

God – An Awesome Judge and Refuge

Nahum

Kevin Laser, March 8, 2020

Well, good morning, it's good to see you. And when Jeremy asked me to preach knowing that he would be away for the Shepherd's Conference, I took some time to pray about it and ask the Lord, what would He want me to preach on? And I thought about a sermon series that he did last summer, late last summer, on Jonah. And I remember at the end of the sermon series, how it ended with Jonah being upset with Nineveh that they didn't get the punishment that they deserved, and yet that God was gracious to Nineveh and Nineveh repented. And I thought to myself, well, what whatever happened to Nineveh? Whatever came of that? At the Iron Man Bible studies on Saturday morning we're going through the Old Testament, and I began to see that there's more to the story of Nineveh than we see at the end of Jonah. And so, that leads us to today which is why I chose the book of Nahum of all the books in the Bible, small, little obscure book at the end of the Old Testament among the Minor Prophets. And so we're going to take a look at that this morning. And basically look at Part Two of the story of Nineveh.

If you recall, Nineveh was a capital city of Assyria, which was a large nation that was actually characterized by a lot of cruelty and oppression. But maybe you, like me, have wondered, whatever happened to Nineveh? How long did they walk with God? How long did they walk in His compassion and His kindness, and enjoy that blessing of His?

Well, like I said, Jonah is part one where God shows His patience, His mercy, that His compassion extends even to the Gentiles. But Nahum, however, is part two. This is where God shows that He is a jealous and avenging God whose judgment is inescapable, and yet He's also a refuge for all who trust in Him. Nahum is actually a very descriptive book that showcases God's awesomeness and justice. God reveals that He is full of justice, something that we tend to ignore, because it's difficult for us to accept sometimes. Yet with His justice comes punishment, and Nahum unashamedly describes God's plan of destruction for Nineveh. If you read the rest of Nineveh, we only read chapter one today. But if you read the rest of it in chapters two and three, it's very graphic in terms of the description of what God is going to do to Nineveh.

And repeatedly, God emphasizes that His justice cannot be thwarted. And those are the darker threads of truth that are woven through the book of Nineveh. If you recall, begrudgingly, Jonah called for Nineveh to repent. And the Ninevites submitted themselves to God and they turned from their sin. It didn't actually take long in the long scope of things only a few generations until they wandered back into their life of sin. It was only about 100 years since Nineveh was saved and so they repented upon which they within 100 years, within about three generations before they turned back away from God. They turned their back on God. They turned back to their arrogant, cruel, selfish ways.

And at the time of Nahum, which we're gonna look at today here, Israel was split into two parts. There's Israel, the 10 tribes of the north and then there's Judah, the 2 tribes in the south. Assyria had already conquered the northern group of tribes being Israel. They had already been conquered, and they were oppressing Judah. That's sort of the setting, the scene, which we find ourselves here in the book of Nahum. And although God's grace was granted to Nineveh for a season, when the Assyrians returned to their sinful ways God decided that was the time when He would bring His judgment. The idea that God was going to judge Israel's oppressor, being Assyria, Nineveh being the capital city, would bring joy and hope to Israel and Judah; it would give them comfort and a ray of hope. And most of the Book of Nahum actually speaks of God's judgment. However, there are bright colorful threads of truth. Bright, colorful threads of hope and encouragement for Israel that Nahum actually weaves into his book as well that we're going to look at this morning.

There's only 12 Minor Prophets in the Old Testament. They're tucked away at the end of the Bible, and they're called minor not because they're less significant to any degree. They're called minor because for the most part, we could sit down and read them through in one sitting. Two, three, four, five, eight chapters, something like that. And so it's the shortness of the book that minor describes when we talked about the Minor Prophets. They're used of God in just as big and significant of a way as the other major prophets as we would call them in the Old Testament.

