

The battle of Spotsylvania was one of the bloodiest battles near the end of the Civil War. Union General John Sedgwick was in charge of the artillery and was getting them ready for when the battle would truly begin. Confederate sharpshooters were 1,000 yards away, which is a long way with those old rifles, and was taking shots at them. His troops kept stopping their work to duck and General Sedgwick was frustrated. He walked around in the open yelling at his men for dodging single bullets and asked "What will you do when they open fire along the whole line." The men kept flinching and he yelled, "Why are you dodging like this? They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance." Moments later he was shot in the head and died.

It's important to have humility because pride is deadly. It is not just deadly in war, it is especially deadly for our souls. Turn with me to Zephaniah 2

I. Humble yourself before God and be restored (v. 1-7).

We need to humble ourselves.

This is Zephaniah's call to us.

We have to humble ourselves before this final day.

Before the day comes.

And if we do so, this will be a day of hope.

Let's look at how Zephaniah explains this.

Verse 1, **"Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation,"**

The people of God are called shameless because they are.

They have been sinning openly without any shame.

They do not feel bad about their sins.

Their cheeks do not blush.

They are not embarrassed or ashamed.

They are proud and completely open about their sin.

God also does not call them Judah here.

Nor Israel, nor my people, nor Jerusalem.

He actually uses a word for nation that is typically only used to describe gentiles.

The word describes those who are not God's people.

This is a rebuke and saying they must humble themselves because they are actually just like if not worse than the people they look down on.

And they are called to gather together.

He is using an image of straw gathering itself up.

The straw needs to gather together in a bundle before the fire comes.

Because the day of wrath is coming.

Because the fire is coming.

They need to get together and humble themselves.

To do something about it before it is too late.

Verse 2, **"before the decree takes effect —before the day passes away like chaff— before there comes upon you the burning anger of the Lord, before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the Lord."**

They are running out of time.

The day of wrath.

The day of God's anger is ahead.

Which, when we say wrath or talk of God's anger.

We do not mean that God feels these emotions like we do.

We are just trying to use human language to describe what God's just and righteous judgment on sinners looks like.

It will look like burning anger.

And we need to be ready.

Because the decree is coming.

Time is running out.

He is saying the day is like chaff in the wind.

It is like a tumbleweed.

It is like a vapor here one moment and gone the next.

Time is running out.

And before it runs out.

Before it is too late, they need to humble themselves.

Verse 3, **"Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord."**

So we are commanded to seek the Lord and to be humble.

If we want to avoid the punishment that is coming,

If we want to be blessed by Jesus,

Then we have to humble ourselves before him.

We have to admit that He is God and we are not.

Humility is just honesty

It's being honest with ourselves about who we are

And honest about who God is.

Humility doesn't mean, pretending that we're the least important person in the room.

It's just being honest about what God expects of us and how God expects us to treat and act with one another.

We also need to see here that seeking is an active thing.

It takes work to seek the Lord and it takes work to be humble.

Listen, though you can always find God when you look for it you have to look.

That does not just appear to us when we do nothing

My children sometimes have this problem where they ask me to help them find their water bottle and tell me that they've looked everywhere and they're crying because they can't find it.

And usually they haven't looked.

They just realized they don't have it.

They might look all around the room without moving and then start crying.

My response first is that you go and try and look and then if you can't find it, go find it, but you at least need to walk in every room at the house and see if you see it.

We do the same thing when it comes to God.
We ignore our Bible reading we ignore a prayer.
We decide we don't need to go to church every single week.
We make a no effort during the week to see God continually.
And then we break down and cry and ask why is God so far from us?
As if we can find God,
As if we can become more holy and more sanctified and more like Jesus
was absolutely no effort at all.

