



## EXPOSITORY SERMON.

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**NOT BY MIGHT! NOT BY POWER! BUT MY SPIRIT!**

**Scripture Reading – Zechariah 4:1-6, 11-14.**

### **Introduction**

The children of Israel had been in captivity in Babylon. God had punished the nation for the sins and they had suffered for seventy years as slaves under Babylonian Ruler Cyrus. God had stirred Cyrus to allow them to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple and the city. But only a little group had returned. Zechariah the Jewish governor's task was to encourage the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple. He was a prince of royal blood of Israel and the civil leader of this first detachment of returning exiles. And because Zerubbabel, a member of the royal house from which the Messiah was to come, was to be the builder of the temple, he was a prophetic person – a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. What was true about him primarily was to have its fulfillment in great David's Son, Jesus, who was to come after and who was to build His temple, the church. Jesus words confirm this truth for He said "I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. Matt. 16;18.

So Zerubbabel started building the temple. However he met with fierce opposition from foreigners who had settled in the land in their absence.

Consequently the Jews lost heart, and the work was suspended for nearly twenty years. Ezra tells us "then the work of the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill." Ezra 4:24. Was that right? Can it be right in any set of circumstances that the work of God should cease? But you might say did not the previous verse declare that the enemies had "compelled them by force and power to stop," so what choice did they have? If this point of view was allowed to dominate their thinking then the work of God would be thwarted, and God's purpose on earth doomed! The state of the people of God was one of failure and defeat! It was the end! **But was it?** Was there no alternative? Was it possible for the people of God to mobilize more might and to amass greater force and power? Even if it was, that was no guarantee of success.

In this challenging hour God had a word to say through Zechariah "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty. With this declaration, God gave His servant a remarkable vision. A vision of a golden candlestick, or lamp stand, with seven branches, each branch surrounded with its own lamp of gleaming light; above the structure a golden bowl serving as a reservoir for the oil, and so by means of pipes running from the bowl, oil was fed to each of the seven lamps. Two evergreen trees, rich with Olive oil, were standing on either side, pouring their golden oil into the bowl which fed the lamps. To the Jewish people the meaning of the vision was clear. The lamp stand was a familiar piece of furniture in their Tabernacle and Temple, symbolizing the function of God's people on earth. Symbolically it summarized God's purpose for the nation of Israel among all the nations of the earth. They were to be light bearers; they were to be the Light of God among the nations. Through them God was to shine in the darkness. His truth was to be diffused; His perfection, His holiness, His greatness and His power were to be made known to the uttermost parts of the earth. The flowing oil is interpreted by the words, "Not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit" says the Lord Almighty. That is to say that there was an abundant supply of oil to maintain the sevenfold flame, and the supply was from God. It was at this point that God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage



Zerubbabel to tackle the task again with the assurance that this time the work would be completed. Zechariah's message was conveyed to him by means of eight visions recorded in chapters 1-6. One of the great utterances of the Old Testament occurs in the fifth vision in chapter 4:6. This is the Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, "not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty. This was God's solution to the opposition that faced Zerubbabel as he was about to build the Temple. God did not minimize the difficulties that faced them; He magnified the power of His Spirit. His solution for the church has not changed. We live in dark and desperate days. We should be acutely aware of the force and the power of the demonic. It would be foolish to belittle and underrate the formidable might of demonic darkness surrounding us, but at the same time there is no reason to be intimidated by it. God has the answer! He says to us as He did Zerubbabel "it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty. How are we as a church and as Christians to confront and challenge the deepening darkness about us? How is the Church of God built? In the vision that came to Zechariah we read the guidelines used in the building of the temple, God has set them down as vital in the building of His church. Now what are the basic ingredients to working in the Church of God? The vision that came Zechariah of the lamp stands has the answer that question. It tells us that,

### **1. THE PRIORITY OF THE CHURCH OR THE CHRISTIAN IS TO BE**

**REALIZED. Zechariah 4:2. What is this priority?** It is to function as light in the darkness. "I see a solid lamp stand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the light." The church or the Christian exists to give light to those in the darkness of sin. This is the function of church. She exists to give light. Jesus confirmed this truth to His disciples "You are the light of the world." This statement is not made in the fog. It is clear. Jesus did not suggest that we be the light of the world. It is His assumption and expectation. The question is "How this is light sustained?"