Nahum is an Elkoshite, which probably means that he's from a town or a region called Elkosh, and his name actually means comfort and reassurance. We'll see in the passages that we're going to look at how he brings comfort and he brings assurance to Israel and to Judah in particular. And Nahum is commissioned by God to prophesy the ruin and destruction of mighty Assyria as a nation. This is no average city state, this is not some community that has some wall that's by itself, independent. This is a major world empire. And from all appearances, it seems unstoppable. It seems invincible. Nahum's words are actually a warning that no nation in this world is so strong and beyond the reach of God's judgment, that He cannot bring His judgment.

In fact, the fulfillment of Nahum's prophecy came in 612 B.C. when the Babylonians with the help of the Medes overtook Assyria and completely destroyed Nineveh. Nahum preached during the reign of King Manasseh, one of the most evil kings in Judah, it was a very dark time of history in Judah when there was lots of idolatry and lots of wickedness in the land. And Assyria had taken Israel captive and oppressed Judah, like I said before, for a very long time. Assyria though was a very large, a very cruel, a very bullish nation, and they oppressed Judah in many ways. God describes them as arrogant and boastful. They thought that they had conquered the people of God by their own power and by their own ability. And Nineveh was proud of their strength, they saw themselves as invulnerable with walls around their city. Walls were 100 feet high. They had a moat around the city, 100 feet wide, 60 feet deep; they seemed invincible.

But let me ask the question, Why was Israel under oppression? What was this all about? Well, Israel had turned their back on God as it says in 2 Kings 17. And God explains that he actually chose Assyria as his instrument of justice against Judah and Israel. In 2 Kings 17, I'm going to summarize a little bit here and then read verses 13 to 17. But in the first part, this is what God says of Israel and Judah. He says they feared other gods. He says they walked in the customs of the nations on their kings. He says they did things secretly, which were evil in God's sight. It says they built high places of worship to other gods, they served idols and they did evil to provoke the Lord. But I want to read for you verses 13-17 in 2 Kings 17 it says this,

¹³ Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets *and* every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.” ¹⁴ However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God. ¹⁵ They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and *went* after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the Lord had commanded them not to do like them. ¹⁶ They forsook all the commandments of the Lord their God and made for themselves molten images, *even* two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. ¹⁷ Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him. ¹⁸ So the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah. ¹⁹ Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced. ²⁰ The Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight.

You see, although Israel was a privileged and a chosen nation, God needed to punish them for their sin and their wickedness. And He needed to bring them to repentance. Hence, Assyria was God's instrument of justice. Let's go back to chapter one. If you're not already there, let's open up to Nahum chapter one. Nahum, like I said, is composed of three chapters and we're going to focus mostly this morning on chapter one. Take a look at verse two with me.

“A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.”

It begins by saying He's a jealous God. We don't normally think of God as being jealous do we? We think of one another as perhaps being jealous, we experience being jealous at times; but we don't necessarily think of God as being jealous. And yet this prophecy begins by saying He is jealous; and as a result of His jealousy, He is vengeful and He is going to pour out His wrath on Assyria.

We are commanded not to covet what other people have, not to look longingly at their possessions, their skills, their talents, their blessings, not to be discontent with what God has given to us. Instead, God has commanded us, be content, be satisfied with what He has given to us. And let's not grumble about the blessings that He's provided. Let's not think that His blessings are actually insufficient. When we are jealous, it's a sin against God that says, "I'm not content with what You have given to me. I really want something else, which You've given to me is not sufficient. I know better than You do. What You've given to me is not good enough. I want that thing over there. I want that one." And at that point, the root of our jealousy is pride. We think we know better than God.

God's jealousy, on the other hand, is not like our jealousy. When God gave the 10 commandments He said in the second commandment,

“⁴ ‘You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.’”

That's Exodus chapter 20, verse four to six.