We need to actually seek his righteousness.
We have to seek it on purpose
You have to put in the effort it takes.
We have to strive God.
Being a Christian is far more so just what you doing on Sunday morning
although it's a very important part.
And the good news is that we will never seek in vain.
Those who seek the Lord will always find Him.
There are none who have truly looked for God who have not found Him.
They may have not liked what they found.
They may have rejected the God who answered them.
But God is here waiting for us to seek Him.
He is not playing hide and seek.
He is not far off in the sky for no one can go.
He is here and all around us.
He wants to save you.
He does not want anyone to have to face His wrath.
He does not anyone to be cast out from His presence.
But, we have to seek Him.

And if we seek, we can be hidden from wrath.
Zephaniah's name means "Hidden by the Lord."
His name calls them to join him.
So if we want to be hidden, we have to be humble.

We have to admit who we are and we have to admit that we need Jesus to save us and to keep us safe.

Remember the difference of the prayer of the sinner and the Pharisees.

The sinner was willing to cry and weep and acknowledge who he is

The Pharisee was busy lying about who he was.

We are humble we can be hidden.

We can be hidden in Christ.

When the day of wrath comes, we can be hidden in Christ.

When God the Father looks at us,

He will see the righteousness of Jesus on our behalf.

Verse 4, **"For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted."**

This is why they are to seek God!

This is what the day of wrath will bring.

Sure and real judgment will come to their places and days.

The landscape and political realities will shift.

Verse 5, **"Woe to you inhabitants of the seacoast, you nation of the Cherethites! The word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left."**

Here God gives a warning to those who do not see God and who do not seek humility.

If they don't seek humility, then God will be against them, and his judgment is going to come.

Verse 6, **"And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures, with meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks."**

These great kingdoms and cities that they are so proud of that once we're grand will be turned into a place where sheep and cattle can graze.

They will be forced to be humble.

Verse 7, **"The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant of the house of Judah, on which they shall graze, and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For the Lord their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes."**

And what was the place for enemies who will then belong to the remnant. The remnant here as those who are humble.

The remnant in the prophets always refers to those who in the midst of a wicked people and a wicked land had a wicked time seek the Lord, who seek humility and do what is right even when no one else around them does.

And the promise of God is that those who are humble can receive the blessing

That those who humble themselves before the Lord will one day be exalted.

That they will be able to have a peaceful picnic and rest in the same places that they once feared and saw as evil.

We've got promises that he will be mindful of them, and those who are few humble will be restored

Those who humble themselves before God can find restoration.

The restoration that Jesus promises on that final day is the restoration and the reconciliation of all things.

Whatever it is that you have a lost in this world.

Whatever it is, that has been stolen from you.

Whether things or your health or your sanity or your peace

Whatever it is that you have lost you do not have to fight to get it back.

You don't have to scheme

You can just humble yourself before God and wait because God will restore all that the enemy has stolen. He will restore all that you have lost, and he will restore all the locusts have eaten.

He promises one day to restore our health and new glorified bodies he promises to restore our minds to live in a world with the intrusive thoughts, and the depression, and the darkness no longer has any sway.

Who will restore your memories and the joy to what's had as a child.

All these things can be ours if we humble ourselves
The day is coming.
And if you wanna find restoration, you need to be intentional
You need to have a plan and you need to have daily habits that help you seek God.
Because we need to be humble enough to admit that we're not gonna just be humble and seek the Lord on our own all the time we have to work at

This is how the final day can be a day of hope instead of wrath.
If we humble ourselves.

Then, that day will be a day of hope and joy and restoration.
But it can only be a day of hope if we humble ourselves now.

II. Refuse to humble yourself before God and be desolated (v. 8-15).

We must choose to humble ourselves.
And if we do not, then we will be humbled.
Our pride will lead to a very great fall.
And this is what will come to the nations around Israel.

Verse 8, *"I have heard the taunts of Moab and the revilings of the Ammonites, how they have taunted my people and made boasts against their territory."*

Receive the enemy of God's people taunt and revile God.
And they reviled his people.
They speak with hate towards others.
One thing we should see.
The way that God judges his people and the way of God's judges other nations is different.
Other nations seem not to be judged for their idolatry or their wrong religion, but they are judged by God primarily for the way that they treat other people and especially for the way that they treat God's people.
One Wednesday we might spend more time talking about this.

