"NOT BY MIGHT NOR BY POWER,
BUT BY MY SPIRIT"

Zechariah 4:1-14

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PREFACE

This sermon was preached to the College Avenue Baptist Church (now Oasis of Hope Baptist Church) at its 50th Anniversary Celebration on Sunday, August 14, 1988. The pastor under the anointing of the Holy Spirit used this method and message to share God’s vision for Oasis of Hope, then College Avenue Baptist Church, with the congregation. This message was validated as prophetic on June 18, 1989 when Oasis of Hope/College Avenue Baptist Church moved into its new facility for worship and ministry, without having raised the equity required by the bank before it could authorize the beginning of construction. Therefore, this message is being reprinted and shared with the congregation as a reminder of God’s mission and ministry agenda for the church. My prayer for you is, that as you read it, the Holy Spirit will inspire you to make yourself available to Him as an instrument for accomplishing His purpose.

"NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT"
Zechariah 4:1-14

Zechariah, one of the more obscure of the prophets is frequently quoted, but unknowingly. I dare say that many of the people who quote his words “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts,” do not know that they are quoting from Zechariah. But if Zechariah is obscure, Zerubbabel, the person to whom these words were first addressed is totally unknown to most people.

It is important that you know a little about who Zerubbabel was and what his situation was, in order to appreciate the word of the Lord to him through the prophet, Zechariah. Zerubbabel is a descendant of Israel’s beloved King David. His father’s name was Shealtiel. His grandfather was Jehoiakim, the king who ruled Judah just before Jerusalem was taken into Babylonian captivity. You may recall that because of sin and rebellion against God, Judah was subjected to Babylonian captivity for 70 years. After the 70 years were up, Isaiah notes that God empowered his servant, King Cyrus of Persia, to conquer Babylon. Shortly thereafter, Cyrus issued a decree sending back to Jerusalem all who would go, so that they could rebuild the temple. About 50,000 Jews returned. Zerubbabel, the governor and Joshua the high priest were charged with the responsibility of leading the people in rebuilding the temple. So, Zerubbabel was the ruler of the run down dilapidated city of Jerusalem.

He was the governor of a ghetto who faced some powerful politi-
cal and social opposition to his efforts to fulfill His God-ordained task of rebuilding the temple and thereby renewing and reviving the spiritual lives of the people. You also need to know that the task had begun some 15 years prior to Zerubbabel’s receipt of this word. As a matter of fact, the people began the work of rebuilding the temple immediately after their arrival in Jerusalem. But they were halted by powerful political and social opposition. So for 15 years the foundation of the temple laid exposed, being eroded by the elements. But, in addition to the opposition, the interim period of 15 years saw a change in the attitude and interest of the people as it related to the rebuilding of the temple. For they concluded, based upon the fact that they faced so many problems and so many hindrances to their efforts, that God was not in the plan to rebuild the temple. The temple would be a tool, an instrument in strengthening and preserving the spiritual lives of the people. It would be a catalyst for revival and revitalizing the people of the Covenant and through them the Messiah would come. The role of the temple in the history of God’s people was significant. It was for centuries the center of the sacrificial system, the focal point of national worship and festival days, repentance, atonement and prayer.

As New Testament Christians, we understand that God’s temple is in the hearts of believers. However, we should not discount the value of the house of worship. Therefore, they occupied themselves with other pursuits. And in the midst of this situation a word of the Lord came unto Zerubbabel.

Zechariah tells us how the word was given. One night as he, Zechariah, was sleeping he was awakened by an angel who obviously had spoken with him before. And rather than just give Zechariah a word for Zerubbabel, the angel showed Zechariah a picture, a vision, then asked:

“What do you see, Zechariah?” His reply, “A lamp stand of gold with a bowl at the top of it and around the bowl are seven lamps and there were seven spouts. One from each lamp to the bowl. There were also two olive trees. One on the right and one on the left side of the bowl. And there were two gold pipes running from the trees to the bowl.” It would seem that what Zechariah saw was some kind of contraption which would feed the oil from the olive trees directly into the bowl which would in turn feed the oil directly to the lamps.

The angel then asked Zechariah, “Do you know what you see? You have described the picture well. For indeed there is before you a lampstand of gold with a bowl at the top of it and around the bowl are seven lamps. And there were seven spouts. One from each lamp to the bowl. There were also two olive trees. One on the right and one on the left side of the bowl. And there were two gold pipes running from the trees to the bowl, but do you know what it is that you see?”

Puzzled and hesitatingly, Zechariah answers, “No my lord – no I do not know what it is that I see. Will you tell me what it is?”

