

Zephaniah Devotionals & Sermon Illustrations

Zephaniah 1:1

The word of the Lord that came to Zephaniah. - Zephaniah 1:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

Let's start the year 2003 right: by fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ. But don't just begin this way—keep your eyes on Him throughout the year with Today in the Word.

“Let Us Fix Our Eyes on Jesus” will be the running theme throughout this year of devotionals. Topics to come include “Images of Christ in Revelation,” the Sermon on the Mount, and ? Corinthians: The Church of Jesus.” But Christ isn't found only in the New Testament, and that's why we're beginning the year with Zephaniah and Zechariah. As we study these prophets' messages in their historical contexts, we'll see that God had been promising a Savior all along. Long before the manger in Bethlehem, His people were eagerly awaiting and rejoicing in His coming and His redemption.

Zephaniah, whose name means “the Lord protects” or “the Lord treasures,” was of royal birth, since the genealogy in verse 1 lists him as the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah. He prophesied during the reign of King Josiah (see 2 Kings 22–23; 2 Chron. 34–35). Josiah was the last godly king who reigned prior to the conquest and exile of Judah.

As nobility, Zephaniah probably lived in Jerusalem, moving among and ministering to powerful people in the king's court. He worked contemporaneously with Jeremiah, Nahum, and perhaps Habakkuk.

Based on the genealogy, Zephaniah was probably only in his 20s when he began to prophesy in about 625 b.c. He started his ministry early in Josiah's reign, when the effects of the king's evil predecessor still dominated the religious life of Judah. In 621 b.c., priests working to restore the Temple found a copy of the Law, which sparked a national revival. In fact, it's likely that Zephaniah's preaching also helped bring about this revival. ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Zeph. 1.2 I will utterly consume.

Zephaniah exercised his ministry in the days of Josiah. This is an interesting fact, because in his days there was a great reformation, and yet the prophet makes no reference to it. An examination of the history of that reform will show that, so far as the nation was concerned, it was superficial. The king was loyal to God, and sincere. He was also popular with the people, and they followed him in his re-forming work, as to external things. But there was no true repentance. Therefore Zephaniah did not recognize the reform; and indeed, in all probability the insincerity of it gave greater vehemence to his denunciation of the sin of the people. Taken as a whole this prophecy sets forth the severity and goodness of God with overwhelming force; and shows how these apparently contradictory elements of His government move to the same end. The words we have emphasized give the key note to the prophet's message as to the action of God, consequent upon the sins of the people. This chapter is wholly taken up with the day of Divine wrath. The outlook was wider than Judah. It began with the declaration that the whole creation, so far as it was polluted, should be destroyed. It then dealt with the nation itself, denouncing its sins, and announcing the consuming wrath of God as proceeding against princes, extortioners, the city, the merchantmen, the luxurious. It is a terrible setting forth of the severity of God against apostasy. There was no equivocation, no uncertainty, no hesitancy, in the prophet's words. They abide for all time, a revelation of the fact that God not only will make no terms with sin, but that He will proceed against it in fiery indignation that it may be utterly consumed. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Zephaniah 1:2-13

Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is near. - Zephaniah 1:7

TODAY IN THE WORD

One day, Jesus warned His listeners against greed and told this parable: The lands of a certain rich man produced a fruitful harvest. He decided to build new and bigger barns to hold his growing wealth, and felt secure in his prosperity--with so much in the storehouses, his worries were over. He said to himself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.”

But because of his complacency and self-centeredness, God's judgment fell on that man that very night. Jesus concluded: “This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:13-21).

Today's reading also describes God's judgment on sin, especially as it will take place on the Day of the Lord (vv. 2-3, 7). Verses 2-3 overview His judgment at the end of history, and this serves as a preview to what will happen to Judah in the near future. In the metaphor in verse 7, Judah is the sacrificial victim, while the invited guests are the armies of Babylon. God will "consecrate" this pagan nation to accomplish His plan.

The pictures here promise the total destruction of evil. Not a single trace of wickedness will be allowed to remain—it will all be swept away, cut off, and punished. This is definitely a zero tolerance policy! If it seems harsh, remember that God is utterly holy, yet has shown remarkable patience through-out history.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As you ponder the perfection of God's judgment today, seek out applicable cross-references from other locations in Scripture. Find and jot down at least five cross-references that boost your understanding of His holiness, justice, or judgment. What main truths does the Word of God communicate to us? ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Zephaniah 1:5

C H Spurgeon

Morning and evening

"I will cut off them that worship and that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham."

