

SUMMER SERMONS

ZEPHANIAH 3:17

DOES GOD REALLY LOVE ME?



CHRIST SCREAMED
FOR US ON CALVARY,
SO THAT HE COULD SING
OVER US IN HEAVEN.

FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Does God really love me? Have you ever asked that question? Some of us have asked that many times. Why?

It's often because we feel so unloveable. We see our sinfulness, our backsliding, our own lack of love, and wonder, "How could God love *me*?"

Or maybe we've had bad experiences of human love. Perhaps we've been abused, or we've been abandoned by someone who once said they loved us, or we've been betrayed. If people don't love us, how can God love us?

Sometimes it's because we're depressed. We're really down about ourselves or our lives. We don't feel anything apart from darkness and distance from God.

When we're going through suffering for any length of time, especially repeated losses, we find doubts rising about whether God loves us.

Whatever the reason, we ask that painful question: **Does God really love me?**

While the question is understandable it's also damaging. When we doubt or question God's love for us, we weaken our own love for God, we lose our desire for God, and we depress our enjoyment of God. Who wants to be with someone or love someone who doesn't really love us?

Using Zephaniah 3:17, I want to help you answer the question with a resounding YES. Doing so will increase our love, desire, and enjoyment of God.

CONTEXT

Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah and ministered around 640-610 BC. Judah had fallen into idolatry, syncretism, and religious indifference. God used Zephaniah as one of the "Eleventh Hour" prophets to call Judah to repentance. The key verse is "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). Zephaniah's own name backed up this message because it means "God has hidden."

The structure of the book is:

- Judgment (1:2-18)
- Hope (2:1-3)
- Judgment (2:4-3:8)
- Hope (3:9-20)

The structure of chapter 3 is:

- Jerusalem sentenced (3:1-5)
- Nations sentenced (3:6-8)
- Salvation of remnant (3:9-20)



So how much does God love us?
He enjoys being with us.



1. GOD ENJOYS BEING WITH YOU

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one... (17).

The **your** are the people in verse 12. **But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly (12)**. The LORD is described as a mighty one, the name given to mighty warriors.

This mighty warrior wants to be with humble and lowly people. This is remarkable because usually mighty warriors want to be with other mighty warriors not weak civilians. Think of our own modern day mighty warriors such as Chris Kyle, James 'Mad Dog' Mattis, Norman Schwarzkopf. Would they want to spend any time with you or I, who have never risked our little fingers for our nation? Not likely.

But the mighty warrior of this text enjoys being with the afflicted and the poor. He's not just in the same building or even the same room, but he's in the midst of such.

APPLICATION

♥ Stand in amazed awe that God wants to be with people like us. He looks forward to it, enjoys it and treasures it. If you doubt it, look at Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, and who he loved to spend time with

♥ If God enjoys being with us so much, does that not encourage you to want to be with him more, both in private and in public. Use God's desire for you to increase your desire for him.

GOD'S FIRST HOME IS
THE HIGH AND HOLY HEAVEN,
BUT HIS SECOND HOME IS
THE HUMBLE HUMAN HEART.



I need more than God's presence with me.
What about salvation?



2. GOD ENJOYS SAVING YOU

...a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness (17).

When a Hebrew writer wanted to emphasize something, he would use repetition. When he wanted to make something unforgettable, he would repeat something three times (e.g. "Holy, Holy, Holy" in Isaiah 6). Here Zephaniah uses the word for joy three times. This mighty warrior does not just tolerate being with you, he enjoys being with you. "Joy, Joy, Joy!"

And what does he especially enjoy? He has a special joy in saving. Think of how much pleasure you get in seeing someone saved. There's no greater joy in the world, is there? So consider how much more joy God gets when he actually does the saving. He enjoys saving us from guilt, from the devil, from hell, from shame, from bondage.

We can see that joy when Christ came as a mighty warrior to do this saving (Ps. 40:7-8; Heb. 10:9). We see it when he began his public ministry (Matt. 3:17). We see it in his joy over people being saved (Luke 10:21). We see it in the parables he told of joy in heaven over sinners repenting (Luke 15).

APPLICATION

♥ This verse has been described as the John 3:16 of the Old Testament. If God enjoys saving you, how much more should you enjoy being saved by him?

♥ Echo heaven's triple joy on earth, both in your own salvation and in the salvation of others. Let joy, joy, joy drive out sad, sad, sad.

GOD DOESN'T SAVE
BECAUSE HE HAS TO,
HE SAVES
BECAUSE HE LOVES TO.



What about after salvation?
Is the salvation just functional or is it also relational?



3. GOD ENJOYS LOVING YOU

He will quiet you by his love (17).

This phrase can be translated in two ways. The first way is of God doing the quieting of us. The text is based upon the picture of a mother soothing and calming an upset child. She draws alongside the troubled child to reassure of her loving care. God quiets us in a similarly tender way when we are troubled.

