



Zephaniah Wk. 5
The Day of Distress
By Pastor Jody May 05/31/2026

[CALL TO HEAR]

Zephaniah 1:17-18 ESV

- ¹⁷ I will bring distress on mankind,
so that they shall walk like the blind,
because they have sinned against the LORD;
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.
- ¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold
shall be able to deliver them
on the day of the wrath of the LORD.
In the fire of his jealousy,
all the earth shall be consumed;
for a full and sudden end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.
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Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”

People – “Thanks be to God.”

Pray

Introduction

We have gotten to the end of the Chapter 1, and we are 1/3 of the way through now, and we have finally gotten to that image, what Zeph has been alluding to, the actual occurrence of the Day of the Lord. You know last week was like the scream of charge before the onslaught where we heard both the cries of those in fear of what they see and the cries of the oncoming forces of God as they tear into those awaiting judgment. Now today the prophetic poet Zephaniah has us experiencing the day live time/as it is happening, this is war correspondence (Joe Galloway) as the bombs are bursting around you and the bullets are zooming by your head.



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What we are looking at today is the topic of what brought on the Day of the Lord, that which you have been reading about in Isaiah for the last two weeks. How did we get to this moment of retribution.

Illustration

It all has to do **with one's view of sin**, where does it come from and is it really that bad? And any time as people we try to define sin or try to develop an opinion of it, *outside the scriptures*, it will always lead us into trouble. Fortunately for me I had good parents who were ready with Grace and Wrath to help me learn a lesson on what sin is and how it brings you distress. 😊 (Norfolk Pines)

My heart said that my desire was not bad but that it merely bothered my mother, the action I so craved. My answer was to attempt my wishes without her knowing, believing I knew better. That is exactly how we are with God and our desires to exercise our will. God seeks to preserve and save, and we seek to risk and destroy. The problem is not God, it is us, the problem is not that we want different things it is that we want the wrong things, and our demise comes from the failure to take His loving warnings and rebuke in scripture seriously.

MP

We take Sin Seriously
Because God takes sin seriously
And only Christ's Intervention can save us.

What we will see from our text today is the way in which God responded and will respond to His creation's sin. We will look at how the **Lord brings distress on those who sinned against Him**. That is when God turns over people to wrath to a destiny of their own choosing. Secondly, how the **Lord delivers wrath in which no one can escape**. Then thirdly **how the Lord consumes with the jealous fire**. All these images are given to help prevent the reader from falling into sin showing the seriousness of which our God views sin. It is condemnation for those who do not change it is also Salvation for those that hear and obey.



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1. The Lord brings the Distress because all have sinned against Him.

¹⁷I will bring distress on mankind,
so that they shall walk like the blind,
because they have sinned against the LORD;
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.

If you remember we started out Zeph with the universal scope of God's judgment:

²"I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.

Sweeping away in the Hebrew means a gathering up for the purpose of getting rid of. The Lord was going to work backwards through creation (3-4), through the things He created, getting rid of the things that have been corrupted. Now, here in the last two verses, after that crescendo we came into last week with that intense picture of the Day of Darkness, we have come full circle. Zeph again talks about the inclusivity of His judgment. He's going to bring **distress on mankind**. It is no longer just about His people, His rulers, His false priests, and those that followed them blindly, this day of judgment is for all men.

What we want to capture here is that God is holding all men, just not those that knew Him as their God, He is holding all people responsible for their actions, all are receiving a just payment. Family let me just say this with absolute clarity. **It does not matter if someone claims to be an agnostic, a Muslim, a Hindu, a New Ager/Wicca Enthusiast, a Bigfoot Loyalist, an Alien Lover, nor an atheist, the LORD is Everyone's God, you don't get to choose whether you want a relationship with Him, all will be judged by Him for all are His creation.** We will get back to that important part in a moment, as to 'why' judgment is coming, but first, what exactly is God bringing?

He says, **I will bring distress**. It is a Hebrew word used to mean 'trouble' in the Bible, and it is a word used to described being 'bound up/tied'. I think the



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intent here is that God is brining trouble for all people that is inescapable.¹ He is quite literally going to put something on you that can't be washed off.

When the Lord God delivers things to His creation, those are things that only the Lord God can take away. When God assigns portions of blessings you will get them, when He assigns a time of death you won't escape it, when He perseveres you in life there is no falling away, and when punishment is doled out you receive it in full. God is the only one that controls what He gives, when He gives, and how He gives, and He decides what to take away ([Job 1:20-21](#)).