— Zephaniah 1:5

Such persons thought themselves safe because they were with both parties: they went with the followers of Jehovah, and bowed at the same time to Malcham. But duplicity is abominable with God, and hypocrisy his soul hateth. The idolater who distinctly gives himself to his false god, has one sin less than he who brings his polluted and detestable sacrifice unto the temple of the Lord, while his heart is with the world and the sins thereof. To hold with the hare and run with the hounds, is a dastard's policy. In the common matters of daily life, a double-minded man is despised, but in religion he is loathsome to the last degree. The penalty pronounced in the verse before us is terrible, but it is well deserved; for how should divine justice spare the sinner, who knows the right, approves it, and professes to follow it, and all the while loves the evil, and gives it dominion in his heart?

My soul, search thyself this morning, and see whether thou art guilty of double-dealing. Thou professest to be a follower of Jesus— dost thou truly love him? Is thy heart right with God? Art thou of the family of old Father Honest, or art thou a relative of Mr. By-ends? A name to live is of little value if I be indeed dead in trespasses and sins. To have one foot on the land of truth, and another on the sea of falsehood, will involve a terrible fall and a total ruin. Christ will be all or nothing. God fills the whole universe, and hence there is no room for another god; if, then, he reigns in my heart, there will be no space for another reigning power. Do I rest alone on Jesus crucified, and live alone for him? Is it my desire to do so? Is my heart set upon so doing? If so, blessed be the mighty grace which has led me to salvation; and if not so, O Lord, pardon my sad offence, and unite my heart to fear thy name.

Zephaniah 1:12

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

I will search Jerusalem with candles. Zephaniah 1:12

The state of things in the chosen city was scandalous. The people worshipped the host of heaven on the housetops; the temple-courts were filled with the priests of idolatry; the court affected foreign dress and manners. Nothing could prevent the invasion of the Chaldeans as ministers of the Divine vengeance. These were the terrible guests whom the Almighty had summoned to the feast; and the feast consisted of the spoils of the city (Zephaniah 1:7).

No sin of his people can escape the notice of God. He searches out the secret evils of our hearts with lighted candles, not for his vision alone, but for ours; that we may know, and abhor them, and put them from us. There is the candle of conscience. The spirit of man is as the candle of the Lord. In some men the candle is present, but not lit: in others it is lit by the power of the Divine Spirit; and there is something of the incandescent flame about it then.

There is the candle of outward events. How often does God allow some incident of which we hear in social conversation, or read in the newspaper, to cast a sudden and unexpected light upon some passages in our lives which we have carefully shrouded in darkness. Right into a hidden closet the searchlight falls, saying "thou art the man."

Then there is that candle of his Holy Word. A text or sermon unkindled by the Spirit of God is like an unlighted candle. But when God's Holy Spirit rests on it, interfusing it with fire, then how mighty is its effect! It searches the heart and tries the reins; it reveals to man his thought and the real object of his existence, that he may repent.

Zephaniah 1:14-2:3

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. - Zephaniah 2:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

Early in the 20th century, the city of St. Pierre, on the island of Martinique in the Caribbean, was known as the "Paris of the West Indies." But it all came to a crashing halt on the morning of May 8, 1902.

On that morning, a volcano named Mount Pelée erupted, sending hot ash, toxic gases, and magma down the mountainside at terrific speeds. Within minutes, the entire city had been destroyed, and 30,000 people had been killed. St. Pierre has never been completely rebuilt, and today only a fraction of the previous population currently lives there.

As deadly a disaster as this volcanic eruption was, it's nothing compared to what will happen on the Day of the Lord. In the Old Testament, the phrase "day of the Lord" is often associated with divine judgments. In Zephaniah, God's judgments in both the immediate and distant futures are linked as parts of His unified plan for history. "The great day of the Lord is near—near and coming quickly," the prophet proclaimed (1:14).

The description of this "day" in today's reading is poetically miserable. It will be filled with bitterness, anguish, ruin, and fire. Why will it occur? Because of sin (1:17). God's justice and power will completely purge and purify the land of evil. Since He is the one true Lord, His "jealousy"—that is, His wrath against those who worship false gods—is totally legitimate and His punishment appropriate, no matter how extreme it sounds (1:18).

