



OHBC — WEEK #38

THIS WEEK'S VERSE: ZECHARIAH 4:6b

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

Why Zechariah 4:6b?

Because it is really the very essence of the Christian life!

As we look back over our shoulder at God's working in our lives to bring us to Himself, we now see that He opened the eyes of our understanding to be able to comprehend that there was no amount of human "might" or human "power" that could deal with our sinful condition before a holy God. What we were in desperate need of was a new birth that could only be brought forth by the Spirit of God Himself (what Jesus referred to as being "born of the Spirit" – John 3:5-6). Concerning our salvation, Zechariah 4:6b could be very aptly quoted. It is "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

Every person who has been "born again" by the Spirit of God understands that very well. What most Christians fail to realize, however, is that Zechariah 4:6b could be quoted just as aptly, for how it is that we actually live the Christian life! That seems like one of the most difficult lessons to really comprehend. The Christian life is not a difficult life to live. It is impossible!!! And no amount of human "might" or human "power," even exercised by born again people can produce what God now intends our lives to be. It is something that only the Spirit of Christ living through us can ever pull off.

Though it is such a difficult concept to actually grab a hold of and live by, the cross references abound in Scripture. Take a few minutes to meditate on these verses in light of what God teaches us in Zechariah 4:6b:

- Philippians 3:3 – "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."
- II Corinthians 3:5 – "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;"
- Colossians 2:6 – "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:"
- Galatians 2:20 – "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."
- Philippians 3:9 – "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"
- Ephesians 6:10 – "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."
- John 15:5 – "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

As we hide Zechariah 4:6b in our hearts this week, may it be a continual reminder for the rest of our lives, that every single thing in every single dimension of our lives is "not by might, nor by power, but by [His] spirit."! If there's a "secret" to living the Christian life, that's it!

DAY 186

TODAY'S READING: DANIEL 7-9

OVERVIEW:

Daniel's vision of the four great beasts; Daniel's vision of the ram and the he-goat; Daniel's seventy weeks.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Until now, Daniel has been interpreting dreams for others. But now God gives him extraordinary visions of his own. His first vision is of four great beasts that came up from the sea. An angel explains this dream to Daniel. Each beast represented a kingdom:

1. The lion with wings (vs. 4) – This is Babylon. Babylon was still ruling at this time, but in just a few years (as chapter 5 explains) the empire would fall.
2. The bear with ribs (vs. 5) – This is the Medo-Persian empire. The three ribs represent the three empires already defeated in history (Egypt, Babylonia, Libya). The fact that the bear stood “raised up on one side” indicates that one half of the empire (the Persian half) was stronger and more honorable than the other half (The Medes).
3. The winged four-headed leopard (vs. 6) – This is Greece, led by Alexander the Great who swiftly conquered the world, defeating the Persians about 331 BC. But Alexander died in 323 BC, and his vast kingdom was divided into four parts (thus the four heads). Four of his generals each took parts of the kingdom and ruled them as monarchs.
4. The terrible beast (vs. 7-8, 17-27) – This is the Roman Empire. This picture seems to go beyond history into the “latter days” because we see the ten horns on the beast which parallel the ten toes of the image in chapter 2, the revived Roman Empire of the last days. Verses 8 and 20 tell us that a “little horn” (ruler) will appear and defeat three of the ten kingdoms represented by the ten horns and ten toes. This little horn will then become a world ruler, the Anti-Christ! His mouth will speak great things and he will persecute the saints for three and a half years (vs. 25). God will send judgment (vs. 9-14, 26-28) in the person of Jesus Christ to slay this beast and set up his kingdom forever!

This vision complements and supplements the one from chapter two. There we have man’s view of the nations (precious metals), but here we have God’s view (ferocious beasts). The vision in chapter 8 is actually an amplification of 7:6, explaining how Greece will conquer Medo-Persia.

