

# When Life Is Overwhelming

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes relying on the Holy Spirit to overcome overwhelming challenges and discouragement in life.*

**Duration:** 33:54

**Scripture:** Psalm 121:1-2, Mark 10:27, Romans 8:31, Ephesians 3:20

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Faith And Trust"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on the story of Zerubbabel in Zechariah, emphasizing the message that tasks are not accomplished by human might or power but by the Spirit of God. It highlights the importance of relying on God's strength to overcome seemingly impossible challenges, encouraging listeners to surrender their burdens and trust in God's ability to move mountains in their lives.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn now in our Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 3 for our scripture reading today. 2 Corinthians chapter 3. I'll read the first and the outnumbered verses. We ask you to join together as you read the even numbered verses.

Let's stand for the reading of the word. Do we begin again to commend ourselves or need we as some other epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us and written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not with tables of stone, but upon the fleshly tables of the heart. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was abolished.

But even unto this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. And now the Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Let's pray.

Father, we pray that you'll help us this day, that we might behold your glory, and that there might be that work of your Holy Spirit in our lives, changing us, Lord, from glory to glory, even into your same image. Bless now, Lord, the study of your word. Open our hearts, speak to us, and Lord, just let it minister to us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated.

Well, we're getting into the book of Zechariah this week, and we'll take the first seven chapters tonight, and next week the next seven chapters, and then the book of Malachi, and we have completed the Old Testament, and we start off in the New Testament the following week. So we're just about ready to finish up on the Old Testament. It's been a great journey, but we're looking forward to getting into the New Testament and the exciting truths of the New Testament.

This morning we'd like to look at the fourth chapter of Zechariah, verse 6, where we read, And then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain, and he shall bring forth in the headstone thereof with shoutings crying, Grace, grace, unto it. Have you ever been working on a project and you got to the place where you thought, Well, there's no use even trying anymore.

It's just too big. The task is too great. I can never do it.

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by your circumstances and felt that you couldn't take one more step, that you might as well just give up and quit? Have you ever felt just like giving up? If you have, then you understand the feelings of Zerubbabel in our text today. He was discouraged. He was ready to give up.

He had returned from Babylon with other Jewish people from the captivity, and they had high hopes. The people were in high spirits. They were looking forward to getting back to Jerusalem.

They had heard of the beauty of the city of Jerusalem. They had heard of the temple and all, and they were anxious to see Jerusalem. They weren't really prepared for what they found when they came to Jerusalem because the destruction by the Babylonian army was so complete.

The city was nothing but rubble, piles of rubble, and so the magnificent temple was just completely destroyed, and the devastation was just unbelievable. The people of the neighboring villages had pillaged the city, and the people, just their hearts sank when they saw the condition, and their dreams were sort of shattered just because of the reality of what they were looking at. Have you ever worked all day very hard, and at the end of the day, you couldn't see any visible results of your labor? It seems like you made no headway, but think of after working months and, again, having that feeling that you can't even see what you've done in these many months.

The pile of rubble still looks as big as it did when you first started to move it, and if you can not catch this, you're catching the mindset of the people. They were discouraged. They were ready to give up.

The people had become so demoralized that they'd given up the project of rebuilding the temple, and they started working on their own houses and left the temple just to go. The book of Haggai was written at the same time that Zechariah was writing his book. There's only about two months difference between the writing of the two books, and Haggai was calling on the people to not give up and to get back to work on the house of God, and he pointed out that God's blessings were lacking because they were letting the house of God go desolate while they were just tending to their own personal houses.

We need to remember that the most important relationship in our lives is the vertical relationship, our relationship with God. If this is right, then the horizontal relationships will be right, but until this is right, our whole life will always be out of kilter. It seems that there is a fixed axis in our life between the perpendicular and the horizontal, and if the perpendicular, my up and down relationship with God is right, then my horizontal is right.

I have a right relationship with you, but if my perpendicular gets out of kilter, then it's a fixed axis, and my relationship with others becomes topsy-turvy, up and down, and I have a real problem. So the importance of seek first the kingdom of God, his righteousness, then all of these other things will be added unto you. God will take care of the others, but the important thing, of course, is that vertical axis upon which our whole lives spin or revolve.

Jesus, of course, encouraged us to seek the spiritual things first. Through the prophet of Zechariah, God is going to send the message to the leaders to encourage them to return and to start building the temple again. God said, if you notice that you just don't have enough money to get through the week, that you're always, you know, just short and so forth, it's because, he said, you've forsaken my house and you're busy about your own things, and that's the reason why you're just having so many problems, so many difficulties, so much hardship.

So during this time, Zechariah saw this vision that the Lord gave him, and the vision was of the menorah. Now, the menorah was that seven golden candlestick, a candlestick with seven little cups on the arms of it, and that was to light up the sanctuary of the Jewish temple, and it was to be a symbol that God intended the Jewish nation to be the light of the world, and that was one of the main furnishings of the temple was this menorah, and each day it was the duty of the priest to change the oil and to put in new wicks and so forth, and to make sure that that menorah was always burning, the seven golden candlesticks were always burning continually. In the vision, that, of course, that was quite a laborious task.

