

ZEPHANIAH THREE, SEVENTEEN

Intro: Zephaniah was, as 1:1 indicates, the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah. He lived and prophesied about 600 years before Christ. Josiah was the king of Judah at the time.

The Spirit of God leads Zephaniah to look ahead to the day of the Lord--the time of the Second Coming of Christ to the earth, the day which is preceded by the Great Tribulation, and followed by the Millennial Reign. All three of these events actually make up the day of the Lord.

The book is primarily a book of judgment.

And yet with all that is said about judgment there is hope.

But the amazing thing about Zephaniah's prophecy is that he takes us right into the very heart of God, so to speak, in order for us to see what it will mean to God when Israel is at last redeemed.

This morning we had a very significant verse in the epistle to the Romans: Rom. 15:4,

"For whatever things were written in earlier times were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope."

And so, while this speaks of time when we will be with the Lord, yet the truth applies to us just as much as it did, and does, to Israel.

Cf., e.g., Eph. 2:7,

"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Do you really know how much the Lord loves you? This verse will help you to understand, especially with the background Zephaniah gives us in the first part of the book.

I. WHO GOD IS: "The Lord thy God."

This is almost like an introduction. Can anything speak more of the grace of God? Do we need any greater assurance of our security in Him?

"God" is mentioned just 5 times in this prophecy: 1:7; 2:7, 9; 3:2, and here. Note especially 2:7, 9; 3:2 for the same emphasis which we have in our text.

"Lord" is mentioned 30 times. All except in 1:7 are Jehovah; there it is Adonai.

How often we need this assurance. It makes all of the difference as to how we look at our needs.

II. WHERE GOD IS: "in the midst of thee." Cf. 3:5, 15.

When we depart from the Lord, the first feeling we have is that the Lord has departed from us. But He has not gone. Cf. Psa. 46:1; Heb. 13:5, 6.

The expression carries with it two ideas:

- 1) That the Lord is reaching out to us.
- 2) That He is close enough to touch us.

Cf. Rev. 1:13, 17; 2:1.

III. WHAT GOD IS: "is mighty."

Here we see Him as a God who is active. His power is more than is required to meet the needs of His people. With God nothing is impossible.

IV. WHAT GOD WILL DO. There are four things which Zephaniah mentions--all of which give comfort to the people of God in times when they know that they deserve only judgment.

A. "He will save."

We should read here that, He will condemn, or He will judge. Instead, He will save!

Could we say here that we have salvation in the future tense?

It not only means that He can save, but that He will, AND THAT HE WILL PRESERVE THOSE WHOM HE HAS SAVED.

Cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-5.

B. "He will rejoice over thee with joy."

Note how Zephaniah's contemporary, Jeremiah, emphasized the same in Jer. 32:41 (read from v. 37).

The expression here means that God will rejoice exceedingly! His joy will be uncontained. Cf. Jude 24, 25.

C. "He will rest in his love."

"Rest" means to be silent--a contrast with the expression which precedes it, and with that which follows. All of the restlessness which a lover feels in his heart before his love it returned is gone, and God rests in silence

D. "He will joy over thee with singing."

Do you remember what David did when they brought the ark of God into Jerusalem? Cf. 2 Sam. 6:16,

"And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked out of a window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart."

Just before this it is recorded that

"David danced before the Lord with all his might" (2 Sam. 6:14).

HE WAS A MIGHTY HAPPY KING! HE WAS SO HAPPY THAT HE COULD NOT STAND STILL.

Take a NT example. Cf. Acts 3:8. Peter and John had just healed a man who had been unable to walk from the time that he was born. After he was healed, Dr. Luke records for us,

"And he, leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God."

He was so happy you could not stop him!

These two illustrations picture what Zephaniah is trying to tell us in this verse. THE DAY IS COMING WHEN GOD IS GOING TO DANCE FOR JOY. HE IS GOING TO SHOUT, BUT THERE WILL BE NO WORDS TO EXPRESS HIS JOY; IT WILL BE UNUTTERABLE!

Why?

Because, at last, at long last, Israel, his Beloved, will return His love so that the Almighty God will not be able to contain Himself!

Concl: It sounds unbelievable, doesn't it? But it is true! How could we have any greater expression of God's love for His people.

Let us bring it down to ourselves.

Read the words in John 17:23, especially the last part. The Lord wanted the world to know this, BUT DO WE? Then notice how our Lord prayed in the next verse--v. 24.

See also 1 John 3:1-3; John 3:16.