

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

28 July 2024

The Answer to Our Disturbing Situation

Text: "He 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 Almighty." *Zech. 4:6*

Zerubbabel was the Man in the community of the Israelites who returned to Palestine from Babylon in response to the generous and enlightened policy of Cyrus the Great.

Born and raised in Babylon, Zerubbabel was a descendant of the house of David; and although he was never allowed to be a king of Israel, he did serve as the civil governor.

Along with Joshua, the high priest and religious leader, this man gave leadership to the struggling community.

In Cyrus's decree liberating the Jews to return from exile, he gave permission for them to rebuild the temple of God at Jerusalem.

This temple had been ruthlessly leveled by the Babylonians.

"The stones of the sanctuary," lamented Jeremiah the prophet, "are poured out in the top of every street".

Accordingly, when the exiles returned home, the first concern was the rebuilding of the temple of their God.

Ezra records the jubilation of the people "when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord."

When Zechariah and his companion, Haggai, appeared on the scene, things were not going well for the returnees.

Opposition was present on every hand.

It is always the case that when God's people say, "We will arise and build," the devil's crowd says, "We will arise and destroy."

This was a time of defeat, discouragement, and depression for God's people.

Where could the leaders of God's people find the answer for such difficult days?

Where can the church find the answer for its problems today?

The secret is found in our text; and the key to unlock the truth of that secret and make it available is prayer.

Zechariah had a personal message to the ruler Zerubbabel from the Lord.

His personal message is our text and lives up to the prophet's name: Zechariah, "Jehovah remembers."

Notice that God remembers and gives the solution to calm every fear and solve every problem.

In seeking to grasp the point of God's message to Zerubbabel, we must remind ourselves first of the disturbing situation confronting the civil leader of God's people.

Let's examine four factors that contributed to Zerubbabel's troubling circumstances..

An unfinished project.

First, Zerubbabel faced an unfinished project, the rebuilding of the temple of the Lord.

There can be no doubt that the task of rebuilding was part of the divine plan for the Israelites.

Indeed, God raised up Cyrus to enable his people to rebuild the temple, prophesied by Isaiah before the death of that great king.

In the same way God has assigned us a divine project to undertake and complete.

We refer to the building of that spiritual temple, which is the church of the living Christ.

It is never right for work on that building to come to a standstill, for there is always work to be done in the construction of that spiritual house.

Honesty demands that we confess to the times when we become discouraged and give up our part of the work of our lord.

Yet we must never forget that God has called us to the work and that it is his will that the work should be carried through to completion.

Zerubbabel faced an unfinished task just as we do today.

An unrelenting pressure.

Second, God's people faced an unrelenting pressure, the opposition of the enemies of God's people.

Let's look at the design of the enemy.

The enemy weakened the hands of the people of Judah.

How this was done is not clear.

Perhaps they cut off supplies.

They could have made surprise attacks against the people.

Whatever form the opposition took, it resulted in weakened hearts and hands.

The amazing thing about the enemy of God's people is that he uses the same basic battle plan more than once.

Right now Satan is seeking to cut you off from your Source, the Lord God himself.

He is seeking to take you by surprise.

He looks for ways to intimidate you to prevent you from completing the task God gave you to do.

He constantly turns the pressure on your life and on the life of the church.

Judah's enemies weakened the hands of the people.

They also troubled them.

God's people were scared into stopping their work on the temple of the Lord.

The Devil is a master at terrifying people into quitting.

He knows every argument to paralyze God's people into inactivity.

He can stir up the storm clouds of discouragement so that God's people will retreat to the safety of the storm cellars of life and never accomplish the task God has given them.

We note that the enemies of the people of Judah hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose.

They didn't mind spending some money if, as a result, they could quench the zeal of God's people and crush the building project at the outset.

We are dismayed as we read the account of the Enemy's success over God's people.

"Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem".

This was the disturbing situation facing Zerubbabel.

An unspiritual people.

Zerubbable also faced an unspiritual people.

This was a new problem.

In another day as they returned from Babylon, they did so with hope and inspiration.

They began the work with great confidence in the Lord, until they ran into opposition.

When they started focusing on the enemy, they ceased to focus on the Lord.

Then they became idle and inactive.

This gave way to humanistic thinking that led to outright carnality.

We are experts at rationalizing our failures.

We have a hundred and one alibis to explain why we are not engaged in the work of the Lord, but they are just feeble excuses.

An unwelcome prospect.

The final factor in Zerubbabel's disturbing situation was that since he did not have the remedy for his people's discouragement or the resources to change defeat into victory, there was nothing he could do.

The opposition he and his people faced loomed up like a huge mountain before them.

Would he ever be able to finish the project God had given him to do?

The prospect was grim indeed.

When our way seems darkest, when God seems to have forgotten us, when resources are all dried up, we need to remember this divine solution.

God assured his leader that there was no prayer too hard for him to answer, no problem too difficult for him to solve, no promise that he would not keep.

The same assurance is given to us today.

But we must remember that it is not by our power nor by our might but by his Spirit that we can overcome the opposition.

You may ask, "But how do I receive this power? How can I be led by the Spirit?"

The apostle Paul answers this for us in *Ephesians 6:18*: "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests".

Prayer is the answer to our disturbing situation.

Are you disturbed about some situation in which the enemy has defeated you?

Do you at this moment feel distressed because you have not completed the work God has given you to do?

Have you tried prayer?

Face your failures the way Zerubbable did in the power of the Lord.

Prayer is not the "only" thing we can do, it is the best thing we can do, always.

For prayer takes us before God and God is the answer to every problem.

Give it to God in prayer and step back and watch Him work.

He is always perfect in his response.