



February 9, 2020
“When God Sings”
Zephaniah 1 - 3
Pastor Gary Hamrick

Did you know the Bible actually tells us that “God sings”? What makes God sing? Two words: You do! The prophet Zephaniah tells us that God has such love for his redeemed children that he expresses that joy through song. Perhaps you have struggled with a perception of God – that he is angry and vengeful and could never really love or forgive you. While it’s true that God is certainly holy and just, the Bible emphasizes his mercy and love over his wrath and anger. It’s a staggering thought that the God of the universe rejoices over us with singing, but that’s what the Bible says! In this message Pastor Gary teaches on God’s delight over his children.

Historical Background

1. Zephaniah was the great-grandson of King Hezekiah.
2. In Hebrew, his name is Tsephanyah, which means the Lord hides.
3. Zephaniah prophesied to the southern kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Josiah, circa 630 B.C.
 - a. Josiah was king of Judah from 640 B.C. to 609 B.C.
 - i. He became king when he was only eight years old after his father, King Amon, was assassinated.
 - ii. There were no “good” kings in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, but there were a few “good” kings in the history of the southern kingdom of Judah, and Josiah was one of the “good” kings.
 - iii. When Josiah was 16 years old, he sought the Lord.
 - iv. When Josiah was 20 years old, he was convicted about the major problem of idolatry in Judah and purposed to rid the land of idols.
 - v. When Josiah was 26 years old, he began the restoration of the Temple

in Jerusalem.

- vi. In the process of restoring the Temple, the book of the Law of God was found, and Josiah was moved to begin a spiritual renewal in Judah.
 - vii. Pastor Gary shared a three-point outline of Josiah's life that everyone should emulate: seek the Lord, get rid of idols, and read the Word of God.
4. God sent Zephaniah to prophesy and assist Josiah during the time of spiritual renewal in Judah.
5. "The Day of the Lord" is a phrase that Zephaniah used 19 times, which is more than any other book in the Old Testament.

Zephaniah Identified Two Major Sins

Idolatry

6. **Zephaniah 1:4-6** – *"I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of **Baal** from this place, **the names of the idolatrous priests with the pagan priests** – those who **worship the host of heaven** on the housetops; those who **worship and swear oaths by the LORD**, but who also **swear by Milcom [or Molech]**; those who have turned back from following the LORD, and have not sought the LORD, nor inquired of Him."* (Emphasis added)
- a. Molech was the pagan god of the Ammonites.
 - b. The worship of Molech included child sacrifice.
 - c. Idolatry of all sorts plagued the people of Israel for centuries.
7. Pastor Gary said, "[Idolatry of this kind] simply illustrates the innate need that every human being has to worship someone or something greater than himself or herself. Because we were created in the image and likeness of God, God knit within us, not just the capacity, but the desire to connect and commune with him. [What] happens is if we don't turn to him and worship him for who he is, if we don't connect and commune with God, the Creator of the universe, then what we will end up doing is deferring that [desire] to someone or something else, and we will worship that someone or that something else to satisfy the innate need we have to worship. ... [Some] have made a god of the earth. [This] is pantheism. All of [the] preoccupation with the environment has given the earth god-like status. [Nature] and trees are worshiped. [It seems to be the case that] Greta Thunberg ¹ is the goddess of the earth! ... It is a terrible day when the green sea turtle has more favored status than a baby in the womb! ... My point is, when the environment and

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta_Thunberg

created things are cherished above the Creator and what God determines is valuable, in terms of life, when you see this imbalance, it's idolizing... Idolatry is all around us, and [some] world religions still bow down to carved idols."

- a. Pastor Gary mentioned a number of things that are "idolatry" in our day, including materialism, addictive pleasure in the form of sex or alcohol or drugs, or the god of technology, and people.
- b. Pastor Gary said, "Idolatry is in the heart of every one of us at some level, competing with God for our time, attention, love, and devotion. It might be a more sophisticated form of idolatry... but it is no less offensive to God than the idolatry of other world religions."

8. Pastor Gary said, "Covetousness drains our contentment in Christ. ... What are the things that compete in our hearts for affection and devotion that should be unto the Lord?"