Every day it was, you know, doing the same thing, cleaning up and putting the fresh oil in, and it was one of those things that could become very monotonous after a while, but God gave to Zechariah this vision. He saw this menorah with the seven golden candlesticks, the seven arms on this candlestick. He saw the cups with the oil, but then he saw on either side of this menorah there were olive trees, and there were branches that were going from the olive trees directly into these cups, filling them constantly with the oil so that it wasn't a daily task that he had to worry about getting the oil and filling the cups, but here was just this sort of a Rube Goldberg kind of a thing where these olive trees were feeding the oil into the cups just daily, and the Lord said to Zechariah, what do you see? He said, I really don't understand it, and the Lord said, well, that's the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, it's not by might, it's not by power, but it's by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, this mountain of rubble shall be removed.

In other words, he's discouraged. It looks like they're not getting anywhere in the removing of the rubble, but the Lord is giving words of encouragement, not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Might is a word in Hebrew that is used for human resources or human ability.

The work isn't going to be done with human resources or human ability. Power denotes human effort, physical or mental, and it should be noted that they had tried might and power, and they had run out of their might and power, but the mountain of rubble was still there, and the temple was not rebuilt, and so it's interesting when we have exhausted our store of endurance, when our strength has failed ere the day is half done, when we reach the end of our hoarded resources, our Father's full giving has only begun. His

love has no limits.

His grace has no measure. His power has no boundary known unto men, for out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth again. Today, we see men trying to do the work of God through might and power.

The Christian periodicals are filled with the conferences that you can attend, conferences on how to raise the funds for your church, or how to stimulate church growth, or how to win the world for Christ. There are Christian think tanks where men come together and they explore new ideas to make the church and the gospel more attractive to the world. They're seeking for success formulas, and for a price, you can buy the recipe for developing a large church.

There's step-by-step processes whereby you can evangelize your community. I was going to say that these programs are a dime a dozen, but that's not quite right. They're \$395 a seminar.

If you register in advance, \$500 if you wait and register at the door. Through over the 50 years that I've had in the ministry, I've seen hundreds of these programs come and go. I even participated in some myself in the early years of my ministry.

As Zerubbabel and Joshua, I became discouraged after putting out so much effort and so little to show for it. When I'd given up on the men's creative devices and ideas and their power routines, I just started doing what the early church did back in the book of Acts. They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, in fellowship, and in prayer, and the Holy Spirit added daily to the church such as should be saved.

As people would come from around the world to discover the secret of the phenomenal work that the Lord was doing here, they were usually disappointed because they did not have, uh, we did not have the success programs to sell to them, and they always thought we were holding back from them. Now, really, what is the real secret of your growth there? We said it's just the Lord, you know. Oh, no, no, no.

Really, what are you doing, you know, and they want you to lay out some kind of a program for them, but we didn't have any. We were just teaching the word of God, loving one another, and watching God do a beautiful work, and we've had that blessed privilege of being able to do that. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? I want to ask you, did you receive the spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are you now going to be made perfect in the flesh? There was a time when the hippie movement was a hot item in the press, and they were writing about it in the papers, and in the magazines, and so forth.

This counterculture hippie movement had taken hold here in the United States, and I was reading an article in the Time magazine about the 65 hippies down there at Black's Beach in San Diego who stripped to the bare and went swimming in the nude. They're in the bay at San Diego, and I thought, is that all that the magazine has a report on, 65 kids swimming in the nude down in Black's Beach at San Diego? We're going to be baptizing about a thousand kids in Corona del Mar. To me, that's more newsworthy than kids swimming in the nude down there.

I think I'll get hold of Time magazine and see if they would like to do a report on something else that's happening in the Pacific Ocean rather than just kids swimming nude. The Lord spoke to my heart. I was driving home from church and thinking about that, and the Lord spoke to my heart.

He said, who's been your publicity agent up till now? I said, well, you have, Lord. He said, well, look, you haven't had to do any advertising. You've been in Look magazine.

You've been in Reader's Digest. You've been in several newspaper articles. Are you not satisfied with the job that I'm doing? I had to say, well, Lord, I'm very satisfied.

Forgive me. Forget trying to contact Time magazine and let them know. When I got home, there was a fellow sitting in the living room, and my wife said, honey, this fellow is a reporter from Time magazine.

He wants to do an article on, you know, the church and the kids coming to Christ and all, and so the Lord was one step ahead of us, which he always is, but it was exciting to see how God was working, and it is exciting to see the work of God continuing. The Lord was saying to Zerubbabel, you have worked so hard until you're totally exhausted. You're at the point of giving up.

You've pushed the people until there's no more push. It is true that you can push people too far, and when they do not see the promised results, they get discouraged and quit. The time has come to let the Spirit do the work.

Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, this mountain shall be removed. The result of letting the Spirit do the work, first of all, the work gets done. The mountains will be removed.

We have different words to define a task. We say, well, that's very easy. Oh, well, that's difficult.

We say, oh, that's hard, and then there are some who say, oh, that's impossible, and so we have a tendency to measure a task and grade it as far as difficulty or ability to accomplish that particular task. But you know, if it's God doing the work, then any talk of impossibility is absurd. He said, behold, I am God.

