

NEWSLETTER 2024-5

To: My Fellow Saints and Well-Wishers

Date: October 7, 2024

Re: God is With His People Always – He is With You!! Zeph. 3:17

“The LORD your God is in your midst, of you, a Mighty One, a Savior [Who saves]! He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest [in silent satisfaction] and in His love He will be silent and make no mention [of past sins, or even recall them]; He will exult over you with singing.” (Zeph. 3:17 Amplified Bible)

Beloved, it seems as if the adverse situations in the world continue on and on and so many are living in despondency, but in God we have assurance that better days will come! **Let not fear and doubts rob us of our hope in God!**

Isa. 41:10 NKJV

“Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

As observed in the work of other prophets, the **Book of Zephaniah** follows a pattern of judgment on all people for their sin, followed by the restoration of God’s chosen people. Various themes are noted in the Book of Zephaniah but at this time, note three main factors.

1. God is Sovereign over all.
2. The wicked will be punished and the righteous will be vindicated on the day of judgment.
3. God blesses those who repent and trust in Him.

Zephaniah 3: Warns the people to turn away from their idol worship and disobedience to God, and urge them to return to the God of their forefathers. Not only does God’s presence brings joy that cast out fear, but it also brings restoration of justice and help to the poor.

Zephaniah 3:17: Reminds us that God is with His people always . . . *“The LORD your God in your midst . . .”* He is the mighty one who will save you, not just in the future, but today. He is your Savior, the Almighty God, and *“will rejoice over you with gladness.”*

In our focus verse (Zeph. 3:17), the prophet Zephaniah was offering hope to Judah. His reason for writing was for the people to turn from their sinful ways and return to the God of their forefathers, who was willing to forgive, heal, and restore them. Beloved, God is still reaching out to the world today to meet His conditions and He will heal the land!! (2 Chron. 7:14; Isa. 55:6-7).

A. Delightful Presence of the Almighty God Zeph. 3:17a

“The LORD your God in your midst . . .” (Zeph. 3:17a NKJV)

The phrase noted in Zeph. 3:17a, is about God’s presence with His people. Some refer to it as a summary of God’s heart for His people, and it reminds us that God rejoices in His people and in great delight (See Psa. 147:11-12; 149:4; etc.).

We can also say that God's presence is the foundation on which we are established; **definitely, "all other ground is sinking sand!"** It is with Him we have fellowship; this is the ground of our testimony. Our God is not in some distant land but always in our midst and His presence guarantees our joy! (1 John 1:1-4; etc.).

Our God dwells in us (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; etc.). Even in the midst of our challenges, those seemingly prevailing situations or whatever adverse circumstances, God is always there and He know all the details (see Psa. 139, NB Vv. 7-12, highlight v. 7).

What happens when we take time to remember God's faithfulness, even in those times we struggle with faithfulness? We acknowledge our situation. We seek His presence. We worship. We praise! We thank Him for being our faithful God, and in those expressions of love to Him, God takes delight.

His presence is our greatest desire and we ought to live a life worthy of such blessings.

Note some examples of our benefits:

1. There is hope in the presence of God. (Psa. 62:5-6; Jer. 17:7-8; 1 Peter 1:3-4)
2. There is love in the presence of God. (John 15:13; Rom. 8:37-39; 1 John 3:16)
3. There is joy in the presence of God. (Psa. 16:11; Isa. 35:10; Rom. 14:17)
4. There is peace in the presence of God. (Isa. 26:3; John 14:27; Phil 4:6-7)
5. There is protection in the presence of God. (Psa. 121, NB v. 4; Isa. 54:17; 2 Thess. 3:3-5)
6. There is comfort in the presence of God. (Psa. 23, NB v. 4; Isa. 49:13; 2 Cor. 1:3-4)
7. There is provision in the presence of God. (Matt. 6:25-34, NB Vv.31-34; Luke 12:22-34, NB Vv. 24-28; Phil. 4:19)
8. Etc.

B. Deliverance Assured . . . He is Mighty! Zeph. 3:17b

" . . . The Mighty One, will save, . . . " (Zeph. 3:17b NKJV)

He is mighty: that is possessing great and impressive power or strength. The phrase, **"God is mighty"**, means that **God has great and impressive power and strength, and that this power is unfathomably greater than anything in the world.** The word **"mighty"** is a translation of the Hebrew word **"gibbor"** which means: "strength, power, hero, warrior."