Instead of hearing the gospel instead of hearing the truth and humbling themselves to come and find God and they taunt, and they mock and they persecute.

They boast and are prideful.

And the both against territory is saying that all our country is the best.

They may say things and describe other places as if it is a Third World country

Other countries are far lower on the totem pool of greatness

So God will judge them for their pride.

Verse 9, **"Therefore, as I live," declares the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "Moab shall become like Sodom, and the Ammonites like Gomorrah, a land possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a waste forever. The remnant of my people shall plunder them, and the survivors of my nation shall possess them."**

Moab and the Ammonites are desolated for their pride.

They are told that the country they are so proud of will be judged like Sodom and Gomorrah

There's some significance here as you may remember where Moab and the Ammonites come from.

They are descended from a lot and the incident with his two daughters.

They fled from Sodom.

His daughters did not repent did not turn from God.

Instead they gave birth to an evil and wicked people.

And so God promises that you're gonna face that same judgment here again.

You will be turned into salt pits like your matriarch

The land you are so proud of us being great will be a wasteland, no one will want to be at.

And those of my people who are humble will plunder you

And they will steal from you

They were actually so desolated that history forgot them.
The Moabites were thought to not be a true people.
Not until the discovery of the Mesah Stele describing them in the 1870's.
Such will be the fate of all who refuse to humble themselves.

Verse 10, **"This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they taunted and boasted against the people of the Lord of hosts."**

Why is this gonna be their punishment question?
Because if they're pride
They've stood and proclaimed that they are God.
They are the greatest nation on earth.
Other nations are nothing apart from them.
They brag out of all peoples they've been chosen by God to be great.
And also because they taunted and boasted the people of God, they will be punished.
They will be humbled
Really they will see what they honestly are.

Verse 11, **"The Lord will be awesome against them; for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations."**

What an incredible phrase right here in the beginning of the verse.
It might be my favorite phrase in the whole passage.
God says that He will be awesome against them.
We use the word awesome all the time.
We may use it to describe how good our fried egg sandwich was.
Or how awesome a basketball game was the night before.
Or maybe we will tell our children that they are awesome.
And those are true and good.
But the Bible uses awesome in a very different way.

The essence of God will be revealed in such a way that the only proper response is one of awe.

To be awesome is to fill all who witness something with awe.

It stops even your enemies and the people who hate you in their place.
So God is bringing this essence against them.
And He is going to do something awesome.
Those who believe they are incredible.
Those who have been boasting and bragging about how awesome they are.
They are going to have the fullness of God's awesomeness come.
And it will be against them.

His awesomeness is simply going to humble them.
And it will not just humble these nations.
God is saying He is going to humble their gods.
Every nation that has its own gods.
Or its own pantheon of gods, all those gods will be famished.
It is literally saying that God will starve them.
They will waste away and disappear.
Obviously, there are not actually other gods or rivals to God.
However, it could be referencing the demons who at times appear to be gods and ask for worship.
Even they will bow down one day.

But God is claiming He will destroy all rivals to His throne.
And that after that every knee will bow.
People in every country and every land will worship Him.
People from every background.
People in every language.
People in every different culture.
They will all be humbled and one day admit that God alone is worthy.
The most prideful and arrogant will have to bow down.

It is humiliating to bow.
There is a reason we don't do it a lot in our modern American culture today.
Because honestly, we are too proud.

But, one day every prideful person will have to physically bow and acknowledge God and God alone.

Verse 12, **"You also, O Cushites, shall be slain by my sword."**

Remember Zephaniah is part Cushite.

So, he is prophesying against his own people.

We got another nation to the south of Kush to modern day. Ethiopia will also be judged for their pride and slain.

Not just the people who taught

Sometimes people might make this is just being part of the Abraham at covenant and well anybody who taught or attacks or boast against the nation of Israel, be punished and so we need to not do that and that's true. It seems to be gone to eat more than just that.

