

JOHN 16:1-7
THE WARNING!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 16 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

Keep in mind that here in John chapters 13 through 17 we are hours away from Jesus being arrested and then put on trial before the Jewish religious leaders and then with Pilate before He is crucified!

Jesus is no longer teaching the crowds of people, that has ended, and His focus is His men who will carry on the work of the ministry when He is gone. So these words are His farewell address to them!

This began in the upper room where they shared the Passover meal and as we moved to the end of John chapter 14 we moved from the upper room and they began walking the streets of Jerusalem. We see that in John 14:31, “... Arise, let us go from here.”

As they were going through the streets of Jerusalem they are heading to the Mount of Olives and to get there they passed through the eastern gate or the golden gate, which were massive bronze doors that led out of the Temple area. And these doors had carved into them grape vines and as we saw, this gave way to Jesus’ teaching about the vine and the branches in John chapter 15.

For some 3½ years now they have been walking with Jesus, but that was going to end. What were they going to do?

Maybe they were a little fearful, anxious, worried and I believe that they were because we see Jesus tell them in John 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me."

He wants them to put their trust in Him, and that will help dispel their fear. And I think that is a great lesson for us to learn, to put our trust in Jesus and He will dispel or put out that fear in our lives.

Now there are a few farewell addresses in the Bible that are powerful.

We see Moses and Joshua give some powerful farewell addresses to encourage the people to continue on.

And that is what we are seeing here with Jesus, it is his farewell address to His men!

Let me share with you, not a farewell speech but a very powerful speech given by Winston Churchill. Of this speech we are told,

Winston Churchill, one of the greatest orators of the 20th century, was interestingly enough, like Demosthenes and other great orators before him, born with a speech impediment which he worked on until it no longer hindered him. One would never guess this from hearing Churchill's strong and reassuring voice, a voice that would buoy up Britain during some of her darkest hours.

During the Battle of France, Allied Forces became cut off from troops south of the German penetration and perilously trapped at the Dunkirk bridgehead.

On May 26, a wholesale evacuation of these troops, dubbed "Operation Dynamo," began. The evacuation was an amazing effort-the RAF kept the Luftwaffe at bay while thousands of ships, from military destroyers to small fishing boats, were used to ferry 338,000 French and British troops to safety, far more than anyone had thought possible.

1908

On June 4, Churchill spoke before the House of Commons, giving a report which celebrated the “miraculous deliverance” at Dunkirk, while also seeking to temper a too rosy of view of what was on the whole a “colossal military disaster.”

[This is part of the speech from Winston Churchill]

I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone.

At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty’s Government—every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation.

The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength. Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God’s good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.

- <https://bit.ly/3RW7r9w>

As great of speech as that was by Churchill, the one that was given by Jesus to His men is far superior.

The reason I say that is because the words of Jesus were not just for a period of time, but they continue on today and minister to our lives.

And they were not just words to encourage them, words to give them hope, peace, a look into the future, but the power to accomplish what Jesus is calling them to do!

He has given to us words of encouragement, of hope, of peace, a look into the future, and even warnings of difficult times but He is with us!

And as we have seen, Jesus speaks a lot about loving others, loving people that may not love you back. And as hard as that may be, we understand it. We see how much Jesus loves us and now He is asking us to love others as He loves us.

We see that in John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

The evidence that we are a disciple of Jesus Christ is our love for others and not just a worldly love or a love that loves in response to people being nice to us!

Jesus is speaking of an *AGAPE* love or an unconditional love. This is not a human love but a supernatural love that can only come as we surrender our will to the Lord and allow that love to flow in us and through us, touching the lives of others.

Again, difficult but I don't think they are discouraged by this. This is a positive thing that they were to manifest in their lives.

But as much as Jesus talks about love in these chapters, He balances it out with –
PERSECUTION!

“Now wait a minute! I thought Jesus is trying to encourage His men and yet, He is speaking of the world hating them, persecuting them, and this morning, it is even going to get worse for them! So how is this encouraging?”

