
Quiet and Rest – Zeph 3:17

OPC Women's Retreat ~ April 10, 2021 ~ Tricia Mathys

1. Minor Prophets

- a. So far: Eternity in our hearts, Lamentation, Now...Quiet and Rest
- b. We're going to look at a passage from one of the minor prophets today.
Please grab your Bibles and find Zephaniah in the Old Testament.
- c. **Zephaniah is a minor prophet** who prophesied under the reign of Josiah, the last good king to reign over the southern kingdom of Judah. You'll remember that the Kingdom was divided under King Solomon's death.
- d. When you hear the term minor prophet, it just means that these prophets wrote shorter books with a narrower focus than the major prophets.
- e. Zephaniah is speaking to the Southern Kingdom of Judah bringing an **oracle of woe**.
"More fire in this minor prophet than in all the others."
- f. Types of prophetic oracles;
 - i. **Of direction** – when His instructions are sought
 - ii. **Of woe** – an accusation, or a pronouncement of coming judgement
 - iii. **Of blessing** – when God has determined to be merciful
- g. Chapters 1 and 2 of Zephaniah bring clear messages of accusation to the surrounding nations. Interestingly, every nation surrounding Judah: North (Assyria), South (Ethiopians), East (Philistines), And West (Moab & Ammon) – are all declared to have judgment coming.
- h. And then, with God's people squarely in the center of this area, Chapter 3 begins with a catalog of accusations against Jerusalem, the capitol of Judah.
- i. But, this coming "Day of the Lord," which is the primary theme throughout this book, takes a stunning and glorious turn. Happily, this book ENDS an oracle of blessing. So, let's read...

Zephaniah 3:14-20

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.

2. Quiet or Quieted?

- a. Okay, there's SO much in this passage. And no way I could do justice to covering all of it, so it's a good thing my plan is to **focus on verse 17**.

- b. **Take a second to spot the four actions God declares He's going to do:**
 - i. Save
 - ii. Rejoice
 - iii. Quiet
 - iv. Exult
 - v. Those things, *in that order*, are really important in understanding the magnitude of this verse.

- c. **In particular, I want to focus on the phrase: "He will quiet you by His love"**
 - i. This phrase is interesting because older commentators, including John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, and John Gil all agree that this verse is best rendered: **HE will be quiet** in His love, rather than He will quiet **YOU** by His love. It may not seem like it, but that's a big difference.
 - ii. Discovering this, naturally I wanted to dig a little deeper.
 - iii. At first it seemed to me that since the other verbs/actions in this verse: save, rejoice, and exult are things God does **for** or **over** His people, surely the "quieting" must also be something He did for us.
 - iv. I WANTED it to mean that.... Why would I not want it to be about me? ;-)
Turns out though, I was crazy for wanting it to be that. You'll see why as we go along.
 - v. The more research I did, the more convinced I became that the correct rendering is indeed that God IS QUIET in His love.
 - vi. You see, the majority of places where the same word is used, **its meaning is: "to hold one's peace," or "to remain silent as an expression of approval."**
 - vii. With that in mind, I went back to the passage and then saw something ELSE that supported this conclusion. I realized that throughout it, there's the **common biblical structure being used called parallelism.**
 - Parallelism – The repetition of one idea. The same thing said two different ways. The Psalms are FULL of parallelism.
 - We're going to walk through this, so stick with me here, it's worth it.
When we look at our passage, starting at verse 15:

- “The Lord has taken away the judgments = He has cleared away your enemies” (We know that God most often judged His people in the OT by using enemy nations as punishing agents)

- **In verses 19 and 20:**

- “I will...gather the outcast” = “I will bring you in...when I gather you together.”

- “I will change their shame into praise and renown = “I will make you renowned and praised”

- **Now back to verse 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.”

- **Save = Quiet (!) AND Rejoice = Exult**

d. “Speak now or forever hold your peace”...

- i. **So, you should be thinking, I see how rejoice and exult are the same, but exactly how are “save” and “quiet” parallel concepts?**

- ii. Let me give you an illustration I think applies perfectly.

- iii. Maybe you’ve seen this in the movies: boy meets girl, boy loses...a climactic wedding and then comes that part where the minister asks the gathered crowd if anyone has any objections. Something like:

- “Should anyone present know of any reason that this couple should not be joined in holy matrimony, speak now or forever hold your peace” ...and then...