That distress will cause them to **walk like the blind**. **Example** - My house is very dark at night, we live in the woods and there are no external lights, so it takes patience to navigate our home when nature comes calling sometimes in the middle of the night. Even though I know my house well, I still can't see half open doors, misplaced shoes on the ground, light switches that I think move on their own accord, and a dog that likes to pick a new sleeping spot every other night. This would be very distressing if I had to do this all the time and yet that is exactly what will happen when God comes to visit on the Day of Distress. People will have the light of understanding turned off, life won't make sense, there is no sense of mora/spiritual direction, there is no sight/hope of a future. They will be stubbing their toes on the things they have left out themselves to trip over forever. It is a distress they could have helped if they but heeded the warnings.

NOW the Why does this all happen? The blinding trouble that no one can escape. **"because they have SINNED against the LORD; "** You know all through chapter 1 I wonder if you ever caught that in all the judgment, and God's calling out of the different individuals, He has never stated the 'why' this **Day** must come. Zeph finally states it here, because they have sinned against the Lord. It is like that great scene out of the classic *A Christmas Story*, when Schwartz got beat by his mom. Ralphie lied about where he heard the curse word from, his mom called Schwartz's mom and all his poor friend could say when she got

¹ |. צָרָה S3334, 6869, 6887 TWOT1973, 1973c, 1973d, 1974, 1974c GK7674, 7675, 7676 vb. bind, tie up, be restricted, narrow, scant, cramped: Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, [Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon](#) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 864.



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her hands on him, “Mom what did I do!?” It may have caught Zeph’s people off guard, but they didn’t really think they had a problem.

You see, and this is where we need to wake up to this fact, if all of God’s Word is divinely inspired, without error, has authority over us and is useful for all teaching, correcting, and rebuking, then listen to what Zephaniah says about sin. Zeph says to God. **SIN IS A BIG DEAL!** Sin is not just a mistake, sin is not something to be taken lightly, **sin IS NOT a byproduct** of environment, government controls, fleshly desires, bad neuron wiring, failed upbringing, low IQ, nor low self-esteem, **sin does not come from VICTIMIZATION.** In other words, sin is not something to be overlooked because we believe our actions could not be helped. Sin is what God is coming to judge, and He does not care about how we see it, for there is only one way to see it, as a direct assault and treasonous action against God, in which no one is excused.

Now for those that die in their sins, what is the penalty? Zeph says, “**their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung.**” That’s a very vivid picture for us describing the tearing open of the bowels and the spilling of everything inside of a person, to the ground. The wasting of life, the unrepentive sinner’s life is a horrible travesty for the blood is lifegiving, it was a gift from God, embused with His breath, to bring forth His will on this earth. It is a missed opportunity, it was a mishandling of the greatest of all blessings, it was the mistreatment of what God holds most dear, His creation that was to image Him.

Family, not taking sin seriously is not to take the life God gave you seriously. Our sin is not an excuse for living life the way we want it, all of mankind will be held accountable for how they spent their life. The only way we can avoid this distress is if we have a substitute that endures the payment for sins.

2. The Lord Delivers Wrath of which no one can escape.

18a Neither their silver nor their gold
shall be able to deliver them
on the day of the wrath of the LORD.



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The next two points come and go quickly, we could do a long exegetical study on the history of silver or gold in scripture but that's not needed. What Zeph is referring too is that **you can't buy yourself out this trouble**. When the end comes that which you can provide by your own hands won't do you any good. You **can't ransom yourselves** from your sins, that is only what the blood of Christ can do.

Silver and Gold in that day bought one's sacrifice for sins, but all that is here is an attempt to buy off God for what they really want; it is an attempt at a **bribe**. The offering of money is the offering of giving to God not one's heart but one's safe existence in return of favors (watch a mob movie and you will understand the intent of this type of security).

How many times have we read in the OT already where kings would have to pay tribute to live securely in their own lands, that's mob tactics, that recognizes the God of money, that has nothing to do with God worship. Worship is about the heart and when the Day of the Lord comes it is too late to try and adjust the heart's affections for God.

While we still have time on this earth let us take sin seriously for God takes it seriously, and it was so serious that Christ was the only one that could do anything about it.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 ESV

⁵For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a **ransom** for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

You see trying to throw some money God's way is to ignore the payment that God already made for sin, the life of His Son. The blood and life of all people, that which was wasted on themselves, was paid for once and for all by the life of Jesus. His most precious, pristine, and perfect, blood was spilled onto the ground for us, the judgment of the Father fell upon Him for only He can pay the cost for sins. To wait, to deny, to not treat sin seriously, is to reject His payment for what you most needed, and that your offerings are good enough.



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Family let's all make sure we take the problem of sin serious for the exorbitant amount of His ransom displays the enormity of our sin.