They are being warned of what is coming and I think it is always better to know what is coming then to have it blindside you. And what was being spoken to the disciples of Jesus and about the Jewish believers back then, is also being spoken to us today!

That is why I have called this study – **THE WARNING!**

And I think what Jesus wants from us is love in the midst of persecution. I realize that for many, they don't like that. Someone does something to them they are ready to chew them out, beat them up, mock them but love is the farthest thing in their minds.

Let me show you how this is to work, something that Jesus is trying to teach us.

We are told,

Just before Easter in 2009, Fred Winters, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Maryville, Illinois, was shot and killed during a Sunday morning service by a disturbed young man.

The tragedy shocked the church and the pastor's family, but it did not destroy their faith.

The next week the newly widowed Cindy Winters was interviewed on a national news broadcast.

When asked about her husband's killer she said, ***“I do not have any hatred or even hard feelings toward him. We have been praying for him.”***

- <https://bit.ly/3g3tZrG>

That is not a human love she is expressing, it is a supernatural love that can only come from God in the midst of this tragedy, in the midst of this persecution you might say.

So, again, some tough lessons the Lord has for us in this farewell address to His men. I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following points. They are,

DON'T STUMBLE – JOHN 16:1-4

HIS DEPARTURE – JOHN 16:5-6

THE HELPER – JOHN 16:7

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 16, beginning in verse 1 as we study the Word of God and look at the topic - **THE WARNING!**

JOHN 16

VERSES 1-4

Jesus warns His men that they need to be careful so that they don't stumble and then He tells them to look out because persecution for your faith is coming and it is going to come down hard upon them!

And not just persecution, but the martyrdom for their faith, they will be put to death for their faith.

Now I don't know about you, but to me, I don't think that is too encouraging!

Think about it being half-time at a pro-football game. You are down by 35 points. Your star quarterback is out. Your defensive line is injured with three guys out. Not good.

And the coach comes in and he tells you, to encourage you, to pump you up so that you can come out and do a better job, and he says, “*Men, we did not do well that first half. And I am here to tell you, the second half doesn’t look too good either. You see men, their starters did not play the first half, those were the practice squad. The starters are coming out in the second half! But don’t be troubled by these things’ men!*”

I don’t know about you but to me, I would be like, “*Not a great half-time speech! I feel like we are headed for trouble!*”

But it was something that they needed to hear, or Jesus would not have said it. It was a reality that was coming, and they needed to be aware of these things.

And what we see Jesus doing is He is warning His men of the coming persecution against them, why?

Because of their love for Jesus.

Why is that so important? Because they needed to be ready, they need to be aware of these things so when they do come, they won’t be surprised, they will not stumble.

Now when we think of this word “**stumble**” we feel it means that we trip up, we make a mistake, we are even denying our faith or something along those lines.

That is not the point that Jesus is making here. You see, when Jesus said, “**These things I have spoken to you that you should not be made to stumble**” that Greek word “**stumble**” is ***SKANDALIZO***, (skan-dal-id'-zo) and it speaks of causing to stumble. The idea here is that of being caught unaware! And that makes sense when you see what Jesus tells them!

One writer put it like this, “*A skandalethron was not a stumbling-block which might trip you up . . . It is used of the spring of a trap which might ‘go off’ when you were least expecting it.*” (Tasker)

Remember those Jack in the Boxes for kids. You would wind them up as the music would play and then, all of a sudden, you didn't know when, ***POP*** and the Jack in the Box comes out and scares the kids. I guess not that great of a toy, but it was fun to watch them. They were stumbled by this or caught off guard and that is what Jesus is saying here. That He does not want them to be caught off guard and thus, the warning of the coming persecution that will cost many their lives!

We too should not be unaware of what is happening around us, the hatred, the persecution for our faith.

Yes, in this country we don't see as much persecution for our faith as we see in other countries, but I believe it is coming and we need to be aware so that we are not caught off guard!

And think about some of the atrocities against man that have been done in the name of God when the reality is, they didn't even know Him!