In the context of Zechariah's vision you will discover that there is a constant flow of oil through seven channels to the lights. While that oil is flowing the lights continue to shine. And oil being a symbol of the Holy Spirit, we conclude that we as lights cannot shine apart from the flow of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. The interpretation of the flowing oil is that it is "not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty." It is the presence and the power of the Spirit that gives light in the darkness. What can we say about light? First it is,

**a. Penetrating Zechariah 4:2. The lamp was the only light in the darkness of the Temple.** There were no windows and so the natural light could not enter. The lamp was lit and it penetrated the darkness bringing light to sanctuary. Dr. Stowell who was president of Moody Bible Institute asked a Russian pastor why he thought Gorbachev had lifted the oppression from the Christians in the Soviet Union. He replied that the major problem facing was the faltering economy. Much of the trouble, he explained, was due to absenteeism, alcoholism and non-productivity in the work force. Gorbachev reportedly told Russian leaders, "Why do we oppress the very people who do not absent themselves from work. "We need their strength." It was the light of a persistently righteous community of repressed Christians in a hostile culture that finally..... caused the light to be seen and God to be glorified. As a result, Bibles were freely distributed, evangelism took place in homes and stadiums and Christians were free to worship without interference. In fact, Russian leaders asked Westerners to help them establish the values of the Ten Commandments that they too might stability and success. While the political atmosphere has changed somewhat the light penetrated the darkness.

It is true that "so often the rejection of religion is not on account of the wickedness of men, but on account of the worthlessness of religion."- that is to say religion without the light or salt is worthless.. Jesus said "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out....." Matthew 5:13. That



which keeps the church (Christian) salty and ensures penetrating light is the Presence and continual flow of the Holy Spirit. Light penetrates. But it also has, **b. Power. Zechariah 4:2. Light has the power to expel the darkness.** It illumines the darkness. There are too many who are wringing their hands in despair at the condition of the world. The darkness is ever deepening and we see that. Where does the blame lie? John Stott uses an illustration to answer to this question. If the house is dark at night there is no sense in blaming the darkness. Darkness happens when the sun does down. If our society is corrupt like the dark night, there is no sense in putting all the blame on society. This is what happens when a fallen society and evil is allowed to go unrestrained and unchecked. Where are the Christians who are the light of the world? Where is the church in the darkness? Why is it not having a greater impact on our society? Research has concluded that while bigger and bigger churches are being built and are being filled, in so many of them there is very little spiritual and moral impact being made in the communities about them. There is very little light to penetrate the darkness. To Jesus this truth was central that is why He said ""let your light shine before men that they might see your good works and glorify Heavenly Father. Matthew 5:16. The power of light is totally dependant on oil of the Holy Spirit, for it is "not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord Almighty." The message of this vision is that the church is to function as light in the power of the Spirit. Without the Spirit it cannot and does not function effectively. This priority as a priority is to be realized by the Christian. Secondly what is clear here is that,

**2. THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT IS TO BE RECEIVED. Zechariah 4:6. "It is neither by might, nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty."** Note that power and might are contrasted with the Spirit of God. The function of the church and the Child of God as the light of the world is dependant not upon man's fleshly resources but upon God's Holy Spirit. The aggressive action of the church to move forward in victory and fruitfulness is dependant not upon the

might and power of man, **BUT** on the might and power of the Spirit of God. Why is this so? It is because of the

**a. The Nature of Man's Limited Resources. What is the meaning of might and power on the human level? Zechariah 4:6.** Where are the limits of these powers?

The angel relaying this message to Zechariah is warning the church and the Christian of making the mistake of totally relying on human resources which he defines as might and power, to do the work of the church. The first word "might" seems to mean a combined force, of one kind or another. Revised Version has a marginal reading "it is not by an army; it is not by the might of an army.

