



Zephaniah Wk. 14
Praise the Lord!
By Pastor Jody May 08/09/2026

[CALL TO HEAR]

Zephaniah 3:14-15 ESV

Israel's Joy and Restoration

- 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.
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Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”
People – “Thanks be to God.”

Pray

Introduction

Fair weathered fans, are you familiar with that term? That is a person that only supports a team that they associate with when things are going good. It is similar to another common phrase of **jumping on the bandwagon**, which displays a person that jumps onto the fan base of whatever is popular at the time. Both situations indicate a person that is neither loyal, nor do they like the discomfort of losing, and at their heart is a person who is all about their feelings at all times. It shows a person that is not really tied into what they say they care about.

I have been driving around with a UM tag on the front of my truck for 5 years now. For the first three years I had that tag no one paid me any attention unless it was a DAWG fan laughing at me. Then 2 years ago when our quarterback lit up the field, I started getting some attention and my wife noticed people were flashing gang signs at the car. I had to assure here that was just the sign for the 'U'. The last year everywhere I went, people were



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flashing the 'U' at us so much it was hard to drive and keep my hands on the wheel. What we experienced was a lot of bandwagoners jumping on and celebrating with us most likely because these folks were DAWG haters.

You see this this type of commitment not only in the sports world. You see that with modern pop artists, you see that with social influencers, medical/diet trends, popular shows, and with political figures. Most people run out of reasons to praise those they support because in the end they are looking for an emotional high that gets them feeling good about who they are. You see the world longs for, is always seeking out, but can never find something worthy to praise, worthy of loyalty, worthy to sing about all the time, because nothing the world produces can offer an eternal sense of good well-being. **There is nothing that man can conjure up that offers the promise of something that will never let you down.**

Thank God that for the church we are not dependent on man for our sense of eternal happiness. BUT that for His people, God is not only more than enough, but the promise of knowing God is an eternal promise that we will be most satisfied in Him forever!

Revelation 21:3-4 ESV

³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, **the dwelling place of God is with man**. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Our happiness church is not tied up in a team/tribe, a get rich quick scheme, nor any earthly pleasure but that in the end we will get the best thing in all of the Universe, a perfect being who with us forever, and the result of that, that which causes us pain now, is DEAD! But God never intended for His people to live in misery until that day, the joy of receiving Salvation was that you and I begin to live with that reality now. Jesus lives with us now, the effects of His presence in our lives we receive now, so our reason for Worship and Joy begins now and shall never know no end. That is what Zephaniah gives to the people of his day, when they were looking at impending judgment, he gives



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them an eternal framework or reasoning why it is right to continually worship the LORD with a glad heart and to keep them from being fair weathered fans.

MP

**Because the Lord has saved His people and dwells among them,
they must rejoice and worship Him.**

To build upon this main point today we will break up this sermon into 2 main parts: (v.14) WHAT we are called to do – to WORSHIP & (v.15) WHY we are called to it.

What we are called to do:

1. A Call to Worship.

Israel's Joy and Restoration

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!

There are very few commands given to God's people in the book of Zephaniah. There are many implied 'to dos' but not many straightforward instructions. Mostly because this book is all about God's actions, what He does, how He judges, How He disciplines, and how He restores. So, when God steps up to the plate in Salvation history the job of His people is to sit watch and take note.

There is a "*Be silent*" command in 1:7. All God wants Israel to do is stop their gabbing for there is no use in saying sorry/casting blame, there is nothing within their power to do to stop what is about to happen. Chapter one is all about watching the Lord rise up and take matters in His own hand. It is where we as His children get silent and focus in on His great work, lest we draw the attention of our angry father.

There is a '*Gather together*' (2:1), and a '*Seek the Lord*' (2:3). It is a call to those in Israel, whom God was about to preserve. Not that they were innocent mind



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you, but His command is the preserving action of His people. He is letting those who He is about to save from deportation, mutilation and death, that seeking the Lord in humility may have this punishment pass them by. This is why we most likely see the success of Josiah's reforms even though he was told by Huldah the prophetess in [2 Kings 22:14-17](#) that it was too late.

Then you have the 'wait for me' in 3:8 right at the end of His pronouncing the final judgment on all the world. This is the *wait and see* notification from God, it is the making aware of those that received this prophecy that all there is left to do is wait for the inevitable.

Then here in v. 14 we have the last of the straightforward commands to do a thing. And it comes off rather strange, especially in a book like Zephaniah, that here at the end of the oracle of Doom, on the Day of the Lord, is a command to celebrate? Specifically, Zephaniah says to **sing, shout, rejoice, and exult** four words that you would not expect to see here at the end of Zephaniah, unless you are a masochist or a glutton for punishment. So why here and why now?

