

Revival - Part 3

by J.I. Packer

Revival is the work of God revitalizing moribund Christians and churches by awakening those moribund believers, by visiting the moribund communities, by bringing deep knowledge of himself where before knowledge was only shallow.

Duration: 1:09:58

Scripture: Psalm 81:11-12, Psalm 85:4-5, Zechariah 4:6

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Zechariah chapter four and verse one, which describes a vision of a solid gold lampstand with seven lights and two olive trees. The speaker emphasizes that this vision represents the word of the Lord to the rubble, emphasizing that God's work is not accomplished by human might or power, but by His spirit. The speaker also expresses gratitude for the fellowship and singing at the conference they are attending. Additionally, the speaker clarifies that the conference is not a political movement, but rather a gathering for the personal edification of pastors, elders, deacons, and members of Baptist churches.

Transcript

I appreciate Fred Malone's kind introduction, and it's good to know, as it's always good to know, that something you did long ago, and it's nearly 30 years since I wrote Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, has done good to someone whom one didn't know about at the time of writing. It's moving, it's humbling, but it's joyous to know that this material is used in the way that God does in fact use it. I would like to say, before I begin any exposition, that being at this conference has been a great joy and a great lift to my spirit.

I shall remember the fellowship and I shall most certainly remember the singing. It's a long time since I was in a singing situation that made me think so much of the singing that there will be round the throne on that glorious day. Only one thing I have to say, Fred, it is not that I am going back to the colonies, or back from the colonies, I should say, that's the way you said it.

I live in Vancouver, Canada now, and I am returning from the rebels to the colonies. As I said, I shall carry with me the happiest memories of what the rebels get up to, now that they have the country to themselves. Well now, I'd like to begin by reading the fourth chapter of Zechariah.

Please turn it up and have it open before you as I speak. It's the fifth in Zechariah's series of visions, the one that we didn't say anything about at all yesterday. Zechariah, chapter 4 and verse 1. Then the angel who talked with me returned and wakened me as a man is wakened from his sleep.

He asked me, what do you see? I answered, I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights. Also there were two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left. I asked the angel who talked with me, what are these my lord? He answered, you not know what these are? No my lord, I replied.

So he said to me, this is the word of the lord to the rebel, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, says the lord almighty. What are you almighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of God bless it, God bless it.

Then the word of the lord came to me, the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple. His hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the lord almighty has sent me to you.

Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. These seven are the eyes of the lord which range throughout the earth. Then I asked the angel, what are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand? Again I asked him, what are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil? He replied, you not know what these are? No my lord, I said.

So he said, these are the two who are anointed to serve the lord of all the earth. May God bless his word to our hearts and to him be the praise. Amen.

In this third talk I seek to bring you and myself with you right down to earth to the place where the rubber meets the road and where practical action has to be taken. Let's turn our backs on any romantic dreaming about revival that we may have done these last couple of days. Let's give ourselves to realistic thinking about revival as it relates to our lives, our churches, your church, my church, and our time.

What we've seen so far is that revival is the work of God revitalizing moribund christians and churches by awakening those moribund believers, by visiting the moribund communities, by bringing deep knowledge of himself where before knowledge was only shallow, by evoking vital and wholehearted and vigorous and lively response to himself where previously response was apathetic. In revival God purges and brings holiness. In revival God searches and arouses deep faith and deep repentance of a kind that were not there before.

Out of revival flows worship. Out of revival flows witness. There's an evangelistic overflow.

Communities are shaped and in general terms you knew this before ever you came to this conference. It is part of our protestant heritage to know about revival in broad and general terms and we knew enough about it to desire it and to be attracted by the subject. I believe it was the subject that brought you here rather than the speaker and I believe that I speak to you as folk who are still even more perhaps than before concerned about revival in your own situation.

You long to see it in your situation as I long to see it in mine. Let's be clear about the elements in revival. I've given you my checklist.

I stand by that checklist. God comes and the gospel is prized because sin is seen. Repentance goes deep.

The church becomes itself and Satan keeps pace to mess it up. These are the criteria of revival. There's much talk these days which would lead you to think that certain types of manifestations are the sign and guarantee of revival.

Different people vary as to which manifestations they pitch on as indicators of revival. Some think that you have revival wherever you have tongues. Some think that you have revival wherever you have supernatural healing.

Other suggestions are made. I put it to you that the criteria of revival are as stated and if people suppose that wherever you get manifestations you have revival there's going to be an awful lot of chasing of will-o'-the-wisp in our days. So what has all this got to say to us? I've just reminded you of the position that we've reached so far, the understanding of revival to which we've come through studying Zechariah and reflecting on the thing in itself.