Sometimes the word means wealth. A history reveals that the church and the Christian so often find their security and influence in the material wealth. Wealth is used to control the church and its decisions. Sometimes it means faith that is placed in the human courage. But wherever it is used it suggests great resources. i.e. Great resources in an army to fight the battles, and great wealth in order that the army may be maintained are regarded as top priority. But God made it clear it is "not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty." The truth is that reliance on what the Bible calls the arm of flesh, has defeat built in to it. It may have brief human success but it will ultimately fail. We are slow to learn that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds. 2 Cor. 10:4. It is not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty. The word power used here refers to the strength or vigor of individuals. The words might and power represent all forms of human resources and strength to which the Lord's people are tempted to resort. The temptation is to turn to human resources to accomplish God's work. One has said, "not by anything man can do, can man do anything for God." (Campbell Morgan) No matter how formidable the resources of man maybe and no matter how powerful their might maybe, they are still totally inadequate and incapable to equip the child of God to do the work of God's Kingdom on earth. It is only by His Spirit that it can be done. We may be able to legislate for the governments of the world, but we cannot build the Kingdom of



God that way. As Campbell Morgan perceptively writes "by splendid resources and magnificent resoluteness we can do much on the human level; but by these things we cannot shine as lights in the world or bring in the Kingdom of God.... It is by the Spirit of God alone the work of God in the world that this happens.. Not by our splendid resources; not by our resoluteness of purpose touched by the dynamic of persistent endeavor, not by anything that is human ; but by the selfsame mystic Spirit of God, intangible, imponderable invisible, but present and potent, ' by my Spirit said the Lord of Hosts.." The light in the Temple depends on the flow and supply of the oil. The might and power of man are confined to the limitations of humanity. They are restricted by chains of the flesh. Herein lies the nature of human resources. Now what about,

**b. The Nature of Divine Unlimited Resources. Zechariah 4:6. The thrust of the message here is that the light in the Temple depended on the flow and supply of oil.** The lamps were fed mysteriously. There is no mention of the source. They were fed in an unseen way. There was no human conveyance. In the same way there is nothing whatever human about our supply in fruitful service for God. It is all of grace lest anyone should boast. The fire on the ancient Jewish altar had to be kept burning constantly. If the channels of our spiritual life are always open to the unperceived flow of the oil of the Spirit, our light will never go out. The flame could be kept aglow only by the oil, and there was bowl with its supply to each lamp. The oil was indispensable; without it the lamp stand was useless and an encumbrance. But it received oil in order to consume it. Note that! It received and consumed it: it functioned only by absorbing the oil and transmitting it as light in the darkness. Then God has a ministry toward us and in us before there can be a ministry going out from us. That lamp received the oil from without, something happened within and the light went out from it. The oil of the Holy Spirit is not an option to maintain a cutting edge in the work of the church. It is essential and basic to our effective witness in the world. If there is no oil there is no light. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria "You would have asked him (God) and He would have given you living water. This water is a gift that comes from without. Then

something happens within. For Jesus goes on to say that the "water I shall give him will become in him a well of water welling up to eternal life (see John 4 verses 13-14). This is the Holy Spirit's ministry to us and in us. God has a ministry towards us from without and in us before there can be a ministry out from us. Once this spring of living water is placed within by Christ, then and only then as Jesus said, "the streams of living water will flow from him." By this He was referring to the Spirit. John 7:37-39). Before there can any radiance of light, there has to be the constant flow of oil. In the Temple the flow of oil in the lamp was continuous. Through the pipes to each of the lamps the oil flowed and kept on flowing and the lamps kept on shining. The flow was continuous. But the flow was also abundant and the light was consistent. The thrust of truth is clear here "it is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord Almighty. What must **NOT** escape our attention is that it is "the Lord Almighty." who speaks. This is the truth which is the greatest need in the church because she has largely forgotten it. We give it lip service but that by itself is not acceptable, because it is not functional, fruitful or effective. We have become so obsessed about planning we do very little praying and tragically, this reveals the extent and lack of depth of our dependence on the Holy Spirit. It seems that we have sadly neglected that it is 'not by might, nor by power, but my Spirit says the Lord Almighty.'" Not by intellect or our resources of wealth, or enthusiasm, nor by the determination of effort or the latest methods or technology. All these things may have their place, but none of them, not the whole of them, can do God's work in the world in this critical hour." The church, winning souls and evangelism is only effective when by the Spirit God's work is done. What is desperately lacking is the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in this age. Samuel; Chadwick said that "The human resources of the church were never so great; the opportunities of the church never so glorious; need for the work of the church never so urgent." - the necessity for the light of God to shine in the deepening darkness, never so desperate. The root cause of the present condition is that the Christian church seems to places more trust in the methods of the world than in the power of God.

