

Please turn to Zephaniah chapter three. We'll be looking this evening at verses one through 14. Zephaniah three, one through 14.

Well, last week we saw that you should seek the Lord because the Lord destroys and delivers. You should seek the Lord because he destroys and there's only one way to avoid this destruction. It's to run to him. And you should seek him because he delivers because He is the only one who can deliver you from this coming destruction. So you seek him because there is a judgment coming, and you seek him because he is the refuge from this coming judgment.

But why, I ask, why does God deliver those who seek him? Why does the Lord deliver those who seek him? Is it because your seeking is perfect? Is it because in some way your seeking of the Lord is meritorious, you've earned Him, He is your debtor now because you've made some zealous effort to seek Him, so He's indebted to you. Is this why the Lord delivers those who seek Him? If that is why the Lord delivers those who seek Him, that would be like saying, The Lord saves those who save themselves. The Lord seeks those who first seek him. And the truth is that this is an entirely backwards way of thinking. It's entirely backwards and wrongheaded to think that the Lord seeks you because you seek him. That the Lord delivers you ultimately because your seeking of him is somehow meritorious. That it makes him your debtor.

Think, for example, of our first parents in the garden. I ask you, who sought who? God sought them. God came and God sought our first parents when they were doing the very opposite of seeking him. You think of Nicodemus. What did Christ say to him when he came to him in that tree? He said, I came to seek and to save the lost. And so Nicodemus was saved because God in Christ came to seek and to save Nicodemus. God sought you who trust in him this evening. When he came to you and he effectually called you to himself, when he effectually called you to Christ Jesus so that you would be saved, he sought you. You see, the gospel is this unbelievably rich news that God seeks man, not man seeking God. The gospel is the good news that God seeks man. And why, I ask you this evening, why does God seek man? What is the reason? And at this point, we must confess with the little child, him, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. We can't go any deeper than that. We can't explain the why beyond that he loves me, that he wanted to seek and save me. Sure, we can say it's for his own glory, it's for his own worship, but at the end of the day, we can't fully understand the reason. Why he saved me, I cannot tell you, but that he saved me, I will not deny because he has done it.

And so we simply must rest in this sure reality that he has done for me that which I could not do for myself. So you're a saved person here this evening, And you seek God. You do seek God. You seek him daily. You seek him in your scripture reading. You seek him in your prayers. You seek him in your attending worship. You're saved and you're seeking him. But I ask you, why are you seeking him? It is because he first sought you. He determined for the foundation of the world to seek you and to save you and to make you his own son or daughter.

Or maybe you're here this evening and for the first time ever you are wanting to seek the Lord. There's something in your heart that's compelling you, that's drawing you to want to seek Him, to get to know Him. And if that's you here this evening, I ask you why? Why is it that you're this evening starting to think, I want to seek the Lord? I'll tell you why. It's because God is seeking you. He's drawing out the affections of your heart to want Him. And so He wants you, not because you're worthy of Him, He wants you because he wants to save sinners, and you're among his people, and he's drawing you right now this evening to trust in him and to repent of your sins.

Well, such is the unspeakable riches of the gospel. With this in mind, let us pray and ask God to bless the reading and preaching of his word.

Dear Heavenly Father, we do pray that you would bless now the reading of your word. The Spirit indeed is willing, The flesh indeed is willing, but apart from the spirit, we can do nothing. We ask for the spirit to help, for the spirit to do for each of us here this evening, and corporately together as a church, that which we cannot do for ourselves. Make us hear and love this portion of your word. In Christ's name, amen.

We'll hear now the word of God, Zephaniah chapter three, verses one through 14.

Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, oppressing city. She listens to no voice. She accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord. She does not draw near to her God. Her officials within her are roaring lions. Her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning. Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men. Her priests profane what is holy. They do violence to the law.

The Lord within her is righteous. He does no injustice. Every morning he shows forth his justice. Each dawn he does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame.