Where does all this touch up in our own lives? Let me straight away set before you four propositions which I think indicate the answer to that question. First has to do with the need of revival. The proposition is this.

Spiritual stagnation. Falls under divine judgment. That is true in churches just as it is true of us as individuals.

God may take up human sin into his plan. He has done so in the past and will do so again. But he never condones it.

He never justifies it. Always it evokes his anger. Always it brings signs of his displeasure.

He forbids it and he forbids it because it's not in his nature to approve it. So where there's sin in any form we may expect to know the displeasure of God in experience and spiritual stagnation is a form of sin. Spiritual stagnation is what you get when for whatever reason you decline to be wholehearted for the Lord.

Maybe you never have been wholehearted for the Lord or maybe you were once but you've decided not to be so anymore. And there may be active disobedience involved. There may be simply passive apathy involved.

But either way to refuse to meet God's redeeming and saving love with wholehearted love and loyalty in response. That is sin. That is stagnation.

That is something spiritually fixed. That is something spiritually ruinous. And it brings down as I said signs and tokens of God's displeasure.

That's all that you can expect while that is the condition of the individual or the church. You've got it all through scripture. In Psalm 81 for instance where the psalmist is acting prophet and the Lord is speaking his word through the psalmist's mouth.

And if you look at verses 11 and following you see God saying this. After verse 10 I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

Comes this in verse 11. But my people would not listen to me. Israel would not submit to me.

So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. If my people would but listen to me. If Israel would follow my ways how quickly would I subdue their enemies and so on.

But Israel has turned her back on her God and so that's not the way it is nor the way that it's going to be. Their enemies are not subdued. Impotence, poverty, misery continues.

You just look over now to Psalm 85 at which we looked the first time I spoke to you. You have the psalmist in verses 4 and 5 prior to that key verse, verse 6. You have him saying restore us again O God our Savior. Again because verses 1 through 3 have looked back to revivals of past days when God did show favor to his land and bless his people in a wonderful way.

Forgiving their iniquity, setting aside their wrath, showing them that he was their God and that he loved them. But now things have slipped, things have matched again. So the prayer has to be, verse 4, restore us again O God our Savior and put away your displeasure toward us.

Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? The signs of God's anger are there. The impotence, the barrenness, the poverty. Will you not revive us again he prays that your people may rejoice in you once more.

When the Lord Jesus from his throne speaks to the seven churches in the book of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 there's very much of the same kind of talk. They too, five of them at any rate, very clearly are in a state of spiritual stagnation. And Ephesus, I said yesterday of the Sardis, of course I was wrong.

Ephesus is China's rebuke for having left its first moth and called to repent and do the first works. And the church at Sardis in the opening verses of chapter 3 is told that though it has a name that it lives it's dead and must wake up and strengthen what remains or else its candlestick will be pulled up and thrown away. And the church at Laodicea, self-satisfied and self-deceived in its self-satisfaction, is diagnosed as being tepid, repulsive, to be tepid, lukewarm before the Lord when he gave his son to save us.

It is just more than the son himself in his glory can abide. Because you're just lukewarm, he says, I'll spew you out of my mouth. Vulgar talk for a very unpleasant prospect.

Behold I stand at the door and knock, he says. If you hear my voice and open the door I'll come into you and stop with you and fellowship will be restored. But only so.

You must change. You must repent. Be zealous and repent.

Need I quote any more scriptures to make my point that spiritual stagnation falls under divine judgment? There's under his anger and experiencing one way or another the tokens of his displeasure. The alternatives are always revival or judgment. And that is as true for us in North America today as ever it was in Bible time.

There's a lot in Charles Finney that I can't go along with but I'm not at all sure that he was wrong when he wrote this. Christians are more to blame for not being revived than sinners are for not being converted. Well you could argue against that but you can see what he's saying.

He's saying that it's a great and grievous thing when those who claim to know the grace of God are apathetic and half-hearted and formal and superficial and just spiritless and backbone-less and energy-less in their response to it. God give us a caution about spiritual stagnation. Second proposition.

This has to do with a source of revival. It follows directly from all that we've said. It is God alone who quickens.

That's true of the church. That's true of the individual. Organizing is no answer.

We've been reminded of that already. There are many many scriptures that say that. Let me turn you to just one which we haven't referred to yet but which makes the matter as plain as can be.

It's Isaiah chapter 22 where Isaiah is bringing the people the word of the Lord with regard to their response to the threat of a Syrian invasion and in the middle of verse 8 we pick up with a reading. This is what we find. In that day says the prophet in the word of the Lord you look to the weapons in the palace of the forest.