But instead of answering Zechariah’s question, the angel told him something strange. Instead of interpreting the vision the angel spoke to Zechariah and said “The word of the Lord to Zerubbabel...”

Why did God have this strange word to Zerubbabel? Why did Zerubbabel need a word from the Lord? He needed a word from the Lord because God was and is aware that sometimes problems, disappointments, and opposition play havoc with our own efforts to fulfill our God-given responsibilities. Yet when God gives us a job He wants the job to be done. And in this situation God had given Zerubbabel a job. In fact, He had raised him up out of Babylonian captivity as the one who would have the authority of the Davidic lineage to rebuild the temple of the most High God and restore the people to God’s moral and spiritual values. You see, God was fully aware that as long as the temple laid in ruins – as long as animals were walking aimlessly between the inner and outer courts – as long as grass was growing in the middle of the holy of holies then the spiritual life of His people would be weak and chaotic. God knew that His people needed His symbol in their midst.

So God has raised up from Babylonian captivity a leader to lead the people in restoring the temple and building up a place from which His glory could spread upon the face of the earth. God was intent on making it so that the people who walk in darkness could see His great and glorious light. So God had a word for Zerubbabel – a word which would keep him from becoming discouraged in the face of problems and opposition. A word which would encourage him when confronted by opposition from without and lethargy from within. You do realize, don’t you, that the 15 years of inactivity since the laying of the foundation had adversely affected the people.

As a matter of fact Haggai the prophet who immediately preceded Zechariah, describes the way the inability to rebuild the temple had affected them. He tells us that the people were now busy building their own houses – and taking care of their own businesses. They
were according to Haggai busy establishing their own security and restoring their own domiciles. Mind you now, God has no objection to our having our own houses, businesses and investments. But God wanted them and us to know that it is all right to build houses and establish businesses but don’t mess with security. He wanted them to know that Man is neither smart enough nor capable of establishing his own security. Haggai tells us that God’s concern was about how long and how much they would spend working on their own agenda before they would get around to working on His agenda.

So, a word of the Lord to Zerubbabel who was apparently frustrated in trying to do the work that God had given him to do. Let me ask you: Do you know anything about that? Do you, College Avenue, sometimes find it difficult to move in ministry – to build physically and spiritually for the glory of God? Oh, I tell you when God says: “I’ve got a house I want you to build – I’ve got a ministry I want you to effect and you encounter opposition and disappointment on every hand it can cause depression and a loss of confidence that God had indeed called you to do the work. You may even begin to ask God – “Why don’t You open doors? Why don’t You provide the resources? Why don’t You give me some support?” In this kind of situation you and I like Zerubbabel need a word from the Lord. So God set out to restore something to Zerubbabel – He wanted to encourage him – to strengthen him. So He says to Zechariah “give this word to Zerubbabel and to College Avenue Baptist Church.”

Why don’t we stick a pin here and leave Zerubbabel for a moment.

For there is a church in Indianapolis – a church which God has called to rebuild families. But it would appear that the satanic attack against families in the congregation has moved in high gear resulting in divorces, separations, spouse, parent, and or child abuse. A church which has accepted the divine and biblical order which is male leadership and headship, for the family, the church, and the community but finding women rebelling against it and men resisting it.

A church which has been talking and anticipating some form of building or adding on for at least 15 years.

God has a word for that Church. A word which is best understood in a picture. So open your mind’s eye and see what it is that God wants to do in and through CABC.

Picture if you will on a 40 acre tract in the area of the city which is often looked upon with scorn and as a ghetto –

- A facility for worship and ministry housing

a) A Sanctuary
b) A Family Life Center
c) A Parent Child Development Center
d) A Family Counseling Ministry

Connected with the Family Counseling Ministry will be family development housing. Townhouses where fledgling families with no sense of what a family is or ought to be – no sense of responsibility to family members – no concept of what makes a house a home can move into with the stipulation and understanding that participation in family development activities and biblical family counseling is a requirement for living there.

e) A K-8 school
f) A Child Care Center

- Athletic and Recreational facilities and programs as a way of inculcating and developing character in young people.

- Senior Citizens housing

- A center for the promulgation of African American culture and values to help African Americans know, cherish, and promulgate their history, heritage, culture, and values within the American culture. You do know don’t you that we are the only minority in America who almost completely deny our own culture heritage and values to accept those of the majority society.

Now that you have a clear picture of how God wants to spread His glory – His light – and His hope to the hearts and lives of broken people in Indianapolis, let us catch back up with Zechariah as he approaches Zerubbabel with the word from the Lord. But as you do, keep in mind that many times in the Old Testament when the prophet of God approached the King or ruler he came with a “woe” – a warning – a word of condemnation. Therefore, the ruler would immediately try to clear or justify himself before the man of God.