The second way it can be translated is **He will be quiet in his love**. Here, it's not the mother who does the quieting or soothing but the mother who is soothed and quieted. God does not do the quieting but is quieted. The picture here is of a mother visiting the room of her little child before going to bed herself. It's been a busy, noisy, stressful day, but now everything is peaceful and at rest. She pauses and gazes on the child experiencing the joy and peace of loving this child so much.

God gazes upon you with calm contentment. He is quietly enjoying you without you even being aware of it. There's a wordless wonder, a deep quietness, an unruffled satisfaction as he thinks about you.

To go back to the military metaphor, the image is of the mighty warrior returning from battle with his spoil. He sets it down and gazes upon it with deep satisfaction and joy.

APPLICATION

♥ Be quieted and calmed by the tranquil and tranquilizing love of God when you are troubled by suffering or tormented by sin. When the devil's hatred disturbed your peace, let God's love calm the storm in your soul.

♥ When you go to bed at night, remember, God is visiting your room through the night and is enjoying gazing upon you. It satisfied him and gives him pleasure. He is quieted in and by his love.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU LOVE GOD
GOD LOVES YOU MORE.



How does God express that love?
How can I be sure that he really loves me?



4. GOD ENJOYS SINGING OVER YOU

He will exult over you with loud singing (17).

God cannot contain himself any longer. The silence of the scene is shattered as he erupts in an ecstasy of rapturous love. The singers are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – a Holy Trio. The Father sings “My son, my son, my son.” The son of God sings, “My bride, my bride, my bride.” The Holy Spirit sings “My home, my home, my home.”

What’s the tone of this song? There are no minor notes in it. The tone is joy, happiness, gladness, celebration, and jubilation. The volume is so deafening that if we heard it with our present ears, it would burst our eardrums. Thankfully, when we get to heaven, we will be given new ears and hearing capacity to not only survive this song but enjoy it. For the moment, though, we have to go on by faith, believing that the song is being sung even though we cannot hear any of it with our normal ears. This is a song that has no last verse.

But, as someone once said, you can’t have a singing God without a screaming God. The Lord could not sing unless the Lord had once screamed. God could not love us unless he had poured out his anger on the Mighty Warrior. The scream that made this song possible was, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.”

APPLICATION

♥ If Christ’s scream is not your hope, then you have no hope of hearing Christ’s song. If his death is not your hope, you have no hope of life. Zephaniah has some of the most awesome descriptions of God’s judgments in the Bible (see chapter 1). If we don’t want to scream with terror when God comes to judge, we must put our hope in Christ’s scream of terror.

♥ When we eavesdrop on God’s singing, we hear the excitement and joy of the bridegroom on his wedding day (Isa. 62:5; 65:10). Look up some YouTube videos of bridegrooms when they see their wives. Therefore, let’s respond with our own song of joy in response to God’s song of joy (the same verbs of joy are used in verses 14, 17). Sing, shout, raise the rafters, celebrate, excite and exult your heart.

**CHRIST SCREAMED FOR US ON CALVARY
SO THAT HE COULD SING OVER US IN HEAVEN.**



CONCLUSION



FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [The Pleasure of God in the Good of his People](#) by John Piper
- [The God who Sings](#) by Darryl Dash
- [Trials and Consolation](#) by C H Spurgeon (mp3)
- [How Zephaniah Helps us Feel the Glad Love of God](#) by Jonathon Parnell

Discussion Questions

- When and why have you asked the question, 'Does God really love me?'
- What effect does such a question have on your relationship with God?
- What part of this sermon did you find most helpful and why?
- Why has this verse been described as the John 3:16 of the Old Testament?
- How does the illustration in Isaiah 62:5 help you understand this verse better?
- Read Zephaniah chapter 1. Why is there such a contrast? Which chapter applies to you?
- How does God's song help you sing?

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DOES GOD REALLY LOVE ME?



Damaging Question

- Weakens our own love
- Reduces our desire
- Depresses our joy

Biblical answer?



Drive away doubts about God's love with God's joyful song of love about you, over you, and for you.



God enjoys being with you

- A Mighty Warrior
- Weak Civilians

GOD'S FIRST HOME IS THE HIGH AND HOLY HEAVEN, BUT HIS SECOND HOME IS THE HUMBLE HUMAN HEART.

Salvation?



God enjoys saving you

- Joy in seeing salvation
- Joy in being saved
- Joy in doing the saving

GOD DOESN'T SAVE BECAUSE HE HAS TO, HE SAVES BECAUSE HE LOVES TO

Functional or relational?



God enjoys loving you

- He will quiet you
- He will be quieted by you

NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU LOVE GOD GOD LOVES YOU MORE.

Express his love?



God enjoys singing over you

- The Singers
- The Song
- The Tone
- The Volume
- The Last Verse?

CHRIST SCREAMED FOR US ON CALVARY SO THAT HE COULD SING OVER US IN HEAVEN.

Action?