It is tragic when "***religious***" people persecute and murder in the name of God. While it is true that "***the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church***" (Tertullian), it is also true that their blood is the stain on the pages of history.

It is as Paul said in Romans 10:2-4, "**For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**"

And make no mistake about it. We do see this played out in the early church.

In Acts 8:1, as Stephen was put to death for his faith in Jesus we read, “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Paul himself, called Saul here, was also guilty of having this zeal for God but not according to knowledge.

In Acts 9:1-2 we are told, “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”

Also, notice what Paul says of himself as he speaks before Agrippa in Acts 26:9-11, “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”

Yes, the early church was almost all Jewish but over time that would change, and the persecution that came upon the Jews by the Jewish religious leaders and the Jewish unbelievers would affect Gentiles as well.

But for the Jew, if you came to Christ for salvation, you would be kicked out of the synagogue. You would lose your job. Your family may disown you. The reality is, coming to Christ cost them everything and thus, they counted the cost and knew that Christ was more important than any worldly things.

Rome, by 325 A. D. put to death some two million Christians for their faith in Christ! Yes, persecution against Christians has grown and continues to grow!

A recent article tells us,

The group Open Doors USA figures that 360 million Christians last year lived in countries where persecution was “significant.”

Roughly 5,600 Christians were murdered, more than 6,000 were detained or imprisoned, and another 4,000-plus were kidnapped.

In addition, more than 5,000 churches and other religious facilities were destroyed.

- <https://bit.ly/3RRosl3>

What about America, do we see persecution growing in America?

You bet we do! Yes, it is not on the scale and severity as we see in other countries, at least not yet. But I do believe that is coming and we need to be aware, we need to listen to what Jesus is saying here so that we don't stumble, or we are not caught by surprise!

This is from Time way back in 2016, some 6 years ago, and I think things are a lot worse.

This is what we are told,

Traditional American Christians have long been on the losing end of culture-war contests - on school prayer, same-sex marriage and other issues.

But recent events, including the Supreme Court decision overruling Texas' restrictions on abortion clinics and the mandate that employers provide access to contraception, have added to the sense that religious expression is under attack.

According to recent Pew Research Reports, the percentage of Americans who describe themselves as religiously affiliated has shrunk while the percentage describing themselves as unaffiliated has grown from 2007 to 2014.

The percentage who say they are “absolutely certain” God exists fell to 63% from 71% during the same time period.

This new vigorous secularism has catapulted mockery of Christianity and other forms of religious traditionalism into the mainstream and set a new low for what counts as civil criticism of people’s most-cherished beliefs.

In some precincts, the “faith of our fathers” is controversial as never before.

Some of the faithful have paid unexpected prices for their beliefs lately: *the teacher in New Jersey suspended for giving a student a Bible; the football coach in Washington placed on leave for saying a prayer on the field at the end of a game; the fire chief in Atlanta fired for self-publishing a book defending Christian moral teaching; the Marine court-martialed for pasting a Bible verse above her desk*; and other examples of the new intolerance.

Anti-Christian activists hurl smears like “bigot” and “hater” at Americans who hold traditional beliefs about marriage and accuse anti-abortion Christians of waging a supposed “war on women.”

Some Christian institutions face pressure to conform to secularist ideology - or else.

Flagship evangelical schools like **Gordon College** in Massachusetts and **Kings College** in New York have had their accreditation questioned.

Some secularists argue that Christian schools don’t deserve accreditation, period.

Activists have targeted home-schooling for being a Christian thing; atheist Richard Dawkins and others have even called it tantamount to child abuse.

Student groups like InterVarsity have been kicked off campuses.

Christian charities, including adoption, Catholic hospitals and crisis pregnancy centers have become objects of attack.

- <https://bit.ly/3VmQcB1>

Remember the warning that Jesus gave to us back in John 15:18-19, “**If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**”

And now we see what that warning of hate will be like. For the Jews, like I have said, they will be kicked out of the synagogue. They will put them to death by those who think they are serving God. And all those other types of persecution that is coming and has come!

