

When Overwhelmed by the Task

by Chuck Smith

When we're overwhelmed by tasks and circumstances, we need to let the Spirit work and trust in His power and ability to accomplish tasks.

Duration: 36:42

Scripture: Psalm 33, Jeremiah 32:17, Zechariah 4:6, John 21:1-6, Galatians 3:3

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

Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of relying on God's Spirit rather than human might or power to overcome challenges and accomplish tasks. It emphasizes the need to surrender our limitations and trust in God's ability to work in our lives, even when faced with discouragement or seemingly impossible situations.

Transcript

Now shall we turn in our Bibles to Psalm 33 for our scripture reading today. I'll read the first, the outnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation as you read the even-numbered verses and shall we stand as we read the Word of God.

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harp, sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song, play skillfully with a loud noise.

For the Word of the Lord is right and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap. He layeth up the depth and storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake and it was done.

He commanded and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to naught. He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

The counsel of the Lord standeth forever. The thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

The Lord looketh from heaven and he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike.

He considereth all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host. A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

A horse is a vain thing for safety and neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy. To deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waited for the Lord. He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him because we have trusted in his holy name.

Let thy mercy O Lord be upon us according as we hope in thee. Let's pray. Lord help us we pray to look to you as our source of strength, our source of help.

We realize Lord that there are tasks that we are facing that are beyond our capacity to deal with. Problems that are beyond our capacity to cope with. And so Lord help us that we might put our trust in you.

That we might receive from you that strength, that help that we need. Bless we pray the study of the word. May it open our hearts to the things that you're wanting to do in our lives as we will just submit ourselves and our problems to you.

Guide us Lord with your counsel in Jesus name. Amen. You may be seated.

Almost through with the Old Testament. Beginning this week with Zechariah. We'll be studying the first four chapters of Zechariah.

Tonight Pastor Skip will lead us in the study of Zechariah chapters one through four. Soon through with Zechariah about four weeks, five weeks, and then we'll move into Malachi for one week and then on into the New Testament. This morning we'd like to draw your attention to Zechariah chapter 4 beginning with verse 6 where Zechariah says that the Lord answered and spoke unto him saying this is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying it's 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 the headstone thereof with shoutings crying grace grace unto it. Moreover the word of the Lord came to me saying the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house his hands shall also finish it and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts have sent me unto you. For who has despised the days of small things they shall rejoice.

Have you ever been working on a problem a project and you thought there's no use even trying any further the task is just too great I can never do it. Have you ever had the feeling that you were just totally overwhelmed by your circumstances you felt that you just couldn't take one more step you might as well just quit. Have you ever felt like giving up? Kay and I came home one day several years ago when our older daughter was just six years old our younger daughter was just six because she had left us a note and it said it's no use I ran away she'd been having some problems with her older brothers they were

giving her a bad time and she figured I just can't handle this anymore it's no use I ran away and we've laughed a lot of times at that note of frustration the sense that it's just too big for me to handle I can't do it I'm not capable.

If you've ever had those moments those thoughts then you can understand the feelings of Zerubbabel he had led 50,000 Jews from Babylon back to Jerusalem with the intent and purpose of rebuilding the temple and making Jerusalem habitable for thousands of more who will be returning to their homeland. The people came with great expectations the morale was high they were just really ready to go however when they arrived at Jerusalem they weren't really prepared for the shock of seeing such total devastation rather than a city with walls it was mountains of rubble that were once the walls that were once the temple that were once the homes in which the people lived. The area had been pillaged for some seventy years by the neighboring villages and though they started into the work it was so great so overwhelming just trying to clear the rubble from the area where they would be building the temple that they soon became demoralized discouraged and left off the project of building the temple.

Now at this time Haggai was also a prophet and as we were studying Haggai last week he spoke to them about the importance of getting their priorities straight. They had turned from the work of building the house of God and they were building their own houses but as the result of their priorities being askew they weren't really doing well at all their crops were failing they were having great financial difficulties and the prophet Haggai said it's because you put yourselves first your own interest above the interest of the Lord and the things of the Lord. With the promise to them if they would just again get back to work on the temple that God would then bless their crops and bless their own finances and get your priorities straight.

As Jesus said seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. He was speaking about how that people have great concern and great care for things. The bills, the projects that we have and how that if we would just seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness he would take care of these other things.

So it's a rebel bow. He is there he is the leader. He is the one that has brought them back leading them in the rebuilding of the temple but the work has ceased the people are discouraged.

How important for us to put the Lord first and the things of the Lord first. You see the most important thing in your life is your relationship with God. The vertical axis really upon which your life revolves.

If the vertical axis is correct then the horizontal plane will be correct. But if the vertical axis is tilted then as your life revolves around the axis if it's not really what it should be you'll find your life will be down and up and down and up and you go in this topsy-turvy kind of a thing where your life is just a yo-yo up and down. So many times we spend so much of our life trying to balance.

Looking for the balance of life but the balance isn't automatic. If you'll just get the vertical axis correct the balance is automatic. Your life will be on an even keel if you've got the right relationship with God.

