

The Destruction of Ninevah

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Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Nahum 1. An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkishite.

The Lord is a jealous and avenging God. The Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies.

The Lord is slow to anger and great in power. The Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm and clouds are the dust of his feet.

He rebukes the sea and it dries up. He makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade.

The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it.

[1:06] Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire. The rocks are shattered before him.

The Lord is good. A refuge in time of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him. But with an overwhelming flood, he will make an end of Nineveh.

He will pursue his foes into darkness. Whatever they plot against the Lord, he will bring to an end. Trouble will not come a second time.

They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine. They will be consumed like dry stubble. From you, O Nineveh, has one come forth who plots evil against the Lord and counsels wickedness.

This is what the Lord says. Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be cut off and pass away. Although I have afflicted you, O Judah, I will afflict you no more.

[2:18] Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away. The Lord has given a command concerning you, Nineveh.

Concerning you, Nineveh. You will have no descendants to bear your name. I will destroy the carved images and cast idols that are in the temple of your gods.

I will prepare your grave, for you are vile. Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace.

Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you. They will be completely destroyed. This is the true and living God, the worst enemy and the best friend.

I wonder which he is to you tonight. He's one or the other. And in Jesus Christ, he can be our best friend.

[3:26] Please turn with me in your Bibles again to the prophet Nahum in chapter 1. Now, we have fairly recently, back at the end of November, finished a series of sermons on a prophet who took a message of destruction, impending doom, to the city of Nineveh, an Assyrian city.

And we saw that when Jonah finally delivered that message, that contrary to what you might expect, the Ninevites repented. And so God relented concerning the promised disaster and did not bring it upon them.

And they had a reprieve from the justice of God. And the book of Jonah concluded with us understanding that God is not concerned just for the people of Israel and Judah, but for all nations. And God is a God of great mercy to show such kindness to all nations. But sadly, there's more to the story of Nineveh.

I wish it ended with Jonah. I wish that was all that we had of the history of Nineveh. That it ended with them repenting. But that's not all that we have.

[4:44] The history goes on. And we see troubling things in the land of Assyria. And in particular, in the city of Nineveh. And we turn tonight to the prophet Nahum.

He's the other prophet that has a message especially for the people of Nineveh. Not too often that you see a prophet focus so much not on the people of God, but rather on a foreign nation, a foreign city in particular.

But that's what you have with Jonah and Nahum. Now, about 150 years have gone by since the time of Jonah. The northern kingdom of Israel has been overrun, scattered, taken captive by the Assyrians.

And presumably, there were some Ninevites among those Assyrians. There's no record that Nineveh pulled away from Assyria. Rather, it became the capital of Assyria. And they continued their cruel and unjust ways.

And they carried that violence and that cruelty into the land of Israel and destroyed and carried those people into captivity. And so, whatever happened with the repentance of the Ninevites, perhaps it didn't last.

[5:53] It was relatively short-lived. Or maybe it was for only some in the capital and others continued their violent ways. Or perhaps it only continued for that first generation that repented. And it didn't continue on to following generations.

But whatever it is, the time of reprieve for Nineveh is up. God's judgment is going to fall. There will be no hope of deliverance this time.

Nahum is a prophecy of certain destruction coming on this city. In no uncertain terms, in vivid, striking, poetic language, Nahum describes the destruction of Nineveh.

In Jonah, we saw striking views of God's mercy. And we saw some of His justice. But striking views of His mercy. When we come to Nahum, we see striking views of that justice.

More fully put on display for all to see. And since we've considered something of Nineveh, with Jonah, we want to finish up the story of Nineveh by taking a brief series, a brief look at the prophet Nahum.

[6:58] And just some introductory and background material to get us started here. 150 years after Jonah, the northern kingdom has fallen. Assyria is still a threat to the southern kingdom of Judah.

There are thorns in Judah's side. Maybe you remember the account from 2 Kings chapter 18 and following, where Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, is marching on Jerusalem.

