

Melted by God's Love

by Sam Caldwell

This sermon titled 'Melted by God's Love' explores the profound love of God as depicted in Zephaniah 3:17. The speaker shares a personal testimony of transformation and emphasizes the continuous saving power of God's love in our lives. The sermon highlights three key aspects of God's love: its nearness, strength, and warmth, urging listeners to be motivated by the overwhelming love of Christ in their Christian walk.

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:17, 2 Corinthians 5:14, Isaiah 41:10, Romans 8:38

Topics: "God's Transformative Love", "The Power of Christ's Love"

Description

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Transcript

Praise God. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Melted by God's love, that's the title of today's sermon. And I didn't realize that the title would be a bit ironic, because I'm melted by the humidity right now. Would you please turn with me in your Bibles to Zephaniah, the Old Testament book of Zephaniah.

And if you need help finding it, go to Matthew, and then go backwards a few books, through Malachi, through Zechariah, through Haggai, and then you'll find Zephaniah, Zephaniah. We're looking at Zephaniah chapter 3 and verse 17. And as we get started, I just want to say that it's a true privilege for me to be here today, and for our church to be with your church today.

This is a privilege, and I believe the Lord has his hand over this. I'm so thankful for you all, and I'm so thankful for Pastor Don, especially. I just want to praise God for these churches today, being together in God's presence.

Amen? Amen. Let's read Zephaniah chapter 3 and verse 17. In his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

Hallelujah. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Oh, Lord Jesus, I thank you, and I bless your name today, Lord. And as has already been prayed, where two or more are gathered, you are there in our midst, Lord. And we know that you're here with us today, and I want to ask you, especially, Lord Jesus, through the preaching today, that you would get me out of the way, Lord, so that we can hear directly from you, Lord Jesus.

This is not a time for people to hear from me or for us to hear the words of man, Lord, but it's a time for us to hear the mouth and the words of God. So we ask you, Lord Jesus, to come and invade this place, invade our hearts, Lord, and open up your word to us. And anyone who needs help, who needs relief, who needs freedom, Lord, bring it through your word and through your love.

Oh, Lord Jesus, you're so good to us. Pour out your love today. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Well, I want to start today just by testifying to you all that the Lord saved me.

In my late 20s, about 11, 12 years ago, and I can put it this way, the Lord saved me from a lot. He saved me from, well, I grew up on the streets of Portland doing drugs. That then turned into alcoholism in my 20s.

I was a cocaine addict for many years in my later 20s. I even headed toward trying heroin in my late 20s. He saved me from sexual immorality.

He saved me from meanness and hurting my friends. And he saved me from so many other things that I wouldn't even want to mention from the pulpit today. So I praise him for that.

The month I was saved, I was on heavy antidepressants. And in my early 20s, I had tried to take my life four times. There was such a darkness over my life, such a darkness.

I got saved in a small church in the center of Toronto, and those people swarmed around me with their love. And they showed me God's love. They showed me what I want to talk to you about today.

But there's one particular person, and her name was Hazel. She was an older woman in that church, Christie Street Baptist Church in Toronto. And after every single service, Miss Hazel would come up to me, and she had very big hands, and she'd take both of them and put them around my hands.

And she'd say, Sam, you don't know how much God loves you. And then I'd go home, and I'd say, man, that's really corny. And then the next week, we go to church service, and Hazel would come up to me afterward, and she'd say, Sam, and she'd start crying, you just don't know how much God loves you.

And sometimes she'd say, you know, I know you can't feel it right now, but you're gonna feel it. And I'd go home, and I'd say, man, that's corny. And then one day, about six months in, I went to Sister Hazel, and I said, you know, Hazel, you've said that to me every week, and thank you, but it's a little bit corny, and let's just talk about something else.

And she said to me, corny? Sam, you think that's corny? That's not corny, Sam, that's the gospel. And I was like, whoa. And that's what I want to tell you all today.