Because God is our Creator, and there is no other God, He alone deserves our loyalty, our worship, our praise, our trust, our obedience. When our hearts give those things to someone else, or something else, God is jealous for our love. He is supreme above all else, and when we give that worship anywhere else, God is jealous for it. Consider what it says in Exodus 34:14, it says this “For you shall not worship any other God, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” He goes so far as to say His name is Jealous. God is jealous in the sense that he expects complete devotion, exclusive commitment, not merely a partial lukewarm half hearted religious observance. Worship belongs to God. He's worthy of worship, and He has the right to be jealous of it. He wants to be known and recognized for who He is. Other gods are nothing.

Oswald Chambers warned, “Beware of anything that competes with your loyalty to Jesus.”

But let me ask you, is it okay for us to be jealous? The apostle Paul actually says that he was jealous for the Corinthians when he was concerned for their faithfulness and their pure devotion to Christ. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2,

“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, being Christ, so that to Christ, I may present you as a pure virgin.”

Paul was concerned for their purity and their devotion to Christ. He had a deep zeal for their holiness. He was passionate for them to be holy and blameless, so that Christ would be honored in their lives. He was concerned actually, that they were beginning to believe in a false gospel, a polluted gospel, a watered down gospel, and that then would result in robbing God of the glory that He deserved. Paul's jealousy was for them actually to be holy and to be presentable to God. We are the bride, Christ is the groom and Paul's passion was for the Corinthians to remain faithful and devoted to the simple gospel and not accept another gospel. So not all human jealousy is actually sinful. We can have what's called a godly jealousy. There can be a godly jealousy which is when we are jealous, desiring, passionate for the things that are valuable and important to God. Where we passionately desire to follow after God. That is right.

But verse two talks more actually about his vengeance doesn't it? If we go back to Nahum 1, it says, “The Lord is avenging, wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries, he reserves wrath for his enemies.” Unfortunately, this aspect of God's wrath is all too often pushed aside in most churches, and frankly, it's not pleasant to think about. It can be disturbing to ponder on and to give much thought to and often, though, we like to think that God should be like us. We want to be the standard of what justice should look like. We want Him To reflect our preferences, and when we do that, we're making a God in our image. We're breaking actually one of God's commandments when we do that. We like to acknowledge that God is loving that He's kind, that He's compassionate, He's gracious – all those great things that are so true, and that we need to proclaim. And yet we are often scared though, aren't we, of letting people know that God is a wrathful and avenging God. We are tempted to minimize and downplay it. And when we do that we are actually communicating a skewed picture of who God is. Yet as ambassadors of Christ, it's only fair and right that we warn people of God's wrath to come.

But let me ask you a question. Why are His judgments fair? Why are His judgments always fair? Well, His judgments are always fair because He knows all things. Every piece of evidence is in His court already. Nothing is missing. And He knows when you tell the truth, He knows the intentions of our heart. He knows what is said, what's not said. He knows how it's said. He knows every single nuance, and his court is never missing, or waiting for a piece of evidence for Him to make a judgment. He has all the evidence that there is to make a fair judgment. Therefore, his judgments are always fairly informed, fully informed.

But I asked you again, why are His judgments always fair? Well, his judgments are always fair because He is perfectly wise to know precisely what kind of punishment to give. It's not like us finite creatures, who have limited wisdom. We see an injustice and sometimes we struggle to know how much punishment the person should receive. What kind of punishment should they receive? One person says one thing somebody else says another. One judge says this, another judge does something different. Was it too much? Was it too little? Was it too long? Was it too short? There's debates. But God's judgments are always fair because he's perfectly wise to know precisely what kind of punishment to give.