And he's coming and he sends a blasphemous message. And he says to King Hezekiah, and to all who would listen to King Hezekiah, he says, No other nation has been able to stand before me.

Their gods haven't been able to deliver them. And so if your king Hezekiah tells you that your God will deliver you from my hand, it's not going to happen. None can stand before me.

It's an arrogant, blasphemous message from Sennacherib. And you remember it comes by way of a messenger and a letter. And Hezekiah goes and he takes the letter and he spreads it out before God.

[7:58] And he begs with God for deliverance. And Isaiah, whose prophet at that time, prophesied that the Assyrian army will be turned back. And God comes in the night and destroys 185,000 Assyrians.

Ninevites included, no doubt. And Sennacherib turns tail and runs back to Assyria. And the southern kingdom is spared. But still, Assyria and the Ninevites are a great threat to the people of Judah.

They're still powerful, despite the angel of the Lord decimating at least that part of their army.

They're still a threat. They're still a danger. They're still a cruel people. A people who torture their victims before they kill them.

A constant thorn in the side of Judah. A violent, wicked people. And so Nahum comes during this time. Perhaps later, maybe during the reign of Manasseh, or the reign of Josiah, while some reforms were going on, it seems that though things might be going okay in Judah, there's no mention of Judah's sin in the prophet Nahum.

That only happens with one other prophet, Obadiah. Only two prophets don't mention the sin of God's people. And Nahum is one of them. So perhaps this comes during the reign of Josiah when reforms are taking place in the land.

[9:10] But there is judgment coming for Nineveh. And so with language that you can hear, with vivid imagery that you can see as the prophet describes it.

Nahum is well known for his striking, poetic, vivid language. He describes this destruction. In chapter 1, we'll just look at the first eight verses tonight.

We'll see an answer to the question. If you ask, who is the Lord? This is Nahum's answer for the question, who is the Lord? And then the rest of chapter 1 is a public announcement of Nineveh's judgment.

This outline is taken from O. Palmer Robertson. But chapter 1, a public announcement of Nineveh's judgment. Chapter 2, a dramatic depiction. There's a picture painted of Nineveh's judgment. And then chapter 3, the surety of Nineveh's judgment. It is coming. It is unavoidable. Because they have sinned against God. And so public announcement, dramatic depiction, surety of that judgment coming.

[10 : 13] And I encourage you sometime this week, if you think of it, to read through the book of Nahum and see that vivid language. Hear it. And you'll be troubled by some of what you see in Nahum. At least I hope you will be, to see the judgment that is coming on them.

But it will be a good exercise to see these things about the city of Nineveh from the prophet Nahum. Well, notice verse 1. An oracle concerning Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum, the Elkishite. It's an oracle. It's a prophetic message about Nineveh. It's what Nahum is going to declare. And he tells you right up front that it's about Nineveh. And that immediately makes you think of Joseph and his dealings with those people.

And it's a book. The book of the vision of Nahum. It's the only prophet that's called a book. That calls his work a book. It's quite possible that Nahum never actually spoke his prophecy, as the other prophets did, which were then later recorded on paper, but that it was written to begin with. And perhaps distributed as some sort of tract in the land of Judah and maybe in Nineveh as well. That's possible that it was just written because it's called a book here, which is unique to the prophets. And it's a book that contains the vision, a revelatory vision that Nahum received from God.

[11 : 28] This word for vision indicates that it's given by God. And it's a prophecy, something that God is going to declare. And it comes at the hand of Nahum, whose name means comforter.

And what a comfort it would be to hear for the people of God that their great enemy was going to be destroyed. Now, some people will read the book of Nahum and say, no matter what they've done, nothing could justify such agony and suffering coming on a nation.

But you have to remember the agony and suffering that they have inflicted on Israel, Judah, and all the surrounding nations as well. This is a violent people who are being talked about here.