If the cause of judgment is sin, then the fitting response to Zephaniah's warnings is repentance. He exhorted the people to seek the Lord, humble themselves, and pursue obedience (2:3). To repent means to turn away from sin toward righteousness. As commentator Matthew Henry said, Zephaniah's purpose was "not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins." And apparently he succeeded, since Josiah's reforms delayed the short-term fulfillment of this prophecy (2 Chron. 34:27-28).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

In today's passage, Zephaniah urged sinners to repent before it was too late. That same message still applies today! Have you repented of your sins and asked God to give you the gift of eternal life, found only in Jesus Christ? This is a choice between life and death. If you haven't yet chosen life, listen to the apostle Peter: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19). You can have the assurance of everlasting life in the presence of God! ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Zephaniah 1:14-18

Our Daily Bread

"TIMES OF TROUBLE"

The great day of the Lord is ... a day of trouble and distress.- Zephaniah 1:14-15

Turmoil continues to seethe in many parts of the former Soviet Union. Unrest, revolt, hunger, unemployment, and severe shortages still plague most of the land. It prompted a leading Russian journalist to refer to these days as *smut- noye vremya*, the "time of trouble."

The Bible uses a similar phrase to describe the events of the endtimes. They will occur during the prophetic era called "the day of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:12-22). It will be a time of terrible tribulation, during which mankind will suffer as never before. There will be earthquakes, famine, war, and death (Rev. 6).

During this period, the Jews will be singled out. Their persecution will be so intense that the era is prophetically referred to in Jeremiah 30:7 as "the time of Jacob's trouble." But that verse ends with the wonderful promise that the Jews "shall be saved out of it." That period of intense tribulation will bring them to faith in the true Messiah.

As followers of Christ, we encounter personal times of trouble. The apostle Peter wrote, "If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him ...

glorify God" (1 Pet. 4:16). Our personal "times of trouble" are opportunities for the Lord to show us His provision, protection, and love. - David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God's unseen presence comforts me,

I know He's always near;

And when life's storms besiege my soul,

He says, "My child, don't fear." - Dennis J. De Haan

Times of trouble are times for trust.

Zeph. 2.1 Gather yourselves together.

In this chapter we have the prophet's appeal, on the ground of the approaching day of wrath. This opening call might with accuracy be rendered in our colloquialism: "Pull yourselves together." That is the exact idea. All the Nation was spiritually and morally relaxed, and so mentally dulled, and unable to realize the true meaning of its own sin. The prophet stood before the Nation as a physician, and cried to it sharply, urgently: "Pull yourselves together." The sign of moral paralysis was that the Nation had no shame. To a sense of sin, and a consequent sense of shame, the prophet sought to bring them, in view of the decree of the Divine judgment which was determined against them. He commenced by describing the judgments which were to fall on the surrounding nations, Philistia, Moab, Ammon Ethiopia, and Assyria; and then proceeded to show how this same fiery destructive force would fall on Jerusalem (Zeph 3.1-7). In the course of this appeal the prophet specially addressed the remnant of elect souls who were loyal to Jehovah. Two things are impressive in this section of the prophecy. The first is that this is the very call that nations constantly need to hear; and that it is difficult for them to obey. Today, those nations most highly privileged need to pull themselves together, and to face moral and spiritual facts. The second is that the souls within the national life who are loyal to God are those who constitute the only hope of the nation being able to do this. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Zephaniah 2:3

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. Zephaniah 2:3

The name of this prophet means, "Whom God hides or protects." The hidden man invites others to his hiding-place; and shows how we may be hidden in the day of God's anger. It is said that in the center of the wildest cyclone there is a point of absolute calm: so amid the wildest storms that have swept the face of the world there have always been some of God's hidden ones:—

"The secret place, the refuge from the blast, The glorious Temple, Lamb of God art Thou; Our feet shall tread the golden courts at last, Our souls have entered now."

"I cannot deny," writes Tersteegen, "the corruptions of the external Church; but I think my dear friend has more necessary things to attend to. Within! Within! With God alone!" There is truth here, though not all the truth. We must have Elijahs as well as Zephaniahs.

Only those may know the hidden life who fulfill the conditions here described. They must be meek; they must work his judgment; they must seek righteousness and meekness. It is the soul that bends before the blast of the terrible ones; that gives place to wrath, not because of pusillanimity, but because of the fear of the Lord; that hands over its cause of alarm and fear to the Most High, which abides in his secret place, and hides under his shadow.

