



**Zephaniah 3:14-20**  
**"God's Protection & Delight"**  
**By Mike Clark**

**Zephaniah 3:14-20**

*14 Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;  
 shout, O Israel!*

*Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
 O daughter of Jerusalem!*

*15 The LORD has taken away the judgments against you;  
 he has cleared away your enemies.*

*The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;  
 you shall never again fear evil.*

*16 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
 "Fear not, O Zion;  
 let not your hands grow weak.*

*17 The LORD your God is in your midst,  
 a mighty one who will save;  
 he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
 he will quiet you by his love;  
 he will exult over you with loud singing.*

*18 I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival,  
 so that you will no longer suffer reproach.*

*19 Behold, at that time I will deal  
 with all your oppressors.*

*And I will save the lame  
 and gather the outcast,  
 and I will change their shame into praise  
 and renown in all the earth.*

*20 At that time I will bring you in,  
 at the time when I gather you together;  
 for I will make you renowned and praised  
 among all the peoples of the earth,  
 when I restore your fortunes  
 before your eyes," says the LORD.*

**INTRODUCTION –**

**The book of Zephaniah is all about the Day of the Lord. It is about universal judgment and destruction.**

**It begins with judgment on Judah and then with Judah's enemies and then with Jerusalem and finally all nations.**

**And then in the middle of chapter 3 you have the conversion of the nations and the last section that we just read is all about joy and restoration.**



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There is much in this passage that points to the Messiah, to the one who would be born of a virgin, Jesus Christ. Let me point out a few things from this text.

In view of the joyful day of restoration that is coming, Israel is exhorted to sing, shout, be glad, and rejoice in verse 14.

The joyful day that is coming is the fact that Israel's day of judgment and chastisement is past, and every adversary has been cast out and the Lord, the King of Israel, is in her midst.

Do you remember what Nathaniel said to Jesus? – Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel! Jesus is the King of Israel. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And it says that the King of Israel is in your midst. Do you know what that is? That is the Emmanuel principle, God with us.

Israel has no further reason to fear. Anxiety and fear will be an experience of the past. And for the believer, there is no longer any reason to fear.

Jesus said do not be anxious and do not fear. He has promised never to leave us or forsake us.

The promises here seem to reach a climax with verse 17. The Lord's presence in her midst is repeated. This is the source of all the blessedness. He is the Mighty Savior!

And as His people, Jesus is our Mighty Savior, Amen?

And then it says that the Lord will rejoice over you!

As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so the Lord rejoices over His people. Then He will rest in His love.

This is an amazing statement! What assurance that God will rest in His love! The love is too great for words to express!

God has quiet joy in his love. Then the silence is broken with God singing.

Psalm 29:3-6 gives us a sense of what that would be like. The voice of the Lord thunders, is powerful, full of majesty, and flashes forth flames of fire!



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Verses 18-19 brings to mind the language of Jesus and how he spoke. He will gather those who mourn. He will save the lame and gather the outcast.

And the book ends in verse 20 with such a contrast with how the book began. It began with judgment and ends in restoration, joy, and praise!

Now with that passage in mind I want to draw your attention to what we are celebrating. We are celebrating advent, the birth of our Savior coming into the world to save his people from their sins.

And that ought to bring us joy because the birth of Jesus brought great joy.

*Luke 2:8-11 - <sup>8</sup> And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of **great joy** that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

The good news of great joy is that Christ the Lord was born and died on a cross for our sins and if we will repent and put our faith and trust in Him alone, He grants us eternal life, forgiveness of sins, everlasting joy!

*Matthew 2:9-11 - And behold, the star that they (the wise men) had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they **rejoiced exceedingly with great joy**. <sup>11</sup> And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.*

So, the wise men rejoiced at the birth of Christ and worshipped Him and gave Him gifts!

And so, during this time of year we ought to be filled with joy. But sometimes the opposite is the case isn't it?

We can get bogged down with all the busyness and stress of the season and we lose our joy. The circumstances of life and trials sometimes take away our joy.

And so, what I'd like to do is to get a little practical here with joy specifically and how we can have joy or if you are struggling with having joy, how to get it and to fight for it.



