

October 16, 2020

A challenge and a call for you to pray.

Christians today, especially those in the United States, have become far too self-reliant: Self-reliant to the point of idolatry. We Christians speak regularly of needing to rely upon the Holy Spirit for guidance and direction; yet our actions betray us. We talk a good game, as it were, but we do not walk what we say we believe. Christians today come to prayer with a preset agenda regarding what and how they want God to answer. Our society continues to make wondrous marvels of engineering and architectural design and we stubbornly refuse to give God the glory for the gifts which He gave so that we could make these marvels. Read with me from Zechariah 4:1-7.

1 Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep. 2 He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lamp stand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; 3 also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side." 4 Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?" 5 So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." 6 Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts. 7 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'"

Children are amazing. They are fun to watch. As I watch them I learn new things about humanity. I remember asking my own children when they were very young if they needed help with what they were doing. Each of them defiantly retorted, “No thanks. I can do it myself!” Eventually, they invariably would come and say, “Daddy, it is too hard. I need your help!” Perhaps, you have experienced this as well. We Christians are like this as well. We believe that we are able to do anything we set our minds to, regardless of how difficult it may first appear. There is no puzzle too complex or task too daunting or mountain so high that we cannot overcome it, we believe. Unfortunately, we usually fail to have lasting success with our endeavors. This is because we fail to realize that we can’t do it, whatever “it” is, apart from the Holy Spirit’s effective working in our lives.

Zechariah’s name means “YHWH” remembers. This is an encouraging reminder that God will not forget nor forsake His people. We who believe in Jesus are God’s people. In His vision Zechariah saw a golden lamp stand with a bowl on top and trees pouring oil directly into the bowl. The lamp stand symbolizes the people of God. The bowl is on top as a receptacle for receiving a direct supply of oil. The trees pour the oil directly into the bowl representing God as the direct source of an exceedingly abundant power and energy to His people.

The people of God were supposed to be rebuilding the temple. Their work was slow and the people began to lose heart and the work ceased. The God’s people needed to know that God was with them. The people’s problem was they were trying to do the work apart from God.

Self-reliance or self-will is always a problem. “The people of God abandoned the House of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols; so wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their guilt. Nevertheless, God sent prophets to the people of

God to bring them back to the Lord; though the prophets testified against them, the people would not listen” (2 Chronicles 24:18-19).

Stephen, the first martyr of the Church, declared to the Sanhedrin, You who [are the people of God] received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it” (Acts 7:51). Self-reliance or self-will will always lead to frustration because it is unsatisfying. The Preacher asserts, “All a person’s labor is for his mouth and yet the appetite is not satisfied. (...) What the eyes see is better than what the soul desires. This too is futility and striving after the wind”(Ecclesiastes 6:7-9).

Working at anything apart from the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit is complete and utter vanity. This is self-serving. Again the Preacher challenges, “I hated life because the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

When we work apart from the Holy Spirit we will never have genuine success. At best all we will have is a partial or imitation of success. If God is left out it will never truly be “success” in that we will have done whatever we did for ourselves and not for God. Jesus teaches, “Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who abides in Me and I in him, that one bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).

Reliance on the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity for God’s people. We must learn to trust God completely. Learning to surrender our will to God’s will leads to fulfillment. Again Jesus teaches, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made complete”(John 15:10-11).

Reliance on the Holy Spirit causes spiritual vitality or health. “When the people cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. God sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions” (Psalm 107:19-20).

Reliance on the Holy Spirit results in lasting success. Obviously if we are not abiding in God and we fail then it stands to reason that success is dependent upon a close and habitual relationship with God.

A clear example of success as a result of reliance upon the Holy Spirit is evidenced in the miracle of Dunkirk. Before the Miracle at Dunkirk was accomplished King George VI issued a call to prayer. On the day this call to pray was made the German army inexplicably halted its advance. This enabled the successful evacuation of nearly 400,000 British, French, and Belgian soldiers. I believe the real miracle of Dunkirk was the people of England responded to God in the midst of their desperation with prayer. Today, I am calling you to prayer. I urge each of you to devote yourselves to prayer asking for God to send His Spirit upon us. I am calling you to pray for the healing of our nation which is only possible by a return to the Lord God through His Son, Jesus. Let us pray.

Almighty and sovereign God, we thank You for the magnificent gift of the Holy Spirit. We ask today that You will cause Your people to “Wake Up!” and realize that the only answer to our problems is a full and complete return to You through Jesus, Your Son and our Savior, amen.

Remember, it is not by our power or might that we will be healed and return to the Lord, but only by the Spirit.

Until the nets are full