In Chapter 9, we have the prophecy concerning Daniel’s 70 weeks. While Daniel was in prayer confessing his own and his nation’s sins, the angel Gabriel touched him and proceeded to give him this prophecy concerning Jerusalem. It is a time period of seventy weeks of years ($70 \times 7 = 490$ years). Verse 25 tells us that the event that will start this 490 year period is a decree that allows the Jews to go back to Jerusalem after being scattered for a time. This decree came about 100 years after Daniel received this prophecy when Artaxerxes decreed that Nehemiah could return and rebuild the city of Jerusalem in 445 BC (Neh. 2). Gabriel said that there would be “seven weeks and threescore and two weeks” ($69 \times 7 = 483$ years) between the giving of the decree and the coming of the Messiah. Keep in mind that prophetic years in the Bible are 360 days, not 365 days long. It has been calculated that there were exactly 483 years between this decree and the very day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (see the book titled *The Coming Prince* by Sir Robert Anderson). Since Messiah was rejected and cut-off as prophesied, there remains yet one week of years to be fulfilled. This is the seven year Tribulation period known as the time of Jacob’s trouble. It is detailed for us in Revelation 6-19. This period ends with Christ’s return to take His rightful place as King of the whole earth. Amen!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE ANCIENT OF DAYS – Dan. 7:9 (see John 1:1-3, 14)

As THE SON OF MAN – Dan. 7:13 (see Mark 10:45 and Luke 6:5)

As MESSIAH – Dan. 9:25 (see Matt. 16:16 and 1 John 5:1)

DAY 187

TODAY’S READING: DANIEL 10-12

OVERVIEW:

Daniel’s prayer answered by God’s messenger who was detained for 21 days by the Prince of Persia; prophecy of the kingdoms from the time of Daniel to the Antichrist; the Great Tribulation.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The first half of Daniel’s book centers on the prophet’s personal historic adventures. The second half focuses on his prophetic visions. God’s people, a major political and military force among the Gentiles since the days of Joshua, now find themselves under Gentile domination. But even world powers do not raise and fall without the consent of almighty God. In a remarkable collection of prophecies, Daniel sets forth both the near and distant future of God’s chosen people; a future filled with purifying judgment and blessing.

The history of the Greek Empire is detailed further for us in chapter 11. This is truly one of the most remarkable prophecies in the entire Bible! In perfect sequence, Daniel chronicled in advance the coming of Alexander the Great, the division of his empire into four parts; the conflicts between Syria and Egypt, Israel's miseries as the pawn between these two rival powers (called the "king of the north and the king of the south"), the dark days of the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes who most certainly is a picture of the coming Antichrist, and the struggle of the Maccabees. He even saw prophetically the intervention of Rome in the affairs of Palestine. Then, Daniel goes on to speak of the last days and of the coming of the actual Antichrist of whom Antiochus was but a type. We are told two interesting things regarding the Antichrist in chapter 11. Verse 20 teaches us that he will be a "raiser of taxes," and verse 37 tells us that he will not "desire women," and is, therefore, most probably a homosexual.

The Great Tribulation is prophesied in chapter 12 and even Daniel himself does not understand what he is even writing about (12:8). He gets no explanation from God either. Verse 9 tells us that the words of this book are closed and sealed until the time of the end (which just happens to be the time in which we are now living). Regarding this time of the end, we are told in Daniel 12:4 that "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased". That is an amazing prophecy considering the modes of transportation (automobile, airplane, and space shuttle) and accessibility of information (internet) available to us today, as opposed to what was available in Daniel's time (horse and chariot). We are truly living in the time of the end, so let us purify ourselves as we wait for the return of our Lord (1 John 3:3)!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE ONE WHO LIVES FOREVER – Dan. 12:7 (see John 8:58; Rev. 1:8; 4:8)

DAY 188

TODAY'S READING: HOSEA 1-6

OVERVIEW:

Israel compared to an unfaithful wife (chapter 1); God seeks reconciliation with Israel (chapter 2); Hosea's reconciliation with his wife (chapter 3); God's controversy with his people (chapters 4-6).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

We now move into the section of the Old Testament referred to as the Minor Prophets. As mentioned previously, they are "minor," not in terms of the content of their message, but simply the length of it. Keep in mind also, that a prophet was someone God called to take His side against nations and peoples (Deut. 18:22 – "a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD"). There is, without a doubt, no prophet who had more of an opportunity to actually "speak in the name of the LORD" than Hosea, as God asked this prophet to do the unthinkable! "And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms" – Hosea 1:2. Hosea was actually told to marry a wife that God knew would break his heart by her unfaithfulness. Why would God do such a thing? For two reasons.