I have cut off nations. Their battlements are in ruins. I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them. Their cities have been made desolate without a man, without an inhabitant. I said, surely you will fear me. You will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you. But all the more, they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.

Therefore, wait for me, declares the Lord, for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger. For in the fire of my jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed.

For at that time, I will change the speech of the peoples. to a pure speech that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Cush, my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones shall bring my offering. On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me. For then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.

But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly, "They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord." "Those who are left in Israel, "they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, "nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue, "for they shall graze and lie down, "and none shall make them afraid."

That ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless now the reading and now the preaching of it to our lives.

This evening, I want us to think together about the unspeakable riches of the gospel, the unspeakable riches of the gospel. And as we unfold this topic of the unspeakable riches of the gospel, we see three things in our text. First, we see sin. Second, we see judgment. And third, we see salvation. So as we come to this topic of the unspeakable riches of the gospel, we must consider these three themes as they are found in our text, sin, judgment, and salvation.

So first, sin, verses one through four. Last week we saw that there was destruction coming from all around Jerusalem. Do you remember that? We saw that there's destruction coming to Jerusalem's West and coming to Jerusalem's East and coming to their South and coming to their North. And now we get to see something about how they are responding to this reality as we come to chapter three. So the end of chapter two is informing us that there's this destruction coming all around Jerusalem. Now we're getting to see how will this city, Jerusalem, respond to this fact that there's judgment coming all around them.

You might anticipate that they are going to repent in dust and ashes. But as we come to verses 1 through 4 of chapter 3, what we see is the horror of sin. We see sin in chapter 3, verses 1 through 4.

You see in verse one how they're described. Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city. This verse actually teaches us about how sin affects different relationships in our lives. It shows us that sin affects our relationship with God, our relationship with our own selves, and sin affects our relationship with others.

How does this show us that sin affects our relationship with God, self, and others? Well, that word rebellious used in verse 1 highlights that it is treason, it is rebellion against God himself, that our sin is rebellion against God, it affects our relationship with God. He is the king over us and we say unto him who is ruler over us, I don't want your commandments, I don't want you, I don't need you, I am okay in myself. So we cast him aside. It's rebellion against God himself. And here, it's rebellion against him as king, but also as covenant-making God, because this is the covenant people of God who are in view. They're casting aside God's covenant love for them and saying they do not need him.

But it's also affecting their relationship with themselves. They are, according to verse 1, defiled. That highlights their personal pollution as a result of their sin. You know, sin is so destructive, not only, of course, first and foremost, with our relationship with God, but even our relationship with our own selves, that you know, especially if you're a believer here, but if you are an unbeliever, wake up. You should know that sin makes you feel dirty. You know that about yourself. It doesn't matter if anyone saw it. It doesn't matter if anyone was around when you did whatever it was. You feel dirty. It's defiled you. You feel unclean in and of your own self. That's how powerful and disturbing and unpleasant and gross sin is. That it can make us feel uncomfortable in our own skin. That's what you see with this defilement, this pollution.

It affects our relationship with ourselves but it also affects our relationship with others and that's found in this word oppressing. The covenant people of God and they're oppressing other people, oppressing people within their own ranks, oppressing surely their neighbors insofar as they had any strength to oppress anyone around them. They're tearing down and belittling and destroying rather than building up and caring for one another, they're oppressing one another, it's affected their relationships with each other. So from God to self to others, sin is seen in this opening verses affecting them in every aspect of their life. And then you see that continue to develop in verse two.

She, that is Jerusalem, the city, she listens to no voice, the text said. You know, God has spoken to them. God has, in a special way, spoken to the city of Jerusalem, to the Israelite people, the people of God in the Old Testament. He's specially come to them, specially spoken to them, and they've heard no voice. They will not listen to him. And he's spoken to us here this evening. He's spoken to us through his word. Every time you open your Bible, that's the voice of God himself actually speaking to you personally. He's actually talking to you through his word, the Bible. And so do you listen to him when he speaks in his word? These people at this time are not listening to him. They don't even want to hear from God's mouth. And why does this happen? or what happens because of sin. This is a pattern that has resulted in the life of humanity ever since the fall.

