

**A Voice For God**  
**Nahum**  
**Englewood Baptist Church**  
**Sunday night,**

What is the biggest, hugest, most impressive city that you have ever seen? Hopefully your answer is not Jackson or 3-Way!

Some of you would say NYC, others might say Los Angeles, others perhaps have traveled abroad to Tokyo or London? In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century before Jesus, the greatest city on the planet was a place called Nineveh. Located today in Iraq, this city was inspiring. Its size, its power, its wealth have inspired fables. The city walls were a picture of its magnificence. At least two series of walls surrounded the perimeter of the city, running on for miles and miles. The inner wall was the highest of the two, shooting up 100 feet in the air, of solid stone. This wall was so wide that three chariots could race side by side. On the outside of the two sets of walls was a moat 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep.

If the Titanic was thought to be unsinkable, Nineveh was thought to be undefeatable. It could NEVER fall. It would endure forever.

Now, how is it that you recognize the name of this ancient city? Jonah! About 100 years before Nahum, Jonah had reluctantly called the city to repentance, and they actually listened to him. To his disgust, they were shown mercy by God. Apparently though, the season of sorrow for sin was long gone and a new generation of God-haters had grown up. The Assyrians, the people of Nineveh had become as nasty as ever. The Lord had decided that he would not look any longer upon their cruelty.

Have you ever seen animal cruelty? Have you ever seen a little dog that had been chained to a pole for years and half starved to death? How about child abuse? A child locked into his room for years, as we have seen recently, a victim of a vicious mother or father. When we see these types of things, it is very difficult for us to stomach. Rage wells up inside of us as we think, "Who could do that to a helpless little puppy?" Or "What kind of person could put their own little boy through such torture?" That person ought to pay.

Do you know what that is? That feeling that wells up inside us? That's a spirit of vengeance...the desire to repay the wrongdoer. It's a natural response to injustice.

The book of Nahum is about God's decision to pay back the people of Assyria, of Nineveh. You have to understand their cruelty to understand the grim message of this prophet. The Assyrians were diabolically cruel, they skinned their victims alive, cut off their hands, feet, noses, ears, eyes, pulled out tongues, made mounds of heads and many more atrocities to inspire terror in those they conquered. After years of terror tactics, the Assyrians no longer had to fight. Cities instantly surrendered when these warlike people came knocking. They had no choice. The Assyrians were what Joseph Stalin only

aspired to be. And God would have mercy upon them no longer. He would take vengeance.

Most people begin squirming in their seats when God is presented as full of wrath and vengeance. This attribute of God makes him out to be a tyrant, an unpredictable hothead in heaven. That's not the case in Scripture, however. This book of Nahum helps us to understand that the vengeance of God is something that we as believers should find hope in. He will repay the guilty.

Look with me now at the beginning of the book.

V.1 tells us very little of Nahum. Like Joel, we get no biographical information except for the little town he came from. He was an Elkoshite. He comes to announce the doom of Nineveh. If the Bible is a book about God, then what can we learn of him, from this story?

### **What Does Nahum Teach Us About God?**

1. **He is jealous.** This is not a new idea, since God had said that a long time ago in the 10 Commandments. We cannot create false idols because God is jealous for our affection and worship. He will not tolerate rivals.

You know, in the book of Hosea, God's people are likened to a cheating wife. And God is torn of what to do with his sleeping around bride. Should he wash his hands of her? After all, he has been fully faithful while she has been sneaking out at night.

God is a jealous god in that he will have a passionate reaction toward anyone who is committing spiritual adultery.

This is a good place for a gut check. What things in my life could potentially cause God to become jealous? What are you tempted to love more than the Lord? We think instantly of the extracurricular things like golf or hunting or fishing. Certainly, there are many men in West Tennessee who think more about killing deer than doing a devotional hour with the Lord. There are more acceptable idols, though. Abraham was tested by the Lord to see if he loved his own son more than Him. Abraham past the test when he was willing to set aside his own Son to follow after God's plan. Our children, our family, our work...all these things can compete with our affections for God.