- iv. That’s the moment when that lost love barges in to the church and makes a heartfelt plea for (usually) the bride.

- v. But alas, that was SO not the purpose of why this was included in the wedding ceremony! **It had nothing to do with fairy tale endings, and everything to do with legal and practical concerns.**

- vi. It surprised me to learn that those words come from the marriage liturgy section of the Book of Common Prayer (circa 1549)

- vii. Because in the Medieval Age, it was very hard to get the word out that someone was getting married, no social media.

- viii. So there was a tradition to announce upcoming marriages starting three consecutive Sundays before the wedding. These proclamations—typically read aloud by a priest and published in the parish bulletin—were a formal “heads up” that a wedding was happening.

- ix. **The last chance for objections would be on the wedding day itself,** during the “speak now or forever hold your peace” portion of the ceremony.

- x. And **why would** someone go so far as to formally object to a marriage union? It came down to the law, not a last chance at true love. If someone

knew of a legal reason that would disqualify either party from marrying, it was considered their duty to object and uphold whatever issues were at hand.

- xi. Interesting...
- e. **Because when we go back and read in Zephaniah 3:17 that God is QUIET in His love, we should go HMMMMM.**
- i. This God, present, in the midst of His people... in other words, the “with-us” God, is silent. **In love, He is quiet; forever holding His peace.**
 - ii. After all, since verse 15 says that “*God has taken away the judgements against [His people],*” it makes sense that the Lord would be quiet: **there remain no more accusations to pronounce.**
 - iii. God is no longer speaking condemnation over His people.
 - iv. The judgement of the first half of chapter 3 been silenced.
 - v. **Now, He’s quiet in His love. But not ONLY quiet. In a glorious reversal, He shouts in His JOY, and rejoices in GLADNESS over His people.**
 - vi. This kind of joy, by the way, points to the deep affection a father feels for His children. God Himself sings and makes music as He brings His children in to the kingdom of righteousness.
 - vii. And then, obviously, we’re bananas if we don’t ALSO rejoice and shout... (**verse 14** prepared a right response for the people:)
“Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion, shout, O Isreal! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.”
 - viii. **There’s a clear mutuality of emotion experienced** by God and His redeemed. What a marvelous thought: our singing out of delight in God is a reflection of **His** singing out of delight over us, His redeemed people!
(https://opc.org/nh.html?article_id=491).
 - ix. **Saving, quiet love is accompanied by shouts of joy and gladness.**

3. Only In and Through Jesus

- a. **In the OT, this reversal of judgement and woe happened** as God cleared away the people’s enemies in the physical realm. We read that in verse 15 of Zephaniah.
- b. **For us, on this side of Calvary we celebrate that God with us, Emmanuel, has done that for us in the eternal realm.**

- c. The images of salvation in **this** verse led New Testament salvation led O. Palmer Roberston to call Zeph 3:17 “**the John 3:16 of the Old Testament.**” I think we have to give hearty agreement to that!
- d. I mean, were you not thinking as I was sharing that passage and then the wedding ceremony analogy: Yes! And Jesus has done it, **EVERY manifestation of blessing in Zephaniah 3, Jesus has done it!**
- i. It is Jesus who has taken away the judgments against us because HE took them upon HIMSELF on the cross.
 - ii. Jesus has cleared a way against our enemies of the world, the flesh, and the devil.
 - iii. Because Jesus defeated evil on our behalf, we shall never fear evil again.
 - iv. He IS God in our midst
 - v. He is the mighty One to save
 - vi. He has gathered those who mourn, that we will no longer suffer reproach.
 - vii. He has gathered the lame, the outcasts, and changed their shame in to praise.
 - viii. Jesus brought victory over sin, death, and the grave. He brought the kingdom of God in to our midst.
 - ix. And He did so **silently**: the messianic servant song of **Isaiah 53:7** says, *“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”*
- e. **Charles Spurgeon writes on Zeph 3:17**, *“Oh, what a host of precious thoughts we can meditate upon here! We have started a whole covey of sweet things and we might profitably stand still and admire them. It is not merely one sweet thought, but many that are included in this one precious truth, “He will rest in his love.” “The Hebrew conveys [the idea that] He would be silent about their sins. And certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ will never give any evidence against His [bride]—“He will be silent in his love.” If He were called upon to say, “Has Your [bride] sinned?” His declaration would be, “I am the Sin-Offering on her behalf. I am her Substitute. I have been punished in her stead. No drop of the hail of God’s vengeance can fall on [her], for it has fallen on me. I can say, ‘Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.’”*
There will not be a word of accusation from Him. Glory!