You check the armory. You saw that the city of David had many breaches in its defenses. So you did something about that.

You stored up water in the lower pool preparing for a siege. You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the walls. You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool.

You did all those things but you did not look to the one who made it or have regard for the one who planned it long ago. You didn't return to the Lord. You trusted in your own resources and your own skill in organization.

The Lord, the Lord Almighty, verse 12, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But it didn't happen that way. Verse 13, see there's joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine.

Let's have a party while we can before the siege starts. Let's eat and drink, you say, for tomorrow we die. It's God alone who quickens and it's to God that his people should return when they become aware that the fires of life have burned low and indeed are threatening to go out.

Because God is sovereign in revival, as I've said before, you cannot predict it but also you cannot preclude it. There's no situation so great and so grievous that God cannot move in it and restore it. So it's with hope that we should brood on the thought that it's God alone who quickens more about Christians and more about churches.

That leads on to proposition number three, which has to do directly with the quest for revival. Follows from what I've just said. Spiritual revival is something to be sought.

To be sought for one's own soul, to be sought for one's own church, to be sought for one's own community. It's not for us to say, well all we can do is wait and twiddle our thumbs until God is pleased to act. As Jonathan Edwards explains in one of his writings on revival, God means his great blessings to be sought before they're bestowed.

Because they'll be valued more when one has laboured to seek them, knowing that God is the only one from whom they can be received. And he expounds, I remember, Ezekiel 37 verse 37 to that end, I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do this for them, namely to increase them with men like a flock. And one can apply that directly to all our concerns to see the church grow, not just statistically, but grow

with folk really brought into newness of life in Christ.

I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. We are to seek spiritual renewal, spiritual revival, and we are to seek it first by petition. Oh Lord, I have heard of your doings and I tremble.

Revive your work in the midst of the years. In wrath remember mercy. One prays for spiritual quickening.

And with that, one opens one's own life to God, as the psalmist does at the end of Psalm 139 verses 23 and 24. Search me O God, I have quoted these words already I think, search me O God, try the ground of my heart, see if there be any wicked way in me. The implication is, if you find any wicked way, tell me so that I may put it away, and lead me in the way everlasting.

One seeks God for spiritual revival by petition linked with self-examination, openness to God's own searching work. And with that link consecration, I'm thinking here of Malachi chapter 3 verse 10, bring all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me now, says the Lord, whether once you've done that, once you've got your priorities right and put me first and begun to worship and serve me as you should, in terms of all the light and power that you've been given so far, prove me and see whether I don't open the windows of heaven and you find that you're experiencing a blessing beyond anything you've known. By petition, by examination, by consecration, seek God for revival, seek revival from God.

This is the biblical way, I said before, I say again, there are great prayers for revival scattered through the Bible that will help us here. Psalms, like Psalm 44, 79, 80, 85, Habakkuk chapter 3, Isaiah chapter 62 through 64, go on from there. Spiritual revival is something to be sought, and this is how one and fourth proposition, spiritual revival is something to be looked for and hoped for.

God does not play cat and mouse with us. When folks seek him with all their hearts, they find him. Maybe for salvation, maybe for blessing on the church, but the promise is that you find him and I find him when we seek him with all our hearts.

And you remember the message on our first evening from 2nd Chronicles 7 verses 14 through 16, if my people, then revival is something to be hoped for. Pessimism about the possibility of revival is a form of unbelief of the Bible. Let me beg you never to lapse into that pessimism, even if for years you've sought revival and not seen it yet.

And that brings us to Zechariah chapter 4, and the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, which is what I want to talk about for the rest of my time this morning. This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, verse 6. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts, the Lord Almighty. And who was Zerubbabel? He was the prince, the political leader of the people, whose responsibility it was, according to the summons delivered by Haggai and reinforced by Zechariah, to get the temple built.

And it was an awesome job, and people had been on it for a few weeks, and they were already losing heart, and Zerubbabel undoubtedly was tempted to despair of ever getting the building finished. And who are we? We are Christians in the year of grace, 1988, desiring revival in our churches and communities, and quickening in our own hearts and lives. I'm going to put it to you that this word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is a word to every pastor, every lay leader, every alert Christian in this conference.

It's a word to us all. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord Almighty. We read these words as Christians do.