Where are you tempted to love something more than your Savior? Think about that.

- Barnes and Noble. I just love the feel, the smell, of a good book. My attention, thoughts, and desires can be so directed to a book that I neglect the weightier matters. It's ok to enjoy pleasures, but be careful that our desire for God trumps all other desires.

2. **He is full of wrath.** This concept is closely tied to the previous one, but it carries the idea awesome power to accompany passionate response. God doesn't make hollow threats. Many parents do that, but God doesn't do that. When he says that he will do something, he has the gumption to go and do it. We think of the great flood of Noah's day. The people of that day believed that God would never wipe out the whole created order minus a few, but he did it. He followed through on what he said.

This is important information to us today. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Living in fear of God means to believe that He can and will make me an object of his wrath if I fail to draw upon his mercy.

On May 1st, 2011 U.S. forces killed Osama Bin Laden in a 40 minute attack upon a compound in Pakistan. This ended a ten year hunt for the world's worst terrorist who masterminded the attack on U.S. soil where the Twin Towers in New York were destroyed and 3000 people were killed. How were Christians to respond to such news?

The biblical Christian response should be two-fold. First, we should be sad that he has died and entered into his eternal condemnation. This judgment is indeed horrible, and as Christians we should be saddened for any unbeliever who has denied the true God as Bin Laden did in his Islamic beliefs. But second, we should rejoice that justice has been carried out. The man murdered 3000 people and we can rejoice for those families who were forever scarred by his evil acts.

Two key texts to consider here:

*"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live," ([Ezekiel 18:32](#)).*

*"If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord desired to put them to death," ([1 Sam. 2:25](#)).*

In the above verses you can see that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, yet he does delight in executing his righteous judgment.

I can understand this, in a small way, when I discipline my own son for blatant disrespect. Certainly I take no joy in punishing my child, but there is a sense of satisfaction that the score has been settled since he bopped his brother on the head with a ball bat.

God will discipline those who disobey. In the case of the Ninevites, it was a harsh punishment to pay back their atrocious behavior to innocent people.

### **3. He is patient.**

This quality is much easier to swallow. This word means that he is slow to anger. One commentator puts it this way: *“He is not capricious, arbitrary, nor hasty in the exercise of his wrath. He is not like one who strikes out without rhyme or reason. His wrath is well planned and well placed.”* --James E. Smith

We have all been in a restaurant and witnessed a mom “lose it” on her daughter or a dad “snap” on his son. Like a violent thunderstorm, he booms and he strikes with loud words or even force. This kind of response is not a reflection of God’s punishment.

Scripture is very clear that God gives men many chances to change his ways—many more chances than he deserves. This was certainly true in Nineveh. Remember, Jonah had already been to this great city 100 years prior to. God had sent Jonah to give the people one more chance at grace. The Lord was “putting up” with their sin even way back then. Now, in Nahum, it appears that these people had “repented of their repenting.” They had changed their mind about changing their mind and any positive effect of Jonah’s preaching had now gone by the wayside.

God had put up with them for many years. He was fed up.

Now, let me bring up a key text in the Old Testament that can shed additional light on this subject of God’s punishment and his “decisive judgment.” Turn with me to Gen. 15:13...

God tells Abraham, in 500 years, your people will storm the land of Canaan and put many of these evil people to death.

The return of Israel to the Promised Land from Egypt would correspond with the “completion” of the iniquity of the Amorites. This is the meaning of the slaughter of the peoples of Canaan. God timed the arrival of his judgment with the fullness of the sin to be judged. Not before. God did not jump the gun. He was, in fact, longsuffering and endured the idolatry and sins of the nations for centuries, giving them “rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying [their] hearts with food and gladness” (**Acts 14:17**).

