

Let the Reality of God's Coming Judgment Warn You, Shepherd You, & Comfort You

Nahum 3:1-10 (ESV)

Notes

Introduction: Two Illustrations Which Define Our Present Age (v1)

First, I want you to imagine a doctor who has a patient come to him who is dying of a deadly but treatable disease.

- However, because the doctor is so *"loving"* he chooses **NOT** to tell the patient the truth about their condition.
- He does **NOT** tell them the truth because he knows that if he does, they will be upset because *it will require them to undergo some very painful operations and undertake major lifestyles changes that will completely reorient their life.*
- So, instead of telling them the truth about their situation, the doctor tells the patient that they are going to be just fine and simply increases the dose of their pain killers in order to make them more comfortable. (Jer. 14:14; 23:16; Lk. 6:26)
- **Instead of giving them the hard truth of their condition and urgently counseling them to participate in the painful work necessary for their healing, the doctor leaves them comfortable in the deadly illness which will soon claim their life.**
- **Nobody likes bad news or painful procedures, but let me ask you: Would this be the kind of doctor you would desire?**

Beloved, this is a picture of what many (so-called) "pastors" & other (supposed) "Christian leaders" are like today. (Jer. 6:14)

- They do **NOT** tell people the whole truth of God's Word. They select only the portions that appeal to man's fleshly desires.
- They do **NOT** explain the real personal consequences of sin (Ezek. 18:20). They will **NOT** openly **warn** others of the fierce wrath of God, of the **danger** of his fiery judgment, or of the **true cost** of being a genuine follower of Christ. (Mt. 16:24-28; Lk. 14:25-33)
- Instead, they *"tickle the ears"* of men by being *"peddlers"* of false comfort, false hope, and a false gospel. (II Cor. 2:15-17; 4:1-5)
- They speak of Jesus, but **NOT** of the necessity of repentance (Lk. 13:5). They speak of heaven's joys, but **NOT** of hell's miseries (Rev. 21:8). They speak of salvation but do **NOT** accurately describe what men need saving from—*God's holy wrath!* (Rev. 20:11-15)
- Meanwhile, thousands upon thousands are dying in their sins—*although their condition is fully curable in Christ!* (Heb. 7:25)
- **They are dying in their sins b/c they are being given cheap "painkillers" to make them comfortable rather than the truth.**
- They are dying in their sins b/c they are being sold a **false Christ**; they are being told that they are *"alright"* and that it is perfectly ok to go on living in selfishness, worldliness & lukewarmth b/c there won't be any consequences. (I Jn. 2:15-17)
- **I know these things are unpopular. They are as unpopular as giving a cancer diagnosis. But they are all true & needed.**

But the problem is not only with pastors is it? I want you to imagine the same scene I described above but in reverse.

- Imagine that the doctor **DOES** in fact tell the patient the hard truth of their deadly but curable condition. (Acts 4:12; 17:30-31)
- Imagine that the doctor **DOES** urge the patient to take the diagnosis seriously, to undergo all necessary treatments—*(even though they will be painful & costly)*—and to immediately engage in a radical change of lifestyle. (Mt. 3:1-10; Mk. 8:34-38)
- **But despite the doctor's correct diagnosis & clear explanation of how to be cured, the patient refuses to listen.** (Isa. 65:1-7)
- **Instead, they complain that the doctor is being too harsh, or being a kill-joy. They say he is overreacting. They say he requires too much of them for treatment & that other doctors say none of those things are actually necessary.** (I Cor. 6:9-10)
- **So, the person stops listening to their doctor & goes in search of a new doctor who won't tell them difficult things.**
- **They look for a doctor who will simply give them "good news" & more "painkillers" in order to maintain their comfort.**

Beloved, with great sorrow I tell you that this is a picture of what many professing Christians are like today. (Read II Tim. 4:1-5)

- Many today prefer comfortable lies over the hard truth. They prefer glib temporal pleasure over eternal life. (Mk. 8:36)
- They do not want to hear pastors teach the Bible, they want to hear pastors tell stories & make them *"laugh"*. (Lk. 6:24-26)
- **They prefer a false "christ" who affirms them in their apathy, love of the world, & selfishness, rather than the true Christ of the Bible who fervently calls men to repent of these things & pursue a life of radical obedience & devotion to God.**
- They prefer a message of false assurance, false hope, & false peace, **OVER** the true message of the coming judgment of God & the one & only way of escape from that judgement: **To forsake the world & its pleasures & cling to Christ.** (Jm. 4:4)

Do not misunderstand me. The Lord Jesus is gentle and lowly (Mt. 11:29). **He is ready to forgive all who seek him in true faith.**