3. The Lord consumes sinners with the fire of His jealousy.

18b In the fire of his jealousy,
all the earth shall be consumed;
for a full and sudden end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

This last image of Chapter 1 is to increase the sense of inescapable danger, as I said in the beginning reading these two verses kind of puts you in the front lines of what final judgment is like. The bombs are going off, people are falling all around you, you're getting plastered with shell casings, and now comes the **coup de grace**; they call in for the **napalm**. It is the final, full, and swift end. People thought there would be more of a struggle, but in the height of the terror God finishes quickly and decisively.

All through the Bible the Fire of God's Wrath is shown and displayed for God takes very seriously our sin and so should we.

Deuteronomy 4:24, the LORD tells His people *He is a jealous God, a consuming fire*. Fire is an image of holiness and God's presence specifically. To be near God without a ransom/substitute/mediator is to be consumed, it's an automatic response because of our condition of sin. It is the opening of the Ark of the Covenant without the covering of His sacrificial blood.

Ezekiel 22:20 He saw as well as to how God's judgment would go down – *"As one gathers silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow the fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you."* 2 Thessalonians 1:8 the vengeance of God is seen as a flaming fire poured out on all those who do not know God and don't adhere to the Gospel. Jude v. 7 the end time punishment of God is described as an eternal fire. And of course, you can't forget Revelation 20:14 & 15 Death and Hades, that encompasses all of mankind even those that have



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already died and are waiting for the final judgment. They are cast into a lake of fire.

The point is fire, and eternal damnation is not just about being thrown out of God's garden once again, it is always to be against God's wrath and holiness that you can never escape, **you are bound to your distress**. That is why Hell is not a party place it is a destination of eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth. The LORD will stand against those people perpetually and they will be under His Holiness forever. Sin is serious, God takes it that way, and so should we, and we should thank God He has provided a way for His people to be spared. That instead of facing a jealous God of consuming fire they come under the zeal of God to love them and keep them safe.

4. The Lord saves by clarifying the destructiveness of sin.

How do we begin to take Sin a little more seriously?

The nature of God's response to the rebellion is what tells us, the reader, how we should view sin. We don't look at scripture and flippantly dismiss it, you embrace it, you absorb it and respond to it in repentance for that is the only thing you are supposed to do. Any other response like complaining, or condoning, or modernizing scripture to fit present day is WRONG AND IT IS SIN! Why because it is idolatry, and we are claiming we know better than God!

Why do we fight God's view of Sin? In the church world there was a saying that developed over time, *"hate the sin but love the sinner"*. What started out in a good way became a fall into heresy I believe over time. You see because it **separates the sin from the sinner**. It removes responsibility. I think the other thing that contributes to this misunderstanding of God's view of sin is we tend to lump God into our understanding of how the world works. What we see when there is no immediate justice for wrongdoing to us is it either means **God doesn't care** or you **just didn't get caught**.



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Hamartiology² Review:

1 John 3:4 ESV

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

- **Sin is the breaking of God's Law.**

Romans 3:23 ESV

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

- **Sin is something that all must admit doing.**

James 4:17 ESV

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

- **Sin is choosing to do the wrong thing on purpose.**

Romans 6:23 ESV

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- **Sin comes with a death sentence.**

Matthew 15:17-20 ESV

Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For **out of the heart** come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

- **Sin comes from the heart.**

I could go through the Bible and all the places where it teaches about the [heart](#) and how it talks about the need for a new one, because you were born with a dead one, you shouldn't trust the one you have, and only God has a cure for it. And it is only the heart that God looks at, not one's excuses for what they did or the why they are the way they are. We are responsible for the sin

² Hamartiology is the theological study of sin and it comes from the New Testament Greek word *hamartia* which means to "miss the mark." This is where we get the idea that sin is "missing the mark" of God's standard (Romans 3:23) and the truth that without a solution for our sin we are damned to eternity in hell.



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in us, and the Day of Distress is God's wrath being poured on us for choosing love of self over love of God.

The Lord in scripture often causes physical blindness on people who were in the process of rejecting Him bringing them to distress. Some like Paul, he restored to live for Him, some like Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 4) or the men of Sodom and Gomora were turned over to their own desires to die by the acts of their wickedness. Or Someone like Samson, who suffered an earthly blindness so that He would learn that life and the strength in his blood was to live for God and not himself. Friends **seeing your sin IS a gift of God**, refusing to acknowledge one's sin comes from the denial of what your heart is capable of. Don't be naïve today, don't treat your sin lightly, for God takes it very seriously, and so should we.

Sin was so serious to God that in order to save His children He nailed those sins on the Cross of Christ. Sin is such a serious offense it can't be forgotten, overlooked, or ignored, BUT equaling God's Holy Justice is God's Steadfast Love which does something about the problem of sin.