Let us seek these things, and then there will be no may-be in our being hidden. We shall certainly be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger; hidden in the wounds of Jesus, hidden in his heart, hidden in God with Christ, hidden in the fiery glory of his intolerable holiness.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!

Zephaniah 2:4-15

Then men will say, "Surely the righteous still are rewarded; surely there is a God who judges the earth." - Psalm 58:11

TODAY IN THE WORD

The Day of the Lord will find unbelievers unprepared and insecure, even if they live in San Jose, California.

Following the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001, San Jose gained national recognition as the American city best prepared for terrorist threats, including nuclear, biological, and chemical assaults. The city has prepared its emergency personnel, stockpiled antibiotics and other medical supplies, and trained a thousand ordinary citizens in civil defense. "National defense is local defense," said one leader.

On the Day of the Lord, it will be not physical preparedness but spiritual preparedness that determines life and death. Those who stand in their own strength will fall.

Today's reading gives more images of judgment, this time specific judgments on the Gentile nations surrounding Israel. Their cities will be abandoned, ruined, uprooted, and destroyed. Once-bustling places will become open fields or wastelands; they will share the destiny of Sodom and Gomorrah. As with those two cities, and as we've already seen in Zephaniah, the cause of judgment was sin. All of these nations were guilty of disrespect for God's people, aggression toward them, pride, and idolatry (plus influencing Israel toward idolatry).

Through judgment, God will demonstrate His superiority to all idols, and will receive His rightful worship (v. 11). One hint that the worship will be universal is found in the fact that the passage moves geographically, from west (Philistia) to east (Moab and Ammon) to south (Cush/Ethiopia) to north (Assyria usually attacked from this direction). He is the God and Judge of all the earth, not just of one region or nation!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today, we suggest that you examine your heart for the kind of self-exalting pride for which Assyria was condemned in Scripture (v. 15). Do you base your security on your own abilities or success? Do your words and actions show arrogance? Have you put yourself at the center of your own universe? Does God have a minimal impact on your priorities and decisions ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Zeph. 3.8 Therefore wait ye for Me, saith the Lord.

That is the sentence in which the theme of the severity of God merges into that of His goodness. It is most significant, when the force of the "therefore" is considered. Observe the immediately pre-ceding words: "They rose early and corrupted all their doings." "Therefore?" because there is no hope of recovery in the people themselves, "wait ye for Me saith Jehovah." When the case is most hopeless, as to man's corruption, then Jehovah acts, and He does so in "indignation," in "fierce anger," in "the fire of His jealousy"; but all that in order to the ending of corruption and the restoration of the sinning people. From that point the prophetic message is one of hope; it becomes a song of love, and there is none more full of exquisite beauty in the Bible. It is a celebration of the Motherhood of God, in which the prophet described Him rejoicing over His people, silent in His love, and then breaking the silence with a song of love. That victory is the victory of love. That is to say that it can only issue from the action of the God of love. There is no hope 'in human effort. The only thing that man can do is to wait for God. But that waiting is a responsibility. To wait for God is to be at the end of self; it is to be submissive to His way of judgment; it is to return to Him with complete surrender, the surrender of utter hopelessness in any other than Himself, the surrender of acknowledged and yielding weakness. Wherever there is such waiting, in love He chastises to purification; and then in love rejoices as His purposes are fulfilled in the restoration of those upon whom His love is set. - G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications

Zephaniah 3:1-8

The Lord within her is righteous; he does no wrong. Morning by morning he dispenses his justice. - Zephaniah 3:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Pilgrim William Bradford recounted the story of a sailor on board the Mayflower: He was "proud and very profane," and often ridiculed the colonists about their seasickness. He even went so far as to say he hoped to bury half of them at sea, then to "make merry with what they had." He swore at those who reproved him.

"But it pleased God before they came half seas over, to smite this young man with a grievous disease, of which he died in a desperate manner, and so was himself the first that was thrown overboard. Thus his curses [fell] on his own head, and it was an astonishment to all his fellows for they noted it to be the just hand of God upon him."

In today's reading, the justice of God is contrasted to the corruption of Jerusalem. In Zephaniah, we've moved from judgment in general to judgment on Gentile nations to judgment on Judah. Wickedness is wickedness wherever and whenever it's found, and God responds to it in the same way, no exceptions.

