
Ministry Address

Not by Might nor by Power -- Haggai, Zechariah 4, and Romans 8 in a Day of Small Things

December 30, 2018

Setting the Context: The Return from Babylon

Ezra 6:14; Haggai 2:3-9

And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo...

When the remnant of Israel returned from Babylon in the days of Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, they set up the altar of burnt offering and then began to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. As soon as the foundation was laid, the old men who remembered the temple Solomon had built began to weep. The new work looked like nothing compared to what had been. It appeared shabby. It was a day of small things.

God sent them two prophets: Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai encouraged them to keep working. Zechariah gave them a vision. Together they sustained the work in a discouraging hour. The three things Haggai brought before them are worth setting out clearly: first, the presence of the Lord -- 'I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts.' Second, the authority of His word -- 'the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt.' Third, the presence of God the Holy Spirit -- 'my Spirit remaineth among you.' Those three things were the ground on which work in a day of small things could go forward.

Zechariah's Vision: Forty-Nine Pipes

Zechariah 4:1-6, 10

And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I see, and behold a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes, seven and seven, to the lamps which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees beside it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof... And he answered and spoke unto me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts... For who hath despised the day of small things?

Zechariah was awakened from sleep to receive this vision. He saw a golden lampstand with a bowl on top, seven lamps, and seven pipes to each lamp -- seven times seven, forty-nine pipes. Two olive trees, one on each side, each feeding oil through a pipe into the bowl. The olive oil in Scripture is a well-known symbol of the Holy Spirit. The point of the vision is its extraordinary abundance of oil supply: forty-nine pipes feeding seven lamps from two self-replenishing olive trees. This was not a meager or hesitant provision. It was lavish beyond counting.

And the word of interpretation is: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts.' This was the encouragement for a day of small things. The outward appearance might look shabby. But the inner supply of the Spirit of God was not shabby at all. It was forty-nine-fold. 'Who hath despised the day of small things? Yea, they shall rejoice.' What do those seven lamps have to rejoice about in a day of ruin? Forty-nine pipes. That is what. The supply of the Holy Spirit has not diminished.

Romans 8: Forty-Nine Expressions of the Holy Spirit

Zechariah saw forty-nine pipes feeding the lampstand. Is there a chapter in the New Testament with a corresponding abundance of reference to God the Holy Spirit? Romans 8 is that chapter. What follows is a survey of the references to the Holy Spirit through the chapter -- not exhaustive, but tracing the main lines, to show the fullness of what God has provided for His people in a day of small things.

Romans 8:1-4: The Spirit of Life, Liberty, Ability, and Strength

Romans 8:1-4

There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent his own Son in likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to flesh, but according to Spirit.

Verse 1 rests on verses 2-4. The reason there is no condemnation is the Spirit of life (verse 2) -- the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life. He is also the Spirit of liberty: that same law of the Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and death. He is the Spirit of deliverance, for it is by His action that there is now no condemning. Verse 3 brings in what the law could not do -- the Spirit of ability, where the law had none. The flesh was weak before the law, but the Spirit is strong -- the Spirit of strength. And it was in the power of the Spirit that God sent His own Son -- the Spirit of the sending of the Son, and the Spirit who provided the remedy for the fixed principle of sin. Verse 4 adds the Spirit of a holy walk: the righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in those who walk according to Spirit.

Romans 8:5-11: Mind, Life, Peace, Friendship, and Indwelling

Romans 8:5-11

For they that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh, and they that are according to Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit, life and peace... Ye are not in flesh, but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you. But if any one has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of him. But if Christ be in you, the body is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit is life on account of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that has raised up Jesus from among the dead dwell in you, he that has raised up Christ from among the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies on account of his Spirit which dwells in you.

The Spirit is the Spirit of a holy mind: what we put into our minds, what we think about. He is the Spirit of life and peace together, as verse 6 says. The flesh gives neither life nor peace; the Spirit gives both. Verses 7 and 8 bring in the friendship of the Spirit: the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, so the mind of the Spirit is friendship with God -- like Abraham, who was called the friend of God. He is the Spirit of submission, for where the flesh is not subject to the law of God, the Spirit gives submission to it. He is the Spirit of pleasing God. Verse 9 gives us the state and characteristic of the believer: ye are not in flesh but in Spirit -- the Spirit of the state of the believer. He is the indwelling Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ. Verses 10-11 bring in the Spirit of resurrection -- the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will also quicken our mortal bodies -- and the Spirit of quickening.