So in my sanctified imagination I can see and hear how the conversation between Zerubbabel and Zechariah might have gone. I can hear Zerubbabel, speaking first, seeking nervously to justify or absolve himself of any blame for whatever has gone wrong, saying: “You know, Zechariah, morale and morals are low in Jerusalem these days. Money is in short supply, and due to drought, crop production is down. Plus you know the political problems we have had. Our enemies tried to join forces with us to sabotage the rebuilding of the temple from within and when we would not let them, then they start-
ed attacking from the outside. And Zechariah, the condition of the temple makes it too depressing to even walk by it. And worse still, is the fact that its condition causes the people to think that God is no longer with them. So spiritually the people are weak, frightened and fragmented.”

I see Zechariah politely but firmly interrupting Zerubbabel saying, “Wait – wait my lord, don’t panic, the Lord will give us a word. Indeed the Lord has given us a word and that is why I am here.”

Let me tell you, College Avenue the Lord is still giving a word. As a matter of fact, He has a word for us today. Oh, I know the musings and murmurings in some of your hearts. I know some of you are saying, does God really want what the preacher has described? Is that really important? Is it really necessary to acquire 40 acres and build a new facility for worship and ministry? Somebody else is asking, “Is it even possible to build and effect the ministry which the Pastor described? Anyway, where are we going to get the resources, the money? We don’t have that kind of money?”

Zechariah, O prophet of God, what is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel and to CABC? The word of the Lord is, “Not by might, nor by power.”

“But wait a minute, man of God,” I heard Zerubbabel saying, “didn’t you hear my description of the conditions in Jerusalem? Didn’t you hear me tell you that the people are without hope, without money, without solid spiritual zeal and without interest in rebuilding the temple? Didn’t you hear me say we have got strong political and social opponents? And you say ‘not by might, nor by power’?” Likewise, I hear somebody at College Avenue saying, “wait a minute, Pastor, don’t you realize that the ministry you just described is going up against the political, economic, and societal powers that be in Indianapolis and the U.S.A.? And you say, ‘not by might, nor by power’?”

Do you really think we can effect the kind of ministry you described without some power? I mean, do you really think that we can have a Christian school, a family development center, a senior citizen housing, and a center for the promotion of African American history, heritage and culture without some might and without some power? Preacher, you are talking serious ministry here. You are talking real money, Preacher! You cannot discard might and power, nor, and do what you described. Have you been in the sun too long?”

Well, maybe we had better do a little explaining here because the above described God-given agenda for CABC does require some might and some power. Yet the word of the Lord to us today is “Not by might and not by power.” So how do we deal with this, especially if we understand that might usually has to do with military force, strength of arms, political clout or wealth. So are you saying we don’t need wealth to get the job done? Are you saying that we don’t have to have City Hall, the School Board, or Lilly Endowment backing us to get the job done? Do you really mean nor by might?

And what about power, Preacher? Power usually has to do with force, strength, determination, resolution, influence or money. Can anything be done without force, strength, determination, resolution, influence or money? Preacher, the ministry you just described for CABC is going to require some resolution, determination, sacrifice, and money. Preacher, that ministry is going to take some might and some power!

But my dears, you have to understand what God is saying here when he says “not by might, nor by power”, God is saying that every once in a while when I am getting ready to do something fundamental – when I am getting ready to do a new thing – (Pastor’s Note)

Three years ago, at the tent revival, situated on the 16 acres of property on East 25th Street, which has been reclaimed and dedicated to God, I told you God is doing a new thing in Indianapolis, a new thing which would deliver the church out of the bondage of traditionalism, psychological, sociological, and spiritual bondage.

Well, today God is saying to CABC, when I am getting ready to show Myself mighty in human affairs – when I am doing a new thing designed to get My name lifted – designed to manifest My glory on the face of the earth, and in the city of Indianapolis – when I am doing a new thing, I have to show a distinction between man as the movers and shakers, and Myself. Oh, don’t worry, I will use might and power again. But sometimes when might and power become separated from My purposes, I have to divorce myself from them and do the “new thing” Myself. I have to make might and power understand Who is Almighty – then after might and power have come to understand Who is all-powerful – then I may use them. But since you are so concerned about the use of might and power, let Me ask you a question or two.

Did I have military power in the Beginning?
Did I have human power and resolution in the Beginning?
Where was might and power when I said "Let there be light and there was light?"

Where were they?

You see, God is saying, I am God all by Myself when I want to be. I am God all by Myself when I need to be. Oh, I'll let you help Me if you yield to My purpose. I'll let you share in My accomplishments if you can or will divorce yourself from your egotistical fixation. But God is saying sometimes might and power as you know it has to take a back seat to El Shaddai - to God Almighty.

