

By My Spirit.

Text: Zech 4:6

Suggested Hymns:

134, 130, 132, 905LSBT222, 133

1) The building of the Second Temple

2) It Is The Holy Spirit Who Builds The Church

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Zechariah 4:6, *“So he answered and said to me: ‘This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is Pentecost Sunday and our text from the Old Testament also speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit. Let us first explain, and then seek to apply the words of our text. The theme is *“By My Spirit.”* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Building Of The Second Temple

The Lord, through the Prophet Zechariah, addresses this message to Zerubbabel under remarkably instructive circumstances. Zerubbabel was the prince and leader of the Jews, under whom the first company of the exiles, numbering about 50,000, returned from the seventy years of captivity in Babylon.

On reaching Jerusalem, he with his fellow-exiles promptly set about the work of building the second temple. They laid the foundations with great rejoicing, in high hope of speedily and successfully completing the work.

But seeing the smallness of their resources and the vastness of the work, the large numbers of people who opposed it, and the fewness of those who helped, and also hearing the old men,¹ who remembered the glory of the former, that is, Solomon’s Temple, said, as they looked with tears on the crude beginning before them, *“³ ‘Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as*

*nothing?*² Zerubbabel and his people became discouraged and stopped working on the temple.

For fifteen years nothing was done. To arouse the leader and stir up the people, and to resume and press forward the work, the Lord through the prophet Zechariah now addresses them. Although they are poor and weak in comparison with the builders of the first temple, yet the Lord wants them to know that this work is not entirely theirs, but is emphatically His, and must therefore be accomplished.

The Lord teaches Zechariah how this would be done.³ An angel woke him up and he saw an impressive symbolic vision recorded in the verses immediately preceding our the text.

The prophet sees a candlestick all of gold, having seven branches, and on the top of each branch seven lamps. On the right side of the candlestick is a living olive tree, and on the left side a similar olive tree. These trees pour from themselves a plentiful and unending supply of oil into the central bowl of the candlestick. Then the prophet asks what the vision means.

The reply given are the words of our text: ***‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.*** The meaning is this: As the candlestick — which stands for the Church — is furnished without cost or labour, with an unending and abundant supply of oil — oil being the symbol of the Holy Spirit — from the living olive trees, so the Spirit of the Lord will furnish abundant power and resources in ways within His power, to enable His servants to successfully complete the building of His temple.

In this way, instructed and encouraged, Zerubbabel and the people promptly resume the work laid aside fifteen years before. There was no lack of materials. The building advanced rapidly to completion. In the sixth year afterwards the house was dedicated to God.

As the people looked upon the great structure in its completeness, every stone and timber, from the lowest foundation to the highest pinnacle, seemed to re-echo the language of the text. It is done, ***not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts.***

2. It Is The Holy Spirit Who Builds The Church, Not Ourselves

That is the original meaning and application, but it by no means exhausts the lesson, — rather it suggests a much wider and universal use.

In the New Testament Church, and in the Church of Christ today it is also emphatically true that all depends upon the light-giving, life-giving, power-giving of the Spirit of God.

It was so on the first Pentecost, which we commemorate today; it is just so now. The source of the Church's life, and its success, is the energy of God's Spirit. That is the one prominent thought and truth that we should meditate and impress upon our minds in these moments of instruction.

Firstly, we note that people are accustomed to look on the outward appearance. They are prone to trust material resources. Thus, quite naturally, they are inclined to fall into the error that God's cause, the preservation and extension of Christ's Church, is dependent upon the same things, that these same things are necessary for the success of the Gospel truth.

Thus, to be more explicit, they have a notion that wealth and worldly influence are necessary helps. We see money exercising a nearly unlimited sway for external comfort and enjoyment. We see how those who possess it receive respect and homage, thousands standing ready to do with eagerness their slightest wish.

To the success of every scheme, whether material or intellectual, money in our day would appear to be the one thing needful. It is called the *nerve of things*.

And is the Church exempt? How is it to be supported at home, how are the heathen brought within its fold, unless the ear of the rich and the powerful be first gained and their purse-strings opened to supply the financial aid?

Now it would be foolish to contend that money and wealth may not be, and actually are, a means in God's providence to further His cause. We need money, but, let it be noted, not as a necessity, but as only a very accidental means. To take any other view of the matter is to put it in the place of God, from whence alone it can derive its efficiency.

Any one who has given careful attention to the history of the Church, from the first publication of our holy faith by Christ Himself down to the present day,

will have found that the favour of the rich and the powerful is not essential to its advancement.