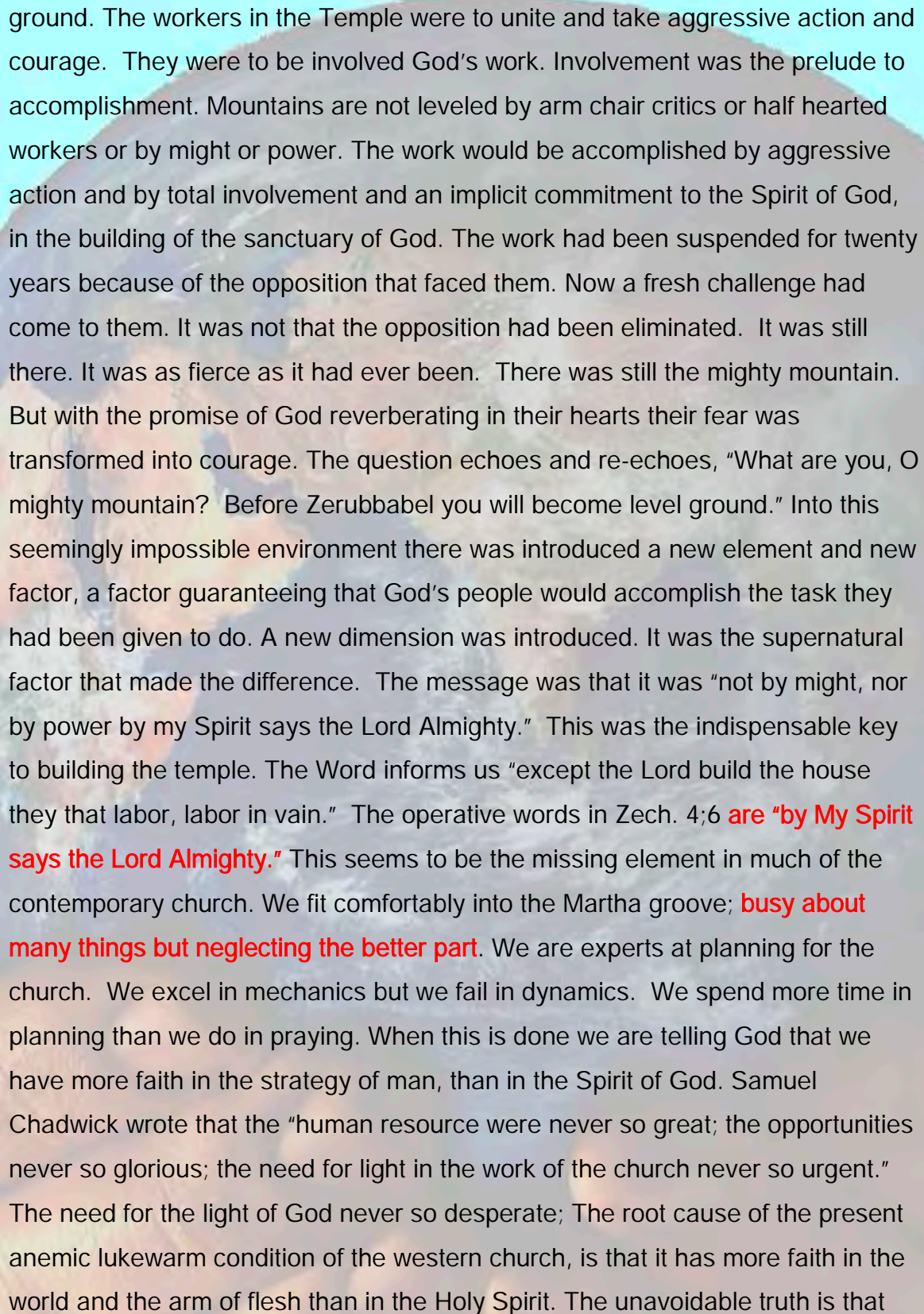


Tozer writes that most of what we do in the church, has been suggested to us by the world. "We need," wrote Chadwick "the breath of the Holy Spirit who would turn death into life and dry bones into mighty armies, but that only comes by the Holy Spirit." The power of the Spirit comes by prevailing and intercessory praying not by exercising of the "arm of flesh". These things are more obvious to the individual who has been in other places and seen what happens when the church decides to depend on God by praying and fasting. One Oriental evangelist who toured the United States recently, commented that the Christians in the West do not need God because they have so much of everything else. But in the mission of the church it is still true that it is not by the might of these things, nor the power of these things but by the Spirit of the Lord Almighty. The power and the Presence of God is to be received. But furthermore,

**3. THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH IS TO BE RECOGNIZED. Zechariah 4:6-10.** The purpose of light is to shine and if the church or the Christian is to be what it is, this Divine purpose must be realized. Whether it be Israel, the church, the Christian, each is to fulfill the purpose for them assigned by God. The might or the power of the enemy cannot thwart, nor destroy the Divine purpose for the people of God, if it be remembered that it is not by might nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord Almighty. This was the Divine word of assurance given to Zerubbabel to inspire and encourage determination to accept the challenge and face the tasks that lay before him. He could now face the formidable with supernatural power and support.

Now the vision indicates four significant promises resulting from the committed service of the people of God whose lives are open and receptive to the flow and supply of the Holy Spirit. Light will shine when it permeates the life. When the Spirit of God takes control these results come into play. First,

**a. The Opposition will be overcome. Zechariah 4:7.** The imagery is graphic. It starts "What are you? O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground!" This is the language of Divine power. The difficulties the nation faced were like a mighty mountain but those obstacles would become like level



ground. The workers in the Temple were to unite and take aggressive action and courage. They were to be involved God's work. Involvement was the prelude to accomplishment. Mountains are not leveled by arm chair critics or half hearted workers or by might or power. The work would be accomplished by aggressive action and by total involvement and an implicit commitment to the Spirit of God, in the building of the sanctuary of God. The work had been suspended for twenty years because of the opposition that faced them. Now a fresh challenge had come to them. It was not that the opposition had been eliminated. It