If you can turn for a moment back to Genesis chapter three, we'll see something about this from the start of the fall. Genesis chapter three, verse eight and verse 10. Genesis chapter three, verses eight and 10, you remember the context? They've just eaten the forbidden fruit and Now, in Genesis 3, verse 8, God is coming to speak with them. They heard the sound of the Lord, but what did they do, verse 8? And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. They heard him, but they didn't want to hear him. They heard his voice, and they ran from his voice. They heard his presence, and they ran from him. Verse 10, and he said, this is the man speaking, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. And this is what man has been doing ever since the fall. They run from the voice of God, the very voice of the one who created us, the very voice of the only one who can redeem us. We run from it. He calls out to you and says, that those who are well weary and heavy laden, I will give you rest. And we in our pride run from his mercy. We run from the gracious offer of the gospel. He extends it to us in Christ. The word came down to speak to us about the only way of salvation. And man has run from it. This is the answer to all that you need most. And man in his sin says, I don't want to hear your voice. That is an incredible picture of the depravity of the human heart, that God would speak and man would say, I do not want to listen. And that's what this verse is saying. She listens to no voice.

But this should not be you here this evening if you were in Christ. Though you perhaps struggle, you need to be listening to the voice of your God. You should love His voice. His voice is the call of salvation. He comes unto you and He tells you about His grace and His mercy. He tells you about the way of life in Jesus Christ. He gives you His good laws to guide you and to direct you. His voice is good to you. It ought to be good to you. You should love the voice of your God. He has called out to you, not in wrath, but in mercy in Christ. The day will come when his voice will be one of wrath for all who are outside of Christ. But today is not that day. Today is the day of salvation. He calls you in his mercy. He comes to you in his grace. He speaks to you in his love. And so do not reject that voice. Hear that voice. Delight in that voice. Rejoice in what he tells you in his word. You should have his words sinking into your ears. That's what Luke 9.44 says. that the words of Christ sink into your ears. And in another place in Luke's gospel, we read that the people who were hearing Jesus, quote, they were hanging on his words. Is that you? Do you hang on to the words of God? Do they sink into your ears? That should be our disposition. That should be our attitude.

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. But he goes on in verse two to describe their depravity. She accepts no correction, right? They do not like the discipline of God. They do not want his correction. They do not want his discipline. Jerusalem doesn't want it. And while we know that the discipline of the Lord is not easy, it is good. And you should love his correcting discipline. You should delight in the fact that he loves you enough as a father to a son to discipline you. The book of Proverbs says, man dies for lack of discipline. His discipline for you is good for you. You should actually be thankful for it. It doesn't mean you have to lie to yourself and say, this feels pleasant in and of itself. This correcting rod right now in and of itself feels good upon my back, so to speak, metaphorically. This correction. Lie to yourself and convince yourself it feels pleasant in the moment, but you really ought to be able to

say, I'm thankful for his discipline. I'm thankful that he loves me enough to show me my errors, to show me my need, and to draw me back in his mercy to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, in Reformed circles, we delight to talk about Jesus Christ as prophet, priest, and king, and we should because he summarizes those roles. He fulfills those roles as our prophet, our priest, and our king. Perhaps it's the case that you like Jesus Christ as your prophet. You like the fact that he reveals to you the way of salvation, revealing to you salvation. You like that as your prophet. Perhaps you like him as your priest, that he is the one for all sacrifice for your sins. But the scripture are equally clear that you ought to love him as your king. And if you do not like his correction and discipline, you're actually rejecting having him king over you. You're saying that I don't need the kingship of Christ. I don't need a king over me because I'm fine in and of myself. You might not actually be sitting there thinking all those thoughts in that sort of a logical manner, but that is what you're saying with your life. When you don't delight in his law, when you don't rejoice in his commandments, when you don't love his lordship over you, you're saying I don't need him as my king. And the kingship of Christ is a good thing for us. Don't you want somebody to rule over you who can do a decent job? In fact, of course, we know a perfect job. I can't rule myself with any decency. Can you? I don't think you can, right? We can't rule ourselves. We fail when we try to take self-rule. And God comes to us in his mercy in Christ and says, I'm your king, and I'll rule over you. And guess what? I'm a perfect king. I'm not like any earthly king who might be full of flaws and failures, I am perfect. So don't disregard or dislike, but in fact, positively love his correction, love his kingship in your life.