These people had gotten out of the right relationship with God. They had put themselves above God. Their projects above the things of God and they were suffering as the result.

Now through the prophet Zechariah God is going to send a message unto the leaders to encourage them to get back to the work of the rebuilding of the temple. So here in chapter 4 the prophet Zechariah had an interesting vision. He saw the menorah, the seven stems of the candlestick, the lampstand, which was the

light in the temple, the golden menorah.

It had little cups at the top of each of the arms that were filled with oil and that had the wick in them and thus the little candles or the little cups of oil burning, giving light in the temple. It was symbolic of how God wanted Israel to be the light of the world and it became a symbol for Israel, in fact still is to the present day. The menorah is one of the symbols of the nation of Israel, declaring God's intention that they be a light to the world.

Daily it was the duty of one of the priests to come in to fill each of the little cups with oil, to trim the wick, and to make sure that the light never went out. It was one of those tasks that just every day had to be done. In this vision that Zechariah had, he saw the menorah, but he saw two olive trees on either side of the menorah.

And from the olive trees there were seven pipes that filled these little bowls of oil at the top of the candlestick. So that it was an automatic thing. It wasn't a daily, routine, boring task that had to be done every day.

But here was now an automatic kind of a filling of oil directly from the olive tree itself and thus the lamps continually burning. The Lord said, Do you understand this, Zechariah? He said, No. And he said, Well this is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, It's not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, this mountain of rubble will be removed.

The people have become discouraged trying to remove the rubble. But it's not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord. Now the word might in Hebrew is used for human resources, human ability.

The word power is a word in Hebrew for human effort, physical and mental. Now they had done that. They had been working by their power and their might and it wasn't happening and they had become discouraged and had given up.

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

In the Christian periodicals each one will have several different conferences across the nation where pastors may go and they can learn the latest techniques on how to raise funds for the work of the church. They can learn all of the lessons to promote church growth or conferences on how to win the world for Christ. There are Christian think tanks where men come together to explore their ideas for making the church more attractive to the world.

Seeking success formulas and for a price you can learn their recipe for enlarging your church. They can take you through the 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 isn't quite right.

They are \$395 a seminar and \$500 if you wait and register at the door. I've been in the ministry for over 50 years. I've seen hundreds of these programs come and go and in the earlier years of my ministry I actually participated in many of them.

But as Zerubbabel and Joshua I became discouraged after putting out so much effort and so little to show for it. When I had given up on men's devices, the might and the power, and just started relying upon the Holy Spirit, simply teaching the Word of God, developing a loving relationship with the body, observing the breaking of bread, the ordinances, and creating prayer groups, we've had the privilege now for 40 years of watching what the Spirit of God can do when you get out of the way and just allow Him to work. Jesus said, I will build my church.

And what a thrill it is to watch Jesus building His church and seeing what He can do. People come from all over the world to discover the secret of this phenomenal work that the Lord has been doing here. They usually go away disappointed because we don't have any programs, success programs, to sell to them.

They're usually looking for some power evangelism program or some new secret for church growth. Some new program that they can take back and implement in their own communities. But what is happening is not anything that we can do or have done, but it is the work of God's Holy Spirit, and it's a joy to watch God do it.

Paul wrote to the Galatians, O 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 as having begun in the Spirit are you now going to be made perfect in the flesh? You know that is a common problem. God has begun a glorious work by His Spirit, but then as we see it we think, well we can improve this, or we can improve that, or we could do, and we want to take over and begin to direct the program or take it out of God's hands rather than just allowing God to continue to do His wonderful work. There was a time during the hippie movement that it was a very hot press item.

Many articles were being written in various publications about this subculture revolution, and I remember reading one day in Time magazine about 65 hippies who were down on Black's Beach in San Diego, and they had removed all of their clothes, and they were lying nude on the beach, and then they were going out and swimming in the nude, and it made Time magazine, it made news around the country of these hippies and their bizarre activity down at Black's Beach in San Diego. And I thought to myself, you know I ought to write to the religion editor of Time magazine and let him know that there were hundreds of hippies here in California that were going down to the beach, but rather than removing their clothes and going swimming, they were being baptized, and they were entering into a new life in Christ by the thousands. And, you know, it would be a interesting sequel to the story of the nudes down at Black's Beach.

And as I was trying to figure out just how I might get hold of the religion editor of Time magazine looking in for the news, for the numbers and so forth, the Lord spoke to my heart, and he said, who's been your publicity agent up till now? And I said, well, you have, Lord. And he said, well, I got you in Life magazine, I got you in Reader's Digest, I've, you know, there's been several articles in the papers, and all. Aren't you satisfied with what I'm doing? And I said, oh Lord, please forgive me.

I'm more than satisfied with what you, you know, that, that tendency to, you know, get in the flesh and might and power. And the Lord really gave me a very, well, it was a sweet rebuke, but it was a rebuke. I got home, and Kay said, honey, there's a fellow in the living room.

He's a reporter from Time magazine. He wants to talk to you. And so I went in, and he said, are you going to have any baptisms or anything? I want to do an article on... And so the Lord put us in Time, but it didn't take, you know, it wasn't something that I did, or could have done.