The love of God is not corny. The love of God is the gospel. And unless you have a gospel that teaches you that God loves you, that He's pouring out His love on you every single day, that He loves you despite your sin, and that He's loving you more and more every day, and melting you with His love, unless you have that in your gospel, then you don't have a gospel.

The gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is that God so loved the world, and He gave His Son, and His Son shed His blood, and His Son rose again from that grave to love you and to save you from death, to save you from your sin, to save you from hell. That's love, that's God's love. I pray that we are melted by that love today.

Let me ask you this before I give you the three points of this sermon. What motivates your Christian life? What motivates your Christian life? Why did you come here today? Did you come here because it's just your routine on Sundays? Did you come here just out of duty? Or did you come here because God showed His love to you, and He's melted your heart, and He's brought you here today? Now look, does everybody remember what Jesus said in that Olivet Discourse before He went to the cross? What did He say about love in the end times? He said, the love of many would what? Grow cold. Has anyone seen that? Have you seen that on the streets of Portland? The love of many growing cold? We see people today hating this country.

We see people hating their parents. We even see people hating themselves, don't we? Hating their own bodies, hating their gender. And so I want us to be very clear today that love is motivating us.

That as the world, the world's love grows colder and colder and colder, our Christian love would grow brighter and brighter and brighter. And that's actually what's happening in the book of Zephaniah. Let me just show you two verses.

Look in chapter 3 here. Look at verse 2. It's talking about a city in verse 2, and it says, She obeyed not the voice of God. She received not correction.

She trusted not in the Lord. She drew not near to her God. This city was starting to take the Lord for granted, and its love was starting to grow cold.

Look at verse 4 with me. It says, Her prophets are light and treacherous persons. Her priests have polluted the sanctuary.

They have done violence to the law. You see, the Jewish nation was starting to take God for granted, and their love was just growing cold. And then what does God do at the end of this book of Zephaniah? Verses 8 through 20 at the end here.

He gives a huge burst of gospel love. And basically, God says to his people, Look, the only thing that can melt your stony hearts, the only thing that can change this nation, is my love. And in these last verses, he just pours it out.

And he says, The gospel, glory, heaven, my love. Look at me, my people. Look toward me, my people.

And that's what we're looking at today in verse 17. Let's read it one more time. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty.

He will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love.

He will joy over thee with singing. Are you melted by God's love? Three points for you today from this verse. It is the nearest love.

It is the strongest love. And it is the warmest love. And I want to ask if this love pervades your life.

First of all, the nearest love. Let's look at our verse. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee.

In the midst of thee. This love that God has to offer you today is near to you. I don't know if anybody's ever been in a long distance relationship.

But if you see a long distance relationship or even a long distance marriage going on, that can be one of the most painful things to endure ever, can't it? But our love relationship with God is not long distance. What does it say right here? The Lord thy God in the midst of thee. That means that he's right here.

He's with you always. As one old song that Kiara and I love to sing together says, No, never alone. No, never alone.

I know he'll never leave me. Never will leave me alone. He's right here.

He's among us. And why do we need this? Because if you believe in a God of love who's up there in the heavens, but he doesn't come into your life. He's not in the midst of you.

Do you know what that's called? It's called deism. It's this thought that God is, he's up there. Yeah, and he's loving and he's great, wonderful.

But it doesn't affect me. It doesn't touch me. There's no long distance relationship going on right here.

Our God is with us. There was a Canadian scientist named Farley Mowat. Anybody ever heard of Farley Mowat? He studied the wolves in Canada.

And he went up into northern Canada on this assignment. He went up there and they told him, I want you to study the patterns of these wolves up there. So he found a place sort of on the edge of a cliff where he could look down into this plain and he could observe these wolves.

He set up camp right there. He's watching them. He has his binoculars.

Over a period of weeks, he's taking data about these wolves. But he's not really getting what he needs. And after many, many weeks, Farley Mowat goes to use the bathroom in the woods there.