But he goes on in verse two, she does not trust in the Lord. She does not trust in the Lord. You see again, the sin here, they're not trusting in the Lord. Proverbs chapter three says, trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. And here you see the people of God themselves, the external covenant community, right? The visible church, and they do not trust in the Lord. They will not listen to him.

And again, I ask in sort of a similar way to the last point, but why would we want to trust in anyone else? Really, the proverb is right. You have two options every day of your life and every moment of your life. Trust in the Lord with all your heart or trust in yourself. Those are your options. And I ask, why would you want to trust in anyone else? Why would you wanna trust yourself over God?

Let's get very practical here. We hear about evolution, okay? You're told that you're dumb because you don't believe in evolution, okay? Who are you gonna trust? Not in a mean way, but in an honest way, who's the dumb one? The person who trusts in the Lord and what he says about creation? Or the person who trusts in evolution? Who cares what people think about you? Trusting in the Lord is the right answer. And you could take this into any other area of life. Trust in the Lord. Trust in what he tells you. He tells you that he forgives you in Jesus Christ. Will you trust him? He tells you that his commandments are good for you. Will you trust him? That's what this looks like, to trust in the Lord, is to take him at his word, to actually believe that he does know more than me. And I would be a fool to think that I would have a better life if I were to ignore his, trusting him.

And at the end of the day, this really is at the root of all sin. It's either will I trust and believe what God says or will I not? It's the same thing that Adam and Eve faced in the garden. Am I gonna trust him or am I not going to trust him?

And then you see in verse two, she does not, that is again the city of God, the Jerusalem, she does not draw near to God. I'm gonna be clear here, when it says she does not draw near to God, it's evident to commentaries that I've read who are way smarter than I am that this drawing near doesn't mean that they never went to the temple again, that they weren't going to, to use our language, it's not saying they didn't go to church, but it is saying that even though they may have gone to church, their hearts were far from the Lord. Even though they may have gone to the temple, their hearts were far from the Lord, that they weren't, near God in their hearts. They wanted really nothing to do with God beyond some sort of religious, you know, tip of the hat, a sort of, you know, we'll pay you, we'll pay our dues. But they didn't really want the Lord. They didn't draw near to him in their hearts.

Then it unfolds even further in verses three and four, this sin. He says, he addresses the rulers, the officials in verse three of Jerusalem. He addresses the prophets and the priests of Jerusalem in verse four. So you have the rulers, what we might say, you know, kings for simplicity sake, you have the kings in verse three, you have the prophets and the priests in verse four. And in each of these areas, the rulers, the authorities are doing the opposite of what they should be doing. So for example, verse three, you see those who are officials, who are rulers, leaders, judges, And rather than using their leadership, their authority, as an opportunity to serve others, as an opportunity to protect those underneath them, they're devouring those underneath them. It's the opposite of what they should be doing. They're using their authority to destroy and abuse those underneath them.

The prophets, the same sort of thing in verse 4. instead of being truth tellers, instead of sort of being committed to whatever God tells them, they're a prophet, they're gonna speak not their own words, they're gonna speak the word of God, they're going to be faithful to proclaim only what God says, no more, no less. Faithful prophets, that's what a prophet's supposed to do, he's supposed to speak God's word to God's people.