- a. [Colossians 3:5](#) - *"Therefore put to death... covetousness, which is idolatry."*
- b. [1 Corinthians 10:14](#) - *"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry."*
- c. [1 John 5:21](#) - *"... keep yourselves from idols."*

Complacency

9. [Zephaniah 1:12](#) - *"And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in **complacency**, who say in their heart, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.' "* (Emphasis added)

- a. Their justification for idolatry and not seeking after God was that God's not concerned about anything so why should we? Why should we care about spiritual things and communing with God? Why should we worship him, honor him, and live for him?
 - i. *"... I will punish the men who are **stagnant in spirit...**"* (NASB - New American Standard Bible - Emphasis added)

10. Pastor Gary said, "[We can become *"stagnant in spirit."*] ... We [can] end up putting God on a shelf, and we only pull him down when we need him. [The] thing that usually jolts us out of complacency is a crisis. That's when we get [really] serious with God. Have you ever noticed that in your life? ... [God was] going to bring distress in the form of the Babylonian army... Zephaniah was sent 25 years in advance to warn the people: God's judgment is coming; the day of the Lord is coming!

11. [Zephaniah 1:14-18](#) - *"the great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick*

darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. 'I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse.' Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land."

- a. Pastor Gary said, "[What was] happening in Zephaniah was a microcosm of the Tribulation that [will] happen on the earth in a day that is to come."
- b. [Revelation 6:12-17](#) is similar to the prophesy of Zephaniah, but John's prophesy is about the coming Tribulation, which will be a time of unparalleled distress.

Our Redemption

12. [Zephaniah 2:1-3](#) - *"Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, **before the decree is issued**, or the day passes like chaff, **before the LORD'S fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you!** Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that **you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger.**"* (Emphasis added)
 - a. Notice the play on words between Zephaniah's name, which means the Lord hides.
 - b. God, through Zephaniah, was warning the people to get right with him **before** judgment comes. (Emphasis added)
 - c. Lot and his family were rescued **before** the judgment of God in the form of fire and brimstone came upon Sodom and Gomorrah. (Emphasis added)
 - d. Noah and his family were rescued **before** the judgment of God in the form of a world-wide flood came upon the earth. (Emphasis added)
 - e. Pastor Gary said, "The same is true in the day of Tribulation that is coming. The Bible teaches that [Christians] will be rescued **before** the great and dreadful day of the Lord. The fact of the matter is that it is true for every single one of us who have trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We are hidden in Christ and kept from the wrath of God. Why? Because Jesus took on the wrath of God intended for us though he had committed no sin. He [died] on a cross and he [took] the punishment intended for us because of our sin..." (Emphasis added)
 - i. [Colossians 3:3](#) - *"For you died, and your life is **hidden with Christ in God.**"* (Emphasis added)

God's Rejoicing

13. [Zephaniah 3:14-17](#) – *“Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD Has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall see disaster no more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: ‘Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. 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.**’ ” (Emphasis added)*

14. Pastor Gary said, “When you come to him humble and broken and contrite, and you surrender your life to Jesus, he rejoices *‘over you with gladness... he will quiet you with His love... [and] He will rejoice over you with singing.’* Imagine this, the Creator of the universe has a song about you! ... What Zephaniah is saying to us is that redeemed people bring so much joy to God that he expresses his emotion concerning his love for us with a song. [He] is not singing because of what we’ve done; he’s singing because of what his son [Jesus] Christ has done in giving his life for us that it might mend the broken relationship that we have with God, so that by the death and sacrifice of Christ we might have... mutual relationship with the Creator of the universe. And this is why God sings. Some of you, your perception of God is scary, and don’t misunderstand, he is a holy and righteous God... he is just and perfect in all of his ways. [Some] of you need to have an understanding that God is also a God of mercy, grace, love, and compassion, who actually sings over his redeemed people. That’s how much God is in love with you. And whenever the enemy tries to play games in your head by trying to make you think that God could never love you, [forgive you, because you are just] a miserable, broken person... The next time the enemy tries to make you think that you are [nothing] but trash, you remember that God is always in the recycling business, and that he takes lives, and he redeems lives, and he restores lives, and he rejoices over lives of his children who have been redeemed by the blood of his son, Jesus Christ!”

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Zephaniah 1:1 3; 2:1-3](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Provide an overview of the life of Zephaniah. (See #1 through #5 above)
3. Read [Zephaniah 1:4-6](#) and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about the innate need every human being has to worship. (See #6 and #7 above)
4. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they were discontent and unsettled because of covetousness.

5. Read and discuss [Colossians 3:5](#), [1 Corinthians 10:14](#), and [1 John 5:21](#). (See #8 above)
6. Read and discuss [Zephaniah 1:12](#).
7. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they were complacent and "*stagnant in spirit*." (See #9 and #10 above)
8. Read and discuss [Zephaniah 1:14-18](#). (See #11 above)
9. Spend time talking about the fact that God is merciful and gracious and forgiving, and these are the reasons God always provides opportunities to repent and turn to him.
10. Read and discuss [Zephaniah 2:1-3](#). (See #12 above)
11. Read and discuss [Zephaniah 3:14-17](#). (See #13 above)
12. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks concerning the love of God. (See #14 above)
13. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)