Romans 8:12-17: Brotherhood, Debt, Death to the Flesh, and Sonship

Romans 8:12-17

So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live according to flesh. For if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die; but if by the

Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear; but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, heirs also; heirs of God, and Christ's joint heirs; if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him.

Verse 12 begins 'brethren' -- a word that tells us the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of brotherhood. He is the Spirit of indebtedness: we owe God everything. He is the Spirit of death to the deeds of the body: by the Spirit we put to death the flesh. Verse 14 gives the Spirit of discipleship -- led by the Spirit -- and the Spirit of sonship: these are the sons of God. Verse 15 adds the Spirit of adoption, which is the Spirit of love, for 1 John 4:18 tells us that perfect love casts out fear, and we have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear. We cry Abba, Father -- that is the Spirit of the cry of Abba. Verse 16 is the Spirit of witness: the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And verse 17 brings the Spirit of inheritance, of joint heirship with Christ, and of suffering and glory together.

Romans 8:18-27: Glory, Creation, Adoption, Hope, and Intercession

Romans 8:18-27

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us... For the earnest expectation of the creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God... in hope that the creation itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God... And not only that, but we ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit... awaiting adoption, the redemption of our body... And in like manner the

Spirit also joins in our weakness: for we do not know what we should pray for as is fitting, but the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The Spirit is the Spirit of coming glory (verse 18) -- it is God the Holy Spirit who will reveal to us the coming glory. He is the Spirit of the revelation of the sons of God (verse 19). He subjected creation to vanity (verse 20) -- the Spirit of the submission of creation to vanity, which means that nothing solid or trustworthy is to be found in this present world. He is the Spirit who will set creation free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (verse 21) -- the Spirit of liberation and of the glory of the children of God. Verse 23 adds the Spirit as the firstfruits and the Spirit of the redemption of the body. Verses 24-25 give us the Spirit of hope and the Spirit of patience. And then verse 26 -- the great comfort for every praying soul: the Spirit joins its help to our weakness. We do not know what to pray for as is fitting. But the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. He is the Spirit of help, the Spirit of intercession, and the Spirit of groanings which cannot be expressed in words.

Romans 8:28-30: Purpose, Foreknowledge, and the Golden Chain

Romans 8:28-30

But we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose. For whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren. But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; and whom he has justified, these also he has glorified.

The Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost to baptize believers into one body, with the Lord Jesus Christ as the head in heaven. Everything is under His control. He makes all things work together for good -- a mark of the Spirit. We would not love God unless His Holy Spirit were in our hearts -- He is the Spirit of love toward God. He calls by the gospel -- the Spirit of calling. The foreknowledge of God is the foreknowledge of the Trinity, including the Holy Spirit -- the Spirit of foreknowledge. And the Spirit of predestination, the Spirit of conformity to the image of the Son.

Who Has Despised the Day of Small Things?

Zechariah's question stands: 'Who hath despised the day of small things? Yea, they shall rejoice.' The seven lamps can rejoice because of the forty-nine pipes. We can rejoice in a day of ruin and small things because of what Romans 8 sets before us. The Spirit who does all these things -- life, liberty, deliverance, holiness, strength, a holy mind, life and peace, friendship with God, indwelling, resurrection, quickening, brotherhood, adoption, sonship, witness, inheritance, glory, help, intercession, purpose, foreknowledge -- that Spirit remains among His people.

Haggai said it plainly: 'I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts... and my Spirit remaineth among you.' The three things that sustained the builders in Jerusalem still sustain those who build now: the presence of the Lord, the authority of His word, and the Holy Spirit remaining among His people. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit. In this day of small things, those who look at the outward appearance and are discouraged need only remember the forty-nine pipes. The supply has not failed.

* * *

Lord willing.