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So, what is joy? – The bible uses all kinds of words for the idea of joy. Happiness is one of those words. Pleasure, blessed, delight, and desire are also words the Bible uses.

Joy is happiness of the heart. It's a deep-down sense of well-being, which also sounds like the biblical definition of peace. So, there is an overlap. The heart of peace will have joy and the heart of joy will have peace.

We long for that deep-down sense of well-being, don't we? And when we get that we want to hold on to it as long as we can.

And inevitably something always comes along to steal our joy. Pain, sorrows, disappointments, fears, anxiety, worry, anger, jealousy, envy, and unbelief.

All kinds of sins rob our joy. They all become hinderances and roadblocks to our joy.

But Listen - we as Christians have the best reasons of all to have joy.

What are some of those reasons?

**Our salvation is the biggest reason to have joy!**

**Luke 10:1-11; 17-20** - <sup>1</sup> After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. <sup>2</sup> And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup> Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup> Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup> Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' <sup>6</sup> And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. <sup>8</sup> Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' <sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

<sup>17</sup> The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" <sup>18</sup> And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the



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*enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, do not **rejoice** in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but **rejoice** that your names are written in heaven."*

**That is what you should rejoice about because that overshadows everything else! Don't make things going your way the basis of your joy. But that's what we do isn't it?**

**We want things to go our way so that we can then have joy.**

**Jesus is saying let your acceptance into heaven, your right standing with God, your forgiveness and salvation, let that be the basis of your joy. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Let your salvation be your deepest reason for your joy.**

**You know our joy is affected by our successes in life and our joy is affected by our failures in life. But Jesus says don't rejoice just because your successful or things are going your way, rejoice that your name is written in heaven.**

**That's the basis – being saved and forgiven by Jesus Christ and being guaranteed eternal life in heaven.**

**Think about what you have Christian! Think about what you own and possess! Those things overcome every circumstance of our short lives on this earth.**

**Knowing that your names are written in heaven is one of the most stabilizing reasons for having joy. And that's what we need isn't it?**

**We need sturdy joy, stable joy, not rollercoaster joy. That's our story for so many isn't it? We feel joy one minute and then it's gone the next and we are back in depression.**

**Jesus is saying let my love for you and my acceptance of you be the stabilizing reason that you have joy.**

**Listen – knowing that your name is written in heaven is the most life stabilizing reason for joy in the universe Amen? There is nothing greater.**

**Life is going to toss you around like a paper boat on a raging sea and make you feel like you are downing.**

**But if your name is written in heaven, you have a deep anchored reason to rejoice.**



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**And this is why you can say with Paul in Philippians 4:4 – “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say rejoice!”**

**Remember those words were not written by a man who was at the top of the rollercoaster emotionally, but was sitting in prison writing those words to the Philippian believers.**

**How could he feel that way? He was able to feel that way because in spite of his circumstances he knew his name was written in heaven.**

**So, if you are having a hard time appreciating what all it means to have your name written in heaven, Ephesians 1 gives us this long list of reasons to rejoice about being saved.**

**He says first of all that God is our Father and Jesus is our Lord and He chose us. Our becoming a Christian was not some random thing. He chose us before the foundation of the world.**

**Before the world was created, He had already chosen us. He predestined us because he loves.**

**He adopted us as his sons and daughters. He redeemed us by his blood. He has forgiven us all our sins. He has lavished us with the riches of his grace.**

**He has given us wisdom and insight. He has opened our eyes and our minds to see and understand and to then believe the gospel as the greatest and wisest truth in the universe. That is wisdom from God.**

**We've been given spiritual insight that we didn't have before. We were dead in our trespasses and sins and spiritually blind.**

**He's given us an inheritance and he's guaranteed that we'll take possession of it.**

**What more do we need to be joyful Amen?**

**So not only has he done this when we first believed but he keeps giving us these things as we live the Christian life. And he will keep giving us these things forever!**



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*1 Peter 1:8-9; 13 - <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and **rejoice with joy** that is inexpressible and filled with glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