And everything's very quiet. And he starts to hear, ha! He hears panting behind him. And over here, ha, ha, ha! He hears more panting behind him.

And he looks behind him and he sees four wolves flanking him on the back. And then he wrote in his journal, which he had to send to the Canadian authorities, he said, I noticed they've been with me all along. They've been right behind me.

And from then on, he changed his whole mode of observation. And he realized that he was living with the wolves. He wasn't just observing the wolves.

He was living with them. I want to testify to you today, that's what it's like with God. Don't just observe God from on high.

Don't just say, he's up there, he loves me, but it doesn't affect my life. We ought to say, he's right here. He's been with me all along.

What does it say here? The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He's right here. He's watching.

And he loves you so intimately, it's the nearest love. Amen? That's our first point. It's the nearest love.

Let that melt your hearts. Secondly, it is the strongest love. Let's look at our verse again.

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save. Now right here is the most offensive thing about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And this is something that actually Pastor Don has been teaching me for the last year. The gospel of Jesus Christ tells us not only that God saves by his life one day 12 years ago or whenever it was, and then he leaves you, and you're on your own. The gospel of Jesus Christ, and I know Don would agree with me on this, says that Christ saves, and then he saves, and he saves, and he saves, and he saves.

He saves us all throughout our lives. Right here, he's called a mighty warrior. He will save.

Literally, in the Hebrew, this word is gibbor, and it means the valiant one, a mighty savior, a fearless warrior. So can you picture your Lord today loving you, loving your soul? He's a mighty warrior. He's coming to save you.

Can you all see him coming over those mountains? He's coming for you now, and he's coming all guns blazing. He's coming bearing a sword to take care of sin in your life, to save you from everything in your life. What's he coming to fight for? For country, for territory, for land? No, he's coming to fight for your soul.

He's coming to fight out of love for your soul. And I just want to ask you this. What can Christ save from? What can Christ save from, this mighty, mighty warrior? Can he save you from meanness? Someone tell me.

Can he save you? Amen, yes. Can he save you from sadness? Amen. Can Christ save you from depression? Can he save you from anxiety? Can Jesus save from drug addiction? Amen.

Can he save from alcoholism? I used to go to AA meetings before I was saved, and they would say, once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. But when I got saved, I read this, and it says, no, once an alcoholic, but now he's mighty, and he's saving, and he'll save you, and he'll save you, and he'll save you. Can he save you from anger toward your spouse? Amen, praise God.

Can he save you from loneliness? Amen, praise Jesus. What about lovelessness? Can he save you from that? What about prayerlessness? Anybody ever struggled in their prayer lives? Can you see Jesus coming over the mountain to say, it's all right, I'm a mighty warrior. I'll save you.

I'm here with you. I'll take your broken, difficult prayer life. Amen.

It's the strongest love. What have we said? Christ's love is the nearest love. He's right here.

Secondly, it's the strongest love. He will save, and he will save, and he will save. Finally, it is the warmest love, the warmest love imaginable.

Look at our verse one final time. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save.

He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love. He will joy over thee with singing.

That's pretty amazing, isn't it? Let me ask you this. Is that just poetry? Is Zephaniah just writing some beautiful little phrases there? This is not poetry. This is reality.

And it's so difficult for us, even as Christians, to accept this. This picture of God's love right here, that God's love is this warm, could it be that God's love is actually this good? Does he really love you this much? Does he really love you like Rich Mullins says, where he says God is just head over heels about you? Is that true? Some of us who have sort of a self-deprecating self-instinct in us, could we believe that? Could this love motivate us in this life? Let's look at these very, very warm phrases, and we'll close with this. It's absolutely astounding.

The first phrase is this. He will rejoice over thee with joy. Are you all picturing Jesus right now over your life and your brokenness? You come as you are, and he's rejoicing over thee with joy.

If you ever were to stay at my parents' house, and you might stay upstairs, my mom would be downstairs, staying up late, watching the Celtics game. She loves the Celtics. She just loves the Celtics.

