

Who Can Stand Before the Furious Indignation of the Lord?

Nahum 1:1-8 (ESV)

Notes

¹An oracle concerning Nineveh.
The book of the vision of Nahum
of Elkosh.

²The Lord is a jealous and
avenging God; the Lord is
avenging and wrathful;
the Lord takes vengeance on his
adversaries and keeps wrath for
his enemies.

^{3a}The Lord is slow to anger and
great in power, and the Lord will
by no means clear the guilty.

^{3b}His way is in whirlwind and
storm, and the clouds are the
dust of his feet.

⁴He rebukes the sea and makes
it dry; he dries up all the rivers;
Bashan and Carmel wither; the
bloom of Lebanon withers.

⁵The mountains quake before
him; the hills melt;
the earth heaves before him,
the world and all who dwell in it.

⁶Who can stand before his
indignation? Who can endure
the heat of his anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire,
and the rocks are broken into
pieces by him.

⁷The Lord is good, a stronghold
in the day of trouble; he knows
those who take refuge in him.

⁸But with an overflowing flood
he will make a complete end of
the adversaries, and will pursue
his enemies into darkness.

It is now a little over a century after the missionary work of Jonah. Much has changed in Nineveh, and not for the better.

- The vibrant faith which transformed the hearts of the Ninevites was **NOT** passed on to their children or grandchildren.
- Thus, the blessing of God retreated once more from Assyrian society leading to moral chaos, violent political divisions, anxious unrest among the people, and ultimately the fearful judgment of God who brought their wicked pride to an end.
- This same sorrowful reality is what becomes of all peoples who, having once tasted the riches of God's undeserved favor & blessing in the gospel, nevertheless, fail to persevere in faith & fail to pass on their faith to the next generation.
- **Arrogance & presumption toward the mercy of God in the gospel always leads to destruction.** As we will see, the same God who is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" is also "a jealous and avenging God."

The Lord Is a Jealous & Avenging God (v1-8)

I. Yahweh's Anger Against His Enemies (Read v2-3a)

- Let me ask you: Is this the God you worship? Is this the God you praise? Is this the God you speak of w/ others? Because this is the actual God of the Bible & the only God who actually exists. The Almighty God is the holy Judge of all the earth.
- He is **"jealous"** for his own glory, for righteousness, and for the protection of his Bride—who is the Church/Israel of God.
- Therefore he is **"wrathful"** against all those who oppose his will, who practice/promote evil, & who mistreat his people.
- Moreover, **"the LORD takes vengeance on"**—that is, makes bloody war against—those who, by their pride, by their refusal to submit to him as their Creator & Lord, & by their wicked lifestyles of indulgence, make themselves **"enemies"** of God.
- Many people confidently tell themselves that b/c God is merciful, he will wink at their laziness, presumption, rebellion, worldliness, & idolatry, (i.e. sin is no big deal). But that is not the truth. The truth is, **"the Lord will by no means clear the guilty."**
- **Every sin committed by every sinner will meet w/ just retribution by the Almighty God who sees & knows every heart.**
- This is how the book of Nahum opens because God is not embarrassed of who he is—and neither should we be.
- God wants the world to know him in his fullness and to worship him according to all his holy character and attributes.

II. Yahweh's Power Over All Creation (Read v3b-5)

- In v3b-5 God's almighty power is illustrated by his absolute sovereignty over every element of creation.
- Yahweh is set forth as **the LORD of the "storm"** which either waters the earth and makes the crops grow to sustain life, or brings raging winds and torrential downpours which destroy the harvest and leave people destitute. (*Blessing or Curse*)
- He is set forth as **the LORD of "the sea" and of "the rivers"** which either give drink to sustain mankind's livestock & life, or, if they **"dry up"** according to the sovereign will of God, they leave people thirsty and hopeless. (*Blessing or Curse*)
- If in any of these things, God withholds his blessing, the beauty of the earth and all its life shall **"wither"** unto ruin.
- Which it shall be depends on God's will alone. Man can do nothing at all to control or manipulate these things.
- But Yahweh is also set forth as **the LORD of "the mountains" and "the hills"**. Consider the great mountains of the earth which are so imposing to feeble man & seem so strong compared to ourselves. Even these **"quake"** in God's presence.
- All the mightiest things upon the earth—whether oceans, rivers, mountains, storms, armies, empires, or Kings—all **"melt"** like wax & **"heave"** in dreadful fear of the indomitable authority, power, and judgment of the Almighty God.