- He will **NOT** break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick (Isa. 42:3). He will leave the 99 to go after the 1 (Lk. 15:4). He will welcome the prodigal who comes home in repentance (Lk. 15:11-32). He will restore the harlot who falls down at his feet. (Jn. 8:11)
- **But what he will NOT do is ever be deceived by PRETENSE, PAGEANTRY, OR FALSEHOOD.** The Lord Jesus is the omniscient God who knows the thoughts of every heart (Jn. 2:25). He is the eternal God from whom nothing can be hidden (Rm. 2:16; Hb. 4:13).
- And his message to the world is a double-edged message: **Jesus is the everlasting Savior** of all who turn to him in true faith, but **he is also the everlasting Judge** of those who, in one manner or another, have rejected the King of Glory. (Jn. 3:16-21)

Now why do I take all this time to lay out these two illustrations of the wicked doctor and of the foolish patient?

- **As your pastor, I promise NEVER to be "the doctor" in the 1st illustration.** I promise to tell you the whole truth in love & to point you to the help & healing that can be found only through true repentance & faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Act 20:26-27)
- **But I also plead with you NOT to be "the patient" in the 2nd illustration.** I beg you not to dismiss the hard truth of God's diagnosis in his Word, nor to reject the counsel his Word gives for treatment just b/c it is hard, painful, & costly. (Lk. 14:25-33)
- **Nahum 3 is a passage which brings us a hard diagnosis.** It warns of God's fierce judgment against our sins. But it is **NOT** a passage meant to do us harm. Like a doctor's diagnosis, the purpose of this message is ultimately to do us good. (Mic. 2:7)

¹Woe to the bloody city,
all full of lies and plunder—
no end to the prey!
²The crack of the whip, and
rumble of the wheel,
galloping horse and bounding
chariot!
³Horsemen charging,
flashing sword and glittering
spear,
hosts of slain,
heaps of corpses,
dead bodies without end—
they stumble over the bodies!
⁴And all for the countless
whorings of the prostitute,
graceful and of deadly
charms,
who betrays nations with her
whorings,
and peoples with her charms.
⁵Behold, I am against you,
declares the Lord of hosts,
and will lift up your skirts
over your face;
and I will make nations look at
your nakedness
and kingdoms at your shame.
⁶I will throw filth at you
and treat you with contempt
and make you a spectacle.
⁷And all who look at you will
shrink from you and say,
"Wasted is Nineveh; who will
grieve for her?"
Where shall I seek
comforters for you?
⁸Are you better than Thebes
that sat by the Nile,
with water around her,
her rampart a sea,
and water her wall?
⁹Cush was her strength;
Egypt too, and that without
limit;
Put and the Libyans were her
helpers.
¹⁰Yet she became an exile;
she went into captivity;
her infants were dashed in
pieces
at the head of every street;
for her honored men lots were
cast,
and all her great men were
bound in chains.

¹¹ You also will be drunken;
you will go into hiding;
you will seek a refuge from the
enemy.

¹² All your fortresses are like fig
trees

with first-ripe figs—
if shaken they fall
into the mouth of the eater.

¹³ Behold, your troops
are women in your midst.

The gates of your land
are wide open to your
enemies;

fire has devoured your bars.

¹⁴ Draw water for the siege;
strengthen your forts;
go into the clay;

tread the mortar;
take hold of the brick mold!

¹⁵ There will the fire devour you;
the sword will cut you off.
It will devour you like the
locust.

Multiply yourselves like the
locust;

multiply like the grasshopper!

¹⁶ You increased your merchants
more than the stars of the
heavens.

The locust spreads its wings
and flies away.

¹⁷ Your princes are like
grasshoppers,
your scribes like clouds of
locusts

settling on the fences
in a day of cold—

when the sun rises, they fly
away;

no one knows where they are.

¹⁸ Your shepherds are asleep,
O king of Assyria;
your nobles slumber.

Your people are scattered on
the mountains

with none to gather them.

¹⁹ There is no easing your hurt;
your wound is grievous.

All who hear the news about
you

clap their hands over you.

For upon whom has not come
your unceasing evil?

Why's Is God's Fierce Judgment Coming? Answer: Because of Man's Sinfulness (v1, 4, 16)

- In **v1** God refers to the **sins of anger & violence** ("bloody city" 6th), **sins of deception & telling lies** ("full of lies" 9th), & **sins of abusing your position or power by mistreating others in order to enrich yourself at their expense** ("plunder" 8th, 10th, 6th, 1st).
- In **v4** God refers to **sexual sins of lust, lewdness, adultery, & perversion** ("countless whorings" 7th, 10th, 1st commandments).
- Moreover, God notes how **sexual sin never exists alone**. Sexual sinners always perpetrate other people by their sins and sexual sinners always strive to entice others to join them in their sins ("betray nations with her whorings and people w/ her charms").
- In **v16** God addresses **sins of greed & of loving & serving wealth over God**, ("You increased merchants more than stars" 1st, 4th, 10th).

