

Sermon in a nutshell!

“Don’t let your hands hang limp!” (Zephaniah 3 v 16, Good News Bible)

The Old Testament prophet Zephaniah was warning the Israelites that their unholy lifestyle was leading them into disaster. If they didn’t repent and change there would be defeat by their enemies and they’d be taken into exile. And yet the Lord would still love them, and so after this punishment, when they had turned back to Him, the Lord would deliver them from their enemies and reinstate them in Jerusalem. A familiar Old Testament theme.

Towards the end of the prophecy, these words would be told to those in the despair of exile:- “Don’t let your hands hang limp!”: a curious phrase with several shades of meaning

Don’t droop! Don’t be so miserable! Don’t be so useless! Cheer up! Chin up! Because the Lord is going to deliver you!

Raise your hands and arms in the air to praise and worship the Lord!
Anticipate His salvation! Put your hands together to pray to the Lord!

Get a grip! Grasp the sword for the fight! You may have to do your part!

Before the fight and afterwards, catch hold of your hoe, to work your captors’ fields as a slave, and later to work your own fields in freedom.

But don’t let your hands hang limp!

Few of us are in danger of national calamity or years in exile, but many of us suffer periods of personal catastrophe. In those times it is easy to doubt the Lord’s love for us, and to despair of any escape, and so to droop and let our hands hang limp. The ancient message is equally for us: God loves us, in spite of our faults, and will deliver us when we turn back to Him. So raise up those limp hands into adoration and thanksgiving! Get a grip on those things that God gives you to grip! And be sure that He has your life in His loving hands, and His hands do not hang limp.

Mike Hill 30/5/07