III. Yahweh's Love For His People & Judgement For His Enemies (Read v6-8)

- All that has been revealed thus far is intended to lead to the question of v6a: **"Who can stand before his indignation...?"**
- **The answer is: Absolutely no one.** Those who make themselves the enemies of God shall be utterly consumed by **"the fire of his wrath"**. Those who harden their hearts as **"rocks"** against God's holy will shall be **"broken into pieces by him."**
- **But all this is a double-edged truth isn't it? This God is either your greatest enemy**—against whom you have not even the faintest hope of escape or victory—**or, he is the greatest Protector and Defender you could ever hope for.**
- **All the strength of this vengeful, wrathful, warrior God is either your everlasting ruin or your everlasting deliverance.**

THIS IS THE POINT OF THE CONTRAST IN V7-8. Which are you? God's enemy by sin & rebellion or God's child by true faith?

- For those who are God's people, chosen and beloved, washed from their sins by the blood of Christ and saved from the wrath they deserve, **"the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble"** & everlasting **"refuge"** for those who are his.
- **But NOT so for those who make themselves the enemies of this God by living in persistent rebellion to his holy will:** **"With an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, & will pursue his enemies into darkness."**
- All the earth should stand in fear before the Lord Almighty who is Ruler of all, King over all, and the Judge of every soul.
- **Beloved, we must ask ourselves: Which are you? Are you walking in humble repentance & submission unto the Lord? Or are you walking in pride, stubbornness, presumption, & rebellion? Are you his beloved child by faith, or his enemy?**
- **This book has two very different messages for you depending on the true answer to that question. Let me explain.**