Romans 5:8-9 ESV

⁸but God **shows his love** for us in that **while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

You see family it is only when we take your sin seriously will we take the sacrifice of Christ seriously. You see a low view of one's sin leads to a low view of Jesus' love and acts of Salvation. And when you don't see Christ rightly you can't love Him rightly. Loving Christ is what propels our obedience, loving Christ is what fuels our desire to be done with sin, loving Christ is what gets us to turn our back on the offerings of this world. The place we find our Salvation is in God's Word, accepting what it says of us, our need for a Savior, the Wrath of God, how He takes it sin seriously because to do otherwise is to spit on the offer of the most glorious thing in all the universe, His Son.

Jesus is the only one that can restore our sight family. Many times, in His Gospels we see Him heeling the blind. Even those that were blind since birth.



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That was always to symbolize what He does for the spiritually dead. Jesus is the one that exercises the power to open our eyes, it is His will to do so, and unless we are born again, we cannot see/enter the Kingdom of God. The ability to see our sin and see our need for a Savior is because Jesus has opened your eyes as well, *while we were still sinners*. Without His actions first on our behalf we are still in distress under God's wrath and headed towards a future we cannot change. Family let the affections of our Lord drive you to your obedience for Him, family I call you to see the Glory of Jesus High and lifted up preserving you from a traitor's fate.

[CALL TO OBEY]

1. Repent of sin seriously and particularly.

Do not call your sin a weakness, a tendency, or a personality trait when God calls it sin; don't minimize it. Bring it plainly before the Lord. Confess it without excuse and turn from it with urgency.

2. Stop leaning on earthly props.

Your money, your reputation, your strength, your planning, even your outward religious activity, cannot deliver you on the day of wrath. Flee from confidence in self and rest wholly in Christ, whose blood alone is able to save.

3. Third, obey while mercy is still extended.

Do not delay repentance. Do not make peace with cherished sin. Pursue holiness today. Fathers, lead your homes in repentance and worship. Families, take up the Word of God seriously, because the Christ who warns is also the Christ who saves.

MP

We take Sin Seriously
Because God takes sin seriously
And only Christ can save us from the Distress of the Day of the Lord.

Charge



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Family pray with me that the Lord will continue to be gracious to His people, that He will continue to open our eyes, to the seriousness of our sin and the zeal of His heart to save His people.

Prayer

Communion

Mark 14:22-25 ESV

Institution of the Lord's Supper

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Today when you eat of the bread remember the life of Jesus which was lived for us. The Lord, in order to prepare the Ransom for us, lived a life of perfect obedience/perfect law abiding, never sinning. Yet He took our problem of rebellion and instead of war brought us an everlasting peace. His sacrifice of a suffering life showed to us that God is indeed worthy of worship. All praise to our Savior, who loved God in perfectly providing for us the righteousness needed to be in His presence.

Today when you drink the juice remember the cost of our sin displayed by His blood for the new covenant. The Ransom was set too high for us to do anything about our serious sin problem. Yet the Lord's payment was enough, the blood was spilled freely for us, and by its' power we were all made clean. And now instead of an eternity in Hell we will live an eternity with Him. Thanks be to our Lord for His eternal sacrificial love!

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand



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Congregation – recites:

LBCF 1689 Chapter 32. Of the Last Judgment, Paragraph 2 God Is Glorified by the Day of Judgment

The purpose for God appointing this day of judgment is to display the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect and to display the glory of his justice in the eternal damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. 4

On this day, the righteous will enter into everlasting life and receive fullness of joy and glory with everlasting rewards in the presence of the Lord. But the wicked, who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, will be thrown into everlasting torments 5 and punished with everlasting destruction. They will be separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. 6

4. Romans 9:22-23

5. Matthew 25:21, 34; 2 Timothy 4:8

6. Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:48; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that along with judgment provides the ransom we need in the life of His Son.

Go in the name of the Son, who while we were still sinners died for us because the problem of sin needed a serious and eternal answer.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, who opens the eyes of blind, so that we may see our Lord, confess our sins, and witness the needs of others who need to hear this great news!



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[FELLOWSHIP CONVERSATIONS]

1. What part of Zephaniah 1:17–18 struck you most deeply, and why?

2. The sermon said we often minimize or excuse sin. In what ways are we tempted to soften the seriousness of sin in our own hearts, homes, or church life?

3. Verse 18 says silver and gold cannot deliver. What are some practical things people tend to trust in instead of Christ, and how can we identify those false refuges in our own lives?

4. The sermon emphasized that seeing our sin is itself a gift of God. How has the Lord used conviction, correction, or hardship to open your eyes and lead you toward repentance?

5. What is one concrete step of obedience you can take this week—personally or in your household—to take sin more seriously and to rest more fully in Christ?



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