But I asked you for a third time. Why are His judgments always fair? His vengeance and His wrath is perfectly measured. Never disproportionate to the sin or the crime. We unfortunately, can lose our temper; we get upset about something. Perhaps it's justly, the wrong that was committed. And sometimes we fly off the handle, we get far more upset. We do far more in our anger than we ought. And yet God in His vengeance and His wrath. It is always perfectly measured. But God's anger and his wrath is perfectly measured even when he says in Deuteronomy 4:24 “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

But I asked you for the last time. Why are His judgments always fair? His judgments are always right and fair, because He is not a God who is partial, or persuaded. We've seen it on the news, we've heard about it, we've experienced it. A judge is bribed, persuaded, influenced to some degree. They give a sentence that's not quite fair. They're influenced by money, influenced by power, influenced by whatever. The sentencing becomes polluted then doesn't. Unfortunately, though, even as parents, we sometimes give a punishment to our kids, that's not necessarily a pure response to the wrong that was committed. But sometimes it's tainted with selfishness. I don't want to look bad. I don't want to deal with this. I don't want whatever it is. Unlike human judges who can be corrupt and corrupted with bribes, God cannot be bribed. God cannot be swayed. He cannot be influenced.

God is always good. In Acts 10:34, Peter says it like this.

“I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.”

The first truth that we looked at is the fact that God is jealous and avenging. The second truth that we're going to look at this morning is that God's justice is inescapable and inflexible or unbending.

In 1957, a man by the name of Frank Freshwaters was driving above the speed limit in Ohio and he struck a man who was 24 years old and he killed him. Frank Freshwaters was arrested, he was convicted and put in jail. And two years later, in 1959, he charmed the prison officials and he

escaped. He became free from prison but he was hiding from the authorities, always looking over his shoulder and on the run with fear. He decided to leave Ohio and travel to other places and eventually he ended up down in Florida. And during that time he changed his name got himself a nice job as a painter, occasionally attended church, he made friends in the neighborhood. And by many accounts, he was a friendly well liked guy in the community. He was known for being a guy who likes to tell jokes and have a good time. In 2015, 56 years later, at the age of 79, the law caught up with him when they approached him at his door. He probably thought that he had evaded the law and justice for so long that he could evade it for good. Fifty-six years, that's a long time. However, the law's perspective required him to still pay the punishment for the crime even five decades later. Even all these years later, the law enforcement were looking for him and they came knocking on his door. His file was still open, and justice needed to be served.

However, during all those years on the run, he began to settle into and get involved in his community, and he made a lot of good friends. And when interviewed about him, a neighbor who knew him quite well said this, and I quote, "This is someone who loved to laugh. I honestly think they should just let them go." From their perspective, he was a loving kind person who was fun to be around. And I'm sure he was in many regards. But what he did in the past should, should be forgotten is what they said, "Look at him now." He's just got his good qualities about him. In contrast from the law's perspective, he was guilty of evading justice, and he needed to be apprehended.

You see, our human perspective can be swayed, it can be charmed, it can be deceived by someone's personality, somebody good looks, their money, their accomplishments. Even human judges at times, as we talked about, are bribed; and criminals escape the full punishment that they deserve. But God's justice is inescapable and inflexible. No matter how many good things we do, we can't fool the judge. We can't bribe the judge. We can't convince the judge otherwise, we can't charm him to sweep our sins under the rug. nothing that we can do, can bargain with God or His justice. We don't have a single bargaining chip Galatians 6:7-8 says this,

“⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

For 56 years Frank Freshwaters could have mocked the justice. You could claim that he was above the law and that it couldn't touch him. But in the end, he couldn't mock it, could he? It was inescapable. And you had to face the reality, despite his friendly personality, despite the support of his friends, despite the fact that he was 79 years old, and despite the fact that he had health issues. Those things did not eradicate the law.

In verse three in Nahum, he reminds us of the same thing when he says this. It says in verse three,

“The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.”

Ninevah was a strong capital city, which was a world power and from a serious perspective, no one could truly threaten their invincibility. They had strength, they had might, they had resources, and they would have mocked anybody who said that God is gonna bring judgment upon them and eradicate them as a nation and destroy the capital city for good as the dominating world power. What did they have to fear? Actually, they had everything to fear. As we see in verse 12, God says this,

“Thus says the Lord, ‘Though they are at full strength, and likewise many, even so, they will be caught off and pass away.’”

