

“By My Spirit”



Richard A. Bennett

“By My Spirit”

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Introduction

As I was preparing this message, I prayed, "Lord, if this should be my last message on earth, may it be very special for Your glory." Then, even more deeply in my heart, the Lord confirmed the text: *"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts"* Zechariah 4:6.

To properly understand this text, it is helpful to consider its context. This verse follows a vision, given by God to Zechariah, of 'seven lamps', 'seven pipes', 'two olive trees', and a 'golden bowl'. Following the principle of exegetical constancy we recognize that oil is the uniform symbol of the Holy Spirit. And in this vision, oil flows from the olive trees through the golden bowl to produce light on the seven lamps.

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With this in mind, let us consider our text as given to Zerubbabel through Zechariah.

First: It was given as Zerubbabel was about to undertake the daunting task of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

Second: It is given as an encouragement from God to each one of us to bring glory to Him and complete the task for which we are called.

Third: With Zerubbabel, we too will understand it is only when we are face to face with our human deficiency that we will have the unspeakable joy of appropriating the all-sufficiency of our Savior's finished work. God has a precise provision—the indwelling and infilling of the Holy Spirit—and a specific plan for each of our lives.

The God of Undeviating Purpose

*"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but **by My Spirit**, saith the LORD of hosts" Zechariah 4:6.*

Have you ever met parents who named their child Zerubbabel? Zerubbabel, of all names! In Africa I met Jeremiah and Elijah, I met Moses and Zechariah, but I have never met a Zerubbabel! No parent seems to choose the name Zerubbabel. Yet in a sense, Zerubbabel is my man!

I love Zerubbabel because when he was in a situation of total and absolute failure, he received and applied God's secret of success. After seventy years in captivity he had returned with a remnant of Jews to Jerusalem. In Babylon, the majority of Jews had readily adapted from an agricultural nation to a people of commerce. The majority

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were reluctant to leave their entrepreneurial lifestyles. Those who did return with Zerubbabel came back to unimaginable desolation. They soon became very despondent.

The previous Temple had been built by Solomon. He had been a man of great intelligence who possessed all the resources necessary to accomplish the task set before him. But, Zerubbabel lacked the necessary means to rebuild the destroyed Temple. In fact, seventeen dreary years had passed, and in the reconstruction project, only the foundation stones had been laid.

However, in the previous book of Haggai, we are told that God said to Zerubbabel: ***"I will shake the heavens and the earth . . . In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of Hosts"*** Haggai 2:21, 23.

It was Pharaoh's signet ring that Joseph wore when invested with Pharaoh's authority. Such is the grace of

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God as He speaks to us in our failure—‘I will shake, I will take, and I will make’!

God always looks for humble men to accomplish His purposes of blessing in any generation. Zerubbabel had been humbled in the valley of failure. So it must be with you and me today. We need to learn that our ability is total inability, His ability is total dependability, and our responsibility is total availability to His ability!

When we truly understand the principle that, without Christ, we can do nothing (Galatians 2:20 and John 15:5c) then, we become the very people whom God will empower with the authority of anointed humility.

Because Zerubbabel was a humbled man, by the grace of God, this promise was given to him: *"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you"* Zechariah 4:9.

The God of Unchanging Procedure

*"This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but **by My Spirit**, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone [Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 2:7b)] with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it" Zechariah 4:6-7.*

Zerubbabel was facing two mountains of impossibilities. One was the mountain of outward hostility; the other was the mountain of inward lethargy.

Outward Hostility

The enemies of God accused Zerubbabel of a hidden agenda in his reconstruction project, so there was great opposition from these enemies outside of Jerusalem. They knew that the temple represented the strength and national unity of Israel and imagined there were political reasons for its reconstruction.

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Inward Lethargy

In spite of the threat of annihilation, the people of Israel, tired of their years of bondage, lived in *"paneled houses"* but allowed the Temple of the Lord to *"lie waste"* Haggai 1:4. They earned wages to put into *"a bag with holes"* (verse 6). Though they received bigger salaries, at the end of the year, they had nothing to show for it! Does that sound familiar to you?

History Repeats Itself

In these perilous days, are you more interested in a Church picnic than in the prayer meeting? Are you more occupied with social events than with an evangelistic outreach? Many of us, however, realize that spiritual battles are intensifying. Today, the Church of Jesus Christ has arrayed against her all the fiendish demons of hell. They attempt to choke and quench the ministry of the Holy Spirit and destroy our Christian liberty. Even though all hell is against us, praise God, we can rejoice that all heaven is for us!

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Soon the trumpet will blow at the Rapture to summon those of us who love the Lord Jesus Christ into His presence. I eagerly await that trumpet sound to bring me face to face with my Lord. Then I will be able to worship Him without the limitations of my lethargy, without a wandering mind, and without any of the distractions of life here below. Then, at last, I will praise Him as I ought. I will rush past Abraham, Moses, Paul, and even past my parents, to fall at the feet of my blessed Lord in worship, love, and praise!

