

Book of Zephaniah

Chapter 3:1-20

¹ **Woe** to her who is rebellious and defiled, the **tyrannical** city! ² She **heeded** no voice, **she accepted no instruction**. **She did not trust in the LORD, she did not draw near to her God.**

Woe > (Patterson) In delivering his pronouncement against Jerusalem, Zephaniah utilizes the form of the woe oracle, including invective (v. 1), reason (criticism) for Judah's punishment (vv. 2-4), and implied threat (vv. 5-7).

Tyrannical > (Strong's) to rage or be violent: by implication, to suppress, to maltreat

Barnes > Jerusalem's sin is threefold, actively rebelling against God; then, inwardly defiled by sin; then cruel to man. So then, toward God, in herself, toward man, she is wholly turned to evil, not in passing acts, but in her abiding state:

- (1) rebellious
- (2) defiled
- (3) **oppressive**

Patterson > The third charge against Judah is that of **oppression**. The Hebrew word (used) is utilized in a variety of ways but most frequently of intolerance toward or the suppression of the rights and privileges of others. It especially characterizes the rich and influential members of society who take advantage of the less fortunate

Heeded > (Strong's) to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience, etc.; causatively, to tell, etc.)

Ironside > "She obeys no one" is literally "she did not hearken to the voice".

Robertson > This city also has not accepted correction. Did she think the calamities that came on her had nothing to do with God's hand of chastening judgment? How could she fail to interpret correctly the providential disciplines which the Lord lovingly brought to her? Certainly she did not think her hours of distress during the reigns of Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh had come because the gods of the Assyrians were mightier than the God who had brought them out of Egypt, did she? **Or did she!**

Think of their logic here. "If we worship Yahweh ... and the enemy worships some other god ... and they defeat us ... isn't it logical to assume their god is stronger?"

Instruction > (Strong's) chastisement; figuratively, reproof, warning or instruction; also restraint

Here is the list from 1:4, 5 as to why their destruction was coming – compare the last three bullets to the last two comments in the above verses.

- Those that worship Baal
- The priests that lead that worship
- Those that worship the “hosts of heaven”
- Those that say they worship God yet swear by Milcom
- Those who have turned back on following the Lord
- Those have not sought the Lord or submitted to Him

She did not trust ... > (Patterson) The seriousness of Jerusalem's spiritual condition is underscored by Zephaniah's choice of word order (MT): “In the Lord she does not trust; unto her God she does not draw near.”

³ Her **princes** within her are roaring lions, her **judges** are wolves at evening; **they leave nothing for the morning**. ⁴ Her **prophets** are **reckless**, treacherous men; her **priests** have profaned the sanctuary. They have done violence to the law.

Princes > (Strong's) a head person (of any rank or class)

Reckless > (Strong's) to bubble up or froth (as boiling water), i.e. (figuratively) to be unimportant ... light.

Barnes > empty boasters claiming the gift of prophecy, which they have not; "boldly and rashly pouring out what they willed as they willed;" promising good things which shall not be.

⁵ The LORD is righteous within her; He will do no injustice. **Every morning** He brings His justice to light; He does not fail. But the unjust **knows** no shame.

Every morning > (Barnes) Literally, *in the morning, in the morning*

Knows > (Strong's) to know (properly, to ascertain by seeing)

⁶ **I have cut off nations; their corner towers are in ruins. I have made their streets desolate, with no one passing by; their cities are laid waste, without a man, without an inhabitant.** ⁷ **I said, 'Surely you will revere Me, accept instruction.'** **So her dwelling will not be cut off according to all that I have appointed concerning her. But they were eager to corrupt all their deeds.**

What did we see the Lord do in Chapter 2?

- *I have cut off nations ... their corner towers are in ruins*
- *I have made their streets desolate, with no one passing by*
- *Their cities are laid waste ... without a man, without an inhabitant*

Why did the Lord do this?

- *'Surely you will revere Me, accept instruction*
- *So her dwelling will not be cut off according to all that I have appointed concerning her.*

How did they respond?

- *But they were eager to corrupt all their deeds.*

⁸ ***"Therefore wait for Me," declares the LORD, "For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all My burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal.***

Therefore > After reading verses 1-7 above this verse should come as no surprise

Wait > (Strong's) to adhere to; hence, to await ... long, tarry, wait.

Witness > (Strong's) the same as 5703 in the sense of the aim of an attack; booty

Constable > The world is still waiting for the Lord to pour out His wrath on all nations. He has not done so yet because He is patient and is giving people time to repent (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). Yet that day will surely come (2 Pet. 3:10). In view of its coming, Christians need to be holy in conduct and godly in character, looking for and hastening that day (by our prayers and preaching, 2 Pet. 3:11). The great outpouring of divine wrath on the earth predicted here will take place during the Tribulation, before our Lord returns to set up His kingdom (cf. 2:2; Zech. 14:2; Rev. 16:14, 16).