I know it's Old Testament prophecy, but it's our privilege as Christians to learn from the Old Testament, from the vantage point of New Testament revelation, which amplifies and deepens and enriches so much that the Old Testament shows us in outline and in formula. When in the Old Testament you read about the Spirit of God, bring all that you know about the Spirit from the New Testament revelation to amplify what's being said. For the Spirit of God was, in Old Testament times, the same person that he is today in this New Testament era.

It's simply that in Old Testament times not so much was revealed and known about him, but the reality of the triune God was what it is, and has been from all eternity. Nothing changes there. So what do I want you to bring to thinking about the Spirit of God as we open up Zechariah 4, verse 6? I want you to remember this, that that word Spirit, ruach in the Hebrew and pneuma in the Greek when you get to the New Testament, signifies power in action, the power of air moving forcefully, breath breathed from the lungs, as when you breathe out to blow out the candles on your birthday cake, or wind blowing tornado style across the country.

Air moving forcefully to produce effect. That's the picture which the word Spirit conveys. And in the Old Testament we hear about the Spirit of the Lord, meaning the active power of the Lord, the awesomely, the awesome power of the Lord as it often is.

And you know that down here, wind and tornadoes is awesome. The Spirit of the Lord was often awesome in the power displayed. We hear of the Spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament in creation, Genesis 1, verse 2, the Spirit of God brooded on the face of the waters, putting creation into shape.

We hear of Him in connection with revelation. The Spirit of the Lord is upon the prophets, giving them the word of the Lord, which they're to deliver. We hear of the Spirit of the Lord enabling them for leadership and for superhuman service, like for instance the service rendered by Samson.

Samson, that mixed up kid, he's not a role model for us in every respect and don't you think it. But when the Spirit of the Lord came on Samson, the strength that he had was superhuman and his achievements in freeing the people of God from Philistine tyranny were magnificent. And it isn't only Samson, there's many others too.

We hear of the Spirit of the Lord enabling folk for service and we hear of the Spirit of the Lord active in the renewing and regenerating of hard hearts. Thus it's already taught in the Old Testament that it's through the Spirit of God that all the godliness that the world ever sees becomes reality. Without the Spirit of the Lord there wouldn't be any godliness anywhere.

You say what passages show that? Well there's one, just one, I haven't time to stop on it, but it's one which will stand for all because it's so clear and so strong. It's Ezekiel again, Ezekiel 36 verses 25 through 27. God is speaking of what he'll do for the people when he restores them to their own land.

He says, I'll regenerate you. I will sprinkle, verse 25, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean. I'll cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols.

I will give you a new heart, verse 25. I'll put a new spirit in you. I'll remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

How will I do that? Well in this way, verse 27, I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. See what's being said there? The prophet is talking about two sides of a

single renewing work of God. Our theological term for it is regeneration.

On the one hand it's cleansing, on the other hand it's evoking responsiveness. It's done by God putting his spirit in folks, thus taking from them the heart of stone, giving them a heart of flesh and making them henceforth responsive to his word and to his will. Let me try a new review which was held by Kelvin and which I believe to have much more to that you can say in its favour than any other, though it's not always the view that that's told I know.

I believe that when Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again of water and the spirit, he was using a two-word parable, born again. And the reference to water and the spirit is to the two aspects of the work of regeneration that are described here in these verses. Water, sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean.

Spirit, I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws because now you'll have a heart of flesh. Later in the conversation he slapped Nicodemus' wrist, you remember. Are you the teacher of Israel and you don't understand these things? The only natural way of explaining that comment is that Nicodemus, as the teacher of Israel, ought to have known what being born again of water and the spirit was because it was all written for him in the Old Testament.

So I'm very much drawn to this way of understanding new birth of water and the spirit and the meaning of Jesus as he spoke to Nicodemus about it. Other views, of being born of water and the spirit are tried by different people, but I'd like you to try mine on, well Calvin's, on for size. And I speak as to wise men and women, you judge what I say.

But this is all Old Testament. Spirit, the active power of a gracious sovereign God, goes forth in creation, revelation, enabling and regenerating and all of that continues through the New Testament. But then in the New Testament you have the additional revelation of the spirit personhood, which appears from the verbs that express his ministry.

He shows things, he says things, he teaches, he intercedes, he can be lied to, he can be grieved. With verbs like that, it's plain that it's a person who's being spoken of. Jesus calls them the second paraklete.

And to be a paraklete, Greek parakletos, meaning counselor, advocate, comforter, supporter, ally, helper, all those things and more, to be a paraklete, a second paraklete, carrying on the ministry of Jesus, the first paraklete, requires that you be a personal agent. Yet there can't be any doubt about the personhood of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, nor can there be any doubt that the Spirit is the agent of the Father and the Son throughout the New Testament, the agent of the Father and the Son, applying redemption to men. The Spirit comes not to call attention to himself, but to witness to Christ.