But until that wonderful day, the Holy Spirit will continue His ministry here on earth. His ministry in the Old Testament was not the same as the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit moved "from without" and "upon" at certain times and in certain seasons to accomplish special ministries. But, in our day, the Holy Spirit has come to take His residence "within." And He moves from "within" to "without" to bring glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Primarily, in the Old Testament, we read of God the Father—Yahweh. There we are introduced to the eternal God. When He spoke, His voice was heard with reverence and awe. He gave His pilgrim people commandments and spoke to them by signs and types.

As we move from the Old Testament to the Gospels, we see God manifest in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. As God the Son, He said, *"I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"* John 6:38. He also said, *"I am in the Father, and the Father in Me. The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me"* John 14:10.

So, in the Gospels we read of God the Son. When His vocal cords reverberated producing wavelengths of sound, his disciples heard the eternal Word of the eternal God!

Astonishingly, the Lord Jesus declared: *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."* John 14:9.

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The Finished Work

When the Lord Jesus Christ came to the end of His life, He lifted His eyes to heaven, and said, *"I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do."* John 17:4. So, on the cross He also exclaimed, ***"It is finished."*** This glorious vocal crescendo of Christ will resound throughout all eternity!

In resurrection victory, He carried His precious blood to the Mercy Seat in heaven. In Revelation 11:19 we read: *"And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament"* or, the Ark of the Covenant.

There can be no ‘Ark’ without a Mercy Seat. And there is no ‘Mercy Seat’ without blood. In heaven, the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is an ever-living testimony to the fact that God's redemptive mission on earth has been accomplished:

The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, overcame the one that has the power over death, who is the devil. (Hebrews 2:14).

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Now, because His Blood is on the Mercy Seat in heaven, and because God's grace has completed the work of redemption on earth, the Spirit of God is poured out, not just 'upon man' but, wonder of wonders, 'into man' and 'through man'. So, the Spirit of God brings to birth another Body of His on earth—the Church! *"For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body"* 1 Corinthians 12:13.

Time Is Short!

Around the world today, the Holy Spirit continues His ministry of convicting of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, as He draws men and women into the Body of Christ.

But, I must solemnly warn you that maybe before this night is over, maybe before this year is over, maybe before this decade is over, the Holy Spirit will lift His eyes to the Son and to the Father and He in turn will say: "I have finished the work that You gave Me to do."

Then, when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from His present ministry in this Christ-rejecting planet, all hell

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will be let loose. And, with the Holy Spirit's withdrawal, every true believer in whom the Holy Spirit lives, will be withdrawn with Him at the Rapture. But until that moment, we know that in us and through us, it is "not by *might, nor by power, but **by My Spirit**, saith the LORD of hosts.*"

Perhaps I am speaking to someone who feels his tenure of ministry is over and that everything that can be accomplished through you in your present location has been accomplished. Now, you think it is about time for you to have a change of venue and to leave your present assignment to another person.

But God says, "I am not looking for big men to do little jobs. I am looking for little men, clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit, who will finish the big job to which I have called them." It is not by imitating the 'big man' that we will succeed. We will only succeed because of what God will do in and through us when we become totally dependent upon the risen Lord.

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Certainly, it is *"not by might"* (the Hebrew word is koach) *"nor by power"* (the word is chayil) *"but by My Spirit."* The first word means "not by the strength of an army." The second word means "not by the strength of an individual."

Solomon had both collective and cultural strength. He had great armies at his disposal and administered them with unique wisdom. He had 150 thousand men and three thousand superintendents to erect that massive structure—the Temple in Jerusalem. Money was no problem. Everything that was needed could be organized and accomplished precisely as intended.

But not so with poor Zerubbabel. Apparently he lacked both leadership, wisdom and material resources. There was no way he could motivate a comfort-loving people to build the Temple of the Lord. But, with great encouragement, God told Zerubbabel that it was not by collective strength that the temple would be completed. Furthermore, He also said, that it was not by cultural strength that the job would be done. It would be

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accomplished by His Spirit, and so it was done! *“The hands of Zerubbabel have **laid** the foundation of this house; his hands shall also **finish** it . . .”* Zechariah 4:9.

Today, God still looks for a man of the Spirit to draw hearts to Himself in purity and power. Even a polished and educated preacher who ministers without the power of the Spirit is no match for a stuttering servant of God who is anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit. I have heard both!

I am certainly not preaching against education! As Spurgeon told his students, "If I can be a ram's horn for God—good; but if a silver trumpet—far better." So I am saying, get all the education you can, then rely on none of it to complete His calling in your life. Remember that it is ***"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."***

The God of Unlimited Power

At the time of the Old Testament tabernacle, it had been the priest's duty to daily replenish the oil in the lampstand. Only thus did the lampstand continue to bear light. But in Zechariah chapter 4, God gives a vision of an unlimited, ever available, and constantly fresh supply of oil. It flowed from the living source of two olive trees and was channeled through the golden bowl to the lampstand.