What were Jerusalem's sins? Oppression, tyranny, rebelliousness toward God, pride, idolatry, and a general lack of faith. The people didn't draw near to their God (vv. 1–2). The leaders in particular were targeted for condemnation for their role in leading the nation astray (vv. 3–4).

Given their behavior, did Judah really think they could escape the same fate as the other sinful nations? The northern kingdom of Israel had already been taken into captivity by Assyria, and Zephaniah had proclaimed the doom of their Gentile neighbors. After these historical and prophetic warnings, one would think that they would be anxious to repent, but in fact "they were still eager to act corruptly in all they did" (v. 7).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

One way that you can respond to today's Scripture is by planning a special worship time for yourself, your family, or your small group. Let the theme of the hymns and songs you choose be the holiness and justice of God. ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Zephaniah 3:9-13

Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him shoulder to shoulder. - Zephaniah 3:9

TODAY IN THE WORD

The perspective of the biblical prophets has often been compared to a person looking at a distant mountain range. From his perspective, the majestic peaks soar upward, one after the other in quick succession. The mountains appear quite close to one another. In fact, though, there may be plains and valleys between them that aren't visible from his perspective.

The prophets spoke of "mountain peak" events, and from their point of view, these events appeared quite close to one another. In fact, though, there are intervening times during which God is continuing to work out more hidden dimensions of His plan.

One implication of this is that sometimes a prophet foretold events as if they would happen at nearly the same time. But one part of the event might have happened a long time ago, while another part is still future--for example, the First and Second Comings of Christ. These are interpretive differences that we'll often find while studying Zephaniah and Zechariah.

In today's reading, for example, God promised to purify and redeem His people, and this prophecy has both near and distant time implications. In the near future, He would bless a remnant who would return from the Exile to their homeland. But the entire prophecy wasn't fulfilled at that time, and so in part it also refers to the future reign of Christ over all the world. What did God promise to do? To purify the people from sin--to completely remove it from Jerusalem. Pride will not be found in God's domain, as haughty people will already have been judged and expelled. The meek will inherit the earth (v. 12; cf. Matt. 5:5).

God will enable His people to worship and serve Him as they ought. Their righteous actions will reflect His character--they'll do no wrong, just as He does no wrong (vv. 5, 13). And since He Himself will dwell with them, they'll live in perfect security (cf. Micah 4:1–4).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Only the meek and humble, not the proud, will be allowed to live in the city of God (vv. 11–12). Humility and faith are inseparable. A true sense of God and a true sense of self go hand-in-hand. ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Zephaniah 3:12

C H Spurgeon

Faith's Checkbook

A Trustworthy Name

"I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord."—Zephaniah 3:12

WHEN true religion is ready to die out among the wealthy it finds a home among the poor of this world, rich in faith. The Lord has even now His faithful remnant. Am I one of them?

Perhaps it is because men are afflicted and poor that they learn to trust in the name of the Lord. He that hath no money must try what he can do on trust. He whose own name is good for nothing in his own esteem, acts wisely to rest in another name, even that best of names, the name of Jehovah. God will always have a trusting people, and these will be an afflicted and poor people. Little as the world thinks of them, their being left in the midst of a nation is the channel of untold blessings to it. Here we have the conserving salt which keeps in check the corruption which is in the world through lust.

Again the question comes home to each one of us: am I one of them? Am I afflicted by the sin within me and around me? Am I poor in spirit, poor spiritually in my own judgment? Do I trust in the Lord? That is the main business. Jesus reveals the name, the character, the person of God: am I trusting in Him? If so, I am left in this world for a purpose. Lord, help me to fulfill it.

Zephaniah 3:13

C H Spurgeon

Faith's Checkbook

A Shepherd Secures Them

“They shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”—Zephaniah 3:13

YESTERDAY we thought of the afflicted and poor people whom the Lord left to be a living seed in a dead world. The prophet says of such that they shall not work iniquity nor speak lies. So that while they had neither rank nor riches to guard them, they were also quite unable to use those weapons in which the wicked place so much reliance: they could neither defend themselves by sin nor by subtlety.