And it is witness to Christ, I picture it in terms of the three modern notions. The Spirit is the floodlight, throwing the light on Christ, opening our eyes and enabling us to see him. The Spirit is the matchmaker, the one who draws us to Christ, urges us to Christ, unites us to Christ, and keeps us in that holy fellowship.

The Spirit is the intercom through whom he communes with us, by letter, through the Scriptures, and we commune with him by phone, through our prayer. So the Spirit brings us into communion with the Son and with the Father through the Son, and keeps us in fellowship with the Father and the Son. So regeneration in New Testament terms means union with Christ, and sanctification in New Testament terms means

conformity to Christ.

He makes us more and more like the one at whom we are looking. And spiritual gifts, not everybody seems to appreciate this, but it seems to me clear from Paul, spiritual gifts are in themselves expression of Christ for the edifying of others. Well we can't stop on that, I just want to remind you of those things so that you'll bring them with you in your thinking as we explore our text.

Now look at what it was. It was declared to be the word of the Lord to the rebels. Zechariah has seen a vision, and it's described in verses two and three, a solid gold lampstand with a great bowl at the top.

In the bowl are seven lamps, with wicks I suppose running down from the base of the lamp into the oil that's there in the bowl in which they float. And each of these seven lamps has seven channels for the lights. That's how it's put in my NIV.

It seems to mean seven places where the edge of the lamp is pinched so that there's a wick resting on that pinched bit of the edge, and thus around the edge of each of the seven lamps you've got seven distinct lights burning, 49 in all. And in verse three there are two olive trees by the lampstand, one on the right of the bowl and the other on the left. That's what Zechariah saw.

And he asks the angel what this is, verse four. And the angel says to him, verse six, this, meaning all that is pictured by what you see is the word of the Lord to the rubbable. I suggested yesterday that the word of the Lord to the rubbable, as pictured in this vision, should be verbalized like this.

It's a vision of God sustaining his own people by his own energy. Pictured by the oil, of which we shall hear more in a moment, the oil that constantly feeds the great bowl on the top of the lampstand and which keeps the 49 lights burning. The church is called to be the light of the world.

The lampstand is a picture of the people of God fulfilling their ministry. It's by divine energy, the divine supply that it happens, not by human resources. And I suggested that in the theology of revival that we were building yesterday, the truth we should draw from Zechariah chapter four is this, that it is from God's spirit that life and energy and power for service flow in revival times.

Revival, in other words, means that God by his spirit supplies new energy and life for ministry and service. This is the word of the Lord to the rubbable. This is the general message.

The picture of the lampstand is something that we could dwell on for rather longer than we're able to this morning. It's a picture which in itself suggests three precious thoughts. God's presence with his people.

Ceremonial lampstands of this kind were found in the temple, the place of God's presence. This one isn't an exact replica of any of the lampstands in the temple, but there was no place in Israel where ceremonial lampstands of this grandeur would be found apart from the temple. So the thought of the temple comes in here and the temple is the place of the presence of God.

And the vision is meant to suggest God's presence with his people, that promised blessing of which we were thinking in our theology of revival yesterday and the day before. The church becomes itself, you'll remember, when God's presence as a matter of experience is restored once again to his people when they need to get it. And then the lampstand suggests the further thought, the thought of God's purpose for his people, I said it a moment ago in just one phrase, we're to be the light of the world.

Jesus said so, Sermon on the Mount. You are the light of the world. The world is in darkness, the world is lost.

Which means people don't know how to live, they don't know which way to travel on the journey of life. They are wandering around aimlessly and cluelessly in the dark. You are the light of the world, says Jesus.

Shine as lights of the world. But it's only by God's power that God's people will ever do this. We need the grace to be different and to be so that we shall be seen as different.

How rarely do our churches get themselves the reputation of being a different sort of people from the rest of the folk around. But I mustn't develop that. Third thought is the thought that we are going to look at more fully, the thought of God's power in his people.

If you look on to the last verses, verses 11 through 14, you'll see Zechariah asking what the two olive trees on the right and left of the lamp stand with, look at verse 12, two gold pipes running from them to pour out golden oil, apparently into the bowl, the big bowl of the lamp stand. He asks the question and he gets his answer. Verse 14, these are the two which are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth.

It's a reference to Joshua the high priest and Zechariah Zerubbabel, I should say, the prince. And as we said yesterday, they were the two mediators of God's grace to God's people. The office of priesthood, high priesthood and kingship had not yet been united in a single person.

