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Shouts of Joy!

The prophecy of Zephaniah is neatly tucked three-quarters of the way through the minor, shorter, prophets that close out the Old Testament. It has been suggested that it is the least known of the dozen. You might be able to attest to that.

The prophecy opens abruptly with a message of judgment on Judah for its sin as it describes “the day of the LORD.” Chapter 2 opens with God calling the people to seek Him in light of the coming judgment. In the last section God tells those who will turn to Him,

“Shout for joy, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, Israel! Rejoice and triumph with all your heart, Daughter of Jerusalem!” (3:14)



There will be shouts of joy! But that is not all. God goes on to say that in that day

“The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will rejoice over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.” (3:17)

Not only will the people be joyfully shouting their praise to God, but God will be shouting for joy over them!

What’s going on here?

To see that we need to note the setting. This message was given to Judah about a remnant (3:13) who in that future day will seek God. God will “take away His judgment” and be in their midst (3:15). So how can they not shout for joy? God, their “victorious warrior” and loving Father will not only receive them, but rejoice over them (3:17).

What does this mean for us? Think of just three unchanging truths that apply to us today.

- God does judge sin. He does discipline His children who are not faithful to Him. The writer of Hebrews tells us “whom the Lord loves He disciplines” (12:6). Our motivation to be faithful should flow from love for God, from a desire to have Him build the character of Christ in us, not fear. Having said that, we should never take sin lightly and realize that God

does discipline sin, and that discipline is for our good. The writer of Hebrews goes on to tell us,

“For the moment, all discipline seems not to be pleasant, but painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” (11)

- God calls people to seek Him. God told the people of Judah through Jeremiah, “‘you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will let Myself be found by you,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.’” (29:12-14)
- God delights, rejoices when people seek Him, come back to Him. In Jesus’ parable of the lost coin in Luke chapter 15 He tells us, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (10). All heaven celebrates!

God also delights, rejoices over His faithful children.

“the Lord’s delight is in those who fear him, those who put their hope in His unfailing love” (Psalm 147:11).

When we get careless or rebellious, God is calling us to return for healing and restoration. When we turn back to Him, confess and repent, He welcomes us not with a scolding, but with His love and “shouts of joy.”

God delights in His faithful children. He also tells us to delight in Him, but we will think about that on another day.

Today, and every day, thank and praise Your loving God who rejoices over you with shouts of joy.

Pastor Lyle