

"God's Desire for His People"

Zechariah 8

Introduction: Over the past several studies we have looked at the judgment of God with fell upon the Jews and that was the Babylonian Captivity. The Jews were carried off into captivity for 70 years. This was because they had turned away from God.

Deuteronomy 28:15, 48-50

¹⁵ But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

⁴⁸ Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

⁴⁹ The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;

⁵⁰ A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young:

Now when we come to the book of Zechariah the captivity is over and these Jews are back in the land. They have come back to build the temple and they needed a push to get going again.

Therefore, God uses the prophet Zechariah to give them Words of encouragement. Through the prophet God has now told them His desire was to bless them.

Notice Zechariah 8:7-15

With all of this said there were now several things which God desired of His people.

I. Build the Temple

This we already looked at.

Notice Zechariah 8:9, 13

Two times in these verses they were told to strengthen their hands. This was an exhortation to get busy on the temple. They had been sent back to rebuild the temple and that is what they were to be doing.

Ezra 1:1-3

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

² Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

³ Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

These people knew exactly why they were sent back from the captivity and so they were to finish what they had started.

The 2nd thing which God desired of His people was to:

II. Believe His Promises.

Notice Zechariah 8:13, 15

Two times in these verses we see that they were told to FEAR NOT. In other words they were God gave them great promises and they were believe them and their faith in these promises would remove all fear from their lives.

I want to show you some verses from the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk authored his book because he longed to see God's judgment upon the unrighteous. In chapter one he wrote of his burden.

Habakkuk 1:1-4

The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

² O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

³ Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.

⁴ Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

Then in chapter 2 Habakkuk waits for God's reply and I want you to notice what God says to Habakkuk.

Habakkuk 2:1-4

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

² *And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.*

³ *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

⁴ *Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.*

If you look at the earth from space it is a beautiful globe hanging in space. But as you get closer it begins to change and when you get on the surface where there are people the darkness is extremely thick. But when there is a believer who makes the choice to walk by faith in the promises of God He or she is like a diamond in the dust.

Application:

This statement made in Habakkuk is repeated several times in the New Testament for us.

Romans 1:17

¹⁷ *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

Hebrews 10:38-39

³⁸ *Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

³⁹ *But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

We are saved by faith and then we are to live by faith in the promises of God. When we do we too shine like a diamond in the dust. It is faith in the promises of God that keep us from living in fear.

Mark 4:40

⁴⁰ *And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?*

It is faith that drives out fear. As believers fear should have no part in our lives. If we are walking by faith fear has no room to exist.

2 Timothy 1:7

⁷ *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

Let me show you why it is so important to be grounded in the Word of God.

1 John 4:16-18

¹⁶ *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

¹⁷ *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

¹⁸ *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Listen!! When we understand the love that God has for us our faith in that love drives out fear.

Let us notice something about unbelievers.

Revelation 21:7-8

⁷ *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

⁸ *But the **fearful**, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

Here we see how the unbelievers are identified. They are called FEARFUL above everything else. If there is something that we are fearful of it is because we lack faith. To walk by faith sets us apart from the rest of the world. Fear would keep the Jews from building the temple.

The next thing God desires is a direct command.

III. Be True to your Word.

Notice Zechariah 8:16a

The opposite of what is said in this verses is what contributed to the captivity. They were to speak the Truth to each other. The opposite of this would be deceit or lies. Notice how the Jews treated the vulnerable.

Amos 5:10-12

¹⁰ *They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.*

¹¹ *Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.*

¹² *For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.*

The Jews were very deceptive as they took advantage of the poor and the needy.

Application:

As believers we are to be people of our word. If we make a promise we are to be true to that promise. Notice what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:33-37

³³ *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:*

³⁴ *But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:*

³⁵ *Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.*

³⁶ *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

³⁷ *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

We are not to swear on anything but we are just to be true to our word.

James 5:12

¹² *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

IV. Judge True Judgment.

Notice Zechariah 8:16b

The Jews had shown favoritism and partiality in their judgments at the gate. They took bribes from the rich and took advantage of the poor.

Application:

We hear all the time that as Christians we are not to judge and there are many passages quoted out of context.

John 8:3-7

³ *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,*

⁴ *They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.*

⁵ *Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?*

⁶ *This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.*

⁷ *So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

There is another text that is often used.

Matthew 7:1-3

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

² *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

³ *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

We must judge when it comes to helping others, but we must not be hypocrites. Who am I to judge if I am doing the same thing?

Conclusion:

All of this causes us to shine like the diamond in the dust which brings glory to our God.