That was only to come when the branch, the branch of David, the Messiah, appeared later in history. This is a pointer to the ministry of the Messiah, as is so much else in Zechariah. But again, that's more than we can dwell on in any detail now.

Suffice it to say that through the mediation, mediatorial ministry of Joshua the high priest doing his thing, offering sacrifice for the people, and the mediatorial ministry of Zerubbabel doing his thing, leading the people in the Lord's name, blessing was to come to the people. These were the two anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth. And through their ministry comes the supply of the divine grace of help, which enables the people of God to be the light that they're called to be.

These are the general truths, then, which the vision is setting before us, and was setting before Zechariah, and Zerubbabel too. But the angel then became specific. This, this vision, is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel.

This is what it means. This is the vision explained in a single phrase. This is what you should say to Zerubbabel to explain what you've seen.

Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord Almighty. Here is Zerubbabel. Daunted by the size of the task.

Think now, brothers and sisters, of the next bit of demanding service, demanding ministry, which you know awaits you as servants of Christ. What is it that you're going back to your churches to take in hand next for the Master? What is it that you're going back to your families to take in hand next for the Master? Just have before your minds the next thing that when you are quiet before the Lord, you know that you ought to be tackling, and which by God's grace you'll go back from this conference to tackle. Think of that, and thus you'll put yourself in Zerubbabel's shoes.

He knew what his job was, and he very much doubted whether he could ever achieve what he'd been called to attempt. I shall fail. This was the thought that was floating around in Zerubbabel's mind.

It might be the thought that is floating around in your mind as you think of that next bit of difficult and demanding service. As long as you think you're likely to fail, you're going to be weak, your hands will be weak, your movements will be sluggish. If you thought you were going to succeed, it would be different.

This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, says the angel, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit. That which has to be done will be done. It's a word of encouragement, and I want us to hear it as a word of encouragement today in our own quest for, well, what? Revival in our churches? Sure.

Revival in our own ministries? Sure. Spiritual quickening in our own homes, perhaps? Yes. Spiritual fruit in the lives of particular folk, friends of ours, to whom we've been witnessing and for whom we've been caring and praying, and who, it seems, are quite impervious to the word.

Starting something, maybe, in the church. Starting something, maybe, in the home. Starting some new pattern of responsibility in your own life.

Starting a course of study, maybe. You're frightened. I know I ought to try, but I don't think I can do it.

Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord. What's the message? One can spell it out in these three ways. It's a word of encouragement.

Tellings are rubbable and oughts. First, this. Keep yourself from misplaced trust.

One of the reasons why we so easily get discouraged in the things that we undertake for God is that we undertake those things in so self-reliant a way. And that boomerangs us. Don't trust to the arm of flesh, says the Scripture, but we do.

And we rely on human resources, and we very soon find that we are making little or no progress. Keep yourself from that misplaced trust, says the Lord, through his servants, to the rubbable, and to you, and to me. That word might, not by might, it's a word which in the Hebrew regularly refers to organized forces.

Was this the rubbable thinking of calling in, maybe, the Persian army, or something like that, to get the temple erected? I don't know, but organized forces, anyway. That word power signifies the strength and the skill of the human individual. Think of that word, that word of rebuke in Isaiah chapter 31 and verse 1, and you'll see what it is that we're being, that's being censured here.

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and the great strength of their horsemen, the skill of those horsemen, but who don't look to the Holy One of Israel or seek help from the Lord. That word, Isaiah 31 verse 1, is pinpointing the message here, keep yourself from that misplaced trust in human resources, in organized forces, because they're great, in human power, because of the human power and skill, because of the wonderful things that human skill can do in human affairs. God's way, God's way of getting anything of spiritual significance done, is the way that you see modeled in the defeat of the Midianites under Gideon, back in the story told in Judges chapter 7, do you remember? Gideon had an army of 32,000 men.

God said, there are too many men here, and he reduced the army, first of all, to 10,000, and then to 300, by applying criteria which seem to me to have been applied simply in order to reduce the number and

make it smaller, and that's the only account really you can give of why when God had sent the fearful home, because you remember, that was what he did for the first 20,000, what God did for the first 20,000, they were fearful, and as I said a moment ago, those who were afraid of failing, will never do well in the enterprise itself. One of the great things which the doctrine of sovereign grace gives us, is a confidence that under God, one doesn't finally fail, because one with God is a majority, as William Carey said, and he was a sovereign grace man too. Yes, well, having got rid of those who weren't confident of victory, remember God then sent, told Gideon to send them down to the stream to drink, and he selected the 300 who drank one way, and sent home the 9,700 who drank another way, and I've heard all sorts of attempts to explain just what's the difference between picking up the water in the palm of your hand and raising it to your mouth, and putting your mouth down to the water and taking it directly from the stream.