The prophets in verse four, what are they called? They're called fickle. Or the word could be translated reckless. In other words, they're saying whatever they want to say. They're saying whatever will be most advantageous to them in their flesh. They're saying whatever the people want to hear. They're ear-ticklers. They're people-pleasers. They're being tossed to and fro by whatever the latest fad in Jerusalem may have been.

And then the same sort of thing with the priests. Instead of being holy, like a priest should be holy, in verse 4 you see that they are profane. that they're unholy, they're the very opposite of what a priest should be. And instead of trying to honor and uphold God's law, we read in verse four that they violate the law. They do violence to it. They hate God's law, the very priests who should love it.

And what an indictment this is, not just on Jerusalem then, but on the modern church today. How much of the modern church is about abusing their authority? How much of the modern church is about abusing God's law, violating God's law, about people speaking as prophets, as the mouthpiece of God, in other words, pastors, about pastors saying only what people want to hear, being people pleasers and ear ticklers. You see this all over the place today just as you used to see it in Jerusalem. So the visible church of God is not really so different in many aspects than what we read right here in the text.

But what do you, what is these opening verses, what do they have to say to you here this evening? What do they have to say to us here this evening? I would simply say this, look at all of the wicked things you see happening in verse two through verse four and say to yourself, I ought to try to do the opposite.

So for example, verse two, she listens to no voice. You should say to yourself, I want to listen to God's voice. I want to listen to what he tells me in his word. I want to hear his word and love it. They accept no correction from God. Verse two, you should want to accept his correction. They won't trust in the Lord. I ought to trust in the Lord. They won't draw near to God in sincerity and spirit and in truth. I should want to draw near to God in spirit and in truth.

Whatever authority God's given to me in life, I don't want to abuse it like the kings and the officials of verse three. Whatever God's word says in verse four, I don't want to twist it like these fickle prophets and try to please man. I want to be faithful to whatever God tells me in his word. Whatever God's law says, unlike these priests who do violence to it, I want to strive to love it. I want to love God's law. That's what these verses have to say to you here this evening. But sin is obviously destructive and bad and wicked and you see it all over these verses.

But that leads us to point two, which is judgment. Which is judgment, verses five through eight. Well these, verse five in particular, the Lord within her is righteous, he does no injustice. Every morning he shows forth his justice. Each dawn he does not fail.

Verse five in particular is a direct contrast to everything you have just seen about Jerusalem. Notice how God is doing no injustice, how God is pure, how God is righteous in verse 5, directly contrasting him with all those in Jerusalem. He is still within her. He is still in Jerusalem in some sort of a manner, but he is very contrary to her. He is very different than her.

Verse 5, the Lord within her, that is in Jerusalem, is righteous. He does no And the people around him, they know no shame, the end of verse five, but the unjust knows no shame. They've forgotten how to blush for their sins.

So this comment though, no injustice. here about God, verse 5, God knows no injustice. This is humanity's greatest problem, right here in verse 5, that God knows no injustice. This is a massive problem for humanity.

Why is the fact that God knows no injustice a horrible bit of news for everyone here tonight? Why is that bad for us? It's bad because if he knows no injustice, that means he's just. And if he's just, that means I should be condemned. Him knowing no injustice is not good news to the man outside of Christ.

if he knew injustice, if he was unjust like you and I are, if he was willing to fudge on the law a little bit to change his standards, then there might be hope for you this evening, right? Because you could say, well, I know he's gonna search my heart on judgment day. I know he knows all the intentions of my heart. I know that my sins will be laid bare, but he's not a just God. So I'm gonna hold out hope that because he's unjust, he might let me pass.

have eternal life and be with him forever. But the problem is that's not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is a God of strict justice. The old guys used to call it the inflexible standard of God, the inflexible law of God. And that's what he is.