⁹ ***"For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder.***

Constable > "Then" signals a major change in time, as well as in the focus of Zephaniah's prophecy. It is a hinge word that serves as a transition from judgment in the Tribulation to blessing in the Millennium. Then, after these judgments (1:2—3:8), the Lord promised to give the peoples of the world "purified lips" that would speak truth and grace, rather than lies and defiled speech (cf. Isa. 6:5-7).

I will give to the people purified lips > You cannot read this phrase without thinking of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6. He had been given a vision of the Lord in His glory and majesty and saw his own sinfulness. In ***Isaiah 6:5-7*** he writes > ⁵ *Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."* ⁶ *Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.* ⁷ *He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."*

Patterson > ("I will give," lit. "I will [over]turn"): Known throughout the Semitic family, this verb is used in the OT transitively of turning someone or something (2 Kings 21:13), overthrowing a city (Gen. 19:21, 25, 29), or transforming/changing a thing/person (Ps. 105:25).

That all of them ... > What is the result of the cleansing of the Lord? > *that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder. Amen!*

Patterson > Structurally, vv. 9-13 provide a further reason for the exhortation to wait for the Lord (v. 8). The first reason (found in v. 8) had to do with God's determination to gather the nations for the long-awaited judgment. The second now deals with the promises of God to a humble and purified future remnant.

P. C. Craigie > the prophet Zephaniah thus gives us a view of the future which is part despair, part hope.... The source of the prophet's despair was to be found in his understanding of human nature and human states; the source of his hope was to be found in God.

¹⁰ ***From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, will bring My offerings.***

Offerings > (Strong's) a donation; euphemistically, tribute; specifically a sacrificial offering (usually bloodless and voluntary)

Patterson > As proof of their new love for God, the Gentiles will bring to Him His covenant people (Isa. 66:20). From the farthest reaches of the world, wherever they have been scattered in judgment (Deut. 28:64-68), God's people will be returned to the land of promise (Deut. 4:27-31; Isa. 11:11-16) and enjoy God's richest blessings (Isa. 66:7-14). Further, all people shall know God (Hab. 2:14) and enjoy His everlasting beneficence (Isa. 2:1-4; 11:1-10; Mic. 4:1-5).

¹¹ ***In that day you will feel no shame because of all your deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; for then I will remove from your midst your proud, exulting ones, And you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain.*** ¹² ***But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of the LORD.***

Feel no shame > (Patterson) The verb can be taken in a subjective sense with the meaning “feel shame” (NASB) or in an objective sense meaning “be put to shame” (NIV, NKJV). The former emphasizes the forgetting of past shameful deeds against the Lord; the latter lays stress on the unlikely prospect of feeling shame ever again since its cause is removed. The latter course has been followed here because the context underscores the fact that in that future day the shameful acts perpetrated against God will no longer be practiced, for those who did such things have been removed.

¹³ ***The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths; for they will feed and lie down with no one to make them tremble.***

The remnant of Israel > The humble, lowly individuals above who have taken refuge in the name of the Lord ...

Feed > (Strong’s) to tend a flock; i.e. pasture it; intransitively, to graze (literally or figuratively)

¹⁴ ***Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!*** ¹⁵ ***The LORD has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you will fear disaster no more.***

Shout for joy > (Strong’s) to creak (or emit a stridulous sound), i.e. to shout (usually for joy)

Shout in triumph > (Strong’s) to mar (especially by breaking); figuratively, to split the ears (with sound), i.e. shout (for alarm or joy)

Exult > (Strong’s) to jump for joy, i.e. exult ... be joyful, rejoice, triumph

Robertson > "One of the most awesome descriptions of the wrath of God in judgment found anywhere in Scripture appears in the opening verses of Zephaniah. The totality of the cosmos shall be consumed in his burning anger. The very order of creation shall be overturned.

"One of the most moving descriptions of the love of God for his people found anywhere in Scripture appears in the closing verses of Zephaniah. God and his people attain heights in the ecstasy of love that are hard to comprehend."

¹⁶ *In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: "Do not be afraid, O Zion; Do not let your hands fall limp. ¹⁷ "The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will **exult** over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will **rejoice** over you with shouts of joy.*

Exult > (Strong's) to be bright, i.e. cheerful (This is a different Hebrew word than is found in verse 14 above)

Rejoice > (Strong's) to spin round (under the influence of any violent emotion), i.e. usually rejoice, or (as cringing) fear

¹⁸ *"I will gather those who grieve about the appointed feasts - **they came from you**, O Zion; the reproach of exile is a **burden** on them.*

Burden > (Strong's) a raising (as of the hands in prayer), or rising (of flame); figuratively, an utterance

Clarke > See **Psalm 137:1-6** > ¹ *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. ² Upon the willows in the midst of it we hung our harps. ³ For there our captors demanded of us songs, and our tormentors mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." ⁴ How can we sing the LORD'S song in a foreign land? ⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her skill. ⁶ May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.*

¹⁹ *"Behold, I am going to deal at that time with all your oppressors, I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and **I will turn their shame into praise and renown** In all the earth.*

I will turn their ... > (Barnes) Literally, *I will make them a praise and a name*

²⁰ *"At that time I will bring you in, even at the time when I gather you together; Indeed, I will give you renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.*