What then? Would they be destroyed? By no means! They should both feed and rest, and be not merely free from danger, but even quiet from fear of evil. Sheep are very feeble creatures, and wolves are terrible enemies; yet at this hour, sheep are more numerous than wolves, and the cause of the sheep is always winning, while the cause of the wolves is always declining. One day flocks of sheep will cover the plains, and not a wolf will be left. The fact is that sheep have a shepherd, and this gives them provender, protection, and peace. “None,” which means not one, whether in human or diabolical form, “shall make them afraid.” Who shall terrify the Lord’s flock when He is near? We lie down in green pastures, for Jesus Himself is food and rest to our souls.

Zephaniah 3:14-20

He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing. - Zephaniah 3:17

TODAY IN THE WORD

Ethelda Bleibtrey, the first woman ever to win a gold medal for the United States in the Olympics, was quite an unlikely hero.

Affected by polio as a child, Bleibtrey took up swimming to help her overcome the effects of her illness. By the time women’s swimming was added to the 1920 Olympic program, she held the world record in the 100-yard backstroke. Unfortunately, only three events were scheduled, and her specialty wasn’t one of them. She entered the races anyway--and won three gold medals! In fact, she won every race in which she swam between 1920 and 1922.

Victory brings gladness and joy. On the Day of the Lord, God’s triumph will spur praise from His people. Today’s verses are actually the second and third stanzas of a prophetic oracle begun in yesterday’s reading. Now that we understand that the Day of the Lord is a day of redemption (not only wrath or judgment), the natural conclusion to the book of Zephaniah is praise.

In fact, praise is the primary responsibility of God’s people. When God does what He has promised for Israel, they are to sing, be glad, rejoice, and fearlessly trust in Him. The same principle holds true for us--when God does what He promises, we praise His name and trust Him to guarantee the future.

In an immediate sense, we see in Scripture how some of these words were fulfilled when God brought a remnant back from Exile. In a future sense, we know He’ll still keep these promises to Israel during the glorious reign of Christ. Since the prophecy and encouragement flows from God’s character, all believers can rejoice in these words of hope.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

If you wish, do additional Bible study today or sometime soon on the phrase “the day of the Lord.” Where else does it appear in

Scripture? In what contexts? What meanings are associated with this phrase and what events take place on this day? How might this concept affect your daily spiritual life? ([Today in the Word. Moody Bible Institute. Used by Permission. All rights reserved](#))

Zephaniah 3:17 Judges 4:17-22; 5:24-31

The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. - Zephaniah 3:17

TODAY IN THE WORD

On February 21, 1980, New York Times columnist Dave Anderson wrote, “Unless the ice melts, or unless the United States team or another team performs a miracle ... the Russians are expected to easily win the Olympic gold medal for the sixth time in the last seven tournaments.” On February 22, 1980, the U.S. Olympic hockey team—comprised mainly of college students—defeated the mighty Soviet hockey juggernaut. As sportscaster Al Michaels called the final seconds of the game, he exclaimed, “Do you believe in miracles? YES!”

If Dave Anderson had been writing about the chances for Israel to defeat Sisera, he probably would have described it as an easy win for the Canaanites. And if Al Michaels were calling the play-by-play on the battle, he might have declared Israel’s victory a miracle. Scripture notes the great power and military prowess of Sisera (4:3). But this oppressive general wasn’t slaughtered on the field of battle or overpowered in a duel with another soldier. God had a far more deliciously poetic justice in store.

As Sisera’s army was routed by Barak, he fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of a nomad who had a friendly relationship with the Canaanite king. She offered him milk and then delivered a mallet, driving a tent peg through his skull. Sisera’s death was God’s judgment for his tyranny over Israel; the means of Sisera’s death was God’s judgment on Barak for his lack of faith (4:9).

Deborah’s song of victory and praise to the Lord highlights the irony of Sisera’s demise. As his mother waited for the “clatter of his chariots,” the symbols of his brutality, her servants assured her that he was likely delayed by enjoying the spoils of victory and ravishing the women (vv. 28-30). But in fact, Sisera was destroyed by a woman who spoiled his victory. The dramatic downfall of Sisera revealed the miracle of God’s deliverance. He rescued His people, and He used surprising means to do it. He is a God who works miracles.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Do you feel overwhelmed by the challenges facing you? Perhaps temptation seems too strong to resist, or a long season of suffering feels like it will never end. You might endure opposition from colleagues or loved ones or face obstacles that threaten to smother your joy in Christ. God has not changed—He still works miracles on behalf of His people. He still defeats mighty strongholds of sin and oppression. He tells us, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 4:9; see 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

Zephaniah 3:14-20

The Power of Love

The documentary film *Young@Heart* gives a rollicking look at a senior chorus of 24 singers whose average age is 80. Filled with humor and poignant moments, the film includes this remarkable singing group’s deeply moving performance at a New England prison. When the concert concludes, the singers walk into the audience, greeting the surprised prisoners with handshakes and hugs.