And so, a violent end will come for them. And so, Nahum, the prophet, comes. We know very little about the man, except that he's an Elkishite, which means that he's from Elkosh, and nobody knows where that is.

There's lots of guesses. But all we need to know is that God gave him a message. And it's a message that has relevance for us today, even though it was about Ninevites thousands of years ago.

[12 : 35] And so, with that brief background, we want to consider the first eight verses of chapter one tonight. And again, we see here in these eight verses, the answer to the question, who is the Lord?

You go to Nahum, and you ask him who God is. And this is his description of the Lord. And it is striking. And we see two things here. We see God as he is portrayed towards his enemies, and God as he is portrayed towards his people.

And Pastor John already asked the question tonight. Which are you? Friend or foe? One of God's people, or one of his enemies?

We see these two things tonight, and it will be clear which side you should be on. Would you enjoy God's favor? First of all, we'll see who is the Lord God towards his enemies in these verses.

And notice that his enemies aren't just nations other than Israel. It's not just Assyria. It's not just Babylon. It's not just Egypt. It's not just nations outside of Israel and Judah.

[13 : 39] God's enemies could be found within Israel and Judah. It was whoever violated God's law. Whoever did not live up to his holy standards.

There are enemies of God here tonight. In this room. And so this depiction of God towards his enemies is a depiction of God toward you.

The God who is described here hasn't changed since the days of Nahum. Since the days when the Assyrians were in power. God is the same.

He does not change. And God's attitude towards his enemies, his position towards his enemies, does not change. This prophecy is directed especially against Nineveh.

But before he gets to those specifics of Nineveh, he gives us this picture generally of who God is. So the Ninevites don't just say, well, okay, judgment's coming. Sure, we don't believe you.

[14:37] No, he says, before I'm going to tell you exactly what's going to happen to you, I'm telling you who's bringing this judgment. It's the God of Israel. It's the God who made the heavens and the earth.

It's the God that he's about to describe. It's not someone to be trifled with. It's not someone who's not going to carry through with his promises. He will do as he has promised.

And so, the God that we are describing here is God today as well. And his enemies are the same as they were then. Those who break God's law.

Heed the warning of Deuteronomy 4, verse 39. Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God. In heaven above and on earth below, there is no other. The Lord is still God today. There is no other. And so, what you see here tonight is true for us as well. And you notice, he's in verse 2, taking vengeance on his foes.

[15:37] He maintains wrath against his enemies. This is God's position towards his enemies. Well, what is that position? Verse 2, the Lord is jealous. God's relationship with his people is often described as that of God being a husband in Israel.

The people of Judah being his wife. And oftentimes, an unfaithful wife. And a husband is jealous. And he will not share his wife with another. Now, the jealousy of God isn't a sinful jealousy like we think of.

It's that jealousy that demands that they worship only Him and serve only Him. And not only will God be angry with His people if they are unfaithful, God will protect His people.

He is jealous for them if someone would seek to lead them astray or do them harm. And the Assyrians were seeking to do God's people harm. And God is jealous to protect His people.

The description in Proverbs 6, in verse 33, is appropriate. Speaking of a man who's been foolish enough to lie with his neighbor's wife. For jealousy, same word that's used of God.

[16:39] Jealousy arouses a husband's fury. And he will show no mercy when he takes revenge. When he takes vengeance. Same word that's used of God here in chapter 2. And so, if someone messes with Israel, God's fury will be aroused.

And he will take vengeance because he is a jealous God. Maybe you husbands know something of this. I think I have never been so upset, so angry in my life as when somebody has wronged my wife.

And it's happened very few times. And my anger isn't a controlled, holy anger like God's. It's a sinful anger to my shame. But I am a jealous husband.

And if you wrong my wife, you've crossed the wrong person. Because I am jealous for her. Now, you take that and you purify it. And you make it holy. And you magnify it by my limited resources. And take the unlimited resources of the God of the universe. And if somebody wrongs his people, beware. Because God is a jealous God. And so, think twice before you plan on leading any of God's precious children astray.