First, because it was a graphic ILLUSTRATION. Hosea, whose name means "Jehovah, or God, is salvation" (much like "Joshua" in the Old Testament, and "Jesus" in the New Testament), is to take a wife of whoredoms because she depicts the unfaithfulness of Israel to her "husband" (Ezek. 16:8-15), the "God of her salvation."

Secondly, faithful Hosea is to take an unfaithful wife because it is a graphic REALIZATION. God wanted Hosea to preach to unfaithful Israel, feeling in his heart, what God felt in His. Perhaps the only way Hosea could really preach "in the name of the LORD" with both the Lord's passion and compassion, was living through the hurt in his relationship with his lover (Gomer), that God felt with His lover (Israel).

Are you experiencing hurt in any area of your life right now? It may reveal something very interesting and significant if you were to take the time to write down the circumstances of what happened to hurt you, and how it has made you feel. Many times, God allows the events and circumstances of our lives to unfold as they do, not only because it fits perfectly into His sovereign design and plan, but to allow us, like Hosea, to feel in our hearts what He feels in His! When we actually put the situation that has hurt us into words, we discover that what we are going through and how it has made us feel, is no different than what God goes through and feels, and has gone through and felt! The New Testament terminology for this principle is "the fellowship of His suffering" (Phil. 3:10).

It seems, however, that most Christians never connect the dots of the pain that they are experiencing, to what the Lord went through in His pain (i.e. His suffering). Missing this connection, it is way too easy to begin to use our circumstances to justify our vengeance, anger or bitterness, rather than to allow our circumstances to move us into a whole other dimension of “fellowship” with our Lord! God has always longed for and looked for people “after His own heart.” Sadly, when He orchestrates/allows the events and circumstances of our lives to make us that kind of people, we forget that the real prayer and desire of our hearts really is Philippians 3:10 – “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”, and miss that God, through our circumstances has actually answered our prayers! This is another one of those principles you might want to take the rest of the day to meditate on, and from there, the rest of your life!

And before we actually get into the “guts” of the Book of Hosea, don’t miss that Gomer is also a very graphic and extremely sad picture of us. When we “love the world” (I John 2:15), or seek to rationalize or justify our “friendship with the world” (James 4:4), our “husband” (II Cor. 11:2), the God of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ views it, and even calls it “adultery”!!! (See James 4:4)!

As we move into chapter one, note also the lesson God wanted to “preach” to Israel through Hosea’s three children. God named his first child “Jezreel,” meaning “God sows” or “God scatters,” depicting the fact that God was about to scatter the nation of Israel. His second child God named “Loruhamah,” meaning “no mercy” or “unpitied.” She pointed to the fact that God would no longer extend His mercy to Israel, but would be taken into captivity. The third child God named “Loammi,” meaning “not my people,” teaching Israel that He no longer recognized them as His children. It may have been that Loammi was not actually Hosea’s child, but a child born of Gomer’s whoredoms. It would be hard to get very far away from your calling if you had to give your children such names! It would be like God asking those of us called to “preach” to this generation (Rom. 10:14), to name our children “Laodicea” (meaning “the rights of the people”), “Lukewarm” (depicting the state of His church), and “Selfish” (depicting the real love of His people, “lovers of their own selves” – II Tim. 3:2). Note, however, in Hosea 2:1, the Lord points to a time when the “Lo” (i.e. meaning “no” or “not” or “without”) would be removed, and Israel would again be “Ammi” (“my people”) and “Ruhamah” (“having obtained mercy”). Note also that “in that day,” “Jezreel” will no longer mean “God scatters,” but “God sows.” God says in 2:23, “And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.” That of course, will be during the Great Tribulation, culminating with the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of His millennial kingdom.

More will be said concerning the chapters in today’s reading in tomorrow’s “Highlights and Insights.”