The inmates’ unexpected amazement at this personal touch reminds me of the book of Zephaniah in which the prophet brings a powerful message of God’s presence and love to His people during a dark time: “The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing” (Zeph 3:17).

According to Bible teacher Henrietta Mears, Zephaniah “begins with sorrow but ends with singing. The first of the book is full of sadness and gloom, but the last contains one of the sweetest songs of love in the Old Testament.”

God’s love for us is always astonishing, especially when it touches us at a low ebb of life. During our darkest times, the Lord comes to us with His joy, His love, and His song.

If your heart is filled with sadness,

Or you struggle with despair,

Turn to God, who’ll bring you gladness

When you sense His love and care. —Sper

In God's garden of love, you are His forget-me-not.

Zephaniah 3:15

C H Spurgeon

Faith's Checkbook

He Routs Our Enemy

"He hath cast out thine enemy."—Zephaniah 3:15

WHAT a casting out was that! Satan has lost his throne in our nature even as he lost his seat in heaven. Our Lord Jesus has destroyed the enemy's reigning power over us. He may worry us, but he cannot claim us as his own. His bonds are no longer upon our spirits: the Son has made us free, and we are free indeed.

Still is the arch-enemy the accuser of the brethren, but even from this position our Lord has driven him. Our advocate silences our accuser. The Lord rebukes our enemies and pleads the causes of our soul, so that no harm comes of all the devil's revilings.

As a tempter, the evil spirit still assails us and insinuates himself into our minds, but thence also is he cast out as to his former preeminence. He wriggles about like a serpent, but he cannot rule like a sovereign. He hurls in blasphemous thoughts when he has opportunity, but what a relief it is when he is told to be quiet and is made to slink off like a whipped cur! Lord, do this for any who are at this time worried and wearied by his barkings. Cast out their enemy, and be thou glorious in their eyes. Thou hast cast him down; Lord cast him out. Oh, that thou wouldst banish him from the world!

Zephaniah 3:17

Our Daily Homily

F B Meyer

The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, a Mighty One who will save. (r.v.) Zephaniah 3:17

If this announcement is compared with the foregoing verse, it becomes apparent that only those may take its blessed comfort who have made the Lord their King. It is when the Lord, the King of Israel, is in the midst that we cease to fear the incursion of evil. Entire surrender and consecration must precede that deliverance from the power of evil which we all desire in our holiest hours.

O tempted one, who fearest every hour because of the fury of the foe, that seems only waiting to destroy, look no longer upon him, but behold thy glorious Lord. "He will save." Dare to repeat those words again and again, as a sweet refrain. Dare to believe that the battle is not yours, but his. Fear not; nor let thine hands be slack! Do thy work in the world, and let God keep thee.

But God will do more than save the yielded trusting one. He will rejoice over the soul that finds its all in Himself. Such exquisite satisfaction will fill his glorious nature, that it shall be as when the heart can no longer contain itself, and wells over with liquid music. It is much to hear a nightingale sing; more to hear an angel; more to hear some child of Adam redeemed from sin sing the new song: but most to hear the great God break out into song. So a mother sings over her babe. O my God, may my life give Thee joy; not grief, nor tears, but a song.

But He does not always express Himself thus. He is sometimes "silent in his love." At such times He does not speak or sing, but broods over the soul that has dared to trust Him. "He will rest in his love." There are times when the heart is too full of blessedness to speak—it has learned to abide in the secret place. An ocean too full to permit of waves!

Zephaniah 3:17

C H Spurgeon

Faith's Checkbook

The Reason for Singing

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."—Zephaniah 3:17

WHAT a word is this! Jehovah God in the center of His people in all the majesty of His power! This presence alone suffices to inspire us with peace and hope. Treasures of boundless might are stored in our Jehovah, and He dwells in His church; therefore may His people shout for joy.

We not only have His presence, but He is engaged upon His choice work of salvation. "He will save." He is always saving: He takes His name of Jesus from it. Let us not fear any danger for He is mighty to save.

