



Zephaniah Wk. 15
The Protective Presence of God!
By Pastor Jody May 08/16/2026

[CALL TO HEAR]

Zephaniah 3:16-17 ESV

- 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.
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**Pastor – "People of God, this is the Word of God."
People – "Thanks be to God."**

Pray

Introduction

What would you consider to be the most powerful motivator we have?

Some would say food. Many of us are like Pavlov's dog where even the promise of a sweet treat at the end of the day gets us to the gym when we would rather not go. Some of us would say money. The power of the lure of money gets many of us motivated to work longer than we should just so we can have the ability to buy what we want. Some would say prestige/honor to have a good reputation, that's why we work too hard for other's approval, or as a people pleaser, or forcing our kids to achieve where we failed. But I will tell you what I think is even a stronger motivator than all of that and perhaps is the most silent motivator in the church.

I think what has all of that trumped is the powerful motivator of FEAR! Fear will make you do things you don't want and will keep you from doing things that you should do. For example, this time of year many of us go from oblivious students of nature to Marine Biology experts because Shark Week



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happens at the end of every July! I ask myself Jody would you do that? Would you get into the water, at night, with a 17ft, 3,000lb. Great White for food? NOPE! How about money? NOPE! How about Fame? NOPE! Sorry FEAR has motivated me to say out of the water! See what I mean, Fear I think is one of the greatest motivators we have and just to be fair it also keeps us safe when we may be in danger.

The problem we encounter though is Fear begins to become the thing that dominates our lives, and the thing that motivates much of our decision making in our tomorrows. God never intended for us to be a people though driven by fear, it is a tool to help us in a fallen world yes, but it should not be our main motivator and decision-making matrix. This is what Zephaniah is getting into today for as we have seen in His work, the world can definitely be a scary place, but here is the main point captured from our verses today.

MP

**God's people should not fear, because the Lord is mighty to save
And rejoices over them!**

Fear must take a back seat in our lives, no matter what the world is projecting in that moment, because the presence of our mighty God is with us, and He actually loves us! Today we will look at this fact **1st** from **A Call to Courage**, the fact that it is first a command of God not to be fearful. **2nd** we will look at the **Reason for Courage**, what is the evidence for why we should not be afraid. Then **3rd** the comforting powerful fact that the **Love of the Lord is in our midst**.

1. A Call to Courage

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

So again, we start off with a very famous phrase now in Zephaniah, ***On that Day***. By now here in week 15 everyone should know what that means, *The Day of the Lord*. But in particular, we have to keep in mind how these verses here



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in the end are connecting together, because they are all part of a same poetic section. **'On that Day' refers to that great Day of Worship and Praise that happened in 14-15.** The Day where God's people were commanded to celebrate (v.14). Because God had removed their judgment, He had cleared away their enemies, and because of that there will be no reason to fear anymore (15). This future Day is a picture of the descendants of Jerusalem, the *daughter of Zion and Jerusalem* (v.14). This phrase is directed to those that will come after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Those that will preserve through God's cleansing judgment.

We also know the phrase "*On that Day*" is connected to the previous verses because of a bridge built by Zephaniah between these two passages based on the topic of **'Fear'**. That subject, that motivator, is found both v. 15 & 16.

v. 15 Because - *The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall **never again fear evil**.* That is an objective cause and effect relationship. Where the Lord is - the enemies must flee, justice must reign, preservation will happen, therefore there will be no fear. Those are objective conclusions. We saw it happen in the Babylonian invasion, we saw it happen at the 1st incarnation, and we have seen the continuation of that truth over the centuries in church history - **where God is evil fails therefore fear not**. Now that refrain, **never again fear evil**, connects us to the next part of the poem.

V.16 "*On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: '**Fear not**, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.*" What we are seeing is these 4 verses are attached by the topic of fear and a descriptor of what it does. It's 2 parts of one command: **Do not FEAR...**

Why **Fear Not** in v.15? - 1st because the Lord is with you, logical objective reality of His presence with the believer as seen through history.

Why **Fear Not** in v. 16? - 2nd **Our subjective view of why we fear must be put into submission to the objective reality that the LORD IS among His people!** That phrase, **let not your hands grow weak** is the simple way of saying, don't be overcome with the fear you see around you, keep your grip strong on the things that must be believed and must be done in this life, don't lose strength



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over what you are seeing happen around you. Simply put, it is wrong to fear the world more than fearing the might of the LORD who is with you.

Proverbs 29:25 ESV

The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

Isaiah 51:12 ESV

¹²"I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass,

NOT to Fear - Now that is easier said than done folks, I understand that. As we sit around the dinner table every night with our families it is easy enough to generate a variety of reasons of why we should be afraid.

I am sure you all have had talks in your family about the grim future of a so-called Christian America. We talk that way because of the various cultural trends we see take root and develop (communism, Islamic cultural invasion, wokeism in every form from inclusion of men in women sports, child mutilation, and drag queen story hour all initiated the adoption of homosexual marriage, and height of modern feminism as women applaud up to birth abortion powers).

Or how about the fear of another pandemic outbreak now in light of the so called Fauci diary that makes government intervention seem all about power grabs not about public safety! Then now we hear about the headlines of a new strand of Ebola outbreak in Africa, one that spreads easier than it did before, that is coming to get us!

Or how about the unaffordability in America where the dream of owning a home and growing personal wealth for your children has been absorbed by the greed of a few which makes the lure of socialism a real problem. As in do we really want to make the government more powerful than it already is!?

We fear when we hear about reports from overseas of active Christian persecution in Africa and China, and we see invading forces into once



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peaceful neighborhoods in the EU, and then we wonder when will it happen to us?

Then we see the rise of secularism, paganism, and mind manipulation from all sorts of influencers through all streams of media and we start to think to ourselves how do we protect ourselves from sin!? That should be the biggest one folks, not all the physical threats to our way of life but what impact will godless culture have on our Christian walks and the ability to shepherd our families well?

Yes, there are definitely lots we could be afraid of and lots of reasons why, but Jesus spoke into that as well, now hear the words of the Lord.

Luke 12:4-7 ESV

Have No Fear

⁴"I tell you, **my friends**, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

God is the one that orchestrates all of life and He is the one that makes the decisions as to how it all ends for every living being. But more than that, Jesus asks the very simple question, ***are not His friends, of more value than earthly things?*** Friends and Family, fear in our lives, is not the absence of God in our lives, but rather we have forgotten that He is with us in every little thing and that His friendship with Him means more than what we think. Friends there in the text is [*Phileo*](#), a brotherly love for another, one that shows obligation to another. The Lord must fulfill His obligation to us and God which is - never to let us go without help, never to abandon us in times of need, and never to just leave us to the schemes of the enemy. **We Fear Not** because the objective reality is - whatever is going to happen to you is under God's Sovereign control and therefore all of it is for our good because Jesus is a true and perfect friend.



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Family I call all of us to courage today, take heart, the Lord Jesus is in our midst. There is not a thing you will encounter that He has not already made a path for you to get through. There is not a scheme of the enemy that has not already been turned on itself by Him to bring glory to God, that will work out for your best interest. There is never a time where He is not watching over you and is aware of those that come against you who will receive the justice of God in the end. He corrects all things, oversees all things, and preserves through all things, for He is obligated to do so, He is your friend, the Lord is with us.

2. The Reason for Courage

^{17a} The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;

Here in the first half of v.17 Zephaniah, while knowing it is hard to control our emotional impulses to fear, again offers some objectifiable reasoning on why we should not be afraid even when it seems everything is going wrong.

The Lord God is in your midst – a **mighty one** who will save; ‘Mighty One’, he has used that before in his poem.

Zephaniah 1:14 ESV

¹⁴ The great day of the LORD is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter;
the **mighty man** cries aloud there.

Here at the end of the poem now we are to remember what this mighty warrior has done.

Zephaniah 1:15 ESV

¹⁵ A day of wrath is that day,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,



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¹⁶ a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.

This mighty man no one can stop, none can stay his hand, He is God's enforcer. But He is not an indiscriminate avenger, Zephaniah says He is Mighty One who will Save (17a). Isaiah used that same term for one who would come, who Zephaniah is holding out for.

Isaiah 9:6 ESV

⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God**,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Again, one of the prophetic passages that points to the only true and faithful king from the line of David that shall be found in the figure of the Messiah. A King that His people recognize.

Isaiah 10:20-21 ESV

²¹A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the **mighty God**.

The prophecy is that God's people return after their correction, after their discipline, for they recognize the saving hand of their God. We take courage because our God is mighty to save, and His might is seen in how He judges and rules over all nations. Again, that goes back to the truth already stated in 3:6-7: ⁶ *"I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant."* ⁷ *I said, 'Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction.'*

We take courage BECAUSE we have seen what God can do! Isn't it interesting and it is something worth challenging ourselves on, that **we fear more what might happen tomorrow instead of taking courage over what God has**



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already done today. We must strive family to change what we are looking at if we want objectifiable courage for tomorrow, instead of letting subjective fears control our futures.

If you only watch news that controls one with fear mongering, then guess which disposition you are feeding into? We need to balance our intake of information with actual Church History, Christian Biographies, Theology, and Scripture above all, and then look at world events through the lens of God's Kingdom. **I will tell you what you find when you do, you will discover that the recording of history since the time of Christ you will see that the events that changed the globe are events tied to the church, her continual reforming into the image of her king, because that is what life is all about.** Life is not about what we are worried about only in our tomorrows, it is about God showing Himself to the world through the years, ever making stronger the faith of those in the church.

We take courage because: we have seen the Mighty One do all that He has said He ever will do, we have seen His hand all throughout time, and we build our strength in being caught up in the one that has the power to finish what He started. If you want the ending picture of that go read [Revelation 19:11-21](#) and you will see the ultimate conclusion of our Mighty Savior.

3. The Love of the Lord in Our Midst

^{17b} he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing

As we conclude this section Zephaniah gives us the best news, we could possibly receive for those that are struggling to conquer their fears. It is not that God is just a capable and the mightiest of warriors, it is not just because the witness of the centuries that show us that God always wins and controls all of history, but that God is in LOVE with His people! These words reflect the reasoning over v.14 of why we should praise and love God, and now Zephaniah says God is doing the same thing over you!



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It says God will *rejoice over His people with gladness*. That is God will take delight in us. It is like when you put your favorite food in your mouth when you are at your hungriest, (yum, yum, yum) that is taking delight. He does this from a position of gladness. God's heart in delighting over us comes from a gladness that generates from within Him. Our God, even the mightiest of warriors, has a well of gladness that He pours forth on His people when He interacts with them. God does not look at His people and it is like, "you again!" All that are His are approached with a disposition of God taking joy in His child.

He exults over us with loud singing. Again, as we are to sing about Him with loud rejoicing, so our God sings over us to the point He wants others to hear. When you watch your favorite sports team or your favorite entertainer, if you get the chance to do it live, you know the impossibility of sitting there and being quiet. That is how God is whenever He interacts with us, praising and encouraging us always. Whatever God thinks about us He shares with the world around Him. God does not hide His love for His people from the heavenly host, but let's them know How he loves them!

He will quiet you by His Love, that one phrase in many of the Bible translations is said differently: He will rest in His love, He will be quiet in His love, He will no longer rebuke you in His love. The end point is His love over you quiets the situation, whatever is happening in the moment the effect of His projected love on His people is **silence**. So instead of the silence caused by the fear of the Lord in Chapter 1 we now have silence cause by the Love of the Lord in Chapter 3. The Lord on His Day has come through for His people with an act of love performed in silence that also silences His children with such a profound act.

Hebrew 12:2-6; 12-13 ESV

Do Not Grow Weary

²looking 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.



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³Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Our mighty warrior in love, in His joy, endured the cross as a silent lamb led to a slaughter, and through that act the mighty one defeated all His enemies. This act is done with no fanfare, with no cheering crowds only the curse and slander of His people. But He quiets those accusers with His victory, and for those that denied Him are quieted, their sobs are absorbed, by His perfect love.

⁴In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproofed by him.

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

Yes, family you will face a temporary pain in your future, yes there will be tomorrows you would rather not go through, and yes you too will fail Him even though He is worthy of all our devotion. But our failures too are the foundations that the Lord builds His success on, our shortcomings are how we learn about gracious loving correction, in our lows is how we learn the loving discipline of a Father, and in our correction is how we add to the history of the church that is always conforming into the image of Christ, Therefore:

¹²Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, **so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.**

Fear not, for the Lord is your midst, take courage and know that you are loved in other words -

MP

God's people should not fear, because the Lord is mighty to save



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And rejoices over them!

[CALL TO OBEY]

1. Refuse fear-driven living and act in trusting obedience.

Because our Lord is in our midst and mighty to save, let not our fears drive our decisions, our household, nor our obedience. Think of those places where fear has made your hand weak or shaky and instead strengthen them by exercise. Pick some things like inviting one another over for meals, practice family worship together, and strengthen your hands in the security of other believers before you try some of the harder things in life. In those times repent of your anxieties and fears to one another and find some people to hold you accountable.

2. Rest in the Lord's saving love and encourage others to do the same.

When panic or discouragement comes for you set your mind on the promise that He loves you. Sing to Him as you know He sings over you, and rejoice that what is happening won't destroy you, that it may just be for your discipline, and that Jesus has already endured the hardest part of life for you making you a friend again with God. Then a good way to work that into your bones is share that truth with others, practice encouraging others, remind others why they should not be afraid. The Spirit of God, His presence inside of us, is greater than the challenges of this world.

Prayer

Lord our God, we thank You that You are in the midst of Your people, mighty to save. Forgive us for how often fear rules our hearts and weakens our hands. Teach us to trust Your presence more than we fear the threats of this world. Quiet us by Your love, strengthen us by Your Spirit, and fix our eyes upon Christ, our mighty Savior, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Help us to leave here with courage, steadiness, and joy, knowing that You delight in Your people and will never forsake us.

Dear Lord, we also ask for those that are still controlled by their fear as seen in their unrepentance and denial of your Lordship. We know that it is only the power of your love that can change them. Please be kind to them and when



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they see the threatening things of this world begin to close in around them, please use it to drive them to find safety in you. My friend if you are afraid of life and the things of this world let me tell you as one who was also afraid, we have found peace in Jesus, come to Him today, know forgiveness of your sins, and discover the care of our mighty Savior. We ask this 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 today remember the life of Jesus lived perfect for us. Fear was not His motivator in this life but Love/Joy for the Father and for His people is what kept Him going. By His life of devotion, the plan of God for Salvation of His people, we were set free from the demands of the Covenant of Works and we were delivered unto the love of the Covenant of Grace. We did not earn a good standing with God by our efforts, but He earned it for us instead. Praise be to our mediator who supplies all the righteousness we need.

When we partake of the juice, we remember the blood of Jesus that was poured out for our sins. In silence He loved us and raised not a word in defiance nor a hand in defense to the cross that waited for Him. His great love for us was displayed for us while we were still sinners, He died for us. Now we benefit from His bravery, from the mightiest of Kings, who has marked us with His blood, ensuring that all sins are forgiven, and the debts have been paid in full. All praise to our King who lives, loves, and rejoices over His people.

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand and recites:



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LBCF 1689 Chapter 17 Of the Perseverance of the Saints Paragraph 1 The Faith of Believers Will Be Preserved by God

Those whom God has accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace. Rather, they will definitely persevere to the end and be eternally saved because the gifts and callings of God cannot be taken away.

God, through his gifts and callings, continually grants and nourishes in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit that lead to immortality. 1

Although many storms and floods might arise and beat against them, these storms and floods will never be able to remove them from the foundation and rock upon which they are anchored by faith. At the same time, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, their experience of the sight of the light and love of God might be clouded and obscured from them for some time. 2

However, God remains the same, and it is certain that they will be preserved by the power of God for salvation, where they will enjoy being the purchased possession of God, who engraved them upon the palm of his hands and wrote their names in the book of life from all eternity. 3

1. John 10:28-29; Philemon 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 John 2:19, 20. Psalms 89:31-32; 1 Corinthians 11:32. Malachi 3:6

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, who calls us to not be afraid and displays His Salvation History so we may gain courage for our lives today.



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Go in the name of the Son, who loves His people enough to suffer and die so that we may live with the courage of our King in us.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, who unites us to our Lord, who gets us to sing His praises even on our lowest of days, and who propels us to share our story with others.

[FELLOWSHIP CONVERSATIONS]

1. When you hear that God says, "Fear not", what fears or discouragements tend to weaken your hands most often?
2. How does it change your view of the Christian life to know that the Lord is in the midst of His people rather than far off from them?
3. What part of verse 17 stands out to you most right now: God's power to save, His gladness over His people, His quieting love, or His rejoicing over them? Why?
4. How does this passage help you think more clearly about Jesus as the mighty Savior who removes our fear and brings us near to God?
5. In a practical way, how can these verses shape the life of your household and your church fellowship this week?



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