Verse 13, **"And he will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and he will make Nineveh a desolation, a dry waste like the desert."**

The kingdom of Assyria will be defeated

And the great city of Nineveh will no longer be the greatest capital in the ancient near east.

No longer a city that never sleeps like New York

No longer place where culture at art is made like Hollywood

Nor a place of great music like Nashville

It will become a Ghost Town and a wasteland.

Assyria was one of the most evil empires ever.

Even today, secular historians will say that they were one of the most violent and brutal for the way that they treated the people that they conquered.

They used terror as a part of national policy to make sure that everyone was afraid and knew not to fight them because they would be totally destroyed.

There are so many examples, but I will just give you one.

One Assyrian king conquered a city, and after doing so he cut the feet off of every single man and turned every child in the city into a eunuch.

And that is one of the minor incidents.

So God who's gonna punish them, especially
In the great empire that they have built through fear and tyranny and terror
will be a wasteland.

Verse 14, **"Herds shall lie down in her midst, all kinds of beasts; even the owl and the hedgehog shall lodge in her capitals; a voice shall hoot in the window; devastation will be on the threshold; for her cedar work will be laid bare."**

The image that is giving us is that this what's great and proud city and proud empire that claimed to be the rulers of the world and the greatest nation on earth will just be a place for desert animals and wildlife.

It will be like ruins you may stumble over in the woods.

For the threshold of their temples, their holiest places and greatest building buildings will be gone all of their great works, torn down.

The exact identity of these animals is unknown.

And owl and hedgehog are just guesses.

It needs to be an animal in the desert.

Something that does not normally live around people.

They are also unclean animals.

Their presence is not adorable or fun, but a realization of the curse.

And the fact that their once proud city is now the home of buzzards and coyotes.

I want you to picture a ghost town.

Our country is full of these towns in these places that used wants to be big.

You can think of ghost towns in Oklahoma places that once were booming and thriving because of oil, but it dried up just disappeared.

Towns in the wild ones that once were thriving a metropolis, but the railroad came to a different place and so just everybody left and if you went there now you'd have no idea this was once a great place.

Picture the way cities are devastated and ruined in apocalypse movies. That is what God is promising for the proud.

Verse 15, **"This is the exultant city that lived securely, that said in her heart, "I am, and there is no one else." What a desolation she has become, a lair for wild beasts! Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist."**

It is not just talking about one city here.

It really means all of them.

Each of these cities surrounded Judah.

They are on the four sides with God's people in the center like a compass.

This should remind us off the universal nature of God's judgment.

The day of wrath came for these people.

And it will come for all of us.

It will come for China and North Korea to the East.

It will come for Russia to the West.

It will come for Mexico to the South.

It will come for Canada to the North.

And it will come one day for the United States.

Every place will be judged on the Day of Wrath.

This judgment will come for any who are prideful and say in their heart "I am, and there is no one else."

If we do not humble ourselves before God, we will be humbled.

And these great nations we are so proud of will be tossed into the dust bin of history to only be known and thought of by history nerds.

Because only the Kingdom of God will remain.

There is grace for sinners.

The only prerequisite for accepting the gospel is acknowledging that you need it.

When we see arrogant people we are angry.
We want to show them up.
We want to humble them.
What did Jesus do?
How did He act when we were proud and sinful?
He does not smack us around.
He does not give us what we deserve.
He humbles Himself.
We just celebrated and remembered that He was willing to be born as an infant.
To need His creation to nurse Him.
To change His diaper.
And to clothe Him.

And He came in humility.
He did not come to a rich family born in a palace.
He came and was poor.
He humbled himself to work a manual labor job as a carpenter for 30 years.
And then His whole ministry was spent serving.
Humbling Himself and touching the lepers.
Spending time with children and the overlooked.

Most of all He humbled Himself to face the cross.
To let us murder Him.
To suffocate and bleed on a piece of wood.
And He did this not to show us up.
He humbled Himself, so that we might be exalted with Him.
The true thing every prideful person is longing for is only found in Jesus.
Let us humble ourselves like our Savior.
So that we may be restored.