Even though Ninevah had a season where they walked with God, they couldn't rest on their laurels and escape God's vengeance. Sadly, they lost sight of God's call of holiness and purity on their lives, and they wandered back into the tangled, prickly brambles of sin. Consider though how sure, God is of His judgment. Look at verse nine with me for a moment.

“Whatever you devise against the Lord, He will make a complete end of it. Distress will not rise up twice.”

God calls for them to muster their forces. In chapter 2:1, he says,

“The one who scatters has come up against you. Man, the fortress, watch the road; strengthen your back, summon all your strength. For the Lord will restore the splendor of Jacob.”

God calls for them to muster their forces, prepare for battle, give everything you've got, defend yourself as much as you can. What God is really saying is, “it doesn't matter what you do. When I send judgment, you're not gonna be able to stand. You think that you're strong and you can stand to resist and evade My judgment. You're deceived, you're fooling yourself. And I will prove it by calling you to muster your forces and then I will utterly, completely destroy you.” And in case they missed the point. God says in chapter 2:13,

“‘Behold, I am against you.’ Declares the Lord of hosts. ‘I will burn up her chariots in smoke, a sword will devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the land, and no longer will the voice of your messengers be heard.’”

Oh, those fearful and dreaded words, “I am against you.” But what about us? Assyria has come and gone. What about us? We're here today, Canada, Chilliwack, 2020. A very safe land to live in for the most part. Consider these words, though, from 2 Thessalonians chapter 1:6-10 where Paul writes about the final judgments that will happen in at the end of time. He says this,

“⁶For after all it is only right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to grant relief to you who are oppressed and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in blazing fire, ⁸He will inflict vengeance on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹they will suffer the penalty of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His mind, ¹⁰On that day He comes to be glorified in His saints, and regarded with wonder by all who have believed, including you, who have believed our testimony,”

With a warning like that, where's the hope? Where is the refuge? Where is our safety? That leads us to my third point, and the fact is that God is our refuge. He is not only an avenging God, who is jealous, He's not only a God whose justice is inescapable and inflexible, but God weaves this colorful, bright, beautiful thread of truth through the book of Nahum, and that is that He is our refuge. He was the refuge for Israel, and He is our refuge as well. In verse seven, it says this, these are sweet words to Judah, words that would have tasted like honey, or the fragrant aroma of a freshly blossoming lilac bush in the springtime. In verse seven, it says this,

“The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him.”

Do you see the irony here? We've been talking about how God is the judge. We have to face Him. And yet He says if you want safety, He is the refuge. He doesn't say go elsewhere. Go find somebody else, go find this, go find that. He says, “I am not only the judge,” as we have already talked about, but “I am the refuge.” Woven into each chapter of Mayhem is this refreshing, bright, colorful strand of hope. And we've been looking at it though mostly from a serious perspective, haven't we? One of doom, one of gloom, one of destruction. But you see on the other side of the coin, is Israel and Judah. Take a look at these verses, 1:3, these words and think about it now from the perspective of Judah and Israel.

“The Lord is slow to anger and great and power, and the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.”

For them, these would be words of hope, words of encouragement. Assyria would have to give an account for their dealings. Here is a group of people that got appointed to be His chosen nation in

the world and to be a light and a witness of who God is. God saw their sin, He raised up Assyria to judge Israel and Judah. And now God looks upon them with concern to free them from their evil oppressors. Where would Israel find safety? Where would they get refuge? Who would defend them? Who would be their shield? Well, God reminds them that He is a stronghold in trouble that they can come to.

