

Post-Exile Prophets: Zechariah
THE WHOLE TRUTH
Thursday, July 10
Reading: Zechariah 8:9-17

Zechariah 8:9 *This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Now hear these words, 'Let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built.' This is also what the prophets said who were present when the foundation was laid for the house of the LORD Almighty.*

The purpose of all God's warnings and promises was to encourage the people to finish building the temple – and to do it for the right reasons (8:9-13)! Their ancestors had refused to listen to God and instead reveled in their sin, thinking they were safe because God's temple was in their midst. Zechariah wants the Jewish remnant to build the temple, not for personal gain, but out of obedience and a pure heart. Zechariah reminds them of the words spoken by Haggai two years earlier when the temple project was restarted.

Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. 6 You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it...9 "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of My house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. 10 Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. (Haggai 1:5-6; 9-10; see also Haggai 2:15-19)

Upon their return to Jerusalem, the Jewish remnant had no stability and no security. There were enemies on every side trying to stop the work (see Ezra 4-5). God had called Israel to be a blessing to the nations, but because of their disobedience, they had become a curse. But unlike their ancestors, this Jewish remnant had responded to God's call in repentance and obedience. Now God could bless them.

WHAT GOD WILL DO (8:14-15): God now promises to do good for His faithful people instead of the judgment He had brought on their disobedient ancestors.

WHAT THEY ARE TO DO: (8:16-17): They had already repented and were being obedient by building the temple. Now the Lord lists 4 things His people (then and now) are to do to enjoy His continued blessings and be an example to the nations around them.

- (1) "Speak the truth" – Our lives are to be marked by honesty and integrity. We don't lie, gossip, and slander others.
- (2) "Render true and sound judgments" – This is important, not just in the court system, but in everyday life. The word translated "sound" is the Hebrew word shalom – peace and wellbeing. All our decisions should be based on truth and harmony.
- (3) "Do not plot evil" – In Hebrew, this literally reads, "do not devise evil in your hearts." God's people are not only to avoid evil actions; we are to avoid evil thoughts and schemes.
- (4) "Do not love to swear falsely" – This is about breaking promises. To swear you are going to do something and then not do it! God's people are trustworthy. People know we speak the truth and will do what we say we will do.

This passage reminds us that when we are not obedient to God, He cannot bless our lives. It also reminds us that sin begins in the heart and mind, so we must keep our thoughts and motives pure. God hates sin and calls us to live differently than the world around us. What areas of your life do you need God to work on? How have you failed to be truthful in the past? What can you do to be obedient and honest in the future?