And Jesus tells them, “**And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.**” John 16:3.

Their actions are the evidence that they don’t know God, not at all. And isn’t it amazing that as glorious a promise that God has given to them, and has given to us, people try to silence it, put out the light just as they did in the early church, they continue to do today!

Now in verse 4 Jesus said that He did not tell them these things, about this persecution in the beginning, why?

As we have seen in our study of John, they were coming after Jesus instead of His men for the most part. But that is going to change when He is gone. They will no longer be able to come after Jesus, but they will come after His disciples and again, we see that today.

One writer summed it up like this. He wrote, “*During the earlier part of His ministry Jesus had spoken comparatively little to His disciples about the persecution which awaited them, because He had been in their company, and as long as He was with them the world's hatred must inevitably be drawn to Himself.*” (Tasker)

But now the time is coming to an end, and they needed to be aware of these things! They needed to know what was in store for them, the persecution that was coming!

That is the warning, and it is a call to them – ***DON'T STUMBLE!***

As we read on, we will see – ***HIS DEPARTURE!***

Jesus is going to be speaking of going away, which is going to be difficult. “*Men, you are going to be persecuted for your faith in Me. Some of you will be put to death for your faith in Me. And by the way, I am going away!*”

VERSES 5-6

Now what does Jesus mean when He says here in John 16:5, "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'"

And my question is this. "*How can Jesus say that none of them asked Him where He is going? We see both Peter and Thomas ask Jesus that question.*"

Remember in John 13:36 we are told, "Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, where are You going?'"

So Peter clearly asked Jesus where He was going when He told His men that He was going away!

And then there is Thomas, and we are told in John 14:5 a similar question to what Peter asked Jesus. We are told, "Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?'"

So both Peter and Thomas asked Jesus where He was going and yet, what Jesus says here seems to contradict that.

I think for both Peter and Thomas the real issue was not about where Jesus was going, but what is going to happen to them when He is gone!

They were so focused on the loss that they missed all that Jesus had for them. Sorrow over this loss was too much for them and they were overwhelmed by it.

Haven't you ever felt that way, so overwhelmed by something and that is all you could focus on? That was what happened with these men!

Again, think about all that they invested their lives in, following Jesus for some 3½ yes, and now all that is going to be taken away as Jesus goes away, He is going to die!

They just could not get it. And we have to remember their mindset. They were still thinking about the Kingdom Age, where they were going to be positioned in it and now this.

And what is interesting is that even after His death and resurrection we see them still focused on the Kingdom Age!

In Acts 1:6-7 we are told, “**Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.’”**

It is not always easy when you can't see the reasons why, but God many times tells us not to walk by sight, but by faith, trusting in Him!

I think the key to why they were missing what Jesus was saying was that as He spoke these words, “**sorrow filled [their] heart.”**

As I have said, we can become so overwhelmed by the situations that are before us that we don't hear what was being said or you don't inquire more about what was said because you don't want to know!

Of this, A. T. Robertson makes this comment, “***Now that they realize that Jesus is going, the thoughts of the disciples turn on themselves and they cease asking the query [question] of Peter (13:36.)***”

In other words, “***What were they going to do when Jesus is gone?***”

So many questions and yet, so overwhelmed, the sorrow of what was coming was just too much for them and at this point they are silent!

Now you may be thinking, “*Hey, wait a minute. I thought these were to be words of comfort, of hope! They don’t seem like words of comfort and hope! Jesus is going away; He is going to die and what hope is there for these men? I mean Jesus tells them that they are going to be persecuted, that some of them will be killed for their faith and then He tells them that He is going away! That is not a good thing, and it doesn’t seem right. How can He leave them at a time like this?*”

That is a great question and I love what Jesus does next.

Yes, He is going away, but as He said in John 14:16-18, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

Jesus is going to do the same here in John chapter 16, give them words of comfort, of hope as the Holy Spirit will be sent to assist them in the work they are to do!