So what hope is there for the wicked centers of this world? What the hope is there for you here this night? Well you must throw yourself upon Jesus Christ alone. That is where God is both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus as Romans 3 puts it. That's where he is both just and the justifier.

He deals justly with our sins in Christ. He doesn't lower his standard of justice, but he also declares us righteous in Christ such that we can be in his presence. He is just and the justifier. You must know that the sword of divine justice has been unsheathed and has been placed into the heart of your Savior in your place.

And because the sword of God's justice has been dealt with on Jesus in your place, He's taken that sword of His divine justice and put it back in the sheath so that there's no more sword to be on you on the day of judgment. But for all who are outside of Christ, you must know that he will unsheath that same sword, and he will wield it with exacting perfection, and he will by no means clear the guilty, and so you must trust in Jesus Christ.

But has God not been giving Jerusalem any warnings in the text? I mean, someone might want to argue with God. Why is he getting so upset with them? Why won't, you know, has he given them enough chances? Maybe he hasn't been merciful enough then, not given them enough opportunity to see their sin and to repent. But indeed, that is not the case.

Remember what he had done from chapter 2, verse 4 through verse 15. What was he doing there? Remember he was showing them, I'm going to destroy these people over here, and I'm going to destroy these people over here, and these people down here, and these people up here. So now the message is clear. I'm also going to destroy you, so repent. And what do they do? They don't repent.

Look at verse six and seven. I have cut off nations. That was what we read about last week. I have cut off nations. Their battlements are in ruins. I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them. Their cities have been made desolate without a man, without an inhabitant. And what does God conclude? What you and I would hopefully conclude, right? I said, surely you will fear me. You will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off. according to all that I have appointed against you. And what do they do? But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.

I don't know if you remember in Revelation 16 verses eight and 10, but Revelation 16 verses eight and 10 describes, I think it's twice in my recollection, different scenarios in which these people are being just, you know, experiencing awful, awful, awful plagues. And then it says, But they would not repent. But they would not repent. And if you've read that passage, I know you have probably at some point, but it strikes you. You're thinking, just repent, right? Aren't you thinking that when you read those? They're getting destroyed by these plagues. Just repent, and that's what he's saying here to us this evening, just repent, bend the knee, just bend the knee and repent. Turn to the Lord, he will receive you, I promise. God does not turn away those who repent. Stop trusting in yourself, go to God, that's the call of the text.

But they use God's call of repentance, his grace, his mercy, and they abuse it to live in sin at the end of verse seven. But all the more, they were eager, to make all their deeds corrupt. It's just like Romans 2 says, God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance. God is kind. He's abounding in steadfast love. He is merciful to sinners. And what that should do is make you say, oh, he will receive me? He will forgive me? He actually will? He promised me? He really is gonna do it? I wanna go to that God, don't you? I wanna go to him because he really does. But instead, these individuals see it as, oh, well, I'll just keep on living in sin. They say, in essence, as Romans 6 addresses, let us sin more that grace may abound, which, of course, is a completely ungodly way of thinking.

Well, in verse 8, let me just sum it up in a word. You read at the end of verse 8, all the earth shall be consumed. That's the result. All the earth shall be consumed. Some people, this is the application for this evening, some people think that because they're sort of in one way or another tied to the external covenant community of God. Maybe they're members of a local church or they have some association with church. They've at least go sometimes. They think that that will be a security for them on the day of judgment. But remember, he's addressing the external covenant community of God. He's addressing the church and he's saying to them, I'm going to bring my judgment on all the earth. Your safety cannot be in church. It's gotta be in Christ. That is where salvation is found.

Our third point and final point. salvation, so we've seen sin, we've seen judgment, and now this kind of comes, verses 9 through 14, if you will, these verses sort of come as a breath of fresh air. Okay, you've ever been underwater, maybe when you were a bit younger, you played a game with a sibling or friend who can hold their breath longer, and you're just hoping the other person will give up because you're, you just, you got to get out, you got to get some air. Well, this is the air that you're looking for this evening. Okay, we've seen a lot of being under the water of God's judgment. We've seen a lot of sin. We've seen a lot of judgment. And what that ought to do is make what we're about to see all the more good to you, right? You appreciate air a lot more after you've been underwater for a little while, because you realize, I need air. But when you're in air all the time, you don't really appreciate it. Well, we want to appreciate salvation this evening. And this text is driving us to that point.