Now did you notice that it says He is their stronghold? He knows those who take refuge in Him. I love that word, those two words. "He knows." Think about your struggles, your afflictions, your challenges. He knows our afflictions. It's before His face. Just like these afflictions, this oppression that Israel and Judah was experiencing was before the face of God Himself. We sometimes think, "Qell, I'm just going through this, nobody knows, God doesn't care. It's going on forever. It's never gonna get solved. The situation seems hopeless." But I want to remind you today that God sees. God knows. Not just in a distant, "I can see that happening." But as a child of His, He intimately knows. God knows His sheep. He understands what we're going through. He sympathizes with us. Our hardships, our trials, our sufferings are before Him and it doesn't escape Him. He in fact says, "I am your stronghold." Today, brothers, sisters, He is your stronghold. He is my stronghold.

Israel was the apple of God's eye and God watches over His people and He knows when they are mistreated and oppressed. Consider these beautiful and refreshing words in Zechariah 2:8.

"For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'After glory,'" in other words, pursuing glory for the sake of glory, "He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of my eye."

God was possessive of Israel. And they were dear and precious to Him, He cherishes them, they were His treasure, and He says that if anybody touches His people, that it's like touching His prized possession. God made a covenant with Israel to be His special possession, and a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. And God says this in Exodus 23:22, He says,

"If you truly obey His voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries."

He says, "If you were against my people, Watch out. Be warned, I'm against you. I tally up every sin against my people, and I will repay the offenders." Israel was already taken captive. And God says to Judah who was being oppressed, "Come to me for refuge. I am your refuge, I am your hope. I made a covenant with you, and I am keeping my covenant." He says to them, "Don't be swayed, don't be overcome by this great nation that you see around you." Sometimes we see situations around us, we look even in society. We look at how society is changing, and how sin is creeping more and more into deeper, deeper into society. And sometimes we get discouraged,

don't we? And we wonder how long, how far, how deep is this sin going to go? And yet God says He is our refuge and He says we do don't need to worry and be afraid. He will not leave the guilty unpunished.

But Israel and Judah needed to remember a couple Psalms. I'm going to read in a moment, Psalm 121. But before I do that, I want to read Psalm 3:3, one simple, short verse that Israel and Judah needed to be reminded of, and that is this. It says,

“But you, O Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, and the One who lifts my head.”

Psalm 121 says this,

“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come from? My help comes from the Lord who made the heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”

You see Israel longed to be reassured that God was still their defender and their refuge from their enemies. Although He brought a season of judgment on them, on Israel and Judah for their sin. God did not abandon His covenant with him. During the oppression they needed to be reminded that God is good to keep His promises.

Take a look at chapter 1 in Nahum, verse 15 it says this,

“Behold, on the mountains of the feet of Him who brings good news, who announces peace! Celebrate your feasts, O Judah; pay your vows. For never again will the wicked one pass through you; he is cut off completely.”

You see, under oppression, they haven't been able to celebrate their God ordained feasts or to pay their vows. And God promises them that peace is coming so that they can freely express their worship. Listen up to this, their oppression wasn't just a serious, ongoing discomfort to them. It actually prevented them from freely expressing their worship to God, as God had ordained and God was jealous for His worship. So He came to the rescue and He destroyed the enemy.

Friends our enemy is Satan. And He still is perfectly working to oppress God's children in this world; he is doing it all over the world, even in little old Chilliwick. Just look around society, watch the news, pick up the paper. What is wrong is being praised as right. It is rampant and it's

affecting more areas of society all the time, and it can become disheartening. But God reminds us in Nahum 1:6 he says,

“Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the burning of his anger?”

He ends the book actually, with these sobering words. If you want to flip over to chapter 3:19. He says this,

“There is no relief for your breakdown, your wound is incurable. All who hear about you will clap their hands over you, for on whom has not your evil past continually?”

He's referring to Assyria. You see, Jonah's dream finally came true. This was a judgment in the past that we need to learn from and Ninevah had an awakening A true change of heart. And yet within 100 years, think of it only three generations. They wandered back into sin. Ninevah allowed sin and worldliness to creep back into their families. Dads in this congregation, I want to speak to you for a moment. Dads we need to take responsibility to be leaders in our families, and lead our children to faith in Christ. We need to be leaders that open the Bible with them and meet God together with them through prayer, through going to church, through reading the Bible through serving together. We need to humble ourselves before our children and before our wives and set an example for our families such that even our children will one day want to tell their children about the example that you've set. Otherwise, the next generation will be lost. Just like Ninevah.