The command is to worship God, and the command is given not on the basis of whether it is good for you at the present time to worship Him because of what you are getting out of Him, but because God's plan, to bring about God's purpose, to glorify Himself, for future generations is about to be accomplished! We are to **worship God for being God**, not necessarily for our immediate satisfaction of what we are getting in return from Him.

Worshipping God, praising Him, telling others about Him, declaring He is good to one and all, cannot be based on our emotions at the moment, that is purely a worldly type of thinking.

Reflection of that type of thinking is seen in the new westernized trend of **kids cutting off their parents**. *Research from Cornell University's Family Reconciliation Project found that roughly 27% of American adults report being estranged from at least one family member, with parent-adult child alienation affecting an estimated one in ten families.*¹ The cultural trend

¹ <https://www.drjamesdobson.org/blogs/audio-blog/why-are-more-adult-children-cutting-off-their-christian-parents/>



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now is to leave the one's you love based on your judgment as to were you truly loved well.

Now, grown children are reinterpreting their parent's disciplinary decisions through a different cultural lens—one that is shaped by therapeutic language, heightened emphasis on emotional safety, and social media narratives that often equate disagreement with harm.² In essence people are being taught that if you were not provided by the world's standards of today, which is to make everyone a narcissist, then our parenting was abuse.

In Zephaniah's day God's people had gotten used to being blessed and protected, misinterpreting their relationship with God. They came to see God's steadfast love and patience as weakness, and it meant they were too lovely to discipline. For us today, if God doesn't do what we want, we immediately go to the thought that, *God doesn't care!* That's us picking up on the psychology of the moment, that all of life should be all about how I feel! Family, friends, life is all about God, His glory, which is why we are constantly called to worship Him in all circumstances! Which btw is the only way to cultivate true happiness in your heart!

Finding someone who is finally deserving of all our praise, to find a person in which there is no fault, to find the being who loves and does justice perfectly, that is what brings people joy. Loving yourself like you're the most important person in the world only leads to disappointment, especially when everyone else disagrees with your hypothesis. True joy and contentment come from being with a group of people that have found a God worthy to pursue, to cling to, to sacrifice for, that is worthy of our loyalty, understanding there is no true joy in living for oneself, but there is eternal happiness in living for the one true God!

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

² <https://www.foxnews.com/health/5-reasons-more-americans-cutting-off-own-parents-according-psychologist>



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O daughter of Jerusalem!

Zephaniah in v. 14 calls for **singing aloud**! Simply put, this is not some quiet psalm singing over what is being lost. Zephaniah calls for the robust singing of a people from exultation. It is to sing with a heart that has joy in God! Yeah, but PJ they are about to get punished and disciplined. YES, and don't you think it's about time for God to do that? Isn't it a good thing that the guilty are punished, the people are corrected, and on the other side of that many are preserved, sanctified, to cultivate a people better able to bear His name!?

That **shout** command that's a good one. That word for shout in the Hebrew is the *battle cry*, it is the cry of God's people that would go up into a fight when they blew the battle horn to charge. Put your heart and loyalty in God, cheer Him on, as He rises up to do His good work. Go through this correcting process with full anticipation of God's victory on the other side!

Rejoice and **exult** with all your heart. Engage the mind, engage the emotions, engage the will, when you worship God. If your heart is not in worshipping God, then challenge your emotions with the truth of scripture. God is always Good, He is always righteous in what He does, and He does all things to the good of those He preserves, the elect. There is ALWAYS a good reason to worship God no matter the season of life, He is ALWAYS doing a wonderful thing!

That's important to know here because in v. 14 there is something else to realize. Zephaniah uses the term again **daughter**, "*daughter of Zion, daughter of Jerusalem*". This is Zephaniah's way saying that for those of that day it will be hard to endure, but your descendants, your offspring, children of Israel, offspring of Abraham those many nations, He is calling them to rejoice in the work that God has done! You see family many of the sacrifices we will be called to give in the days to come, they are not about you and what you get out of them now, but it will be for the saints we are leaving behind. The church is always blessed when the people in her keep their minds not just in the moment they are living in but are living for those that come after them. Put your joy, put your exuberance in that view, and worship God in all seasons for the simple fact that He is worthy at all times!



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Why we are called to do it.

2. Reasons for Worship: The Lord has Taken Away Your Judgments.

15a The LORD has **taken away** the **judgments** against you;

This speaks to the people in Zephaniah's day, and it speaks to us now. Why do we worship the Lord - reason 1 because our **God has taken away our judgements against us**. That is the LORD has taken away what he held against those who would make it through on the Day of the Lord. The only way a person gets through the trials and judgements on the Day of the Lord, since you can't run and you can't hide, is if the LORD has decided to remove judgment from you.

The people in Zephaniah's day were a few years away from the total destruction of Jerusalem, but they would be able to see, that for those that lived through it, that were left behind, that survived, they would see this as a divine act of God. The only way they forgo judgement on that day was that the LORD chose to withhold penalties for sin.