was still there. It was as fierce as it had ever been. There was still the mighty mountain. But with the promise of God reverberating in their hearts their fear was transformed into courage. The question echoes and re-echoes, "What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground." Into this seemingly impossible environment there was introduced a new element and new factor, a factor guaranteeing that God's people would accomplish the task they had been given to do. A new dimension was introduced. It was the supernatural factor that made the difference. The message was that it was "not by might, nor by power by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty." This was the indispensable key to building the temple. The Word informs us "except the Lord build the house they that labor, labor in vain." The operative words in Zech. 4:6 are **"by My Spirit says the Lord Almighty."** This seems to be the missing element in much of the contemporary church. We fit comfortably into the Martha groove; **busy about many things but neglecting the better part.** We are experts at planning for the church. We excel in mechanics but we fail in dynamics. We spend more time in planning than we do in praying. When this is done we are telling God that we have more faith in the strategy of man, than in the Spirit of God. Samuel Chadwick wrote that the "human resource were never so great; the opportunities never so glorious; the need for light in the work of the church never so urgent." The need for the light of God never so desperate; The root cause of the present anemic lukewarm condition of the western church, is that it has more faith in the world and the arm of flesh than in the Holy Spirit. The unavoidable truth is that



things will get no better till we get back to His realized presence and power on us. What is needed is the breathe of the Holy Spirit who would turn death into life, and dry bones into mighty armies and that only comes by the presence of the Holy Spirit. And the Presence of the Holy Spirit comes by prevailing and intercessory praying. The time has come for the church to wake up from their sleep and get on their knees, repent and turn to God once again with more than lip service, so that the Holy Spirit will come in revival power. **Until this is accomplished the opposition will overcome the church. It is by My Spirit says the Lord Almighty that the temple will be built.** The question is repeated "What are you O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. The formidable mountain; the impossible obstacle, the might and the power of the enemy are to melt away. Why this confidence? Why this faith and assurance? This is so because it is "not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit Says the Lord Almighty." The church will never overcome the obstacles apart from the abiding presence of the Spirit. The opposition will be overcome in the power of the Spirit. Not only will the opposition be overcome but.