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through HOSEA’S LOVE FOR HIS UNWORTHY, SINFUL WIFE – Hosea 3:1-5 (Rom. 5:8; Rom. 8:32; II Peter 1:3).

DAY 189

TODAY’S READING: HOSEA 7-14

OVERVIEW:

Israel’s sin rebuked (chapter 7); Israel’s judgment foretold (chapters 8-10); Israel’s restoration promised (chapters 11-14).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In yesterday’s reading, just as God had predicted, Hosea’s wife, Gomer, deserted her faithful husband for other “lovers,” a very painful but graphic illustration of Israel’s unfaithfulness to her husband, God Himself. In chapter 3, Gomer even ended up on the slave block, and God commands Hosea to go “redeem” her (or “buy her back”) and restore her as his wife. (All I can say is, “What a guy!”) Remember, Hosea is a picture of God, and His love for Israel, and His plan to restore her as His wife. (All I can say is, “What a God!”)

The people of Israel all knew who Hosea was, and knew all that his wife had done. They, no doubt, pointed the finger at her and her many sins. Little did they realize that they were actually pointing the finger at themselves! In chapter 4, Hosea begins to help them to understand their own sin (4:1-2), and their unfaithfulness and spiritual adultery against their husband. Hosea likens them to several graphic pictures:

1. "A morning cloud" (6:4) – i.e. here one minute and gone the next.
2. "A cake not turned" (7:8) – what we might call today "half-baked." i.e. Their spirituality was only superficial, not into the core of their being.
3. "Gray hairs" (7:9) – i.e. gradually losing their strength, but unaware of the change.
4. "A silly dove" (7:11) – i.e. extremely fickle; here, there, and everywhere.
5. "A deceitful bow" (7:16) – i.e. has everything it needs to fulfill its purpose, but can't hit the target.

Before simply moving on past the above illustrations, you may want to look back to see how many of them would be descriptive of your relationship with the Lord. It is amazing how "the more things change, the more things stay the same"!

As we move into chapter 8, Hosea understood that it would not be long before the Assyrians would come to take Israel into captivity. He likens God's judgment to the circling of an eagle (8:1), the devastation of a whirlwind (8:7), and the burning of a fire (8:16). Numerous times in our 365 Days of Pursuit we have mentioned the Galatians 6:7-8 principle, we "reap" according to what we've "sown." Don't miss, however, that the fact is, we always reap MORE than what we sow! Israel sowed the wind, yet reaped a whirlwind (8:7; 10:13). A farmer sows a few seeds that multiply into a huge harvest. Is there anything you're sowing in your life right now that you're not wanting to reap, much less, reap in abundance?! May we learn from Israel's mistakes. I Corinthians 10:6 and 11 command us to!

Chapter 9 walks us back into some key places of sinfulness in Israel's past. Hosea references the "deep corruption" at Gibeah (9:9), the "shame" and "abominations" at Baalpeor (9:10), and the "wickedness" at Gilgal (9:15). It teaches us that a life of sin leaves a trail. In time, the trail itself tells the story of how we ended up where we did.

The Book of Hosea doesn't end, however, on a negative note. Just as Hosea never lost his love or his heart for his wife in spite of all of her unfaithfulness, God did not lose His love or His heart for Israel in spite of her unfaithfulness. And just as Hosea bought his wife back out of slavery to be restored in their relationship, God begins to point to the time when He would redeem Israel out of their slavery and be restored in His relationship with them.

God shows His heart for Israel in chapter 11, as He reminds them of how He loved them from the very beginning of their relationship, when He called them out of Egypt. He also reminds them of how from the very beginning of His marriage to them, they were "bent on backsliding" (11:7). God "drew them with cords... and bands of love" (11:4), but they saw the cords and bands as restrictive and wanted to be free of Him.

In chapter 14, God cries out to His wife to return to Him (14:1). He says, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him" (14:4). He points to a time when the nation will be as a beautiful lily, a fruitful olive tree, and flourish as a vine. As we have repeatedly seen in the prophets, this is pointing to the time of the Second Coming of Christ when He sets up His millennial kingdom.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In ISRAEL, as the SON WHO WAS CALLED OUT OF EGYPT – Hosea 11:1 (Matt. 2:14-15).