When I was a teenager, I learned a tough lesson about judgment. About 6 months after I started driving, I got into an accident twice, on the same side of the car, in one week. Believe me I knew what it was to have a blind spot. Well after we got the car fixed a month later, I was just trying to park the car at home, and it was a tight fit, tight enough that I put a crease on the other side of the car. I immediately went in the house, threw the keys on the table and proceeded to apologize and claim I would never be driving again. My parents surprised me that day, they came to me and gave me back the keys, full of assurance and confidence in me, increasing my desire to love and praise them, as they took away judgment on me so I could drive once more. I never wrecked that car again 😊! You see the escaping of a truly deserved judgment is what creates in you a heart that truly wants to praise the individual saving you!



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Again, I believe, this passage in Zephaniah takes us back to the book of Isaiah, to the most famous of all chapters, and it shows the way God takes away our judgment creating a heart of worship within us.

Isaiah 53:5-6 ESV

- ⁵ But he was **pierced** for our **transgressions**;
he was **crushed** for our **iniquities**;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
- ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

On the Day of the Lord at Calvary, the Father placed on Jesus the iniquities of the elect from Zephaniah's day. He took away their judgements and instead He placed them on His son; he was crushed and pierced for our transgressions against God. Not just those folks of Zephaniah's day, but us as well, the descendants by faith of Abraham. The Lord takes away our judgment and places it on the Son so that we too can worship God with exultant joy – for our sins have been forgiven, they have been paid in full, we too have been preserved from the day of wrath. **We worship because our judgments have been removed!**

3. Reasons for Worship: The Lord has Cleared Away Your Enemies.

- ^{15b} he has **cleared** away your **enemies**.

There is one thing that the Lord's people never run short of, enemies. As we saw in Chp. 2 Zephaniah painted the picture of being surrounded by enemies on all sides. Everywhere God's people looked they were accosted not just with physical violence as with the Canaanites/Assyria, but with lies and seduction as from the Ammonites/Moabites, and Cush alike. The enemies of God's people threaten us in every way, not just in pestering us but trying to win us over to their treasonous practices, trying to get us to turn our backs on the God we serve, to defame His name, to show Him as not worthy.



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But Zephaniah looks forward to a day where God will clear away from His people their enemies. This is the result of an earlier promise that He had made to the descendants of Abraham.

Genesis 22:17 ESV

I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your **offspring** as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall **possess the gate of his enemies,**

The promise for us, those offspring, is that we will also possess the gate of our enemies. To possess the gates of one's enemies is to have conquered them, to control their coming and going, to hold power over what they accomplish. It doesn't seem like that now in our current world but remember we must hold our hearts to the truth of scripture.

Ephesians 1:22 ESV

And he (Father) put all things under his (Jesus Christ) feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

Christ has crushed the serpent's head ([Gen 3:15](#)), He has triumphed over Satan, He bore our sin and broke its' condemning power ([Isaiah 53:4-12](#)), He rose from the dead conquering death, and He now reigns until all enemies are placed under His feet. We possess the gates of our enemies because in our **UNION with Him**, Jesus has control of all our enemies already, for all authority has been given to Him([Mat 28:18](#)).

What were once our enemies are now tools and unwilling participants in Jesus' plans. The scheming of our enemy, for Gods' people, can only afflict a temporary damage, but the schemes of evil cannot escape from bringing Jesus' eternal glory, making our joy complete. Whatever death, devil, and demons can do to us it is NOT permanent; it is not going to make a difference on the Day of the Lord they will still lose, and what's more it will only add glory to our own story which will be told in the end. **We worship because Jesus has already won, and He shares that victory with His people!**



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4. Reasons for Worship: The Lord, The King of Israel, is in Your Midst.

^{15c} The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall never again fear evil.

There is still another promise in scripture that outshines all the good things we receive in our Salvation; it is this simple fact: **we get God Himself!** Moses had made a prophetic promise before he died that one day we would receive the ultimate prize, the LORD Himself.

Deuteronomy 33:5 ESV

⁵ Thus the LORD became king in Jeshurun,
when the heads of the people were gathered,
all the tribes of Israel together.

Jeshurun is used twice by Moses and once by [Isaiah](#), and it is the poetic name for Israel, it means '**upright one**'. It is what Israel was always to be, it is her shining in all her splendor without taint, it is God's special name for the people He loves after He has remade them. The LORD will come to Israel, as a King, in her midst, when the time is right to make Israel a light for the world, so that she reflects the glory of the king to the nations becoming *Jeshurun*.