Nor is this all. He abides evermore the same; He loves, He finds rest in loving, and He will not cease to love. His love gives Him joy. He even finds a theme for song in His beloved. This is exceedingly wonderful. When God wrought creation He did not sing, but simply said, "It is very good." But when He came to redemption, then the sacred Trinity felt a joy to be expressed in song. Think of it and be astonished! Jehovah Jesus sings a marriage song over His chosen bride. She is to Him His love, His joy, His rest, His song. O Lord Jesus, by thine immeasurable love to us, teach us to love thee, to rejoice in thee, and to sing unto thee our Life-psalm.

The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.

ZEPHANIAH 3:17

We need not fret, for God sees what is coming. The prophet writes about two future "days" that relate to the Jewish people: a judgment day when the nations will attack Jerusalem (Zeph. 1:1–3:7), and a joyful day when the Lord will rescue his people (Zeph 3:8–20). "Do not fear," the Lord says to them, for he is with them to deliver them (v. 16). We can depend on his love, for it will never fail. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). As the psalmist wrote, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1).

Our God not only saves, but he sings. In our text we see God the Father as a loving parent, holding a troubled child in his lap and singing the child to sleep. Imagine! The Father tenderly holds us and soothes our troubled heart. In Matthew 26:30, we find God the Son singing at the Passover feast before going to the garden to pray and then to Calvary to die. We also find Jesus singing after his resurrection victory (Ps. 22:22; Heb. 2:12). The Holy Spirit sings in and through God's church when we assemble for worship and are yielded to him (Eph. 5:18–21). There are times in the Christian's life when nothing seems to bring peace. Circumstances are pressing, people are too busy to listen, and even our prayers seem ineffective. That's the time to be silent before the Lord and let him sing you into peace. Don't try to explain it, because God's peace "surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7); just enjoy it.

But there is even more. The Lord not only sees what is coming, saves us from judgment, and sings to us, but he rejoices over us. We can make God happy! Parents cherish those times when their children bring great joy to their hearts because of some act of spontaneous obedience and love or because of something very special the children have done just to please them. It isn't enough to simply know God's will and do it; we must also do it to please him. Jonah finally got to Nineveh and delivered God's message, but his attitude was all wrong. He hated the people to whom he was preaching and finally went outside the city and pouted, hoping God would destroy it (Jonah 4). Jesus said, "I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29). The Father wants us to "walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him" (Col. 1:10). God told the priests in Malachi's day, "I have no pleasure in you" (Mal. 1:10). Our living should be like our giving, "not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

"He will be quiet in his love" is another way to translate our text. People who constantly tell us they love us can be as irritating as those who rarely tell us, but where our love is growing deeper, it is expressed in silence as well as in speech. When the Lord is not speaking to us or doing things for us, he is still loving us; and the "silent love" can be enjoyed just as much as if not more than spoken words. Babies who cannot speak express love to their parents, and parents can express and tell their love to their children even when they are silent. Call for silence in a worship service and people become nervous. With longtime friends, there is a silence of communion that says more than words, and this includes God's silent love for us.

Is the Father rejoicing over us? - Warren Wiersbe - OT Words for Today

The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, In those who hope in His mercy. Psalm 147:11

Zephaniah 3:19

C H Spurgeon

Faith's Checkbook

Word to Him Who Halts

"I will save her that halteth."—Zephaniah 3:19

THERE are plenty of these lame ones, both male and female. You may meet "her that halteth" twenty times in an hour. They are in

the right road, and exceedingly anxious to run in it with diligence; but they are lame, and make a sorry walk of it. On the heavenly road there are many cripples. It may be that they say in their hearts, what will become of us? Sin will overtake us. Satan will throw us down. Ready-to-halt is our name and our nature; the Lord can never make good soldiers of us, nor even nimble messengers to go on His errands. Well, well! He will save us, and that is no small thing. He says, "I will save her that halteth." In saving us, He will greatly glorify Himself. Everybody will ask how came this lame woman to run the race and win the crown? And then the praise will all be given to almighty grace.

Lord, though I halt in faith, in prayer, in praise, in service, and in patience, save me, I beseech thee! Only thou canst save such a cripple as I am. Lord, let me not perish because I am among the hindmost, but gather up by thy grace the slowest of thy pilgrims, even me. Behold He hath said that it shall be so. Therefore, like Jacob, prevailing in prayer, I go forward though my sinew be shrunk.