In Isaiah 9:6, Jesus is referred to as **"Mighty God"** or **"El Gibbor"**, which means: "God of power, God our hero, and God our warrior." The phrase **"God is mighty"** can also be used to describe God's acts such as the creation of the world or the redemption of the Jewish people through miracles. For example, Psalm 147, says: *"Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite."* (v. 5 NKJV). **The main idea of the psalm (147): It is good and right to praise our incomparable God, the Creator and Redeemer, who delights in His people.**

I know that we are living in desperate times, but it's always important to remember: the Almighty God abides in the center of our lives and surely will deliver!! Too many are overcome with fear and hopelessness, etc. . . . However, the Scriptures asks: "What then shall we say to [all] this? If God is for us, who [can be] against us? [Who can be our foe, if God is on our side?] [Psa.118:6]" (Rom. 8:31 Amplified Bible)

Oh, beloved, God is ever faithful, remember that, ". . . *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*" (see John 1:14-18; etc.). And yes! Jesus still abides with us in the person of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-31, NB Vv. 15-18; Rom. 8:9-11; etc.).

Beloved, irrespective of what or how long the situation prevails, we must not become disquieted (John 14:27; Phil. 4:6-7; etc.). Never forget that God is a God of deliverance (as a reminder, salvation means deliverance) . . . Oh! Beloved, only believe!! He is able!!

Isaiah 12:2 NKJV

"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation."

See also Psa. 27:1; 37:39; Isa. 25:9; etc.

C. Delight Over You with Gladness Zeph 3:17c

" . . . He will rejoice over you with gladness . . . " (Zeph. 3:17c NKJV)

" . . . He will rejoice over you with gladness . . . " – the KJV: "*... .. with joy ...*": he is not only pleased with you upon your repentance and commitment and becoming one of His, but will take great pleasure in you, just as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride (see Isa. 62:3-5).

Barnes comments on Zeph. 3:17, as follows:

"Love, joy, and peace in man are shadows of what is in God, by whom they are created in man. Only in God they exist undivided, uncreated. Hence, God speaks after the manner of men, of which that is truly in God. God joyeth 'with an uncreated joy' over the works of His hands or the objects of His love. So, Isaiah said, As the bridegroom rejoice over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee"

Some scholars say that God's joy in His people can be understood as admiring, delighting, and exulting love. Others say that God's joy is at the heart of our very existence, made evident in His love and joy!

Too often we fail to see God as one who also rejoices, indeed beloved, **"He will rejoice over you with gladness!"** You can have joy because your God rejoices over you; you are **not** a failure in His eyes, you may have failed in some manner but do not stay down, rise and shine and let Him have His way in your life!! He is wholeheartedly glad that you are His!! Beloved, God loves and cares for you!! He is wholeheartedly glad that you are His. It is God's desire for you to experience His glory and splendor (Psa. 8:5; 21:5; 104:1-2;

28:7; etc.). He is your joy and your strength (Neh. 8:10; Psa. 27:1; 28:7; etc.). He longs to give you a revelation of how deeply He loves you!!

God rejoices with great joy over broken, weak, struggling men and women like you and me, who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. “The Prodigal Son,” had a **“rude awakening”**, he faced the facts of his hopeless condition and returned home; upon returning home, his father had a great celebration (**Luke 15 highlighting verses: 11-32, NB Vv. 8-10**. Note also Luke 15 Vv. 3-7 and Vv. 8-10 . . . indeed, there is rejoicing in heaven even if it’s only one sinner who repents).

Beloved, the conversion of sinners and consolation of saints are the joy of angels for they are the joy of God Himself. Through the church, the entire world should find the joy guaranteed by God’s presence! (Psa. 48:1-2; etc.).

D. Divine Favor Because of His Love Zeph. 3:17d.

“ . . . He will quiet you with His love . . . ” (Zeph. 3:17 d NKJV)

To quiet someone is to hear them out, then gently respond to their concerns. Picture a loving husband doing this for his wife. She is bothered by something, worried and stressed, and she is crying. So, a husband will quiet her and speak to her in her trouble.

What a relief to hear, **“He (God) will quiet you with His love”**; He does so with words of calm, assurance and hope despite the noise of the adverse situation, as noted in our text (Zeph. 3). Judah had been hearing the warning sirens of other nations and her (Judah’s) peace had been shattered by violence (see Zeph. 1, NB Vv. 15-17; etc.), seemingly, the nation of Israel was experiencing a period of turmoil and conflict.

In the midst of it all, God showed up because He is a merciful and compassionate God! Despite it all, Judah still rebelled against God’s will and even then, God extended a promise of restoration; (time is not available, but note carefully Zeph. 3: 1-7, 8-13, 14-15, 16-20 . . . note what is conveyed in each of these paragraphs; etc.).