I can't see that there's any significance in that, save that God meant to reduce the number of Gideon's forces, and he knew what he was doing, so that when the victory was won, there would be no question that it hadn't come by might, and it hadn't come by power, it had come by the Lord's own spirit. Well, it isn't, you see, that small is beautiful, but it is that sometimes small is God-honouring, and the small forces, beginning as they do on the day of small things, are used by God over and over to do great things, and then there's no question that the glory must be his, mustn't go to man. He has done it.

This is marvellous, and he's to be praised. But of course, for this, one must learn to rely on the Lord and refuse to be daunted by the depressing calculations of men. If you were trusting in human resources, well, as I said, that trust will boomerang, you will rely on, sorry, you will calculate in human terms what you can hope to do, and you will be discouraged by realising that the resources at your command just don't seem adequate to do the job.

The sense of human impotence in spiritual work is a healthy thing, brothers and sisters, to feel, I want to see renewal of spiritual life, and I can't bring that about by any resources that I have, any skill that I can command, that's healthy. It sends you back to the Lord with the urgency that grows out of conscious impotence. That's healthy, that's good, that's right.

And that was the first bit of the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit. I do it, says the Lord.

So keep yourself from misplaced trust on human resources. Second bit of the message, second thing that this word from the Lord is saying to Zerubbabel and to us, is keep yourself from misguided despair. Keep yourself from actually yielding to that feeling that it's all hopeless, nothing can ever be done.

Listen to the Lord's challenge. Verse seven, what are you, O mighty mountain? That's the mountain of difficulty which Zerubbabel sees before him. Before Zerubbabel, you'll become level ground.

Not by might, nor by power, but through the work of my Spirit. And Zerubbabel will bring out the capstone, that's the last stone that completes the temple, to shouts of God bless it, that's the NIV, or isn't it lovely, which is the older translation and just as good a rendering of the Hebrew for the record. But he'll bring it out and it'll be put in place and the work will be finished.

You'll see that, says God, by my Spirit. Second challenge, verse 10, who despises now the day of small things? The oracle was given at a time when the work had made so little progress that Zerubbabel despaired of finishing it. It was a day of small things, but days of great things grow out of days of small things and it's good American wisdom, is it not, to say, what, don't start small, don't start at all.

Don't despise the day of small things, don't despair because as yet it's only a day of small things. Moses was awed and indeed scared to the pit of his stomach when God said, you go down into Egypt and bring out my people. He thought it was impossible, far too great a job for him to do.

But surely I will be with you, said the Lord to him. Now let that be enough of your complaints and your wriggling to try and get out of it. You go, I'll be with you and by my Spirit, by my power, by my strength, you'll do it.

If one with God is a maturity, keep yourselves then, brothers and sisters, from misguided despair. Here's a conference, we talk to each other about revival, our hearts are thrilled, we go home and the danger is of a great big letdown, the post-conference blues. That's the spiritual thing, that's Satan trying to get you into, to lapse into misguided despair.

Brothers and sisters, forewarned is for arms, don't do it. Keep yourself from misguided despair and as you say in your hearts, by my own resources, by our resources, the resources of my little group, I can't do it and I have to admit that we can't do it. Say also in the next breath, with the help of the Lord, we can do it.

Not by might nor by power, certainly, but by my Spirit, it'll be done. So, third bit of the message, the word of the Lord to the rubber bull that's contained in this oracle, keep yourself from misplaced trust, keep yourself from misguided despair, keep yourself from demoralized sloth. Sloth, laziness, apathy, doing nothing, opposite of zeal, one of the seven deadly sins of medieval law.

Keep yourself from demoralized sloth. Putting it positively, work. Go home from this conference, brothers and sisters, to work.

Go home from this conference to find the place where the next bit of spiritual work has to be done in your situation and put your hand to it. Do it in dependence on the Lord. Do it because it's the next thing that He's called you to do.

Do it in hope that as He's called you to it, by His Spirit, it'll be done, even though humanly it just seems too much too hopeful. Can there be success here? Yes, with the Lord there can be success if you and I work. Revival comes out of the blessing of God poured out from heaven.

Revival also comes out of the diligent spreading of the Word, the earnest praying, the resolute standing for righteousness in a community, in the church, the purging of the church sometimes. These things have to happen. They are part of God's initial moves in bringing His blessing about.