Is there anything too hard for me? There may be mountains of difficulty in your path. It may be that you've been trying to move those mountains. It may be that you've been laboring strong and hard in trying to, you know, level things off, but it seems like the mountain is still there, and you have come to the conclusion, it just is too much.

I'm worried. I can't do it. Well, when we reach the end of our hoarded resources, our Father's full giving has only begun, and so there gives the opportunity for God to begin his work and to do for you what you can't do for yourself.

The work gets done when the Spirit is the one doing the work. Secondly, you have the assurance that the work is going to be accomplished. The hands of Zerubbabel, the Lord said, have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands also will finish it.

The assurance of God that work is going to be accomplished, and finally, God gets the work that is done when it is done. We know that we weren't able to do it, and we had given up, but now that God does it, we can just watch him, and we can just give the glory to God for what he has done. So, he oftentimes waits until we get so discouraged that we're acknowledging, I can't do it, and that's what gives him the opportunity to then step in and do for you what you can't do for yourself.

When he accomplishes his desires, and the great success is always the result, all we can say is to God be the glory, great things he hath done. We look at the challenge of the Great Commission. Jesus said to his disciples, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned. And the fact that this commission, we look at the world in which we live, and we look at our weaknesses, and we think, how in the world can we ever reach this world with the gospel? It seems like things are really just impossible to reach people whose hearts have become so hardened and so enamored by the world that they're just not interested in the gospel.

How can we do it? How can we reach them? Well, not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, this mountain shall be removed. Oftentimes, in looking at the difficulty, we're prone to just sort of give up and shirk from the task, and we say, who is sufficient for these things? But we must remember that our sufficiency is not of ourselves. Our sufficiency is of Christ.

We often get discouraged because we're looking at the difficulty of the task rather than at the sufficiency of Christ. Maybe you have a mountain of rubble in your life. You know that it needs to be removed, and perhaps you've even endeavored to remove that mountain of rubble out of your life because you realize that it is hindering your walk with the Lord so greatly.

And maybe you've come to that point of almost giving up and just saying, well, just not going to happen. It just can't happen. And know this.

It's not by might, nor by power, but what the Spirit of God can do. He can move that mountain for you. I may be too weak for the task, but He's able to do much more than I could ask or think, and with His help, the mountain shall be removed.

Don't give up, but give in to the power that God has provided to give to you the ability to move that mountain. I know it's impossible for me to move the mountain, but for Him, there's nothing to it. Reminds me, when we were first starting out in the ministry, we were pastoring down in Tucson, Arizona, and our first child was just 18 months old at the time.

A brilliant little girl, just a real lover and just the joy of our lives, and smart as a whip. She was so smart and, of course, just lived with adults, just her mom and dad, and she was just so, well, just real sharp, and so we had a Christmas program for the church, and she memorized this little poem and did a real good job with it, and she was going to recite it for the Christmas program, and I can remember still teaching her. Mama said I was too little.

Daddy said I couldn't do it. Merry Christmas. There I said it.

Really, there was nothing to it, and so it was, I just said a little, but she could say it so clearly, and we were so proud of her, and so when she, you know, she was a little hesitant of doing it, but I said, honey, I'll buy you that new doll for Christmas if you'll, you know, say your poem, you know, because I was so proud of her, you know, being able to say it so clearly, and just she was so little, it was just really remarkable, and I was just wanting to sort of show off my little daughter, and she got up in front of the people, and I looked down, and her little lip was quivering, and she looked up at me, and she said, I don't want a doll, and she went running off, and I thought, you know, I felt like a brute, you know, I saw that little lip quivering, and I thought, you know, I've been pushing her too far, and you know, I felt real bad about it, but you know, it was, well, just one of those moments that you sort of rue afterwards. The mountains, they're too big for us. We can't move them, but he can, and it's not by might nor by power, but by his spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.

So let's just let him move the mountains for us, and he will, if you will just allow him to do it. Father, thank you for the help that you give to us, and Lord, there are those here today who have mountains of difficulty facing them. They're looking at the task, and they're looking at the situation, and they are feeling, Lord, I just can't do it.

I don't have the energy. I don't have the ability. I don't even have the desire.

It's just too much, but Lord, I pray that you'll help them to realize that you are able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we could ask or think, and it isn't by our might or by our power, but Lord, it is by your spirit the mountain shall be removed, and so Lord, help us that we'll be able to turn over our mountains of difficulties to you to allow you to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We ask this, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to pray for you, and if there are situations in your life that are just sort of overwhelming and you even hate to think about them because you've tried everything and nothing seems to be working, and you've been working on it for a long time, but you can't see any progress. It looks like the mountain is still there. Time to let the Lord take over, and so I would encourage you to come on down and just say to them, pray for me.

I just want God's help in dealing with these issues in my life that are just more than I can handle, and they'll be happy to pray for you, and God will be happy to move those mountains for you. So may the Lord be with you. May the Lord bless you, and may He move mountains for you this week.

In Jesus' name we pray. I will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory.

God bless you.

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