Ninevah was in a good relationship with God for a season, weren't they? We don't know the details of that season. But we do know that when Nahum had prophesied judgment on them, that they couldn't go back and they couldn't rest on their laurels. No matter how many good things they did during those good years the following God, it didn't help them escape God's wrath. It is inescapable and inflexible. And likewise, we cannot rest on our past spiritual experiences when we stand before God and give an account for how we have lived.

You see, our spiritual life is not about what we have accomplished in the past. But it's more about how we are living for the Lord today. We can't rest on the past. We like to look back to the past about great experiences that we've had, ways we've served God, but when we stand before God, it's not about our past. It's about our present. Because if we keep our eyes focused on the present, we're going to keep our eyes focused on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Hebrews 9:27 says this, this are sobering words.

“And just as it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly awaiting Him.”

And Jesus describes that same Judgment Day in Matthew 25 like this, He says,

“³¹But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

³⁴“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? ³⁸And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’

⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ ⁴⁵Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

You see, the sheep were the people who humbled themselves before God. They believed in Jesus, they repented of their sins, they confessed with their heart that there's nothing good in them and that they could not save themselves. Nothing they could do or give to God is enough to satisfy His justice. They could do absolutely nothing to atone for their own sins.

The goats, on the other hand, did not put faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is evidenced by the fact that they did not show love to God's children. They were not known for their brotherly love; they held on to their righteousness, their own righteousness, and they could not stand before the indignation of God on the Day of Judgment. Their own goodness failed them. It was exposed, their own goodness, as filthy rags. They suppressed the truth, and their words and their

actions said that Jesus' death on the cross wasn't actually necessary. And in doing so, they lie. Jesus said, "I am the way I am the truth. No one comes to the Father except through me." But it says in Revelation 21:8, these very sobering words, this is what Jesus says, about liars. He says,

"But for the cowardly and the unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

You see, on that day of judgment, there's only one place of refuge and safety. Come to Jesus. believe in Him, so that we can be placed in Him. So that on the Day of Judgment, His judgment will pass over us just like the Passover in the Old Testament. Jesus says, "Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest." Are you weary of your sin having not repented? Are you fearful of the judgment to come? There's hope for you in Jesus, He is your safety. He is your refuge.

Consider your life for a moment though. When God looks at you and how you spend your life, what you focus on and what you spend your money on and what you invest your heart into, is He jealous? Does He long for your worship? Have you given the enemy a foothold, so that your worship isn't wholehearted? Brothers, sisters, let's confess before the Lord. Let's draw near to the Lord, and offer Him all of our worship, that He might not look upon us with any jealousy for His worship.

The Book of Nahum is a sobering book. And it warns us that God is jealous and avenging. That his judgments are inescapable and inflexible. And yet Jesus holds out His pierced hands. And He is merciful to those who take refuge in Him. He says, "Come to me, all who are weary." He's calling for you, and He's calling for me to live a pure, holy life, where we are walking by faith and giving him all the glory. Let's pray.

Father, You are an awesome God. We can't help after reading a passage like this but to to be in awe of how great and how mighty and how holy You are. You are perfect. You are the perfect judge. And I thank you God that you will not leave the guilty unpunished. And yet we are all the more thankful, Lord, that You have sent the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins, that He would pay for our sins, that we might have Him to be our refuge. We thank you God, that You are a God of promise, a God of covenant, that You keep your word. And that Your word of promise to rescue everybody, to save everyone, to forgive everyone who puts faith in You, that You do that. That there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Father may we draw near to You, that everything about our life would be an expression of worship, and that You might not look upon us with any jealousy for the worship, and for the loyalty and for the praise and the honor that You deserve. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen