

ZECHARIAH

Chapter Four

Introduction

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord...”

1. “Might” is a word often used to describe strength in numbers; it is our collective strength as a congregation.
2. “Power” is a word often used to describe strength without numbers; it is your personal strength as an individual.

Neither the strength of our numbers as a group, nor your personal strength as an individual, can accomplish the work of God. God’s work can only be accomplished by God’s “Spirit.”

Having said that, you see in the text that God’s Spirit works *within* and *through* individuals and congregations. Zerubbabel was an individual leading the congregation of Israel in the work of rebuilding God’s Temple in Jerusalem.

Zechariah’s vision forever gives you the eternal perspective on the supply of the Spirit within and through individuals and groups to accomplish God’s work on earth. It does so in a language of simple symbols:

1. The congregation of Israel is represented by the symbol of the lampstand.
2. The individual Jews are represented by the symbols of the two olive trees.
3. The work of God is represented by the light revealed by the lampstand. The congregation of Israel, under the individual leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, was to reveal the light of the glory of God to the surrounding nations and to the whole world.
4. **But this was only possible as God supplied His Spirit to them and through them – represented by the symbol of the oil.**

Without ignoring the original application of this vision to Israel, we can also apply it to the church. In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the church on earth is symbolized by the lampstand. The congregation of each church, under the individual leadership of its pastor, is to reveal the light of the glory of God to the whole world. **But this is only possible as God supplies His Spirit to us and through us!**

We'll seek to understand these things by organizing our thoughts around two aspects of the vision – the *bowl* and the *branch*. Our two outline points will be: #1 God Sees You As A Bowl To Be Filled With His Fresh Oil, and #2 God Sees You As A Branch To Be Flowing With His Fresh Oil.

#1 God Sees You As A Bowl
To Be Filled With His Fresh Oil
(v1-5)

The true spiritual condition of the world of mankind is often described as “darkness” in Scripture. People in darkness need light; light was revealed in Bible times as oil burned in a bowl into which a wick had been placed.

The lamp of the Old Testament was the congregation of Israel on earth. In Isaiah 49:3 & 6 you read,

Isaiah 49:3 “You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”
Isaiah 49:6 ‘Indeed He says... ‘I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

The congregation of Israel was the lamp. Jesus was the light to be revealed by Israel. He was called the light by others (Luke 2:32), and He called Himself the light of the world (John 8:12).

Sadly, the leaders of the congregation of Israel rejected Jesus. They would not reveal Him as the glory of God. Thus they have been temporarily set-aside as God’s lamp. In the mean time, Jesus established a new congregation to reveal the light. He called it the church and, as I mentioned, described it in the Revelation as a lampstand (Revelation 1:20).

Soon – very soon – Jesus will return to rapture the church home to heaven. When He does, Israel will once again assume the role of revealing the light. They will once again be God’s lamp on earth.

With this background we are ready to look at the first five verses.

Zechariah 4:1 Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep.

Zechariah 4:2 And he said to me, “What do you see?”

So I said, “I am looking, and there *is* a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the *stand* seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps.

Zechariah 4:3 Two olive trees *are* by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.”

Zechariah 4:4 So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, “What *are* these, my lord?”

Zechariah 4:5 Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.”

The lampstand was a familiar item to the Jews. It was the seven-branched lampstand that gave light in their Temple. We call it the Menorah. At the end of each branch of the lampstand was a bowl. It was the duty and privilege of the Jewish high priest to tend this lampstand each morning and evening by replenishing the supply of oil in each of the seven bowls and trimming the wicks.

Zechariah was shown the lampstand on earth as God saw it from heaven. Along with the seven branches and their bowls, this lampstand had a bowl at the top into which fresh oil flowed from the fruitful branches of two olive trees. There were seven pipes, or tubes, going from the bowl to each of the seven bowls of the lampstand, making a total of forty-nine pipes.

The chief feature in these opening verses is the bowl that serves as a reservoir from which the individual bowls are filled. The reservoir is never depleted; it has a constant supply of fresh oil. It flows down continuously to fill and replenish the bowls of the lampstand so they can go on giving off light to the world.

The reservoir of oil represents the continuous and inexhaustible supply of God’s Spirit. God’s Spirit fills each individual bowl. You as an individual, and we as a church, are the bowls of the lampstand needing to be filled by a continuous and inexhaustible supply of the Spirit of God.

Pastor and author Warren Wiersbe points out that there are three ways we can go about trying to accomplish God's work: 1) We can trust our own strength and wisdom, 2) We can borrow the resources of the world, or 3) We can depend upon the Spirit of God.

No one ever admits they are trusting in their own strength and wisdom, or that they are borrowing the resources of the world... Yet often that is the case. How can we know we are depending upon the supply of God's Spirit?

There are two things to observe about Zechariah in the text: 1) He was wakened out of a sleep, and 2) He did not understand anything until it was explained to him. This tells you two things about how you can know you are depending upon the supply of God's Spirit.

First, You must acknowledge your total physical inability to accomplish anything for God apart from the filling of His Spirit. Zechariah was in the middle of receiving ten waking visions from the Lord in a single fantastic night. The vision of the lampstand was number seven by my count. Here was God, speaking to him; here were angels, ministering to him; **but he did not have the strength to even stay awake!** It is a picture for you of the absolute and total inadequacy of your own strength, talents, or abilities.