I would have in my own folly, but the Lord stopped me, thankfully, from that. The Lord was saying to Zerubbabel, you've 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. And it is true that you can push people so long and so far and so hard. And when they don't see the promised results, they get discouraged and quit.

And that is the time for the Spirit to do the work. When we have exhausted our own efforts, when we have gone as far as we can, and we have nothing to show for it, and we become discouraged, that's a great opportunity for God, then, to begin to do the work, because I've come to the recognition and realization and acknowledgement that I can't do it. Lord, if it's going to be done, you'll have to do it.

It's very discouraging to be working hard all day long, and then at the end of the day, looking at the work, and you can't see any progress. It looks like there's as big a pile of sand and gravel as there was at the beginning of the day, and you can't really see any progress. Now, think of doing that for weeks, and there's still this huge mountain of rubble.

And that's where Zerubbabel was. They had been working now for weeks, trying to build the temple, and they had not yet removed even all of the rubble. There was still that mountain of rubble.

And the people were discouraged, and Zerubbabel was discouraged. And so the Lord sent the message by Zechariah the prophet, saying, it isn't by might, it isn't by power, but it's by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. This mountain shall be removed.

What you can't do with your best efforts, the Lord is saying, I can do. Let me do it. Now, the result of letting the Lord do the work, setting aside my resolves, my might, my power, by which I could not do it, and just turning it over and saying, okay, Lord, I'm willing to let you do it.

You can use me as an instrument, but Lord, I can't do it, but I'll let you do it through me. And it's amazing what the Lord will do when we relinquish to him the situation. As I look at the various tasks, I'm prone to measure them by, oh, that's simple.

That's easy. Oh, that's difficult. Oh, that is hard.

Oh, that one's impossible. You know, and we judge the situation by our own might or power, what I can do, or what I feel I can do. But when you look at the problem in the light of God's power, then the latter category of hard, difficult, impossible is absurd.

God said to Jeremiah, I'm God. Is there anything too hard for me? Some of you are looking at the situations in your own life. There are habits and you've tried your best to free yourself from them.

You can see the damage that they are doing. You can see the pain and all that it has brought to you and to others. And you've tried so hard to stop, to quit, but you can't do it.

But what you can't do through your might and power, God can do by His Spirit if you'll just relinquish it and turn it over to Him and allow Him to work. There are people that you've been witnessing to. Their hearts seem to be so hard.

They mock you. They scorn your witness. And you think, they're impossible.

They can never be saved. And you've given up. You don't witness to them anymore.

You've given up. But God can do it. And if you'll just let God work.

If you'll just look to the Spirit to do what you can't do, you'll be amazed at what God will do. When you let the Spirit work, you can have that confidence that the task will be accomplished. This mountain shall be removed.

God will do it. You can have confidence in that. The Lord said, Zerubbabel, you've laid the foundation and you're going to finish the work.

He'd given up. He figured he'd never do it. But God said, you're going to.

Finally, and most importantly, when you let the Spirit of God do it, and you recognize that it is the work of God's Spirit, I couldn't do it myself. He's done what I could not do. Then He gets the glory for the accomplished, finished task.

There's no way you can go around boasting in what you have done or how you conquered or, you know, you don't have your seven steps to a more perfect life or this kind of stuff. You just say, it's a one-step program. Turn it over to the Lord and watch Him work.

Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. And He is able to do more than all I could ask or think, if I will just but let Him, and then recognize it's the Lord and give Him the glory for what is done. I think of the last chapter of the book of John when Peter said to the other disciples, they were there again at the Sea of Galilee waiting for Jesus, and He had not shown up.

And Peter said, I'm going fishing. The other said, we'll go with you. So they went out and they fished all night and caught nothing.

In the morning Jesus stood on the shore. They didn't recognize Him. He called out and He said, did you catch anything? They said, no.

He said, well cast your nets on the other side. And they did. And immediately the nets were filled with great fish.

So many they could not draw them into the boat because of the multitude of fish. And when John saw that they couldn't draw the nets in because of the multitude of fish, he said to Peter, it's the Lord. And you know when you fish all night and you've caught nothing, and suddenly there's a change of tactic.

The Lord lays something upon your heart. You follow it. And the nets are suddenly so full you can't draw them in.

You know that there's only one reason for it. It's the Lord. And then to God be the glory for the great things that He has done.

God wants to work in your life today. Maybe you're ready for that work. Maybe you've come to the place where you've given up and you say, well, I just can't do it.

Good that you recognize that because now maybe you're ready to let the Lord do for you what you can't do for yourself. He wants to. And I would encourage you, turn it over to Him.

It's not by might nor by power that it's going to be accomplished, but by the Spirit of God, it shall be. Father, thank you for the privilege of watching you work. And Lord, we just come to you today and we come, Lord, recognizing our limitations, our inabilities.

And Lord, we're looking now to you to take up where we've left off and that you would do your work in our lives, giving us, Lord, that assured victory that it shall be done by your Spirit. Help us, Lord, to surrender and not to take it back ourselves and try to complete what you've started, but just trust you, Lord, to continue your work to perfection. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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