DAY 190

TODAY'S READING: JOEL 1-3

OVERVIEW:

The plague of locusts; Joel's call to repentance; the great day of the Lord; the Holy Spirit; the restoration of Israel; the judgment of the nations.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we embark into the three chapters of the Book of Joel, the Book begins by saying, "The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel." The name Joel means "Jehovah is God" and the name Pethuel means "the sincerity of God" or "godly simplicity." A simple breakdown of the Book of Joel is as follows: Chapter 1 – The Day of the Lord. Chapter 2 – The Day of the Lord. Chapter 3 – The Day of the Lord. Work hard to keep that straight :> .

The Book actually begins with a question: "Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?" The inferred answer, of course, is "no." The "days" Joel is about to describe are so devastating that no one had ever seen anything quite like it. It is much like Jesus' words in Matthew 24:21 concerning the days of the great tribulation: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Joel's prophecy concerning those days was a message God wanted to be handed down generationally through the families (1:3). It was to be told to their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. It is just another reminder that our lives are going to impact, whether negatively (Ex. 20:5; 34:7) or positively (Ps. 78:4-7) the next four generations! Verse four of chapter one describes how there are certain things that seek to "worm" their way into our lives to slowly but surely "eat" away the important things of life. What the "palmerworm" doesn't eat, the "locust" will. What the "locust" doesn't eat, the "cankerworm" will. What the "cankerworm" doesn't eat, the "caterpillar" will. It's time we "wake up" (1:5) and "sober up" (1:5) and recognize what is actually happening before our lives and the lives of the next four generations are not completely "devoured" (1 Peter 5:8) by the enemy! If you've been "sleeping" on your watch (1 Thess. 5:6!), or have allowed yourself to be "drunk" spiritually (1 Thess. 5:7), the good news is, if you'll obey Joel 1:5, and "wake up" and "sober up," God can and will "restore to you the years that the locusts hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar and the palmerworm" (2:25)! Obviously, these admonitions are simply the devotional application of these verses to us. Historically, Joel is preaching these truths to the people of Judah. He reminds them of what they had seen take place in their land by the destruction of a recent plague of locusts. That judgment, however, would pale in comparison to the judgment that was about to be unleashed by an invading army from the north (the Assyrians). Their only hope was through repentance.

But even that does not address the real purpose of Joel's prophecy or to the Book of the Bible that bears his name. Remember, the doctrinal application, as already mentioned, has to do with the days of the great tribulation ("those days" – 2:29; 3:1), just prior and leading up to "the day of the Lord" ("that day" – 1:15; 2:1, 2, 11; 3:14, 18). Joel is prophesying about the judgment of God that will be taking place during the Tribulation Period as a northern confederacy converges upon the Nation of Israel just prior to the restoration of Israel, in that day when the nation will repent and the Lord Jesus Christ establishes His millennial kingdom.

Seeing those three layers of application will keep you between the white lines as you seek to get your bearings in this Book. That's important, because there is a lot of false teaching/doctrine that is propagated out of this little Book of the Bible. Most of it surrounds chapter 2, and Peter quoting Joel's prophecy on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, when Peter basically says, "This" (the events taking place at Pentecost in Acts 2) "was that" (the events Joel was prophesying in Joel 2). In Acts 2, Peter is very careful NOT to say that this is the "FULFILLMENT" of the things Joel said! Note that the Spirit was NOT poured out "upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28) at Pentecost. Notice also that Joel doesn't mention anything about "tongues" anywhere in this chapter: and notice that not of the "wonders" that Joel does mention in verse 20 took place on the Day of Pentecost.

Yes, there was a partial fulfillment of the last days prophecy that Joel is preaching about that did take place on the Day of Pentecost, but by Acts 7, the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy was put on hold, and won't pick up again until the Tribulation Period.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO SAID, "I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH" – Joel 2:28 (Zech. 12:10; Isa. 54:13; Ezek. 39:29).