

Blessed Hope Bible-Presbyterian Church
Adult Sunday School
4 March 2018

Visions of Zechariah
Zechariah 5:1-8 (KJV)

¹ Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. ² And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof *is* twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. ³ Then said he unto me, This *is* the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off *as* on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off *as* on that side according to it. ⁴ I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof. ⁵ Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what *is* this that goeth forth. ⁶ And I said, What *is* it? And he said, This *is* an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This *is* their resemblance through all the earth. ⁷ And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this *is* a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. ⁸ And he said, This *is* wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.

(1) VISION 6: A FLYING ROLL

¹ Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. ² And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. ³ Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. ⁴ I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

Zechariah saw a flying roll or scroll (*megillah*) that is more than 30 feet in length and 15 feet in breadth, rushing through the air. A cubit is defined as the length of a man's arm from the elbow to the extremity of the middle finger. The verb "*flying*" is a participle that denotes a continuous action of "floating." The scroll though inanimate is showing itself "alive." It was written on both sides with judgments (curses) for every one that stole and everyone that swore falsely by God's name. It pursued the culprit in the comforts of his home, punishment was exacted upon that house. Remember the warning by Haggai in Haggai 1:4 "*Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?*" The warning is also in Zechariah 1:3 to repent from their self-indulgence. This is a solemn picture of judgment upon God's people who transgress His laws. This is a picture of God's wrath pursuing the unrepentant of God's children. God does not respect persons in judgment, there is no escape. Everyone who transgresses will be punished.

The Word of God "*is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*" (Heb 4:12). But when we refuse to acknowledge our iniquity and persist in our sins, this vision tells us there will certainly come a time of reckoning and it comes suddenly! Sometimes we distinguish between big and small sins! "I am late for work by just 15 minutes, it is no big deal!" Dear friends, it is not all right. God knows that we are cheating

though our employer may not know. Can we get away with impunity for the sins that we have committed? We cannot! It is a reference to God's people, who have transgressed His law, receiving their just reward. May we examine our hearts this day truthfully.

Have I confessed my sins in contrition? Lord, help me to judge myself.

(2) HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY (1)

“An honest man is the noblest work of God” so says Alexander Pope. “Honesty is the best policy” an old saying goes. “If a man really thinks that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons” says Ben Johnson.

“Make yourself an honest man, and then you may be sure there is one less rascal in the world” says Thomas Carlyle.

Proverbs 11:1 *A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.*

Proverbs 11:1 offers the hearer two contrasting thoughts. The first part describes what is wrong and the second, the correct. The reference to the action is whether it pleases the Lord. Using deceit to gain is not good in the eyes of the Lord. Although no man may see, God sees. This proverb reminds us that God hates deceit.

“A gentleman jumping from a bus in the city of New York, dropped his pocket-book, and had gone some distance before he discovered his loss; then hastily returning, inquired of every passenger whom he met, if a pocket-book had been seen. Finally, meeting a little girl ten years old, to whom he made the same inquiry, she asked: ‘What kind of a pocket-book?’ ‘Is this it?’ ‘Yes, that is mine.’ He opened the book, counted the notes, and examined the papers. ‘They are all right,’ said he; ‘Had they fallen into other hands, I might never have seen them again. Take, then, my little girl, this note of a thousand dollars, as a reward for your honesty, and a lesson to me to be more careful in future.’ ‘No’, said the girl, ‘I cannot take it. I have been taught at Sunday school not to keep what is not mine, and my parents would not be pleased if I took the note home; they might suppose I had stolen it.’ ‘Well, then, my girl, show me where your parents live.’ The girl took him to a humble place in an obscure street, rude but cleanly. He informed the parents of the case. They told him their child had acted correctly.” (Read the rest of the story in tomorrow’s reading.)

Honesty is a fine jewel, but much out of fashion. Grant to me, Lord, the passion of being truthful.

(3) HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY (2)

The girl’s family was poor, it was true, but their pastor had always told them not to set their hearts on rich gifts. The gentlemen told them they must take it, and he was convinced they would make a good use of it, from the principle they had professed. The pious parents then blessed their benefactor. They paid their debts, which had disturbed their peace, and the benevolent giver furnished the husband and father employment in his occupation as a carpenter, enabling him to rear an industrious family in comparative happiness. This little girl became the wife of a respectable tradesman of New York, and had reason to rejoice that she was taught aright in early life and practiced what she learned.

He who says there is no such thing as an honest man, you may be sure, is himself a false deceitful fellow. Cicero believed that nothing is useful that is not honest when he said, ‘He that walketh

uprightly, walketh surely; but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.’ Another worthy advice from a godly man, ‘In all your dealings with your neighbour treat him generously – ‘good measure, pressed down and running over’ – and you will not lose by it at the end.’”

Nehemiah 5:1-13 (KJV) ¹ *And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. ² For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. ³ Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. ⁴ There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. ⁵ Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards. ⁶ And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. ⁷ Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. ⁸ And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. ⁹ Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? ¹⁰ I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. ¹¹ Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. ¹² Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. ¹³ Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.*

The years in captivity had caused Israel to forsake God’s laws. The basic trait of integrity was sold for filthy lucre. The Jews in Jerusalem were slack in their giving towards the support of the Temple. The Levites and the singers had to work in the fields. Although Nehemiah was not a leader of the Temple, he was courageous as a layman to rebuke the Jews confronting them with their sin of withholding their tithes when he recorded “*Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place*” (Neh. 13:11).

“Honesty is praised, but left to shiver?” Heavenly Father, give me courage to be honest.

(4) VISION 7: AN EPHAH (2)

⁵ *Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. ⁶ And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. ⁷ And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. ⁸ And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.*

A study showed that many American merchants, whose revenues outrank those of princes, owe their colossal fortunes principally to a character for integrity and ability. Integrity has been their guide. When you lay the foundations of character broad and deep, build them on a rock, and not on sand, the rains may then descend, the floods rise and the winds blow; but your house will stand.

But establish a character for loose dealings, and lo! Some great tempest will sweep it away. Now consider the price that man has paid for his success. His advertisements are all deceptive; his cheap prices made possible by inferior products. Sow that wicked man's seed, and you will reap that wicked man's punishment. Cheat, lie, be unscrupulous in your assertions – let it not be named among Christians. Yours is a clear conscience, a pure mind, rectitude within and without. Do not envy the cheat and the wicked with their ill- gotten fortunes. He has paid his price; you do not choose to pay it.

The United States of America is the only nation in modern history founded by men who firmly believed God was supreme, both in government and in the lives of men. She has her beginning in the hearts of men and women who had been willing to suffer, lose all they had, and even leave the lands of their birth for the cause of the Gospel. God had greatly blessed America since 1776 and by 1940 it has become one of the world's most prosperous nations. But the God who had so greatly blessed the land was becoming less and less a part of that country's life. Daniel Webster, one of early America's great statesman- orators, had warned the nation against turning from God. He said, "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

What about my country and my business?

Honesty is looking at painful truths in the face. Lord, help me to deal a truthful measure in my business.