

July 3, 2016

"The LORD Your God"

Today I want to look at one of my favorite verses in the Bible, Zephaniah 3:17. But I want to begin by reading from: Zephaniah 3:13-20

13 The remnant of Israel will do no wrong;
they will never tell lies or deceive one another.
They will eat and sleep in safety,
and no one will make them afraid."

14 Sing, O daughter of Zion;
shout aloud, O Israel!
Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!

15 For the LORD will remove his hand of judgment
and will disperse the armies of your enemy.
And the LORD himself, the King of Israel,
will live among you!
At last your troubles will be over,
and you will never again fear disaster.

16 On that day the announcement to Jerusalem will be,
"Cheer up, Zion! Don't be afraid!"

17 For the LORD your God is living among you.
He is a mighty savior.
He will take delight in you with gladness.
With his love, he will calm all your fears.
He will rejoice over you with joyful songs."

18 "I will gather you who mourn for the appointed festivals;
you will be disgraced no more.

19 And I will deal severely with all who have oppressed you.
I will save the weak and helpless ones;
I will bring together
those who were chased away.
I will give glory and fame to my former exiles,
wherever they have been mocked and shamed.

20 On that day I will gather you together
and bring you home again.
I will give you a good name, a name of distinction,
among all the nations of the earth,
as I restore your fortunes before their very eyes.
I, the LORD, have spoken!"

The prophet Zephaniah wrote to warn about spiritual complacency. Zephaniah 1:12
I will search with lanterns in Jerusalem's darkest corners to punish those who sit
complacent in their sins. They think the LORD will do nothing to them, either good or
bad.

Complacency is when we can and should do more or be more but instead we are satisfied to stay where we are. This is always bad, but especially when it comes to our Spiritual life.

TEACHER: "Can someone tell me what the 'status quo' is?"

STUDENT: "That's a fancy name for the mess most of us are in."

Zephaniah wrote to a people once devoted to the Lord who had become complacent. One of the greatest obstacles to getting anything done for the Kingdom of God is complacency. Always guard against it.

The downfall of the church in America is a pervasive absence of zeal—zeal based on knowledge, that is. In other words, complacency has taken over in far too many churches. Complacency is a habitual, uninspired—doing what we do often for traditional reasons rather than because it's best.

"Change is not what we expect from religious people. They tend to love the past more than the present or the future."

— Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (Franciscan Friar Priest of the Roman Catholic Church)

This lack of zeal is a sin. But the people of Zephaniah's time convinced themselves that the Lord didn't care how they acted. They became complacent in their sins. They put their hope and security in things other than God. Listen, make sure that your security lies in the only sure shelter in the world – a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the basis for all we need, to be diligent rather than indifferent.

In Christ we have a living hope. This is why we can have joy and confidence even in the midst of the difficulties and troubles of this world; because we have a living hope in a Mighty Savior. And He is truly a Mighty Savior and the fact that He is a Mighty Savior; is the basis for our:

Joy (v14)

Sing, ...shout aloud ...Be glad and rejoice with all your heart

We sing and shout with joy to and about Jesus because He is a Mighty Savior. This joy is an outward expression but it is also a joy inward, let it be great. Those of you who love God with all their heart, with all your heart rejoice in Him. It was promised (v. 13) that their sins should be taken away and their fears silenced, and then follows, *Sing and rejoice*. Those who are changed by Christ have cause to rejoice.

(v15)

For the LORD will remove his hand of judgment
and will disperse the armies of your enemy.

And the LORD himself, the King of Israel,
will live among you!

At last your troubles will be over,

and you will never again fear disaster.

Judgment is removed; the act, the place, the (law) suit, the crime, and the penalty. The enemy is dispersed or the enemy has been turned away. Our chief enemy is sin in conduct and sin in the heart. To turn from sin and to have sin removed prepares the way for a fully victorious existence. When sin is removed we are prepared for the Lord Himself to be present to protect.

God's promises, applied by faith, gives the followers of Jesus constant and abundant means for joy; they are filled with joy and peace in believing these promises. Joy and protection because He is truly a Mighty Savior.

Confidence and Passion - rather than complacency Zephaniah 3:16 NIV

On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp.

The announcement is... Cheer up, don't be afraid. God's presence gives peace of heart. Trust in God is to throw off all discouragements. Don't give into fear when things are bad, don't fear the worse, but have hope. Do not despair; do not give way to doubts and fears. Have confidence in God, Cheer up, lift your spirit.

Hebrews 12:12

So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees.

Fear will sap your passion to act, but faith and hope will give you passion and joy; the joy of the Lord will be your strength. Peace rather than fear; zeal rather than complacency. Confidence and passion / enthusiasm because He is truly a Mighty Savior.

Restoration (vv18 - 20)

"I will gather you who mourn ... you will be disgraced no more.

And I will deal severely with all who have oppressed you.

I will save the weak and helpless ones;

I will bring together

those who were chased away.

I will give glory and fame to my former exiles,

wherever they have been mocked and shamed.

On that day I will gather you together

and bring you home again.

I will give you a good name, a name of distinction,

among all the nations of the earth,

as I restore your fortunes before their very eyes.

I, the LORD, have spoken!"

God comforts and restores those who mourn. God forgives and brings home again

those who were separated from Him by sin. He will give you who have ruined your name, who have a bad reputation and a bad name, He will give you a good name, and a new name. In Christ we find rest and restoration because He is a Mighty Savior.

Jesus our Savior is the basis for our joy passion, and restoration the very thing we need to stay diligent.