So it is today. God has made available to every believer a conduit to supply the necessary oil. The personal and continual infilling of the Holy Spirit is not God's reward for my faithfulness; it is God's provision for my every need. Flowing from the heart of the eternal God, and because of the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the constant infilling of the Holy Spirit is available for you and for me. And there is no need for us to run from gas pump to gas pump to keep power in the engine!

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Out of God's heart of love and mercy, and because of ‘The Finished Work’ of the glorified Christ with the efficacy of His precious Blood—which constantly prevails in heaven on my behalf—the fullness of the Holy Spirit is continually available to the cleansed and humble heart. The secret of a life of purpose, of purity, and of power is that of being continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Wonderful!

Be a Vessel That Overflows

In the book of Revelation, we are again introduced to seven lampstands, *"And in the midst of the seven lampstands one like unto the Son of man ..."* Revelation 1:13. Notice, the seven lampstands surrounded the Son of Man. The purpose of the free flow of oil (the Holy Spirit) is never to draw attention to the lamp stand. It was always to illuminate, to glorify and to exalt the One who stands in the midst of the Churches—even our Lord Jesus Christ.

Surely, that is why the Lord Jesus said when He was here on earth: *"...the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth*

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from the Father, He shall testify of Me.” John 15:26. So if you want to know how your own personal ministry can merge with that of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, read the next verse: *“And ye also shall bear witness...”* John 15:27. John Wesley, whose ministry changed the destiny of England for good, went up and down his country and testified: “I offered Christ to the people.” As the Holy Spirit anoints your lips, you too will speak well and often of your personal Savior.

It is always the purpose of the Holy Spirit to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ—*“when He, the Spirit of truth, is come...He shall not speak of Himself...He shall glorify Me...”* John 16:13-14. In past days, I would often pray, “Lord Jesus, glorify yourself at my expense.” That is what it is all about—being expendable for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ! The veteran missionary, Silas Fox, stamped on his letters, “Wanted! Wicks to burn for God; Oil provided free!”

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So, when the Apostle John saw the glorified Christ bathed in resplendent light, he exclaimed, *"I fell at His feet as dead"* Revelation 1:17. And that is the inner posture where all true worship and service begins. Only then will the overflow hide the vessel, and men and women will see the Lord Jesus Christ in and through our lives.

Not merely by the words you say,
Not only by your deeds confessed,
But in the most unconscious way
Is Christ expressed.

Is it a beatific smile,
A holy light upon your brow?
Oh, no; I felt His presence
While you laughed just now.

For me, 'twas not the truth you taught,
To you so clear, to me still dim;
But when you came to me, you brought
A sense of Him.

And from your eyes He beckons me,
And from your heart His love is shed,
Till I lose sight of you, and see
The Christ instead.
(*"Christ in you"* - Author unknown)

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Can others see the Lord Jesus in you? Are you full of the Holy Spirit? They will never see the Lord Jesus in you if the purpose of your life is self-expression. If the passion of your life is Christ-expression, then the Holy Spirit will ensure that others will see the lovely Lord Jesus in you. Does the overflow hide your vessel?

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Conclusion

There are those who are reading this, especially young people who are at the crossroads of life, decisions you make now will have consequences throughout both time and eternity. You may be thinking, "But I could never be like some of the Spirit-filled Christians in this world." Neither could I! After God made you and me, He broke the mold!

But God is waiting for you to come to the place where you humbly affirm, "Dying with Jesus, Thy death reckoned mine; Living with Jesus, Thy new life divine; Looking to Jesus till glory doeth shine, Moment by moment, dear Lord, I am Thine!" (Song writer: D.W. Whittle). With that affirmation, it will no longer be what you can do for Him, but what He will do through you! Remember, it is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" Colossians 1:27. So, trust the Lord Jesus in you for His plan to be outworked through you. It may be of help to make this your prayer.

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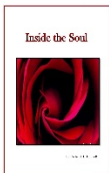
Prayer:

“Dear Heavenly Father, I bring my spiritually bankrupt life to You with the request that my daily living will be explained as, *‘Not by might, nor by power, but by Your Holy Spirit’*.

“Accordingly, I ask for the cleansing of my self-centered living by Your precious blood. By faith, I make my life totally available to You for Your unique plan to be outworked in and through me.

“I rejoice in all that the Holy Spirit will accomplish through me for Your glory! By Your Word, I ask that You will daily guide my steps with a fresh anointing and enabling of the Holy Spirit. In His precious Name. Amen!”

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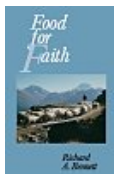


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