And if you're upstairs, eventually you're going to hear this. Wah! And she'll stand up from her chair. She's all alone in the living room, by the way, downstairs.

And she'll just stand up and go, wah! Whenever the Celtics make a great play, she goes wild, as if she's there in Boston. That's what the Lord is doing over you. But I wonder if you can believe it.

Can you believe it, that the Lord loves you so much that he stands up and he's, what does it say? He will rejoice over thee with joy. He's rejoicing over you. Can you believe that? Do you all remember when Stephen, in Acts chapter 7, was stoned to death? He looked up into heaven, and what did he see? Can anyone tell me? Amen.

Usually, Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God when Christ has ascended, right? He's sitting at the right hand of God. But Stephen looks up into heaven, and he sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Why is he standing? He's rooting Stephen on.

He's getting ready to receive Stephen into heaven. Can you believe that? God roots you on. He rejoices over you with joy.

That's incredible. That's incredible. I want to plead with you to believe that, and it gets even better.

Let's look at these other phrases. Look here. He will rest in his love.

Literally, in Hebrew, the closest we can get to this, listen to this, is that God will be quieted in his love for you. He will be quieted in his love for you. What does that mean? When I come home from a long day at work, sometimes working three different jobs, driving up to Augusta, working here, working different places, oftentimes Kiara and I will eat dinner, and then we'll just take our little baby Shiloh, and we'll go onto the bed, and we'll just watch him play there.

And I've noticed that we just lose track of time, and Shiloh's playing and playing, and we're just watching him. And after a few minutes, I notice I'm not thinking about the work day anymore. I'm not thinking about my burdens.

I'm not thinking about what's going on there. What's happening? I'm looking at Shiloh, and I'm quieted in my love for him. Do you all see that? Nothing else comes to mind.

I just love him so much that I'm distracted, right? I don't have to think about these other burdens. Can you imagine this? God looks at you, and he's quieted in his love for you. He just says, ah, wonderful,

altogether lovely, beautiful.

He's calmed by his love for you. Can anybody believe that? It's incredible. Last phrase right here.

He will joy over thee with singing. He will joy over thee with singing. We all sang a few songs together today, didn't we? Was anybody conscious when we sang those songs that God was also singing with us? We were singing up, hallelujah, hallelujah, Lord.

And God's looking down at us and singing, you are my children. I don't know what he's singing, but he's rejoicing over us, and he's singing back to us. Isn't that incredible? Wow.

Let's end with this question. Is the love of God just a cliché to you, like it was to me when I got saved and Hazel came up to me and said, Sam, God loves you so much. Is it just a cliché to you? Do you say, well, yeah, Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so, but been there, done that, got the t-shirt, all right.

Or are you melted by God's love? And let me ask you this again. What motivates you in the Christian life? What motivates you to be a better Christian in your home, to be a better Christian at school, to be a better Christian in the workplace? What motivates you? Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 14, he says, for the love of Christ constraineth me. Anybody read that verse? The love of Christ.

Some translations say the love of Christ compels me. The image there is it's like when you hold a fish, right? And you squeeze that fish and it'll just pop out in front of you, right? Paul's using a verb just like that. The love of Christ, it squeezes me and it pushes me forward.

Are you motivated by the love of Christ like that? You hear, God is rejoicing over me. God loves me. God is quieted in his love toward me.

And that's why I do this. That's why I bear with my brothers and sisters. That's why I live the Christian life.

Amen? Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, for your precious love toward us. It's almost too good for us to believe it, Lord.

Will you help us, Lord, to believe it? To believe it. To be melted by it, Lord. To truly believe that you love us.

And on that basis, to step forward. To love each other more. To reach our communities.

To do everything for you, Lord. Because the love of Christ compels us. Oh, Jesus, thank you for being mighty.

Thank you for your love which is near. And which is strong. And which is warm, Lord.

We praise your holy name. Amen.

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