Complacency takes away joy. Christians ought to be the most joyful people on earth – joyful in the Lord and under His protection; Christians ought to be the most confident people on earth – confident in the Lord and therefore full of passion and zeal for the Lord. Even in the midst of troubles of this world we have peace, rest, for in Christ we have been restored. This is how we rise above troubles as we ought:

(v14) Shout for Joy, sing with enthusiasm. We rise above our trouble in giving praise to God – not for the troubles, but in spite of them.

(v16) Do not be afraid. Do not fear the future as one without hope.

(16) The third way to rise above your troubles and difficulties is to not become complacent, slack, lazy in the work God has given you .

Be a joyful people. Do you think the Lord is telling us rejoice if you feel like it? No to rejoice is a command.

There are three pillars on which our joy, passion, and restoration rest. They are found in Zephaniah 3:17 and I want to share them with you today. But before I can share these three pillars I need to first share with you the foundation on which the pillars rest. For these pillars must have a sure foundation. What is that sure foundation? It is this: The LORD your God! That is how Zephaniah 3:17 begins... For the LORD your God

LORD all in caps indicates the name YAHWEH – the Great I AM. The Lord God, the self-existing, unchanging, ever living God. The great and awesome, mighty God.

Our Joy is not in circumstances but in your God who controls them. Do you trust God? Joy comes from knowing God. He is the Lord YOUR God. You know Him, you can speak to Him, not everyone can say, “my God.” He is not a God you create He is the God who is! If you don’t know Him it is because you can only know Him through Jesus Christ. Can you say that? Can you say you know Him through Jesus Christ? If not you can. You can know God when you put your faith in Jesus and what He has done for you. When you do you will be able to say He is the Lord YOUR God. You must have that foundation - a relationship with God – if the pillars I want to share with you today are to stand. Do you know Him? Here are the pillars:

1. The Presence of God

For the LORD your God is living among you.

God is with you, He is Immanuel, God with us... and so it is like Isaiah said (shared last week):

I like the way Eugene Peterson put it in THE MESSAGE:

When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you.

When you're in rough waters, you will not go down.

When you're between a rock and a hard place,

it won't be a dead end —

Because I am GOD , your personal God,

The Holy of Israel, your Savior.

When you go through difficulty and challenges remember to tell yourself, “God is with me.” I can remember as a child being in a tough situation, I didn’t know what to do, or what I was going to do. I was uptight. But then my dad showed up and a relief came over me as I thought, “oh, good Dad is here, everything is going to be okay.”

The presence of God is in our midst. When we live with the realization of God always being present we will live a godly walk. We will surrender to Him and His will. God will purify our lips and lives see...

Zephaniah 3:9, 11

Then I will purify the speech of all people... On that day you will no longer need to be ashamed, for you will no longer be rebels against me.

Then, as we saw in v16, God will give us great boldness, zeal for Christ because we know He will never leave or forsake us. And then as we saw in v20 we will be a witness for Christ. We will have a great testimony to our community who will say, “see how much they love their God.”

2. The Power of God

He is a mighty savior (Champion, Rescuer, Redeemer, Hero). He is mighty to bring deliverance and salvation. Our God is not a wimp! He is mighty. He will do what He said He will do. Pray that God will keep you from complacency and bring you from complacency to passionately delight in the God of your Salvation. Then non-believers will come and say, “I want to know your God.” And you will be bringing people to church who are hungry for God.

3. The Promises of God

He will take delight in you with gladness. (He is grieved by the sin of sinners, but delights in the grace & service of His saints. God takes great pleasure in those who accept His Son, Jesus). With joy and gladness God delights or is pleased to see His people. Ann and I are going to NC at the end of this month, we can’t wait to see our son and daughter-in-law. With glad hearts we will delight in seeing them. We found out on Thursday that they are having a boy. Some of you know what it is like to have grandchildren. We don’t know that joy yet, so I can’t even image how it is go to be when we will be traveling to NC to see a grandchild. Some of you know what a joy that is. God delights in you. You say, “me, God takes pleasure in me? Yes! Rest in his

love. God so loved you that He sent His only Son, Jesus to save you. God is satisfied that Jesus accomplished His purpose, to redeem you. And so **With his love, he will calm all your fears.** ([One day fear will be completely done away with, yet even now His perfect love calms and drives out fear).

He will rejoice over you with joyful songs. ([This is why I love this verse: God rejoiced over you and not only rejoices, He actually sings about you... with joy. He not only loves you, He loves to love you...so much that God breaks out in song. God spoke when He created, but when you were redeemed He had to sing. What must it be like to hear God sing? Can you even imagine how beautiful that must be?

The presence of God, the Power of God, the Promises of God this is our delight and joy, this is why we are not afraid, this is what should turn our complacency into passionate zeal for the Lord, this is what should restore us.

This is what Jesus had to say about complacency: **Revelation 3:15-16**

I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!

Jesus gave the lukewarm congregation of Laodicea two simple steps to changing their condition: (1) Admission of their situation ("repentance"), and, (2) Sincere change of behavior ("be zealous").

Revelation 3:19

So be diligent and turn from your indifference.

Turn from your indifference to God and serving His Kingdom, and replace it with diligence. Don't think God doesn't care or will do nothing about your sin. Seek the Lord your God; receive his Presence, Power, and Promises. He will restore you and your passion and joy.

<u>Joy</u>	<u>passion</u>	<u>restoration</u>
P	P	P
R		R
E	O	O
S		M
E	W	I
N		S
C	E	
E	R	E

The LORD your God