

## **Speak the Truth to One Another** **08-23-20**

Zechariah was a prophet in the time of the return from exile. A small remnant of the people of Judah had returned to reestablish the name of God in Jerusalem. Zechariah (Haggai and Malachi as well) served these people with messages from God. Much of what Zechariah said pertained to the coming of the Messiah, the true Temple, and the New Covenant. But he did give the people of that time an important message:

*These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the LORD."* Zechariah 8:16-17

Why would there have been a need to be reminded to speak truth to one another, and to put away lying? We know that there were a number of issues surrounding this group. They had failed to build the temple (Haggai 1:2), and perhaps they were making up excuses for this. We know that rumors were flying about the Persians, the Samaritans and others (Ezra 4:4-12); maybe they shared these rumors and thereby shared the lies of the enemies of God. Malachi records that they were not being honest about sacrifices (Malachi 1) or their conduct before God (Malachi 2); perhaps these are the lies that Zechariah sought to correct.

Centuries later the Apostle Paul took this message and submitted it to the church in Ephesus. "Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25). Paul repeated this message to the Colossians in chapter 3:9-10. This admonition is important. **DO NOT LIE TO ONE ANOTHER** and **SPEAK THE TRUTH TO ONE ANOTHER**. What does this mean, and how do we carry it out?

We might consider the dishonesty issues of the time of Zechariah as being the same now. First consider excuses (lies) we create for not building (up) the temple. The temple today is the church that Jesus built, and we are told in Hebrews 10:23-25 that our assembly together is the building up of that temple. Do we lie about why we are absent? Do we say we are sick when we are not? Do we create falsehoods about not being present to cover up our failing? Do not lie to another.

How about lying with rumors? We often receive emails or messages that claim some politician is doing something that threatens us. A little bit of research and it is proven untrue. When we pass along a lie as the truth, is it not our lie? Do we not own it and become responsible for it (Proverbs 19:5)? Christians ought not to proclaim "conspiracy" (Isaiah 8:12) with only the mere speculation; we are people who speak truth.

What about our lies about our conduct? Often we know just what to tell people who are concerned when we are not doing what we should. We know as Christians there is a lifestyle we put away; lying is one part of it (Colossians 3:5-7). What lies do we tell to cover our worldly behaviors?

Finally, consider the lies of sacrifices. Malachi recorded that men lied about giving God their best. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the church (and thereby the Holy Spirit) and died for it in Acts 5:1-9. Often the lie of sacrifices is what we tell ourselves; that what we offer God is good enough, and that we are okay. Maybe Ananias and Sapphira did not even consider it a lie. Yet they were destroyed for it.

Paul told the Saints to speak the truth to one another. We ought to consider this as TRUTH with a capital T, as discussed in John 17:17. That Truth is something we do (John 3:21). That Truth is the way we worship (John 4:24). That Truth is something to know (John 8:32) and something to be (John 18:37). We also speak that Truth with love (Ephesians 4:15) which speaks to our obedience (1 Peter 1:22) and our deeds (1 John 3:18).