So you see, God does not punish arbitrarily. He is patient, allowing people much time to repent before they are punished for their sins. Aren’t you thankful that God continues to show great patience with you? Aren’t you thankful that he puts up with you?

One little point worth making, by the way, is that Israel is not to be equated with the church in this respect. We are not to go on Crusades and kill people to Christianize them. The church is not God’s instrument of judgment in the world; it is his instrument of evangelization and reformation. We have no ethnic or geographic or political identity. We are “aliens and exiles.” God’s dealing with Israel was unique in redemptive history. He chose them and ruled them as a demonstration of his holiness and justice and grace among the nations. But to the church he says, “My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, my servants would fight” (**John 18:36**). His kingdom does not come by force.

#### **4. He is great in power.**

You remember moments ago, when I described how great the city of Nineveh truly was? Let me tell you the rest of the story. In 612 B.C., a group of foreign armies formed an alliance and they laid siege to the city. They cut off supplies going in and out and the walls of the city were still unclimbable. Guess what happened? The weather changed. Heavy rains began and a flooded Tigris river surrounded the city until the soggy ground became so unstable that sections of the wall began to cave. Just as Nahum predicted. This is a true story in history. The attackers poured into the city and sacked it. Before the invaders could grab him, Assyria's king gathered himself and his household together and burned themselves to ashes. The invaders plundered the city and took all the wealth and riches away.

In 1842, archaeologists discovered the ancient ruins of the city. They were hoping to find gold and silver and riches buried with it. They found nothing. The entire city was empty, the invaders took everything. Even the memory of the city was gone.

Read with me now, Nahum 2:1-13 and you will see that God had told them exactly what he would do....

Isn't that fascinating? Every single thing that God says he will do, he will do. He is powerful.

Now, let me make a few points of application for us.

### **Takeaways from Nahum**

- **Human beings have only the illusion of control.**

1:7 makes it clear that our only hope is to trust in God.

I wonder what it means for you to put your full trust in God tonight? Do you realize that whatever you are facing in your life right now, this is an opportunity to trust in the Lord? You might think you have your health in check but the truth is: you have very little control over the contraction of a disease. Your good health is God's fault. You might think that you have your work moving like an oiled machine, but your career could crash tomorrow. You might think that you are parenting perfectly, but without the Lord's help, your kids will turn out to be a mess.

Don't lose your neediness for God. That's why we come together week after week in worship. We must be reminded that we need him to forgive our sins, we need him to give us direction in our lives, we need him to provide for our needs, we need him to help us through trials. Our regular gatherings are designed to draw us closer to his care.

<sup>16</sup> Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16

What do you need? He is able.

- **God can put an end to any nation or any person.**

1:8...

Growing up in America, I have homegrown pride in our country. I have been raised in “the greatest country in the world.” We are a “super power” and people don’t mess with the U.S.

While our military might and abundant resources are a blessing, we should be careful when we trust in chariots and horses. The point of this book is that God is not intimidated by dictators, terrorists, or tall city walls. He can take down any person any time.

Even though God is incredibly patient, he is not indifferent. He will punish the guilty and he will wipe out the wrongdoer.

Billy Graham was in Washington DC years ago. In the US Capitol rotunda, he was presented with a congressional medal of honor. In his remarks, Graham made mention of all the important people represented in statues all over that place. He said, “All these heroes have one thing in common. They are all dead.”

Graham’s point was a powerful one. The cemeteries in Washington DC are filled with “indispensible” people.

The book of Nahum reminds us that all rivers flow to the throne of God. Eventually, we must all answer to Him, and He will shuffle the board of world powers however he pleases. Over the last 100 years, the power has shifted from hemisphere to hemisphere. Over the past 50 years, American politics have shifted from Republican to Democrat and back again.

The activity of nations rages on. The hustle of humanity continues. But one thing is for sure: He is in charge. He is Lord over human history. He is Lord over you.