**Another reason to have joy is God's steadfast love.**

***Lamentations 3:22-24 - <sup>22</sup> The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.***

***Psalms 90:14 - Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may **rejoice** and be glad all our days.***

**So, all our days, every day and every morning satisfied with your love, so we'll keep rejoicing all our days, every morning. That's the point.**

**Everyday God's goodness is being poured out on us. Now we don't always feel it or see it or appreciate it.**

**But it says the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. But sometimes that ceases to amaze us doesn't it? But it still doesn't cease.**

***Romans 8:32 - <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?***

**We just need to open our eyes and see the Lord providing for us, loving us, guiding us, and blessing us with his favor. Sometimes we just need help to see that.**

**So, remember the greatness of His salvation because too often we forget it. That's why we have to preach the gospel to ourselves every day.**

**So, let's get practical here. How do you get joy?**

**Point 1 – You have to fight for joy**

**The first thing you need to realize is that you have to fight for it. Decide to fight for joy.**

**Life will come at you hard. It can be emotionally exhausting. But you have to learn how to fight your way out of things that happen to you and get your joy back.**





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When you lose your joy, it doesn't just come back on its own. And when it does come back it won't stay unless you resolve to continue to fight for your joy.

This is actually what Jesus did.

*Hebrews 12:2 -<sup>2</sup> Who for the **joy** that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Jesus resolved to endure the cross and the shame for the joy that was set before him. And so, we have to resolve to fight for our joy as well.

We have to work and fight and struggle our whole life for the joy that is set before us, eternal life in heaven.

Listen – do you know what this fight really is? Its spiritual warfare. The fight for spiritual joy is spiritual warfare.

From this point on until the day the Lord calls us home, we have to fight for joy like good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

This is part of fighting the good fight of the faith. Part of the faith is the joy of Jesus.

Jesus is the joy of our joy and when we see Jesus and he welcomes us into the boundless joys of heaven, our eternal joy is going to be like nothing we can imagine!

And that's the hope that gives us the ability to fight for joy. The hope that we'll be welcomed into joys immeasurable gives us the strength to fight for joy.

It gives us the strength to fight for joy when we are in pain.

So, the next question is how do you fight for joy? Well once you've decided to fight for joy, the next step is to ask God to give you joy.

**Point 2 – Ask God to give you joy**

The reason we can ask God for joy is because God is joyful. Have you ever thought about that? That God is joyful, and nothing steals his joy? God is in Himself full of joy and it gives God joy to make us full of joy.

In fact, one of the things God sent Jesus to do was to give us His joy.





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*John 15:11 - <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

So, God's joy is to take his joy from his heart and put it into our hearts. That's God's joy. And we simply need to ask him to do that.

*John 16:24 - <sup>24</sup> Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*

So, the good news is that we're not left in our own strength to fight for our joy. It's not something we produce out of our own flesh. This is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

So, joy is not the product of human ability, it's a gift from God to His children.

*Philippians 2:13 - <sup>13</sup> For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

So, pray for joy. Say God, do this in me, give me joy, make me joyful because I don't always feel joyful. Pray for it and receive it and when you receive it, enjoy it.

This is a wonderful blessing from the Lord. Its lifegiving and heart restoring.

Nehemiah 8:10 – For the joy of the Lord is your strength.

**Point 3 – Be thankful for God's goodness to you**

Another strategy is to thank God for his goodness to you. You will be surprised at how much joy you will receive when you make an effort to be thankful to the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

So, there is a direct link between giving thanks and having joy.

Listen - when you are angry or frustrated or disappointed about what is going on in your life, usually you won't be grateful for very much. Suffering can steal your joy like no other. But it can also eliminate your gratitude.

But when you decide to start giving thanks to God for everything he has given to you, even when you don't FEEL joyful, you'll find that when your thanksgiving goes up, your joy will go up too.



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So, gratitude to God is a key strategy to joy. So, if you're having a hard time finding anything in your life to be thankful for, start with your salvation.

Thank God that he has not sent you to hell nor will he if you have believed on Christ, even though you deserve that.

*Colossians 1:12-14 - <sup>12</sup> Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. <sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

So, thank God for forgiving you and giving your everlasting life and delivering you from darkness and hell. Start there and see if joy doesn't start to return.