Maybe we go back, you and I, into situations where those are some of the immediate things that have to happen, or maybe you have to start even further back. Maybe you'll go into a situation where folk in the church have never yet appreciated that there's revealed truth to be learned, and before you can preach to them and teach them and instruct them and lend them good books as Calvinists do, you have to get into their minds the thought that there's something here that needs to be learned. Because the great legacy of liberalism, you know, Gresham Machen said this 70 years ago, the great legacy of liberalism is anti-intellectualism, the idea that religion is a kind of top dressing of pious behavior, which you put on ordinary life.

It's a matter of doing certain things, go to church on Sunday, etc., etc., but it isn't truth to be learned and never was. That's one of the devil's lies that still holds many in its grip. You may go back to churches where people haven't yet woken up to the fact that there's revealed truth to be learned, and you have to try

and instill that thought into them.

Start where you are. There's no other place to start. Start with the next task that has to be tackled in order to lead people on to the place of spiritual richness and joy.

Work, and work in the confidence that the Spirit of the Lord is with you. Just as the rubble was told to work in hope, so the scripture tells us to work in hope. How do you suppose the disciples felt when Jesus, risen from the dead, said, well, I'm leaving you, but I'm giving you a job to do.

You're to convert the world. That's what he said. Go and make disciples of all the nations.

Go and convert the world. But by the grace of God, they kept themselves from demoralized sloth. They worked.

They worked marvelously, and the world, in a real sense, was one. One can do it with the help of God in the power of the Spirit. We must labor to do it with the help of God in the power of the Spirit.

I believe, brothers and sisters, this is the bottom line. The Word of God sends us all home to pray and to work, to work and to pray, and to keep working, and to keep praying until the day of small things becomes the day of great things. There is hope.

It's as bright as the promises of God. Keep hoping. Keep praying.

Keep working. God, and God, revive His work in our midst, and God bless us all. Amen.

We're glad that you have heard this tape from the Southern Baptist Conference on the faith of the Founders. I'd like to say some things about what this conference is, what it intends to do, and upon what principles it operates. First of all, all who hear these tapes need to realize that this conference is not a political movement.

It has no designs on seeking to run any candidate for any office within any denomination. It is strictly a conference for personal edification of pastors, elders, deacons, and members of Baptist churches. It is not a political movement of any kind.

Neither do we consider it a place for airing negative and critical vendettas against other groups. We're quite aware that there's much that could be said about pagans, Turks, Jews, atheists, Pelagians, semi-Pelagians, Catholics, Arminians, Moderates, Hyper-Calvinists, and people of other theological persuasions, including ourselves, that would not be favorable. But this conference is designed for a positive presentation.

Positive edification is our goal. To embrace the truth with such vigor that error must of necessity fall. What are we? We are Southern Baptists.

We welcome people from other denominations, from other traditions, we cherish the fellowship that we have with them, and we feel that the doctrines around which this conference centers are so broadly evangelical that many people can enjoy them. But our stated purpose is to provide edification for people within Southern Baptist life. We affirm our Southern Baptist heritage and desire to recapture it.

We affirm the fellowship that is available in the network of all Southern Baptist life and associations and state conventions and desire to sanctify it. And we affirm the conscientious involvement in a multiplicity of

benevolences that is characteristic of Southern Baptist life. We desire to reform it.

We affirm the task of the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board, the Brotherhood Commission, the Sunday School Board, the Christian Life Commission. All of these have good and proper goals and assignments. We desire to see men within these who believe the gospel and we desire these men to come there, not through political manipulation, but through the individual training of minds so that God and his providence may place people who are prepared in those positions.

Also, what we are, we are Calvinistic. We do not apologize for that. We believe that Calvinism is the gospel in its purest expression.

We could rightly call it Paulinism, but what Christian would not call their doctrine Pauline. We could rightly call it Augustinianism, but Augustine developed his understanding of the doctrines of grace in a context that was not so aware of the necessity of the doctrine of justification by faith. And so we call it Calvinism because not only does it have the great Pauline and Augustinian doctrines of justification by faith, but it also sets these within the context of imputed righteousness as our only standing before God as set forth in the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith.

And a third thing we are, in addition to being Southern Baptist and Calvinistic, we are experiential. We do not have the attitude of those guys out there don't know this, but our attitude hopefully and prayerfully is this question, has my mind and my heart absorbed and is it being molded by the reality of these doctrines? And it is in this context that we seek to apply all the doctrines of grace. We're happy that you have listened to this tape and pray that God may benefit you in it, and perhaps in its providence may lead you to attend one of these conferences.

God bless you.

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