4. We Are Quieted

- a. You see now why earlier I said it was nutty for me to want verse 17 to mean that God quiets ME. That’s way too small an understanding. The best possible reality is for the Lord our God to have no judgement to speak out against us. And that **this withholding of judgement is done in His love...makes for perfect theology**
- i. God is love (1 John 4:8)

- ii. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16)
 - iii. God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)
 - iv. By this we know love (1 John 3:16)
 - v. The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5)
- b. And yes, as we experience the glorious grace of God's silence that saves, **WE are quieted. WE GET BOTH. Halleluiah!**
- c. The Word of God now speaks over us "**a better word**" than one of vengeance and retribution (Hebrews 12:22-24).
- **Heb 12:22-24** *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, (23) and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (24) and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*
- d. **And yet, though we know ALL of this, we're also so often tempted to bring our own accusations** – operating as prophet entrusted with a message of woe *AGAINST ourselves. But friend...*
- vi. whether that self-condemnation comes from a voice that says, "If you only knew who I really am, my failures and faults..."
 - vii. or from shame that says, "I am too unacceptable to enter in. This relationship and fellowship with God or others...it's out of my reach."
 - viii. Or from unbelief that tears you up with doubts over whether God sees your needs and desires.
- e. Let's at least admit this...those accusations don't come from the Kingdom of Heaven. It's the competing voices of the world, the flesh and the devil questioning our right standing and trying to condemn us. Then let's confess that God does neither of those things...
There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1)
- f. **The Lord is quiet in His love.**
- g. **We need not bring false condemnation upon ourselves...**
- i. God knows you, and still He bids you come near through Christ and know His rest.
 - ii. He is in your yesterdays, todays, and tomorrows as a loving Father who rejoices over you with gladness. He does not turn His face away
 - iii. He can and will accomplish that which is good, perfect, and pleasing.

Romans 8:31-32 *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (32) 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?*

h. Be Quiet and Rest Dear Friends

Jesus bids you: *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Mat 11:29-30*

i. **As Christians**, we HAVE taken Jesus’ yoke upon ourselves and REST is the gift He offers: the rest of unearned and unmerited salvation. The pardoning grace that offers **uninterrupted** and **joyous** communion with God. A communion that is free of accusation.

j. **Rest is the gift that comes as God is quiet in His love.**

k. **Jesus has affirmed it...**

Speaking to the sinful woman anointing His feet with oil in Luke 7:
(48) And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." (49) Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" (50) And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

l. That word “**peace**” (i-rah'-nay) means quietness and rest.

m. **Quiet and Rest are two sides of the same Gospel coin.**

n. **Because of this and in the meantime**, we gather together as people who steward this message to each other:

- Jesus HAS brought us in, He has gathered the outcast and lame, He has changed our shame in to praise, He has cleared away our enemies, He IS in our midst, “a mighty One who saves!”
- It means that as we live TOGETHER in and from this peace, we can be what George Eldon Ladd described: “...the church on earth [as] a colony of heaven, enjoying in advance the life of the age to come.”
- It means we can remind each other that in light of the quiet, tender love of the Father, we too can be quieted of our self-inflicted judgments.
- It means we can speak better words to each other, words of truth and love to quench every fiery arrow the accuser would send our way.

o. **Let us call this to mind now and always.** So that when I forget, you can remind me. And when you forget I can remind you.

- p. God is quiet in His love. And we are quieted in soul. But remember, we SHOUT and REJOICE over the blessings of God:
(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...

John Calvin - Prayer in his commentary on Zeph 3:17-19

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are at this day so scattered on account of our sins, and even they who seem to be collected in thy name and under thy authority, are yet so torn by mutual discords, that the safety of thy Church hangs as it were on a thread, while in the meantime thine enemies seem with savage cruelty to destroy all those who are thine, and to obliterate thy gospel,—O grant, that we may live in quietness and [rest], hoping in thy promises, so that we may not doubt, but that thou in due time will [bring us ultimate deliverance]... being at length freed from every contest, we shall enjoy that blessed [eternal] rest which is laid up for us in heaven, and which thine only begotten Son has procured for us. Amen. <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom29/calcom29.iv.iv.xxii.html>