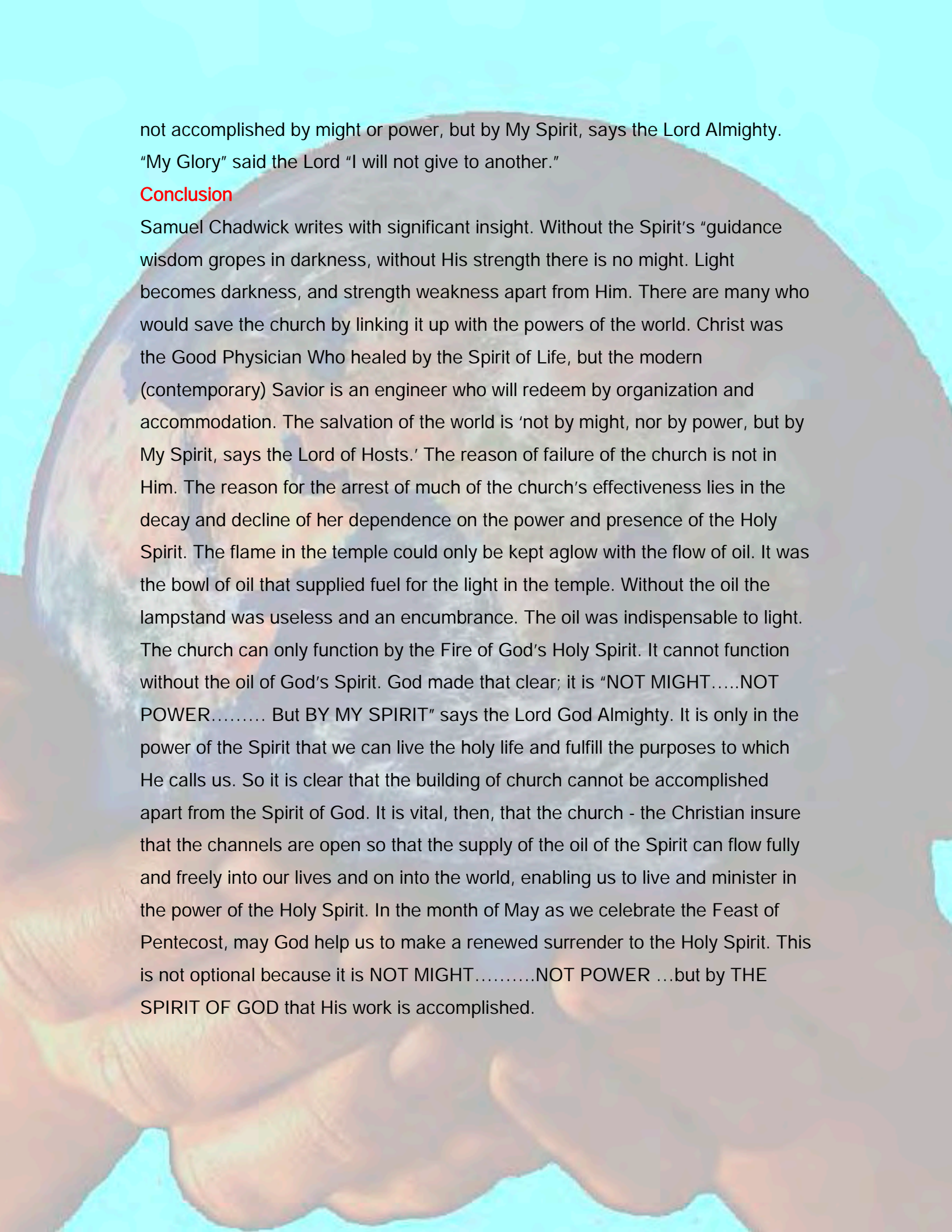
**b. God's Purposes will be completed. Zechariah 4:8.** Then the word of the Lord came to me; the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent you." God said it and said it clearly. The hands of Zerubbabel will complete not only the foundation of the building but the temple itself. In spite of demons and man, adverse circumstances and earthly forces, there will be no broken columns, no unfinished roof, and no incomplete walls. Nothing to hinder its completion! God's plan will be carried through right to fulfillment. So it is with the church. The genuine church is being built by the Lord Jesus Christ. The plan of salvation was completed. Jesus confirmed this when He said, "I have finished the work which you gave me to do." God intends that we should be able to say the same. We can complete the work that God has designed for us. God knows how to deal with those who interfere with a Spirit inspired and Spirit anointed purpose.