Go back with me to Zechariah and Zerubbabel's conversation. Can't you just see Zerubbabel as he says to Zechariah "so you have a word from the Lord today? Well, say on - say on, what is the Word?"

And Zechariah begins:

Oh, my lord and governor, as I slept last night an angel awakened me and showed me a lampstand with a bowl on top of it and seven lamps around the bowl and there were seven pipes running to the lamps from the bowl. And I saw two olive trees one on the right and one on the left of the bowl. And the pipes running from the branch of the two olive trees were emptying the golden oil into the bowl.

I can see Zerubbabel impatiently interrupting Zechariah saying "Is that the word from the Lord?" to which Zechariah replied "No my lord, that is not the word from the Lord, that is the picture." "Then what is the word?" Zechariah says the word of the Lord is "Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit says the Lord of hosts." Then Zechariah left Zerubbabel alone to ponder what the word from the Lord with its accompanying picture meant. Enough about Zerubbabel.

Let me invite you ponder with me the meaning of this word from the Lord to College Avenue Baptist Church as we celebrate our Jubilee.

As best I can make out, God is saying to College Avenue that there are certain needs that people - that African Americans - that broken humanity have which cannot be ministered to by the power of the Pentagon - By the resolve of the Department of Health and Human Services. God is saying that there comes a time when certain things, certain ministries, can only be done by the power of God and God's own grace working through His anointed ones and this is one of those times.

You see, President Reagan cannot fix the family. The School System will not teach values. The Pentagon cannot save souls and you and I cannot do it or at least not without the anointing and power the Spirit of God works through us.

God is calling us to recognize that His agenda for CABC cannot be done by human might, human power, human wisdom, human insight, nor human ingenuity. And when we recognize that, then we can thank God for a bowl. When we have run out of energy, when we have run out of resources, when we have run out of schemes, and tricks, and nothing seems to be adequate for the task, when we must ask, "What do we do now?"

Then we can thank God for a bowl - a bowl with a lamp on top. A bowl which says God is the light of the world.

Yes, we can thank God for a bowl - a bowl with a lamp on top. A bowl which says God is the light of the world.

Yes, the word of the Lord to CABC today is look for a bowl - better yet, make yourself a bowl and look to the olive trees which will empty directly into you so that His light might burn through your lamp. God is saying to CABC become a bowl directly connected to Him - directly fueled from Him. Let me testify:

Four or 50 years, there were a few believers who God had given a concern, a burden for the lives, the souls, and the conditions of people in rural Liberia, West Africa. This little group of believers had little or no knowledge about starting a mission. That little group knew nothing about selecting missionaries - they had no might in the form of denominational nor financial clout. None of them had been there to see the need. But because the Lord had said I want you to do this thing, your Pastor and Ronald Faulkner, without any money or knowing what the trip would entail, became bowls into which God inserted that which was necessary for us to establish the Mission and to go to Africa.

Or again, a few years ago, CABC was trying to receive from within the congregation commitments toward underwriting the building program. Your Pastor and wife concluded that we could sacrifice and give $5,000 in a year. But the Lord called for more -- for $5,000 more. "Lord, you want us to give $10,000 in one year - more than half my salary?" But you know what, we became a bowl! Somehow God gave through us in one year $10,000 and we never reduced our lifestyles, went without anything, nor missed a payment on anything!

Bless God, when you become a bowl directly fueled by God, it doesn't matter how down you have been - it makes no difference how discouraged you have become - it does not matter how many
failures and frustrations you have known. When you become a bowl and the tree is standing right there and the oil of the Spirit begins to drain from the tree into the bowl of your heart, you can say with the songwriter, “He touched me – he touched me and oh, the joy that filled my soul. Something happened and now I know he touched me and made me whole.”

College Avenue, don’t despair because the ministry is slow in coming. But rather individually and collectively let us take our bowls to the source so that through us, He can make His light to shine.

College Avenue, the word of God to you and to me today is don’t despair about the seemingly impossibility of the task just become a bowl and let the fuel of God’s might, power and purpose flow into you. Oh, my dears, the word of the Lord is “Not by might, nor by power.”

Troubled man or woman, God knows you have needs and problems but the Word of the Lord to you today is don’t worry about your dilemma, just become a bowl and allow the golden oil of God’s Spirit to flow into your life.

Wretched sinner, the word of the Lord to you today is if you will become a bowl and if you will confess with your mouth, that is agree with God that you are a sinner – helpless and unable to save yourself and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, then God will connect you to his source of eternal life...

Delivered by:
Paster Frank Alexander
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