Nahum 1:9-15 (ESV)	Notes
<p>(God is speaking to Assyria) ⁹What do you plot against the Lord? He will make a complete end; trouble will not rise up a second time.</p> <p>¹⁰For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink; they are consumed like stubble fully dried.</p> <p>¹¹From you came one who plotted evil against the Lord, a worthless counselor.</p> <p>(God is speaking to Israel) ¹²Thus says the Lord, "Though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.</p> <p>¹³And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart."</p> <p>(God is speaking to Assyria) ¹⁴The Lord has given commandment about you: "No more shall your name be perpetuated; from the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the metal image. I will make your grave, for you are vile."</p> <p>(God is speaking to Israel) ¹⁵Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace! Keep your feasts, O Judah; fulfill your vows, for never again shall the worthless pass through you; he is utterly cut off.</p>	<p>The book of Nahum is all about God's fierce judgment against Nineveh. It vividly describes the inescapable wrath of God which was soon to be poured out upon Nineveh, leading to the fall of that great city and the death of all its inhabitants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thus, for the ENEMIES OF GOD—<i>those who refuse to truly submit to him as Lord, who refuse to actually humble themselves before his authority, who indulge their flesh & live for their own glory</i>—this book is a solemn warning of the dreadful future that awaits them for their wicked rebellion against the Almighty who "is a jealous and avenging God." <p>But, this book was NOT primarily written to the Ninevites. It was written to God's people to give them comfort and hope.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was written to let God's people know that the extraordinarily cruel, barbarous, & evil actions that had been long done to them by the Assyrian's had NOT escaped their heavenly Father's watchful eye & would soon come to an end. It was written to <u>comfort</u> God's people w/ the truth that <i>God sees their pains, counts their tears, & knows their sorrows</i> and that <i>he will soon rise up as their Defender, Keeper, Protector, & Savior by destroying both his & their enemies.</i> Why? Because "the LORD is a jealous and avenging God...vengeful and full of wrath...taking vengeance on his enemies and keeping wrath for his enemies," (v2). The LORD is also "a stronghold in the day of trouble" & "refuge" for his people. In other words, the book of Nahum is both a warning to the wicked & comfort for God's children at the very same time. <p style="text-align: center;">The Lord Is the Dreadful Conqueror of His Enemies & Unfailing Comforter of His People (v9-15)</p> <p>I. The Foolish Pride of Assyria (Read v9-11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v9 teaches that there is no such thing as a successful rebellion against the LORD. All who spurn the LORD, who resist his will, and who walk in defiance of him in heart & life, shall come to a "complete end" & will not "rise up a second time." v10 Like "drunkards" they will be defenseless against God's judgment. Like "dry stubble" and twigs, once the spark of God's fury is ignited against them, all their plans of earthly pomp & pleasure will be utterly consumed in a moment. v11 All who counsel you to live contrary to God's holy will in any respect offer "worthless counsel" because <u>those who accept it foolishly make themselves the enemies of the Almighty God</u> and liable to his fierce justice and holy wrath. <p>II. The Merciful Deliverance of Israel (Read v12-13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>God now turns to comfort his people.</u> In the eyes of men, our enemies can seem very great, even insurmountable. These enemies might include the persecutions of individuals or governments, or our own battles with sin & temptation. But we must remember who our God is. Our Father in heaven is not <i>partly</i> mighty or <i>mostly</i> mighty. He is ALMIGHTY. Therefore, it makes no difference <u>how strong</u> or <u>numerous</u> our foes may be. Let them gather all their numbers and exert all their force. For even if "they are at full strength and many (in number), they will be cut down and pass away," (v12). Yahweh is reminding his people that he alone is the Defender, Deliverer, Protector, and Savior of his beloved people. He alone can "break the yoke" of persecution, of remaining sin, of the oppressions of Satan, & of the idolatry of self, (v13). <p>III. The Final Destruction of Assyria (Read v14)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These strong words are intended to re-affirm the <u>inescapability</u> & <u>finality</u> of the judgment of God against the wicked. For those who persist in sin & make God their enemy by their unrepentance, their name shall no longer be perpetuated, for God himself will put all "vile" evildoers in the grave. He who gives life is also he who takes life away as he wills. <p>IV. The Final Deliverance of Israel (Read v15)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have forgotten that the fierce judgment of God against the wicked is part of the "good news" of the gospel. It is NOT "good news" because people are wicked or because they will suffer God's wrath. It is "good news" because the wickedness that has corrupted the world and brought such devastations upon the earth will not go on forever! No <u>evil empire, dictator, or government</u> will hold the final verdict over the world. We are not trapped forever in <u>sickness, sorrow, disease, despair, brokenness, loss, & pain.</u> Our battles against the flesh & Devil are not everlasting. No! God will put an end to all that is <u>evil, corrupt, perverted, & false.</u> And God will one day renew the face of the whole earth. <u>That day will be a day eternal damnation</u> for those who have made themselves God's enemies. They will be condemned! But that day will be a day of <u>eternal salvation</u> for those who have received God's mercy through his Son, Jesus Christ. And thus, as God's people we are commanded to "keep the feasts" and "fulfill our vows". That is we are commanded to "live upright & obedient lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope" in the coming judgment of God. (Tit. 2:11-15) These acts of obedience are <u>NOT the basis of our salvation.</u> Instead, <u>they are the evidence of our salvation.</u> Obedience/works are the visible fruit that testifies that we are, indeed, the children of God and not his enemies. You cannot <u>live like an enemy of God, rebelling against his will, refusing to submit to his laws</u> & yet claim to be his child. That is <u>NOT</u> what saving faith looks like. That is <u>NOT</u> the life of a person who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Those who are truly God's people will endeavor to live like God's people. Not b/c they think their works save them. But because they truly love and trust the Lord, and therefore their works manifest the faith they hold in their hearts.*

Closing Thought:

The answer to the sermon title is this: Only those who, by sincere faith, are hidden in Christ, covered by his blood, and forgiven of their sins.