The next step in fighting for joy is to lay your burdens on the Lord.

**Point 4 – Lay your burdens on the Lord**

The fight for joy is not a struggle to carry a burden, but it's a struggle to let a burden be carried for you. The life of joy is not a burdened life. It's an unburdened life.

And listen sometimes the burdens in life are relentless, but you can't stop casting your burdens on the Lord.

*Psalm 55:20 – Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you, he will never permit the righteous to be moved.*

You may do it when you start your day and feel the weight lifted but then they return later that day and you have to cast your burdens on the Lord again.

The fight for joy is a struggle to trust the Lord with the burden of your heart. The fight for joy is a fight for freedom from worry. It's a fight for hope, for peace, for joy.

Joy will be found in relying on the sovereignty of God, that He is wise and that He is good. And that He is in control.

Joy is found in trusting that God is in control and that you can rest your weary soul in Him and trust Him.

We fight for joy by trusting the Lord with the outcome of whatever is stealing our joy and trusting that God is working all things together for our good.



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That promise doesn't apply to every problem of yours except this really big one you may be having. It applies to every problem we may encounter or currently have.

Listen sorrow and disappointment and suffering are part of our lives. But for the believer sorrow is mingled with joy. Paul said that though he was sorrowful, yet he was always rejoicing.

*James 1:2-4 - <sup>2</sup> Count it all **joy**, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup> And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

In the midst of our trials, we can have joy because Jesus is Lord and heaven is real and the resurrection is a guaranteed promise from the Lord, Amen?

Just before Jesus died on the cross, he told his disciples that he would be killed.

*John 16:20-22 - <sup>20</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into **joy**. <sup>21</sup> When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. <sup>22</sup> So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will **rejoice**, and no one will take your **joy** from you.*

### **Point 5 – Lay aside sin**

Another strategy in fighting for joy is to lay aside sin and other hinderances. The greatest enemy of our joy is evil. It's the sins that tempt us. So, confessing and repenting of our sins is always a pathway to joy.

In Psalm 51 David confesses his sin to the Lord and asks the Lord to have mercy on Him and later in the Psalm in verse 12 he says restore to me the joy of your salvation.

And you can ask yourself, is part of the reason that I don't have joy because my life is somehow entangled in sins and pursuits in my life that have very little to do with wisdom and pleasing the Lord?

Those things in your life and all the satanic forces behind them are the enemy of our joy.



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*Hebrews 12:1-2 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Listen, when we devote ourselves to resisting the idolatrous power of every craving we get and every desire we feel and every distraction that comes into our lives, that's when we're fighting to please the Lord and to increase our joy.

Now, one last way we fight for joy.

**Point 6 – Bring joy to other people even when you have none yourself**

You want to know what that will do for you? It will be the pathway to joy.

This is the lesson that is so desperately needed in our day and age. Being self-absorbed is the quickest path to unhappiness in your life. It makes us so miserable when all we can think about is ourselves.

That's true in our marriages. Someone once said if we would consider our own self-centeredness to be the biggest problems in our marriages, we would be on the path to making them better. It's the path to joy.

If you want to break the chains of anxiety in you and break the chains of depression, then break the cycle of self.

Start with baby steps and decide to be more selfless than you're being. Get outside of yourself and do something or say something for the good of somebody else.

That will actually increase your joy. Meet someone's need. Say some kind words. Lend a helping hand. Put someone else before you and you'll be surprised how much joy that will give you.

Do you know what this is called? Jesus called it loving your neighbor as yourself. That will bring you joy.

But I have to mention that if you have never repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ alone, then you have no basis to be joyful.

All you have is a fearful expectation of judgment. If you die in your sins, whatever joy you may have will be turned to mourning and weeping forever.



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**So, I urge you to repent and trust in Christ alone so that you may have eternal joy.**

**How do you fight for joy? – Decide that you're going to fight for joy, ask God to give you more joy, give thanks for all the reasons God has been good to you, lay your burdens on Him, lay your sins aside and give joy to someone you know.**

**And so, as we think about our Lord Jesus coming into the world to save sinners, no matter what's going on in our lives, may we rejoice in the Lord, Amen?**

**Let's Pray.**