I have called this verse – ***THE HELPER!***

VERSE 7

In verse 6 Jesus spoke of their heavy hearts because of what they were hearing. Again, they were overwhelmed by all that Jesus was telling them, they were losing hope.

And then, here in verse 7 Jesus says, “Nevertheless.”

And the idea here is that in spite of all that is coming, there is a blessing that will come out of this. If He does not go away, then you will miss out on something that is so important.

God the Father and Jesus will be sending the Holy Spirit to them, and unless He goes away, that will not happen.

Now here is a question that we need to think about. *"If Jesus is going away and He needs to go away to send us the Holy Spirit, what is the point? I mean, think about it. If the Holy Spirit is God and will do what Jesus does, why does He need to come? Why didn't Jesus just stay if He was going to send the exact same Helper to take His place?"*

Those are great points, and we need to look at that so we can understand why this needed to take place.

Keep in mind that in His earthly ministry Jesus was limited to being at one place at a time. We might not think about this too often, but in the Incarnation, Jesus was limited.

Yes, in the Incarnation Jesus was fully God and He was also fully man!

Paul also tells us in Philippians 2:5-8 what He emptied Himself of when God became flesh and dwelt among us. We are told, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

Listen carefully to how The Amplified Bible puts these verses. We are told, “Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:] Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!”

Jesus did not cease being God, but He let go of some of those Godly attributes in the Incarnation. Like I have said, He could only be in one place at one time in the Incarnation!

Yes, before the Incarnation and after His death and resurrection, Jesus was omnipresent, or His presence filled the universe! But when He became flesh, He took on the physical limitations of that physical body!

We see that He was tired, He was hungry, and He was no longer omnipresent in the Incarnation!

But when the Holy Spirit was sent, He not only went throughout the world drawing people to Christ, which we will talk about in future studies, but since the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, He also indwells every believer!

What is my point?

My point is this. With the Holy Spirit indwelling every believer that means that the work of God is being accomplished in many places throughout the world. With the ministry of Jesus, it was limited to His location!

Remember what Jesus said in John 14:12, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

Now people may wonder, “*How can we do greater works than Jesus? He raised the dead, healed all kinds of people. Calmed the seas. So how can we do greater works than Jesus?*”

Please understand that Jesus is not speaking of doing greater works in magnitude, what can be more sensational than raising the dead?

I believe what Jesus is saying is that the works we do will be greater in scope.

You see, in His earthly ministry Jesus was limited to being at one place at one time, as I have said.

But now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, He works in all believers, and He can work throughout the world and thus, we will do greater works in scope than He did in His earthly ministry.

And we see this played out for us in the book of Acts.

Remember what Jesus said in Acts 1:8, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The work we do is a result of the Holy Spirit empowering us and since believers are all over the world, there is that greater scope!

One writer put it like this. He wrote, “*It is expedient for you, implies that the dispensation of the Spirit is a more blessed manifestation of God than was even the bodily presence of the risen Saviour.*” (Alford)

Yes, Jesus wanted them to know that it was to their advantage.

Let me share with you John 16:7 from The Amplified Bible. We are told, “However, I am telling you nothing but the truth when I say it is profitable (good, expedient, advantageous) for you that I go away. Because if I do not go away, the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor, Strengthener, Standby) will not come to you [into close fellowship with you]; but if I go away, I will send Him to you [to be in close fellowship with you].”

Here is the problem. Most Christians deny the reality of the Holy Spirit. That should be shocking to you, it is to me.

And if that is true, and it is, then you can understand why they are struggling so much as they try to live out the Christian faith by their own strength instead of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Listen to what we are told from this 2021 article. The title of this article is - “***Most adult US Christians don't believe the Holy Spirit is real.***”

This is what the author had this to say,

Of an estimated 176 million American adults who identify as Christian, ***just 6% or 15 million of them actually hold a biblical worldview***, a new study from Arizona Christian University shows. . . .

