

Evotion 27.09.06 (pm)

## Zephaniah

The word of the Lord that came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, during the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah:

“I will sweep away everything from the face of the earth,” declares the Lord. “I will sweep away both men and animals; I will sweep away the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. The wicked will have only heaps of rubble when I cut off man from the face of the earth,” declares the Lord. “I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all who live in Jerusalem. I will cut off from this place every remnant of Baal, the names of the pagan and the idolatrous priests - those who bow down on the roofs to worship the starry host, those who bow down and swear by the Lord and who also swear by Molech, those who turn back from following the Lord and neither seek the Lord nor inquire of him. Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is near. The Lord has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated those he has invited. On the day of the Lord’s sacrifice I will punish the princes and the king’s sons and all those clad in foreign clothes. On that day I will punish all who avoid stepping on the threshold, who fill the temple of their gods with violence and deceit.” (Zeph. 1:1-9)

What makes you angry? Is anger justified? Anger is disturbing, energising passion, caused by a perceived sense of injustice. It is expressed in many ways and can be frightening and disastrous. There are plenty of examples in the Bible as well as from today.

Anger can be positive and motivating. Paul got cross with the Corinthians and caused them to re-appraise how they were living; with the Galatians who wanted to go back to rules and regulations instead of freedom in Christ. The many social reforms that have taken place, are the result of righteous anger.

Does God have the right to get angry? The opening chapter of Zephaniah is frightening and many people, Christian and non-Christian alike, have difficulty with the idea that God could anger and punish and destroy.

The Jews were the chosen people, supposed to be a light to the nations, drawing them to God. They readily entered into a covenant with God - including the blessings and the curses. However, they forgot their covenant and began to worship other gods, even corrupting temple worship in Jerusalem, the holy city. They compromised on the laws God gave them, in religious practice and in their way of life, which was supposed to be distinctive. They became indifferent and more concerned about a comfortable life. In any case, don’t all religions lead to God? In this context, does God have the right to be angry.

If we believe that God is lovely and cuddly, providing all our needs and never chastising, we have a real problem. If that is so, why did Jesus die? The Bible tells us that Jesus died for our sin, that he stood in our place and took our punishment. If God does not get angry with sin and evil, then God is not moral. In the pages of the Bible we see God concerned about injustice, the poor, sin and evil. Do we believe that those who have perpetrated evil in the world and died unrepentant, will be in heaven because God says it really doesn’t matter after all?

Thanks be to God who has dealt with sin and evil through the Lord Jesus Christ, so that all who believe in him will be forgiven and have eternal life. Let’s examine our own relationship with God and worship the One who is full of love and justice; who cannot abide evil and has stepped in to save us from ourselves.

## Prayer

Examine your relationship with your heavenly Father. Use the words of this prayer to confess to him and ask for help to live for him each day.

Most merciful God,  
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
we confess that we have sinned  
in thought, word and deed.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart.  
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
In your mercy  
forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are,  
and direct what we shall be;  
that we may do justly,  
love mercy,  
and walk humbly with you, our God.  
Amen