

Zechariah 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

Analysis

This prophetic word stands as one of Scripture's clearest declarations that God accomplishes His purposes through His Spirit rather than human strength or strategy. The formula "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying" (vaya'an vayomer elay lemor, וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלָּי לֵאמֹר) introduces the interpreting angel's explanation of Zechariah's vision of the golden lampstand. The message is directed specifically to Zerubbabel, the governor leading the temple rebuilding effort after the Babylonian exile.

The core declaration "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" (lo vechayil velo vechoach ki im-beruchi, לֹא בְּחַיִל וְלֹא בְּכַח קַיִם בְּרֻחוֹתִי) contrasts three terms for strength. "Might" (chayil, חַיִל) refers to military force, armies, or human resources—organizational strength and numbers. "Power" (choach, כַּח) denotes physical strength, ability, or human energy—personal capability and effort. Both are negated: God's work doesn't depend on human resources or human ability. Instead, it depends on "my spirit" (ruchi, רַוחִי)—the Spirit of the LORD. The term ruach (רוּחַ) means breath, wind, or spirit, emphasizing divine presence, power, and enabling that accomplishes what human effort cannot.

The conclusion "saith the LORD of hosts" (amar Yahweh Tzeva'ot, אָמַר יְהָוָה צְבָאֹת) grounds this principle in divine authority. "LORD of hosts" emphasizes God's sovereignty over all heavenly and earthly powers—ironically, the One who commands infinite hosts declares that His work proceeds not by such forces but by

His Spirit. This verse refutes all attempts to accomplish God's kingdom work through merely human methods, strategies, or strength. It establishes that spiritual work requires spiritual power. The New Testament echoes this principle repeatedly: Jesus declares that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5), Paul affirms that his ministry succeeds not by persuasive words of human wisdom but by demonstration of the Spirit's power (1 Corinthians 2:4-5), and Luke emphasizes that the early church advanced through the Spirit's empowerment, not human ingenuity (Acts 1:8, 4:31).

Historical Context

Zechariah prophesied beginning in 520 BC, during the post-exilic period when Jewish returnees from Babylonian captivity struggled to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. The first wave of exiles returned under Zerubbabel in 538 BC (Ezra 1-2), and they laid the temple foundation around 536 BC. However, opposition from surrounding peoples, economic hardship, and discouragement halted the work for about 16 years (Ezra 4:24). In 520 BC, God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage resumption of the temple project.

Zerubbabel, grandson of King Jehoiachin, served as governor of Judah under Persian authority. He faced enormous challenges: the returnees were a small, poor community surrounded by hostile neighbors; they lacked resources and manpower; Persian officials questioned their authority to build. Human assessment would conclude the task impossible. In this context, God's word comes to Zerubbabel: the temple will be completed not by human might or power but by divine Spirit. The message addresses both immediate circumstances (temple building) and ultimate realities (all God's work).

The vision context is crucial. Zechariah saw a golden lampstand with seven lamps, flanked by two olive trees continuously supplying oil (4:1-5). The lampstand represents Israel as God's light to the nations; the oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit's continuous supply; the two olive trees likely represent Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor—the priestly and royal offices. The vision promises that God will supply what's needed for His work to succeed. Historically, the temple was indeed completed in 516 BC (Ezra 6:15), vindicating this prophecy. The

principle extends to all of God's redemptive work, culminating in Christ who ministered in the Spirit's power (Luke 4:18) and established His church through the Spirit (Acts 2).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge the modern church's tendency to rely on marketing strategies, numerical growth tactics, or organizational methods to accomplish spiritual goals?
2. In what areas of ministry or service are you tempted to rely on personal ability, resources, or human strategy rather than dependence on the Holy Spirit?
3. What does it mean practically to work "by my Spirit" rather than by human might or power—how does Spirit-led ministry look different?
4. How should this principle shape our prayers, planning, and expectations for kingdom work?
5. What encouragement does this verse offer when facing seemingly impossible ministry tasks with limited resources?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	אָמַר	אָמַר	אָמַר	אָמַר	דָּבָר
Then he answered	and spake	H413	and spake	H2088	This is the word
H6030	H559	H559			H1697
אֶל יְהוָה	לְאָמַר	לְאָמַר	לְאָמַר	לְאָמַר	
unto Zerubbabel	and spake	H2216	H559	H3808	Not by might
H413				H2428	H3808
בְּכָח	בְּרוּחַ	בְּרוּחַ	אָמַר	אָמַר	אֲבָאוֹת
nor by power	but by my spirit	H3588	H7307	H559	of the LORD
H3581				H3068	H6635
וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה	of hosts

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 33:16 (Parallel theme): There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

Hosea 1:7 (Word): But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

2 Chronicles 14:11 (References Lord): And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

Isaiah 32:15 (Spirit): Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

Isaiah 30:1 (Spirit): Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin:

Numbers 27:16 (Spirit): Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,

Ezra 5:2 (Parallel theme): Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.

1 Peter 1:12 (Spirit): Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

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