The Apostles saw this day turn into reality. They did not know until Jesus' resurrection, that afterwards it was revealed to them the secrets in the OT by Christ Himself, of which the greatest gift anyone could receive was to receive a King they did not deserve. Paul sums it up nicely in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 1:3-6 ESV

³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh
⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,



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Our King is a descendant of David, our King is also the Son of God and His name has been taken among the nations by the Apostles. His fame has been spread far and wide as the great conqueror of sin, death, and the devil. In His name the things that once had control over us, the fear of evil, is removed by our great king, and now they are under His authority. Death is temporary, sin has been atoned, and the devil is restrained until the time of judgment. **We worship because our king is with us, and His presence protects us from the eternal consequences of our enemies!**

MP

**Because the Lord has saved His people and dwells among them,
they must rejoice and worship Him.**

[CALL TO OBEY]

1. Worship God in Every Season.

Sometimes yes, we concede that we don't feel much like worshipping God but that is EXACTLY the time you should start doing it. Worship is not determined by what you feel in the moment but by the knowledge that God is always worthy of praise. Choosing to do the right thing in that moment brings God glory, realigns your will with the HS, as He will help you do the thing that we should never stop doing. Make a playlist of your favorite hymns, memorize a favorite Psalm for prayer, and call not text a friend for counsel.

2. Rest in Christ's Victory over Judgment and Evil.

Sometimes when things cause you to fear remind yourself that Jesus reigns and rules over the things that cause you fear. ALL authority has been given to Him, so when things happen that cause you discomfort, they are not out of His control nor will, which means His desire for you is to preserve through such trials. Pray for the strength to endure for His glory. We live without fear remembering that our King is in our midst.

Prayer



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Lord God, we praise You because You have taken away the judgment against Your people, cleared away our enemies, and come to dwell in our midst as our King. Forgive us for being slow to rejoice, quick to fear, and often ruled by our feelings rather than by Your truth. Teach us to worship You with our whole hearts in every season. Help us to rest in Christ, who has borne our judgment and conquered our enemies, and make us a people who live with courage and joy because our King is with us. Keep us faithful, glad, and steadfast until the day when we see Him face to face.

Father we also ask for those in this room, watching online, and in our lives who still let fear drive their actions. Those who have no hope, for they do not know you as their king yet. We ask you to open their eyes to their endless searching for something that emotionally fills them up, that they see the fruitless struggle of trying to find something a worldly thing worthy to praise. Please make Christ large in their eyes, cause the fire of conviction to burn in their souls, and let them heed the call to seek you with all their heart. In Jesus' name, amen.

Luke 22:19-20 ESV

"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

When we partake of the bread of the Lord's Supper it is partaking in Jesus' body, all that He has accomplished for us. The Lord came and lived amongst His people. He conquered the covenant of works that was placed on all men, he conquered the temptations that all people face, and He continually worshipped the Father even in the midst of trials and despair. He has accomplished that which we could not do, **praising God in all things**. Praise be to our Lord who has imputed to us His perfect righteousness.

The juice we drink today is representation of receiving the blood of the New Covenant. The Lord came and was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The Father placed on Him all that we had earned in judgement removing the cost of sin from us which is eternal death. Now we



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no longer fear death but embrace a future where we will be united with Him never to lose His presence with us. Praise be to our Lord who conquered sin and who blessed us with an eternal preserving love.

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand and recites:

LBCF 1689 Chapter 8 Of Christ the Mediator Paragraph 1 God Chose Jesus to Save Sinners

In his eternal purpose and according to the covenant made between them, God was pleased to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be:

- the mediator between God and humanity 1
- the prophet 2
- priest 3
- and king 4
- head and savior of the church 5
- the heir of all things, 6
- and judge of the world. 7

From all eternity, God gave Jesus a people to be His offspring and to be redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified at some point in time through Him. 8

1. Isaiah 42:1; 1 Peter 1:19-20; 2. Acts 3:22; 3. Hebrews 5:5-6; 4. Psalms 2:6; Luke 1:33; 5. Ephesians 1:22-23; 6. Hebrews 1:2; 7. Acts 17:31; 8. Isaiah 53:10; John 17:6; Romans 8:30

[OFFERING+LAST SONG] *"Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me"*

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, whom removed judgment from us and placed it on His Son, the only way we could escape His righteous wrath.



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Go in the name of the Son, who suffered under our punishment, conquering all evils, and in return will live among us for all eternity.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that opens our eyes as to why God is ALWAYS worthy of worship and praise, now go and share with this world why you have found the reason for true eternal contentment.

[FELLOWSHIP CONVERSATIONS]

1. What truth in Zephaniah 3:14–15 most strengthens your joy in the Lord right now?
2. How does knowing the Lord has taken away judgment against His people shape the way we worship?
3. What does it mean to you that the Lord is in the midst of His people as King?
4. What fears are silenced when we remember that the Lord has cleared away our enemies?
5. How can our church grow in wholehearted joy, praise, and worship together?



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