disappointed. Sometimes you keep believing while tired.

But notice what the psalmist calls those tears: they are connected to sowing. That means tears are not proof that nothing is happening. Tears can fall on seed.

Every prayer prayed over this church has been seed. Every Sunday School lesson taught has been seed. Every hymn sung when only a few people were present has been seed. Every offering given, every visit made, every person encouraged, every time somebody opened the church, cleaned a room, practiced a song, taught a child, or whispered a prayer for revival - that has been seed.

The difficulty is that seed disappears before it appears. You put it in the ground, and for a while you see nothing. If you judged the field too early, you might assume nothing was happening. But under the ground, roots are forming before the stalk ever breaks the surface.

That may be where New Hope is. We may have been judging by what was visible while God was doing hidden work. The tears may have been watering something. The prayers may have been rooting something. The struggle may have been preparing both the field and the laborers.

Harvest is not only about God sending people. Harvest also requires a church ready to receive people. If revival comes, somebody has to teach. Somebody has to disciple. Somebody has to encourage. Somebody has to welcome. Somebody has to pray. Somebody has to carry burdens. Perhaps God has been strengthening the church because the harvest ahead will require stronger hands.

SLIDE 20 - POINT THREE: "Tears are not proof that nothing is happening."

PULPIT CUE: Use a quieter tone here, then build: "Prayer is seed. Faithfulness is seed. Worship in hard times is seed."

Prayer is seed. Faithfulness is seed. Worship in hard times is seed. And the Bible says those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. The tears are real, but they are not final. Rejoicing is still in the text.

SLIDE 21 - GALATIANS 6:9

Point Four: Do Not Quit Before Due Season

Galatians 6:9 says, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

There are two phrases in that verse we need to hold together. The promise is, "we shall reap." The warning is, "if we faint not."

Weariness is dangerous because it can make good people stop doing good things. You can become so tired that you stop expecting. So disappointed that you stop praying. So frustrated that you stop serving. The enemy does not always have to destroy a church; sometimes he only has to wear it down until it quits expecting anything from God.

But Paul says, do not be weary in well doing. Why? Because there is a "due season." God has seasons. There is a planting season. There is a waiting season. There is a growing season. And there is a reaping season. The mistake is quitting in one season because it does not yet look like another season.

If we are in a waiting season, wait faithfully. If we are in a sowing season, sow faithfully. If we are in a pruning season, let God prune faithfully. But do not quit before due season.

I cannot promise the timetable. I cannot tell you exactly what growth will look like or exactly when revival will break through. But I can tell you what Scripture says: do not grow weary in doing good, because in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

SLIDE 22 - CHURCH ENCOURAGEMENT: "I've Gotta Make It"

I've Gotta Make It

There is an old gospel conviction wrapped up in the phrase, "I've gotta make it." I am not quoting a song; I am borrowing the spirit of perseverance behind that thought.

There comes a point in the Christian life when you have to settle something in your spirit: by the grace of God, I am not turning back. I may get tired, but I am not quitting. I may stumble, but I am getting back up. I may cry, but I am still walking. I may not understand every season, but I know who called me.

I've gotta make it through discouragement. I've gotta make it through disappointment. I've gotta make it through temptation. I've gotta make it through the seasons when I do not see what I hoped to see. Not because I am strong enough by myself, but because the grace of God is sufficient.

And as a church, we need some holy determination. We need to say, "We are not closing the book on what God can still do here. We are not surrendering the future because the past was difficult. We are not allowing struggle to have the last word."

SLIDE 23 - GALATIANS 6:2: "Help Others Make It Too"

If I Make It, I Must Help Somebody Else Make It

Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Here is where the Christian message becomes larger than personal survival. It is not enough for me to say, "I've gotta make it," and then leave everybody

else behind. If God has given me strength, some of that strength ought to be used to lift somebody else.

The church is supposed to be a place where burdens are shared. Somebody may be smiling this morning and still be struggling. Somebody may be faithful and still be tired. Somebody may be singing and still be carrying grief. They do not need another critic. They need an encourager.

If you have been through something and God brought you through, you are now qualified to tell somebody, “Do not quit.” If God comforted you in grief, you can comfort somebody else in grief. If God strengthened your faith in a hard season, you can stand beside somebody whose faith is shaking.

And if harvest is ahead, unity matters. A growing church cannot be built on spectators. It needs burden-bearers. It needs prayer warriors. It needs teachers. It needs encouragers. It needs people who say, “Nobody walks alone if I can help it.”

Maybe some of the strength God produced in us through past struggle was never meant to stop with us. Maybe God strengthened us so we could become a stronger church for the people He is going to send.

SLIDE 24 - ISAIAH 40:31: “Final Encouragement”

Final Encouragement: God Renews Strength

Isaiah 40:31 says, “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

That is the word I want to leave with New Hope: renewed strength. Not pretend strength. Not borrowed appearance. Renewed strength from the Lord.

The God who sustained the church through yesterday can strengthen the church for tomorrow. The God who gave grace in the lean season can give wisdom in the growth season. The God who kept us through struggle can prepare us for harvest.

So do not curse every hard season. Some of those seasons trained us. Some of those seasons humbled us. Some of those seasons taught us to pray. Some of those seasons reminded us that the church belongs to Jesus, not to us.

And now we look forward. We do not live in denial about the struggle, but neither do we build our identity around it. We take the strength God has formed in us and use it for what comes next.

Where there has been struggle, let there now be strength. Where there have been tears, let there be seed. Where there has been waiting, let there be faith. And when the harvest comes, let there be a church ready to receive it.

SLIDE 25 - INVITATION: HYMN 318 “The Nail-Scarred Hand”

Invitation

PULPIT CUE: Move from church-wide encouragement to individual response. Do not rush this section.

Maybe you are tired today. You have been trying to hold everything together, and your strength is low. The invitation is for you: come and ask God to renew your strength.

Maybe you are discouraged because you have been sowing and have not seen the harvest. Come and ask God to help you not faint before due season.

Maybe you have been carrying somebody else and you need strength to keep loving, praying, and helping. Come.

Maybe you want to pray specifically for New Hope - for growth, for revival, for unity, for the harvest ahead. Come and pray for this church.

And most importantly, if you do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior, the strength you need begins with salvation. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. You cannot save yourself. But you can trust Him. Come to the nail-scarred hand of Jesus.

By the grace of God, we are going to make it. And by the grace of God, we are going to help somebody else make it too.

Closing Preacher Notes

- Keep the message encouraging rather than scolding. The central tone is hope after struggle.
- Do not imply that church growth or revival is guaranteed on a specific timetable. Emphasize faithfulness and readiness for whatever harvest God gives.
- Use the “I’ve Gotta Make It” phrase as a thematic reference only; do not quote song lyrics.
- The strongest congregational build should occur from Galatians 6:9 through Galatians 6:2, then settle into Isaiah 40:31 and the invitation.