**Human effort, human impulse and human ambition can be weak and unstable,**

but with the Spirit of God on us we can fulfill God's purpose and be able to ultimately say "I have finished the work that you gave me to do." **This can only be said because it is not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty.** God's purposes will be completed through His children. Third **c. Righteousness will be revealed. Zechariah 4:10.** Although the building might progress slowly, the people were not to despise the day of small things; for although the word was slow; the work was sure. The scripture says "Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel." The plumb line is the symbol of righteousness. A builder places his plumb line against the wall to see if it is going up straight, upright and perfect. All of the construction had to answer to answer to the plumb line. This symbol of righteousness is vital in the building of God's church. All God's purposes have exalted righteousness. And only lives marked by righteousness will be approved by the plumb line of heaven. Only a Holy Church will be approved by a Holy God. Everything related to the building of the church must be brought into line by the plumb line of God which is righteousness. This is the priority and the standard that God sets down for His people. The final result is that,

**d. Glory will be given to God. Zechariah 4:7. The word says then he will bring out the capstone or the headstone to the shouts of "God bless it! God bless it!"** The Glory will be where it belongs - to the capstone and we know who that is. Christ is **the capstone** of the corner of the temple of God, the church. He and He alone, deserves all the glory. The church is not built by might and by power but by the Spirit of God. So he deserves the glory for it is He who builds the authentic church. This is the work of the Spirit. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes "He will glorify me." **The capstone** is also a sign of the completion of the building. We as Christians are complete in Christ who is the head of the Church and it is to Him that glory is given. It is by the working of His Spirit that we are part of the Body of Christ and not by human ingenuity. We grieve the Spirit when we take the glory for the victories and achievements of the church. God's purposes are





not accomplished by might or power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord Almighty. "My Glory" said the Lord "I will not give to another."

### Conclusion

Samuel Chadwick writes with significant insight. Without the Spirit's "guidance wisdom gropes in darkness, without His strength there is no might. Light becomes darkness, and strength weakness apart from Him. There are many who would save the church by linking it up with the powers of the world. Christ was the Good Physician Who healed by the Spirit of Life, but the modern (contemporary) Savior is an engineer who will redeem by organization and accommodation. The salvation of the world is 'not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.' The reason of failure of the church is not in Him. The reason for the arrest of much of the church's effectiveness lies in the decay and decline of her dependence on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. The flame in the temple could only be kept aglow with the flow of oil. It was the bowl of oil that supplied fuel for the light in the temple. Without the oil the lampstand was useless and an encumbrance. The oil was indispensable to light. The church can only function by the Fire of God's Holy Spirit. It cannot function without the oil of God's Spirit. God made that clear; it is "NOT MIGHT.....NOT POWER..... But BY MY SPIRIT" says the Lord God Almighty. It is only in the power of the Spirit that we can live the holy life and fulfill the purposes to which He calls us. So it is clear that the building of church cannot be accomplished apart from the Spirit of God. It is vital, then, that the church - the Christian insure that the channels are open so that the supply of the oil of the Spirit can flow fully and freely into our lives and on into the world, enabling us to live and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the month of May as we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, may God help us to make a renewed surrender to the Holy Spirit. This is not optional because it is NOT MIGHT.....NOT POWER ...but by THE SPIRIT OF GOD that His work is accomplished.