The study shows, in general, that while a majority of America’s self-identified Christians, including many who identify as evangelical, believe that God is all-powerful, all-knowing and is the Creator of the universe - more than half reject a number of biblical teachings and principles, including the existence of the Holy Spirit.

Some **62% of self-identified born-again Christians contend that the Holy Spirit is not a real, living being but is merely a symbol of God's power, presence or purity.**

Another 61% say that all religious faiths are of equal value, and 60% believe that if a person is good enough, or does enough good things, they can earn their way into Heaven.

All these positions challenge a biblical worldview.

- <https://bit.ly/3saM221>

Again, that is shocking to me that so many Christians don't believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity but some kind of force like the cults believe.

And to me, I can understand why the church is so ineffective in what it is doing and what it believes because it does not have the Holy Spirit to guide them in all truth and they don't have the Holy Spirit to empower them for the work.

You can't do this on your own. Well, I guess you can. And we see that many times today and it ends up being a work of the flesh and not of the Spirit, and it won't last!

Remember what the Lord told Zerubbabel in Zechariah 4:6, "**So he answered and said to me: 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," Says the Lord of hosts.'**"

This was important for him to understand, and I believe it is important for us to understand.

Keep in mind that Zerubbabel was the civic leader in Jerusalem and his responsibility was to finish the work of rebuilding the Temple.

The problem was that the work was stalled, and Zerubbabel needed encouragement to carry on the work and as he began others would join in and assist in the work of God.

And don't lose sight of how bad things were. The Temple area was a mess. You could work all day and it would look like nothing was done.

And yet, God is going to encourage His people.

But how is He going to do that, the work is overwhelming, and they did not have the strength, the power to do it!

Prior to this Zechariah was given a vision of oil and lamps and in the Scriptures, oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit, and we might think of the lamps as our lives.

Thus, the picture is being filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work of God!

In other words, "**'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts."**

Back in Zechariah chapter 3 the High Priest, Joshua is clothed in filthy garments and the Lord clothed him with rich robes, white robes.

In other words, it is a picture of salvation as the filth of sin has been removed from our lives and we are seen as white as snow because of the shed blood of Christ applied to our lives by faith!

So first you are saved and now, here in Zechariah chapter 4 we see this empowerment for service.

And guess what, the Temple was completed some four years from this period of time!

How was it done?

Not by their might. Not by their power. But by the Spirit of God working in them and through them!

God wanted Zerubbabel to know, to understand that God will continually fill him with His Spirit, He will give him the strength he needs to accomplish this great work! Talk about your encouragement!

How does this relate to us?

Very simply, if we try to accomplish the work of God in our strength, out of our own resources, we are only going to become frustrated and discouraged. The work will be overwhelming to us. But, if we allow God's Spirit to work in us and through us, what seems to be mountains in your life will be leveled, the work will be completed.

And what do we see today?

We see Christians try to accomplish by their own efforts the work of God and it does not work!

Think about it. I get all kinds of mailings on how to grow your church. Programs to get more people in. Do mailings to people. And it goes on and on what you need to do to grow a church ***EXCEPT***, surrender to the Holy Spirit and wait upon Him. Let Him do the work and if you do it will last.

I guess because so many Christians reject that the Holy Spirit is real, the only other solution to accomplish the work of God is do it with your own power, your own strength. And it will not work, not like God wants it to!

You see, what we need to do is surrender our lives to Him, surrender to the Holy Spirit's leading and understand that it is "**Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts."**

That continual flow of the Holy Spirit in our lives empowering us to accomplish great things through Him!

1929

That is what Jesus is instructing His men, that the Helper, the Comforter will come and will empower them to do the work of ministry because the Holy Spirit is real. He is not some force or power, but He is God!

Through the work of God's Spirit in our lives the work will be accomplished!

And I believe the effectiveness, the fruitfulness and the overall dynamic and victory that characterizes your life as a Christian will be directly proportionate to your understanding of the Holy Spirit and how much you honor and obey Him with your life.