God's Spirit works in and through you as an instrument... But you don't add anything to Him by any strength, talent, or ability you think you have! It has often been said that God doesn't need your *ability*, only your *availability*. God delights to use your weakness to reveal His power. You are a bowl He can fill with His Spirit to accomplish His work on earth.

Second, you must acknowledge your total mental inability to accomplish anything for God apart from the filling of His Spirit. Zechariah understood zilch about what he was shown until it was explained to him. His intellect was insufficient until it was illuminated by God.

Have you ever become frustrated because you read God's Word and don't see anything in it? *Be encouraged!* You are in good company. That is my experience all the time! Unless God shows me

something, I have no idea what to say. He must illuminate His Word to your heart by the Spirit. Your intellect can be a hindrance rather than a help to God's illumination.

God sees you as a bowl to be filled with His Spirit. It is a picture that ought to excite and encourage you. Wherever you find yourself, whatever you are doing, you can reveal the Light of the world as God supplies His Spirit to you.

Bowls were an important feature of the first five verses. The remaining verses emphasize the branches.

#2 God Sees You As A Branch To Be Flowing With His Fresh Oil (v6-14)

The vision Zechariah saw is completed for you in verses eleven through fourteen:

Zechariah 4:11 Then I answered and said to him, "What *are* these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?"

Zechariah 4:12 And I further answered and said to him, "What *are these* two olive branches that *drip* into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden *oil* drains?"

Zechariah 4:13 Then he answered me and said, "Do you not know what these *are*?" And I said, "No, my lord."

Zechariah 4:14 So he said, "These *are* the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth."

The reservoir bowl was itself being filled by a constant flow of fresh oil right out of the fruitful branches of two olive trees. The angel told Zechariah that the two branches were "the two anointed ones." He meant the two earthly leaders of Israel: Zerubbabel and Joshua.

These two guys had a difficult ministry, and especially Zerubbabel. He had to rally a rabble who often grew discouraged while rebuilding the Temple. He faced constant danger from enemies surrounding Jerusalem. The Temple itself would only be a shadow in comparison to the splendor of the former Temple.

Zerubbabel was promised a constant flowing of God's Spirit through him to accomplish the work. From heaven's perspective, Zerubbabel

and Joshua were like fruitful branches of two great olive trees. Through them would flow a supply of fresh oil – God’s Holy Spirit.

You, too, have many difficulties, dangers, and discouragements in your work for the Lord. But you, too, are promised a constant flowing of God’s Spirit through you.

In verses seven through ten you see the Spirit flowing through Zerubbabel. You’ll notice that God promises that He is going to accomplish the work He has given Zerubbabel. He that began a good work will complete it. The emphasis is not on the work but on the effect of the Spirit in Zerubbabel’s life as he went about his daily walk and work. The effect of the flow of the Spirit in Zerubbabel’s life were: *A steady faith, shouts of grace, and a sense of joy.*

A Steady Faith:

Zechariah 4:7 ‘Who *are* you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel *you shall become* a plain...’

A mountain becoming a plain should remind you of Jesus’ promise that the smallest amount of faith could remove the largest mountain. In your daily difficulties, dangers, and discouragements you can know the constant flow of God’s Spirit to produce faith that those mountains are not obstacles but opportunities to see the Lord’s faithfulness. We always focus on the situation; God wants to bring His Son into focus, accompanying you in and through the situation. God’s Spirit produces a steady faith.

Shouts of Grace:

Zechariah 4:7 ‘...And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”’

Notice again the promise to Zerubbabel that what God had begun, God would complete. The placing of the capstone was the final dedication of a structure. It was still four years away – but from God’s perspective it was already accomplished.

God would see to it the work was accomplished. Zerubbabel’s part was to work in a way that best represented God. There would be shouts of “Grace, grace to it.” It’s a prediction that the people would recognize that, though they did the physical work, it was all because

of God's spiritual favor in their lives. It is a reminder to us to walk and work by grace – being gracious and revealing God as gracious.

People should look upon your life and shout, "Grace, grace to it."

A Sense of Joy:

Zechariah 4:8 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

Zechariah 4:9 "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple;

His hands shall also finish *it*. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.

Zechariah 4:10 For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth."

Again note that God will see the work accomplished. The emphasis here is on "rejoicing." The "seven" "eyes of the Lord" symbolizes God's Omnipresence. *It is God Who is pictured as rejoicing!* God rejoiced to see Zerubbabel at work with the "plumb line in his hand."

If God rejoices over the work He Himself gives you, then it follows there are no "small things." Rather than "despise" what you believe to be small or mundane or insignificant, realize that God rejoices to see you in the work He's given you. He rejoices to see the plumb line in your hand... Or the pen... Or the dishes... Or the diapers... You get the idea.

Since God rejoices, you ought to have **a sense of joy** – and joy is something that can flow *in* and *through* you by the Spirit God supplies.

Conclusion

There is an alternate translation to the phrase "the two anointed ones" in verse fourteen. The phrase can be translated "the two sons of fresh oil."

God always sees to it that His work gets accomplished. He uses individuals and congregations, but He never depends on their might or power.

Rather than focusing on the work, be filled with the Spirit and let the Spirit flow through your life. Be a son or a daughter of fresh oil.

