**Zephaniah 3:1-9 Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, To the oppressing city! 2She has not obeyed *His* voice, She has not received correction; She has not trusted in the Lord,
She has not drawn near to her God. 3Her princes in her midst *are* roaring lions; Her judges *are* evening wolves That leave not a bone till morning. 4Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; Her priests have polluted the sanctuary, They have done violence to the law. 5The Lord *is* righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, But the unjust knows no shame. 6“I have cut off nations, Their fortresses are devastated; I have made their streets desolate, With none passing by. Their cities are destroyed; *There is* no one, no inhabitant. 7I said, ‘Surely you will fear Me, You will receive instruction’ - So that her dwelling would not be cut off, *Despite* everything for which I punished her. But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds. 8“Therefore wait for Me,” says the Lord, “Until the day I rise up for plunder;
My determination *is* to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy. 9“For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the Lord, To serve Him with one accord.**

We’re back with Zephaniah tonight, as God turns His attention from Nineveh and the surrounding area to Jerusalem. The subject of this book is the rebellion and coming judgement of Jerusalem, the wickedness of the city and, in spite of the wickedness, the patience and long suffering that God shows. Not unlike the world today, where wickedness is around every corner, on every TV and computer screen… where we have started to call evil good and good evil… right wrong and wrong right, and still God is patient and long suffering with us… but how long on Lord? How long?

 Verses 1 & 2 say *Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, To the oppressing city! 2She has not obeyed His voice, She has not received correction; She has not trusted in the Lord, She has not drawn near to her God.* Woe to the city that is rebellious and polluted – One translation uses provoking in place of rebellious. The city is provoking God, not just wickedness, but an open wickedness being flaunted and celebrated. Guilty of many different crimes and perversions, as well as oppressing the poor and helpless (which we know God will not allow). She has not obeyed His voice, God’s instructions through His prophets, have been ignored – no change in behavior has come about. The city has not trusted God, has followed false God’s, and has refused to draw near to God. When we refuse to draw near to God, He will refuse to draw near to us. These verses paint a picture of a city that has been given every opportunity to change, given all evidence of the need to change, and has refused to change.

 Verses 3 & 4 *Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; Her judges are evening wolves That leave not a bone till morning. 4Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; Her priests have polluted the sanctuary, They have done violence to the law.* Her princes and judges are devouring the people… another form of oppression like in verse 1… through injustice and violence. They gnaw at the bones of the people, who are their prey, and take everything… greed and gluttony is a hallmark of the city leaders. Her prophets are false prophets, lying to please and seduce the people. Her priests are serving in the sanctuary even though they have committed idolatry and are not clean. They’ve polluted the sanctuary, profaned the holy places, and broken God’s ordinances – done violence to the law. In Jeremiah 23:1, God says *woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture*. In Ezekiel 34:2 & 3 says - *Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.* Priests and pastors, shepherds, are called to care for God’s people. He punishes those who enrich themselves and cause the flock to perish.

 Verse 5 *The Lord is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness.* God is in the midst of Jerusalem, and God is in the midst of His people at all times. God will neither do anything unrighteous, nor will He allow unrighteousness to continue uncorrected. It was true then and it is true now. *Every morning He brings His justice to light* This has the idea of every day, God brings justice and corrects wickedness, He shows goodness to those who are faithful to Him. The term “Every Morning” brings to mind that civil and criminal judgements in Jerusalem were made first thing every morning. *He never fails, But the unjust knows no shame.* God does this every morning without fail, but the wicked show no shame, no remorse, no repentance for the sin.

 Verse 6 & 7 *“I have cut off nations, Their fortresses are devastated; I have made their streets desolate, With none passing by. Their cities are destroyed; There is no one, no inhabitant.**7I said, ‘Surely you will fear Me, You will receive instruction’ - So that her dwelling would not be cut off, Despite everything for which I punished her. But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds.*God reminds the people that His word will come to pass – Nineveh will be destroyed. The 10 tribes of Israel have already been taken into captivity. They would not hear instruction and judgement followed. Desolation in the streets, cities destroyed, people carried into exile. In verse 7, God says – surely you will fear Me – meaning, surely, because you saw all of these things come to pass, prophecies come to pass with stunning accuracy – surely Jerusalem will see and repent and return to Me. But instead, the people rose early and corrupted all their deeds. They got up early and this has the idea of working diligently to be sure that they squeeze all the wickedness possible into each and every day.

 Now, we are reminded of the promises of God for His Faithful people. Verse 8 *“Therefore wait for Me,” says the Lord, “Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy.* Addressing His Faithful, God says Wait for Me. Until God arises as the enemy of Jerusalem, gathers the Chaldeans and the Babylonians and all the allies of these powers and pours out His wrath on Jerusalem.

 Verse 9 *“For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the Lord, To serve Him with one accord.* God now speaks of a remnant that will be left after the destruction. The pure language will be a pure language of the heart, idolatries will be put aside, sins repented of, and God will be their pure focus. Worship will be restored. They will call only upon the name of the Lord and this remnant will serve Him with one accord, one focus.

 Next week we will finish Zephaniah 3 and we will learn more of this remnant and the promise God makes and keeps. In times of wickedness and rebellion, those who remain faithful to God form a remnant to keep worship alive and give glory to God. May the faithful of the United States be a remnant to teach our children and our loved ones, even as our leaders practice wickedness, as our rich and powerful devour and oppress, as our celebrities seek to defile. God will be Faithful to those faithful to Him, but we must be faithful even when all around appears to have gone off course. God judges and corrects daily and will one day judge the earth and all who have refused to return to Him and to gather those who have been faithful..