So we see here our third point, salvation, verses nine through 14. He begins in these verses to show us something about salvation, which is shocking because he's just been driving home judgment. And then he turns, a 180 in verse nine, for at that time, I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech. What I want us to see about salvation as we just really peruse quickly these verses is this. We want to see that God is sovereign in salvation. God is sovereign in salvation. How do you see in the text that God is sovereign in salvation? You see it in a few ways, but we see it especially in this way. You see it in the three-fold use of the phrase, I will, I will, I will. Three times he uses that language, I will. He uses it in verse 9, verse 11, and verse 12. And it's God speaking, Yahweh. And listen to what he says, verse 9. I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech. Verse 9. Now drop down to verse 11, about halfway through. For then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain." So God says, I will change, I will remove, and then verse 12, but I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. So God says, I will change, I will remove, and I will leave in your midst certain people, people who are humble and lowly."

The point is simply this. God is sovereign in salvation. God is the one who changes the hard heart. God is the one who raises the dead. God is the one who gives to men life. God is the one who saves man who cannot save himself. He removes, I love that language, he removes the wicked bales from our hearts. The same sort of language is found in Hosea 2.17. He talks there in Hosea 2.17 about how I will remove the bales from you. Isn't that good news? I can't remove the bales of my heart. You can't remove the idols of your heart. You can't do it. You just simply can't

do it. Have you ever tried to remove a bale from your heart? Have you ever tried to remove an idol? You just can't do it. But God can. And so you take that bail to God, you put to death the deeds of the body by the spirit, right? Romans chapter eight. It's incredible, the sovereignty of God and salvation doesn't cripple you, it actually strengthens you because it drives you to the one who can help you. You see that in this text and who are some of the people mentioned in verse eight through 13 that God converts, that God saves?

Well, it includes verse 10, people who are from beyond the rivers of Cush, from beyond the rivers of Cush. Remember, those are the people that are way down south, the people who are not near God's people. And he's saying, I go to the ends of the earth, essentially what he's saying, to save people, people from Cush. And have we heard about the Cushites in the book of Zephaniah? We have. Back in chapter two, verse 12, look there. What did he say about the Cushites back there in chapter two, verse 12? You also, O Cushites, shall be slain by my sword.

So he goes down to the very people that we've already heard he's gonna slay with his sword, and he says, from that place, I'm gonna raise up people for myself. So it's from the very last places you're going to expect God is going to bring about worshipers. And why does he do this? Well, I just said it, because he wants worshipers. Look at verse 10. Verse 10, from the rivers of Cush, my worshipers, he is going to get himself some worshipers and he'll go to Cush or even beyond to do it. God is determined to get the worship, which his name is due.

Back in verse nine, you actually see the same sort of thing. Back in verse nine. For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, and this is why, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord." Right? That's the language of worship. Back in Genesis 4, verse 26, people began to call upon the name of the Lord. He did this because he was calling people to worship him. And not just to worship him, but to serve him at the end of verse 9. And serve him with one accord. So God is going to seek worshipers.

So this evening, what is your confidence, if you have confidence, Lord willing, I hope you do, what is your confidence that God is gonna grow Second Presbyterian Church? I will tell you what our confidence ought to be, that God is going to grow this church, in number, talking about number here, we also pray for holiness, but why do we think he'll grow us in number? It's not because of my preaching, it's not because of our very good programs, which we praise the Lord for, we have a lot of really, really great things, what God has allowed us to be doing. We have the prayer meeting on Friday mornings. We praise God for that. We have the women's Bible study. We have the after school program. We have VBS. There's a lot of things we can say amen and praise the Lord for those things.

