

Zephaniah 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.

Analysis

She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction—Jerusalem's fourfold rebellion demonstrates comprehensive covenant failure. The verb "obeyed" (shama, υηψ) means to hear with intent to obey, the fundamental covenant requirement (Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel"). Jerusalem heard God's voice through law, prophets, and conscience but refused obedience. "Received not correction" uses musar (רָגוּן), meaning discipline, instruction, or chastening—she rejected God's corrective judgments meant to restore her.

She trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God—the indictment moves from external rebellion to internal heart apostasy. "Trusted" (batach, נַזְכֵּר) means to feel secure, confident, to rely upon completely. Despite covenant relationship, Jerusalem placed confidence in political alliances, military strength, and religious ritual rather than Yahweh Himself. "Drew not near" (qarav, בָּאֵךְ) means to approach intimately, the language of worship and relationship. Though maintaining temple worship externally, Jerusalem had no genuine heart intimacy with God.

This fourfold accusation—refusing to obey, rejecting correction, withholding trust, abandoning intimacy—exposes the comprehensive nature of Jerusalem's apostasy. She possessed all covenant privileges: God's revealed will (obey), His disciplinary care (correction), His proven faithfulness (trust), and access to His presence (draw near). Yet she refused every dimension of relationship. This parallels Jesus's indictment of first-century Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34)—persistent

rejection despite persistent grace. The pattern warns against presuming on covenant privilege while refusing covenant responsibility.

Historical Context

This verse describes Jerusalem during the late seventh century BC under Josiah's reign (640-609 BC), though Zephaniah likely prophesied before Josiah's reforms began in earnest. The previous reigns of Manasseh (55 years) and Amon (2 years) had established deep patterns of idolatry and injustice. Despite brief revivals under Hezekiah and later Josiah, the nation's heart remained unchanged, as both Zephaniah and his contemporary Jeremiah testified.

The historical record shows repeated divine initiatives Jerusalem rejected: prophetic warnings from Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah; Assyria's destruction of northern Israel as warning (722 BC); Hezekiah's narrow deliverance from Assyria (701 BC); discovery of the Law scroll (622 BC). Each represented God's "voice" and "correction," yet the people returned to idolatry and injustice after each reform. The nation's trust lay in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon as political allies rather than Yahweh. Temple worship continued outwardly, but hearts remained far from God (Isaiah 29:13).

Zephaniah's indictment proved accurate when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC, fulfilling covenant curses. The prophetic pattern extends beyond historical Israel to the church: religious profession, covenant privileges, and outward observance mean nothing without obedient hearts, teachable spirits, genuine trust, and intimate relationship with God through Christ.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Which of these four failures—refusing obedience, rejecting correction, withholding trust, or avoiding intimacy—most characterizes your spiritual life currently?
2. How does maintaining religious activity while lacking genuine heart relationship with God manifest in contemporary Christian experience?
3. What would repentance look like concretely for each of these four failures: hearing and obeying God's voice, receiving His correction, trusting Him completely, drawing near to Him intimately?

Interlinear Text

ל	א	בְּקָר	וְלִקְרָב	לְאַמְתָּה	שְׁמֻעָה	ל
H3808	She obeyed	not the voice	H3808	she received	not correction	
	H8085	H6963		H3947		H4148
ל	א	בְּיִתְהּוּנָה	ל	א	אַלְפָה	לְקָרְבָּה:
not in the LORD	H3808	she trusted	H413	to her God	H3808	she drew not near
H3068		H982		H430		H7126

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 5:3 (References Lord): O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

Jeremiah 22:21 (Parallel theme): I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.

Isaiah 43:22 (Parallel theme): But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.

Isaiah 29:13 (References Lord): Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have

removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Psalms 73:28 (Faith): But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Psalms 78:22 (Faith): Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:

Psalms 50:17 (Parallel theme): Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.

Proverbs 5:12 (Parallel theme): And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof;

Jeremiah 32:33 (Parallel theme): And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.

Jeremiah 2:30 (Parallel theme): In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.