Beloved, this is only a very short list of types of "sin" which pervade this fallen world and which rage in human hearts.

- Yet, who among us is not guilty of these things?** If even only this short list were the standard of our judgment, who among us would be counted righteous in the sight of God? Let the words of Holy Scripture be your humble answer:
- "None is righteous, no not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one...all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God."** (Rm. 3:10-11, 23; Col. 3:6)*

What Will God's Judgement Be Like? Answer: God's Judgment Will Be Deadly, Exposing, & Inescapable (v3, 5-7, 14-15, 19)*

- This passage describes the wrath of God which was about to be poured out on Nineveh. Yet, as **II Peter 2:4-10** teaches, the historical outpourings of God's wrath are given to us as, **"an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly."**
- Thus, we should **NOT** only see God's judgment against Nineveh here, but shadows of the judgment to come for the world.

According to Nahum 3, what shall this holy & fearful judgment of God be like when it comes for the guilty? (Nah. 1:3; Ps. 1:4-5)

- "Deadly" v3.** In the day of God's wrath, **"heaps of corpses"** will fill the streets like floodwaters. The slain shall be many.
- In that day, God's **"eye shall not pity"** (Ezek. 7:4, 7:9, 9:10). Nor shall his hand be slack. He will dispense perfect justice in wrath.
- "Exposing" v5-7.** In that day God will fully expose the shame & filth of the wicked. Every secret will be known (Rm. 2:16; II Pt. 3:10).
- Everyone's outward show & pretense will be stripped away to nothing so that all are seen for who they really are. (Hb. 4:13)
- "Inescapable" v14-15, 19a.** **Nothing is able to rescue the sinner from the wrath of God except true faith in Christ.** Whether religious or irreligious, moral or immoral—if you are **NOT in Christ there is NO ESCAPE from God's holy wrath.** (Jn. 3:36; Rev. 17:14)

How Is This Passage of Holy Scripture Intended To Help Us?

To Warn Us | God has given this passage to WARN us with the truth (in the midst of a world of lies and false comforts).

- Many people do not like the truth that God is their Judge (II Tim. 4:1) & that he **"will by no means clear the guilty,"** (Nah. 1:3).
- They prefer a false "god" of their imagination who winks at evil, expresses no anger, & exacts no "vengeance". (Nah. 1:2)
- But telling ourselves lies about God, ourselves, and the future judgment will make as little difference as a man who tells himself gravity is not real before jumping off of a cliff. In both cases, believing a delusion leads to ruin and death.**
- The Almighty God is the Judge before whom you must soon stand. This passage serves to warn all men before that great and dreadful day that we stand guilty & liable to the dead, exposing, & inescapable wrath of God for our many sins.

To Shepherd Us | God has given this passage to SHEPHERD our sinful souls unto Christ. (Ezek. 18:32)

- What is the purpose of God's warning? It is to shepherd our straying souls to Jesus Christ with all urgency & devotion.**
- God has given examples of his judgment throughout history & published warnings of his judgment throughout his Word, in order to shepherd the souls of sinners out of the coming "flood" and into the "Ark" of salvation who is Christ. (II Pt. 3:1-7)
- Do you want to know why so few people see the preciousness of Christ—even Christians who profess to trust him?**
- It is b/c we close our eyes & shut our ears to the reality of God's fierce judgment of wrath against the world for sin.**
- You feel your desperation for air when you are trapped underwater. You feel your desperation for food when you have not eaten in days. **And you feel the preciousness of Christ & your own desperate need for him when, by the conviction of the Spirit through the Word of God you see clear the reality of your own wickedness & the judgment of God against you.**
- It is beneath the dreadful verdict of God's judgment against sinners that the true beauty of God's mercy in the cross of Christ is most clearly seen! It is beneath the crushing weight of the reality of God's judgment that our souls are most fervently shepherded to forsake all else that we might have Christ as our Savior from the wrath to come!** (I Thess. 1:9-10)

To Comfort Us | God has given this passage to COMFORT us by God's promises of future blessings to his Church.

- This passage comforts believers b/c it tells us that this present war against sin & sorrow is **NOT forever**. The day is soon coming when all that is evil, vile, broken, crooked, & deformed will forever be put away **THROUGH the judgment of God.**
- The day is coming when the 1st heaven and the 1st earth will be burned with fire & melt away to nothing. (II Pt. 2:11-13)
- Then God will bring forth the new heaven & new earth in which righteousness dwells. And it will be there that the saints of God will know everlasting deliverance, everlasting joy, everlasting hope, everlasting life, & everlasting love.
- But none of this can come unless God 1st judges the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed: Jesus Christ.**

Closing Charge:

"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn and live!" (Ezekiel 18:32)