But why do we ultimately at the core of our being say, I believe God's gonna grow this church. Because God is determined to get his worshipers. And if we're a true church, we should believe that God will fill this church because he wants to have his worshipers. It's not for us. It's because we want him to get to worship, do his thing. We read about it this morning in Psalm 96. He wants to be worshipped. If he'll go beyond the borders of Cush, I think he could come right to Yazoo City and grow this church and I think you do too because you think God, you believe in your heart that God wants to be worshipped and he does and so right here he can do it because he wants to be worshipped. So you see that going on to verses 11 and 12 you see that God is going to remove all the proud and he's going to leave all the humble. And who are the humble? What makes them humble? It's simply this, verse 12. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord. They're humble because they're people who don't think they can do it in themselves. That's what makes them humble. They're not humble because they are necessarily morbidly

introspective or anything like that. That's not necessarily humility. Humility is knowing that you need Christ and going to him and receiving what he has to offer.

It's actually going to him and saying, I'm going to believe today that you're good enough, that you're loving enough, that you are who you say you are in your word, and I'm going to trust you. That's going to him for your refuge. And anywhere else we go is not good. Anywhere else you go will not keep you on the day of judgment. He is the only refuge. There is salvation in no one else, as the scriptures say. This is the only place for refuge. And so you go to him. That's what Zephaniah's been doing. He's been driving us away from every other refuge so that we would run to Christ.

Well, then he concludes in verse 13, and we'll sum it up, that it's purity and protection. He says that those who come to him have this promise of a life to come, and even that begins now in this life of purity and protection. Look at verse 13. Those who are left in Israel, they shall do no injustice and speak no lies. Nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue." That's purity there. That's purity. And they're said to have no injustice. And you know who else is said to have no injustice? We read about him earlier. God. Chapter 3, verse 5. Chapter 3, verse 5, God was said to have no injustice. And here his people are said to have no injustice. What happens is this to the believer. He becomes more and more into the image of his God. Do you see? God has no injustice. And now God's people have no injustice because they're being conformed more and more into the image of their God. They speak no lie. Just like their God is a God of truth, God's people more and more become people of truth.

And then you see God's protection at the end. For they shall graze and lie down and none shall make them afraid. The imagery here of grazing and lying down, does that make you think of a sheep? Because it should. And he's saying that you're a sheep. And he's saying that God has a shepherd over you. And that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is your shepherd. and in him you are protected, in him you are safe.

Well, we have seen tonight three things about the riches of God's gospel, and it is this, that there is sin that needs to be dealt with, and there is a judgment coming, and what that makes glorious to you this evening by God's grace is this, his gospel. This is the good news, that he saves people who do not deserve to be saved. Rejoice in this good news, let us pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, there's so much in these words, these verses, And Lord, by your grace, please do not let this be unhelpful. Please, oh Lord, let these verses be a benefit to our souls as we consider the fact that though our sins be grievous, they are offense to you, they're offense to our own selves, they're offense to others around us, and though the judgment is real and mighty and great and awful and awesome, we also have this unexplainable news. It comes out of nowhere in verse nine. It's the last thing you expect verse nine to do. And yet it's exactly what you do. And you've done this, I believe, Father, for most and perhaps by your mercy, all of us in this room. And all we can do is say, I don't understand, but you've done it for me. And I rejoice because you've done it for me. And so we praise you for what you've done for us. And we pray, Father, that you would be pleased to bring worshipers to Second Presbyterian Church or to other good churches, Lord, in our area, not because we at all hopefully think we're anything, and hopefully we really can say that from our hearts, but because we really believe that you want to be worshiped, and you will be worshiped, and you'll go beyond Cush, and we pray that you would go down here to Yazoo City in a special way. But, oh, Lord, whatever your will is, would we worship you, for we are your children. In Jesus's name, amen.