

# Sing Aloud!

---

*Zephaniah 3:14-20*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. There is an old legend about the beginnings of the Anaconda Mining Company.
1. A group of prospectors set out from Bannock, Montana in search of gold, but they went through great hardships.
    - a. Several of their company died en route. They were overtaken by Indians who took all of their good horses.
    - b. Discouraged, the prospectors sought to make their way back to Bannock.
  2. As they journeyed back, one of them casually picked up a little stone from the creek-bed.
    - a. Upon cracking the rock with a hammer, he declared, "There may be gold here."
    - b. The company panned gold in the same creek & realized fifty dollars—a great sum in those days. They said: "We have struck it rich!"
  3. Making their way to Bannock, they vowed not to breathe a word concerning this gold strike—and they kept their word.
    - a. Quietly they equipped themselves with supplies for another prospecting trip.
    - b. But when they were ready to go back, three hundred men followed them.
      - 1) Who had told the others of the gold find?
      - 2) Not a soul! It was their beaming faces that betrayed their secret!
- B. If there is anyone whose smile needs to betray his/her secret, it is we Christians.
1. God has done so much—he gave his only Son to save us from an eternity in hell, he hears us when we pray, he has given us a peace that nothing can remove.
  2. Is it any wonder, then, that Scripture exhorts us to be a joyful people?
    - a. "Rejoice in hope" (Rom 12:12).
    - b. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil 4:4).
- C. In this morning's passage, Zephaniah encourages the people of Israel to be joyful.
1. READ TEXT.
  2. "Daughter" here stands for the people—Zephaniah is calling for the people as a nation to sing aloud & rejoice.
  3. But, what could this nation possibly have to rejoice about?
    - a. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, a king who "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD" (2 Ki 22:2).
    - b. However, Josiah's reign comes after the evil reigns of his father & grandfather.
      - 1) Amon, Josiah's father, "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done. He walked in all the way in which his father walked and served the idols that his father served and worshiped them. He abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD" (2 Ki 21:20-22).
      - 2) Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, was one of the most evil kings the nation of Judah ever saw. Of his reign we read: 2 Ki 21:2-9.
      - 3) Manasseh reigned 55 years & Amon reigned 2 years.
    - c. The Book of Zephaniah explains how God is going to judge Judah because of the sins of Manasseh & Amon.
      - 1) "I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests, those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens, those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom" (1:4-5).
      - 2) "'Wait for me,' declares the LORD, 'for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed'" (3:8).
- D. However, in the midst of such righteous indignation, God offers great hope.
1. Those who turn to the Lord in repentance have an opportunity to avoid the great disaster about to befall Judah: "Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD" (2:3).
  2. However, it is also true that the Lord has a long history of offering hope in the midst of great judgment.
    - a. He did in the time of the Great Flood. God destroyed every single breathing thing on the face of the entire earth, but inside the ark there was safety.
    - b. In his letters to the seven Churches of Asia Minor, Jesus speaks a great deal about judgment.

- 1) For example, to the church at Laodicea, the Lord says, “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” (Rev 3:15-16).
- 2) Yet, even to that congregation, Jesus offers hope, pardon, & love: “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev 3:19-21).
- c. At the end of the age, the Lord will offer hope in the midst of judgment:
  - 1) “God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess 1:6-8).
  - 2) There is great judgment in those verses: the Lord will come to take “vengeance” on his adversaries.
  - 3) But, there is also great hope in those verses: those in Christ will be granted “relief.”
3. In this morning’s passage, also, God holds out his pardon & love in the midst of his great judgment for those who are willing to take hold of that pardon & love.
  - a. Therein is the cause of joy & singing. There is the cause to give praise to God Almighty in spite of the fact these Jews will suffer so intensely.
  - b. The “daughter of Jerusalem” is encouraged to sing a song of praise unto God. A SWEEPING SONG & A STOUT SONG.

## A SWEEPING SONG, v 15

- A. The Israelites need to sing “*A Sweeping Song*,” for the Lord has promised to sweep away their judgments & their enemies.
- B. “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,” v 15.
- C. The Lord has swept away the judgments of Judah.
  1. “The judgments against you” certainly refers to the Babylonian Captivity, for when Josiah comes to the throne, only 42 years remain until the Captivity. I do not know when during the reign of Josiah that Zephaniah prophesied, but whenever it was, the Babylonian Captivity loomed quite closely.
  2. God had promised that he would send his people into captivity for their sins:
    - a. Even after the great reforms of Josiah, we read: “Still the LORD did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. And the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there’” (2 Ki 23:26-27).
    - b. Throughout the Book of Zephaniah, we read of how God will bring his judgment upon Judah.
  3. But, there was coming a time--after the judgment had run its course--that God would remove all the people’s judgment from them.
    - a. If God had plans to judge Judah for her iniquities, why would God offer the Israelites “*A Sweeping Song*” & promise to sweep away all their iniquities?
      - 1) God sent the people into Babylonian Captivity in order that they might be humbled. When the people repented of their sins in humility, God promised to sweep away their sins.
      - 2) Notice Jer 29:10-14.
    - b. Here’s the point for us: God is going to bring great judgment upon this earth.
      - 1) That destruction will be so complete that there won’t be a thing left of this earth: “The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed” (2 Pet 3:10).
      - 2) But, when the Lord comes & sweeps away this earth, he promises us the opportunity to have judgment swept away from us.
        - a) If anyone sins, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:1-2).
        - b) In a nutshell, “propitiation” means “that which sweeps away sin.”
  - D. The Lord offers you this very morning the opportunity to sing “*A Sweeping Song*” & have your sins & judgment swept away in the blood of Jesus. Will you seize that opportunity?