Let me show you what I mean about the empowering of God's Spirit upon our lives. We are told,

During World War II, a contingent of American troops in Normandy who were holding a few German soldiers as prisoners received a message that relief was on the way. They were holding their own at the greatest cost; provisions were low, and they felt that they could not hold out much longer.

What cheer the message brought! They were not alone. They were allied to a great power that was at their service.

But the prisoners did not rejoice; they had no part in the blessings of their captors.

So the Comforter comes to help the children of God alone, and they alone rejoice in the promise of his coming.

- Practical Bible Illustrations from Yesterday and Today

Jesus did not leave His men alone and He does not leave us alone. He has sent His Spirit into our lives to help us live a godly life.

1930

Think about all the religions of the world. They all tell you what to do and what not to do. And some of the things that they say are not bad, not evil, but it is just not helpful because they don't give you the power to accomplish them.

But Jesus has as He sent the Holy Spirit into our lives. That is the power we need to live Godly lives.

Remember the disciples after the death and resurrection of Jesus and how they were discouraged, they went fishing. Not a lot of hope.

Peter denied the Lord three times, so he thought he was done. The Lord could not forgive him.

And then, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon them and empowered them for service, what happened to Peter?

Peter gave a powerful message, the one who could not even acknowledge he knew the Lord!

Prior to Pentecost, the disciples had all the tools to carry on the work. They were with Jesus for some 3½ years and as we see here in John, He continues to instill in them the things they will need to carry on the ministry.

Why didn't they start the work right away?

What were they lacking?

They had all the information, so why didn't they go out and do the work that they were called to do?

Because they lacked the power to run those tools!

Think about it. An electric drill is great, it works beautifully when it is plugged into the power source.

1931

But if it is not plugged into a power source, then it is useless. It can't do the work that it was made to do.

The same is true for us. We can't do the work that God has called us to do unless we are plugged into the power source, you might say. And that power source is the Holy Spirit!

How people can deny the Holy Spirit today just shows that they don't know the Scriptures, it is that simple.

And think about it. Something that Jesus promised His men and us, He lied about! No, He didn't. He spoke the truth and the Holy Spirit came not only to indwell believers but to empower them for the work that God has called us to do and to live out our Christian faith!

Let me share with you this story and see how it relates to being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We are told,

A town somewhere in the U.S. was battered one night by hurricane-force winds. In the morning, after the storm had abated, the citizens emerged from their homes and shelters to assess the damage.

The power of the storm quickly became clear to one investigator who was dumbfounded by an incredible discovery.

Mouths dropped open as people came to check out his report: a common plastic drinking straw driven deep into a telephone pole by the night's vicious winds.

Obviously, under normal circumstances, a flimsy straw could never penetrate a telephone pole. But the tremendous power of the wind had driven the straw into the wood like a spike.

1932

As believers living in an ungodly world, sometimes we wonder if we can ever make a difference. We wonder if we can effectively penetrate our cynical culture with the good news God has given us to proclaim.

The answer lies in the source of our power.

If we rely on our own strength and methods, then no, we cannot make much of a difference. But if we choose to be driven by God's limitless power, we become like that straw in the hurricane where nothing can stop us. We can indeed make a dramatic difference.

- Greg Laurie, On Fire, pp. 21-22

It is easy to look at this world and be discouraged. It is easy to lose hope when you see immorality, wickedness growing at alarming rates. It is easy to be sorrowful and troubled by these things.

But remember what Jesus said, "**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.**" John 14:1.

Not only that but we should not be caught off guard because Jesus has warned us of these things that are coming and have come upon this world. This should not be a surprise to us as Jesus said, "**These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.**" John 16:1.

May we embrace the days we are living in and with the help of the Holy Spirit it is amazing what God can do in us and through us for His glory!

Why not receive all that God has for us and as we do, may others be able to say of us, as they said of Paul and his companions, "**... ‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.’**" Acts 17:6.

1933

Or really, in this upside-down world, by the power of God's Spirit, may we turn this world right-side up!

You see, it is not by our might, nor by our power but by – ***THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!***