This I can say but briefly: The message of doom, seen in the beginning of the Book of Zephaniah becomes a message of hope in the end. There will be a new day for the nation of Israel when God blesses His people! **Our lesson: “Let us take heed and yield to God’s perfect will!”**

You can have joy because your God will shepherd you to the **still waters!** His love will guide you to quiet places where your heart can rest. He will calm the areas of your life that are burdened and stressed by covering you in the depths of His love and affections. You can have peace today in the presence of your heavenly Father no matter what the situation you may find yourself in!! God is able!!! Yes!! He is able!!! And will deliver!!!

Your God will quiet you by His love as you follow the leadership of His Spirit. Indeed, **“He will calm you with His love.”** Recognize God’s presence, trust in His sovereignty, bolster your faith, and embrace His love!! (Psa. 24:4; 34:4; 94:19; Isa. 41:10; 1 John 4:18)

E. Declaration Express with Singing Zeph. 3:17e.

“. . . He will rejoice over you with singing.” (Zeph. 3:17e NKJV)

What we are observing in this final phrase of Zeph. 3:17, is God’s pleasure, His delight, expressed by **“singing”** . . . some associated words base on the Hebrew usage are: gladness, joy, shouting, rejoicing, etc. Two important observations regarding the phrase: **“He will rejoice with singing.”**

First: Singing represents God’s joy. The Hebrew phrase (Zeph. 3:17e) can literally be translated as: **“He rejoices over you with a shout of joy.”**

Second: God’s singing parallels the singing of His people in Jerusalem. **“Singing aloud, O daughter of Zion.”** (See Zeph. 3:14).

This unit of poetry begins with the people of Jerusalem singing praise to God and end with God singing over His people, and He expresses joy when His people praise Him.

The word picture in Zephaniah 3:17 is full of emotion. God the Father is the One who holds His daughter Jerusalem and sings joyfully in her presence. Just as a loving parent cradles a child and sings out of love, so God’s song over His people is born out of His great love. After a time of hardship, our loving Lord dries His people tears, comforts their hearts and welcomes them to a new world!

Allow me to recap briefly: **“He will rejoice over you with singing”**: One of the synonyms for **“rejoice”** is **“exult.”** To **“exult”** is to be joyful or jubilant because of a triumph or success. You can joy today because God sees you as a victor, one who triumphs. You have been transformed! You are a new creation! You are now what God has most desired for you!

His chief longing has always been one of a personal relationship and by faith in Jesus Christ you have met those criteria. God **exults** over you today, just as you are, continuing to commit your all to Him! **“He rejoices over you with a shout of joy!!”**

We often think of angels singing, exalting God, and never think of Him singing. Here (Zeph. 3:17e), we are told: **“The LORD your God takes great delight in you, so much that ‘He will rejoice over you with singing!’”**

Psa. 147:11 Amplified Bible

“The Lord takes pleasure in those who reverently and worshipfully fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy and loving -kindness. [Psa. 145:20].”

Beloved, amidst all that is happening today and will happen in the future, I once more encourage you to continue to be strong in the Lord, He has guaranteed never to leave nor forsake us and we are reminded that although Jesus Christ ascended to heaven God’s presence continues to be in us through the Holy Spirit (John 14:26-27; Rom. 8:10-20; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; etc.). Adverse situations will confront us but as Jesus said **“Let not your hearts be troubled . . .”** (John 14:1a) (See also John 14:8; 16:22;33; 2 Thess. 2:16; etc.).

The hymn **“He Abides”** by Herbert Buffum

I'm rejoicing night and day
 As I walk the narrow way,
 For the hand of God in all my life I see;
 And the reason of my bliss,
 Yes, the secret all is this:

The Comforter abides with me

Refrain:

He abides, He abides;
 Hallelujah, He abides with me!
 I'm rejoicing night and day
 As I walk the narrow way,

For the Comforter abides with me.

Once my heart was full of sin,
 Once I had no peace within,
 Till I heard how Jesus died upon the tree;
 Then I fell down at His feet,
 And there came a peace so sweet;

Now the Comforter abides with me.

He is within me everywhere,
 And He knows my every care;
 I'm as happy as a bird and just as free;
 For the Spirit has control;
 Jesus satisfies my soul,

Since the Comforter abides with me.

There's no thirsting for the things
 Of the world—they've taken wings;
 Long ago I gave them up, and instantly
 All my night was turned to day,
 All my burdens rolled away;

Now the comforter abides with me.

(Emphasis mine)

Website Update

Psalms 42/43, Parts A and B along with their Review Questions and Answers were uploaded to the website early August (2024). Psalms 45 and 46 will be posted by mid-October.

Thank you for your continued prayers and God richly bless you and your wonderful family.

Yours-in-Christ
 Bishop K. Wright