## A STOUT SONG, vv 15b-17

- A. The Israelites could sing “*A Stout Song*,” for they had no reason to be afraid. They could be a stout people.
- B. “The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: ‘Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. 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.’”
- C. The Israelites would never again need to fear evil.
  - 1. At the time Zephaniah was writing, the Israelites would have every reason to fear.
    - a. The Babylonian Captivity was going to be a horrible event:
      - 1) Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem, captured the royal family, & took the vessels out of the temple (2 Ki 24:11-16).
      - 2) Nebuchadnezzar continued a long siege against Jerusalem. During that siege, “the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land” (2 Ki 25:3).
    - b. Even after they were restored to the land following the Captivity, the Jews faced many challenges.
      - 1) Daniel prophesied about the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes with these words: “His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many” (Dan 8:24-25).
      - 2) Antiochus reigned from 175 to 164 BC & brought a reign of terror upon Judea. For example, in a span of three days, Antiochus slaughtered 40,000 Jews.
  - 2. Because the Jews, according to prophecy were going to suffer so intensely after their return from Babylon, I really don’t believe this can refer to the reestablishment of Jerusalem. It must refer, instead, to the coming of the Messiah 600 years or so after Zephaniah.
    - a. The coming of the Messiah was often depicted as a time of peace, a time of calm, a time without enemies.
      - 1) “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore” (Is 9:7).
      - 2) “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together . . . . The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Is 11:6, 8-9).
    - b. Further, notice when the Israelites would have no reason to fear: “The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil” (v 15).
      - 1) When the King of Israel in the form of Jesus Christ would enter Judea, the people would have no need to fear.
      - 2) Human kings were insufficient to keep them safe--the reforms of Josiah did not turn the Lord’s wrath away, Jehoiachin was unable to subdue Nebuchadnezzar.
      - 3) Only the Lord could keep the people safe--Only he could give them reason not to fear.
- D. We can sing “*A Stout Song*” because of Jesus Christ--we have absolutely no reason to be afraid.
  - 1. When sending the disciples out into Israel, he warned them that they might face persecution, yet he says, “Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Mt 10:31). How could the disciples not be afraid in the midst of persecution?
    - a. Mt 10:28: “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.”
    - b. Those whom the disciples faced could not take their soul--they could take their breath, their blood, their life, but they could not touch the soul!
    - c. What a glorious message!
      - 1) This world can bombard us with temptation, with discouragement, with great trial. We may face an accident that takes our life. We could face an enemy who takes our life. We may face a disease that takes our life.
      - 2) But our soul cannot be touched!!!!
        - a) As long as we abide in him, our souls are safe in Jesus: “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (Jn 10:28-29).
        - b) I can sing “*A Stout Song*,” for my soul cannot be taken from the Father without my consent.
  - 2. Jesus became flesh and suffered so “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Heb 2:14-15).
    - a. We have no reason to fear death, for Jesus has come & destroyed it.

- b. I do not at all mean to minimize the suffering that many go through in their final days, nor do I wish to minimize the grief or the concern for their families they are sure to experience.
    - 1) But, we know that death--because of Jesus--is not the end!
    - 2) In Christ, we do not need to fear death.
      - a) When death overtakes these bodies, angels bear our souls to Abraham's bosom (Lk 16:22).
      - b) We know in fact that those who die in the Lord have a better existence than we do:
        - i. Paul declares, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Phil 1:23).
        - ii. "I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'" (Rev 14:13).
  - c. We can sing "*A Stout Song*" even in the face of death, for in the "Age of the Messiah," the grave has been shattered.
- E. General Charles Gordon was a British commander well-remembered for his campaigns in China.
- 1. When he was attacking Khartoum, someone suggested that the general stop up the windows of his headquarters with sand.
  - 2. General Gordon became quite angry and said, "When God was proportioning out fear to all the peoples in the world, at last it came to my turn, and there was no fear left to give me. Go tell all the people in Khartoum that Gordon fears nothing, for God has created him without fear."
    - a. If you are anything like I am, you were not created without fear. Yet, in Jesus we can have that fear removed with the great knowledge that he reigns over all and cares for his people.
    - b. Do you have fear this morning? Do you need to come to Jesus & have that fear removed in his blood?