In the period of its rise and apparently greatest weakness, when it had only a few poor fishermen for its adherents and advocates, its growth was most rapid. After wealth began to make itself felt, its progress was retarded, and internal decay set in.

We do not say that the result of every influence of this sort brings about decay, but rather that the extension of the Church is independent of all such agencies for its vitality and effective power. Riches and civil power cannot in themselves, irrespective of the divine blessing, promote the cause of Christ in the world.

Because we know that every one professing himself a Christian is tempted to give money undue prominence, it is therefore proper to heed the warning contained in the text. *Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit.* Let us not overestimate and exaggerate the value of money in spiritual matters.

Secondly, it is also important to note that the cause of Christ is not dependent for its advancement on personal talents and high intellectual endowments. How much is made of that these days!

Correct enough, as the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased with the early Christian age, the Christian Church, guided by common prudence, as well as by the express statements of the Bible, has ever since required that those who occupy the sacred office should possess such an amount of mental competence as might fit them to expound and apply the truths of Scripture.

However, there is danger of overestimating and idolising the intellectual ability of these office-holders to the practical neglect of the truth they present, is only too apparent.

Since the day that Paul, Apollos, and Cephas⁴ divided the favour of the Church of Corinth, the one being for Paul, the other for Apollos, and the third for Peter, this partiality, or favouritism, has been very common and still is.

Add to this the growing intelligence of the age, its high and general standard of education, and the loud cry for men of talents and superior scholarship is strong and pronounced.

These things, accordingly, are not to be despised or neglected; on the contrary, cultivated. But let us not for one moment believe that Gospel truth is dependent on learning and genius to keep it awake. Learning and presentation are nothing except when they are blessed. Without the blessing of God they are likely to produce injury, just in proportion as they are great.

Let us beware of regarding them in any higher or different way. Unless an energy or agency superior to that of man pave the way for truth to enter, the finest scholarship and the most persuasive eloquence will not force a passage. What that energy and agency is our text tells us. *‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.*

We have the important requirement mentioned in Jeremiah 23:28, *he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully ... says the LORD.*

Thirdly, we note that another agency and resource upon which too much stress is laid is this: We have fallen upon a generation of trumpet-blowing, and advertising.

It would almost seem as if many of us believed that we were to take the world by storm. We see it in every department, and the Church is falling in line.

Today many ministers advertise themselves and their sermons under ridiculous declarations, as if to draw the crowd was the only and sole purpose rather than regenerating the heart. Let us beware of placing too much significance on this matter of advertising.

Fourthly, we must not be forgetful of the Master’s direction: *“Let your light so shine before men.”⁵ “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand.”⁶*

And yet, it is well to remember that vision of Elijah,⁷ when he stood upon Mount Horeb, and the Lord wished to speak to His servant.

First, *a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind.* That was followed by a terrific earthquake that shook the ground; “but,” it says, *“the Lord was not in the earthquake.”*

Then, following it, came a fire; “but,” it says, *“the LORD was not in the fire.”* Then, when tranquillity reigned again, and earth and skies lay in silence,

“came a still small voice.” The Lord was in that. He is still in the still, small voice of Gospel grace.

Let all ministers preach this Gospel grace in all its purity and in all faithfulness, and it will do the work. It is the only instrument the Holy Spirit uses in changing a person’s nature.

Let the pastor and his members live that Gospel, let them show in their characters and behaviour that they have been born again and are sustained by the work of the Holy Spirit; that they are temples of God, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in them, and thus by a god-like life commend the religion they profess.

Let them both, minister and members, be found where they were all with one accord on the first Pentecost, in one place, that one place is the place of worship; and let them both be doing what the first disciples were doing, — praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, upon themselves and their cause, and ask God’s blessing upon their undertaking.

Summon all your forces, mention all your resources always remembering *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” Says the LORD of hosts.”*

May God the Holy Spirit, come into our hearts, take possession of them, and come into our homes and rule there.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,⁸

Come and Thy people bless,
And give Thy Word success,
And let Thy righteousness,
On us descend.

Thou, who almighty art,
Now rule in ev’ry heart,
And ne’er from us depart,
Spirit of pow’r! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Ezra 3:12

² Haggai 2:2-3

-
- ³ Zechariah 4:1-5
 - ⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:12
 - ⁵ Matthew 5:16
 - ⁶ Matthew 5:14-15
 - ⁷ 1 Kings 19:11-12
 - ⁸ LSB 905