[17:49] Think twice before you think of seeking to do harm to the name of Christ or His church. Nineveh had done great harm to God's people. And they were about to pay the price.

We would be foolish to do harm to God's people. To seek to lead them astray. You'd be foolish to walk out of a service where God has come with convicting power and the Word.

And to take somebody aside who's been convicted and to try to distract them. And to turn their mind away from the Word that they've heard. And to make them think on ordinary things and the things of the world.

To get them to forget the conviction that they felt. You'd be foolish to do that because God is jealous for His people. And we're told in Matthew 18, verse 6, But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

It's bad enough tonight if you're an enemy of God that you are rejecting Him. Don't be so foolish as to drag others to hell with you. God is a jealous God.

[18:54] That is His attitude towards His enemies. And when God's jealousy is aroused, skip down a moment to verse 3. The Lord is slow to anger. You think that's God's attitude towards His people.

It's His position towards His enemies as well. God is slow to anger with His enemies. He's proven that with the Ninevites already. The message was 40 more days from Jonah and Nineveh will be destroyed.

But they repent. And God relents concerning the disaster that comes. And He shows them great patience. He was slow to anger with the very people who are about to be destroyed now.

His justice, His wrath was saved for some 150 years. That's slow to anger. And we don't know what came of those repentant Ninevites.

We've mentioned some possibilities already. But regardless, now God's patience has come to an end. And so the enemies of God may experience His great mercy in the form of slowness to anger for a time.

[19 : 54] But slowness to anger doesn't mean no anger. It just means that it will eventually come should you not repent. And if you are currently experiencing the slowness of God to anger, and you are, because you're still here, there is still yet hope for you, then you shouldn't be so foolish as to waste the opportunity that God is giving you.

The doors are still open. His arms reaching out wide. Come. Come. And He will receive you. He's slow to anger, but there will come a day when that time comes to an end.

But for now, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. And so come now, while you're enjoying the patience of God. Because one day, just like it came to an end for Nineveh, a gruesome, bloody end, it will come to an end for you.

And it will be too late. God is slow to anger. But when that anger comes to an end, back in verse 2, He is a God of vengeance. Three times in this verse.

We can't miss it. The Lord is a jealous God. And avenging God. The Lord takes vengeance. The Lord takes vengeance. The same word. Three times. God sees what has happened.

[21 : 18] He sees that people have violated His law. And not on a whim, but according to His justice. He punishes those. It's retribution on those who have disobeyed Him.

The warning has come. Deuteronomy 32. It's mine to avenge. I will repay. I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me. He will take vengeance on His enemies.

It's not a surprise. At least for the people that have received God's Word to this point. And the Ninevites should know it as well. They were warned once that judgment was coming. They know God takes judgment, punishment, vengeance on those who disobey Him.

But Nahum can't have us missing this. That He is a God of vengeance. He will pay back those who break His law. But He's a God of wrath as well.

He is filled with wrath. In verse 2. The Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. Literally is the Master of wrath. Is the Lord of wrath. And He keeps His wrath for His enemies.

[22 : 26] He maintains that wrath against His enemies. He is the possessor of great anger against sin and He dispenses it on those who do sin. And may cause great suffering in their lives on this earth as it was about to with the Ninevites.

The Ninevites, the Assyrians, had made others to suffer. Now they were going to suffer under the wrath of God. And it will mean suffering for all of eternity. An eternal torment when they die.

You do not want to be on the receiving end of God's wrath. It is coming. And it will be your eternal suffering. Well, okay.

God's a vengeful God. He's a God of wrath. But we're the Assyrians. We're the Ninevites. We're the most powerful nation in the earth.

And so we're not really afraid, afraid of your God. Well, says Nahum, the Lord is slow to anger in verse 3, but He is also great in power.

[23 : 28] Now maybe that doesn't mean much to you Ninevites, but Nahum's about to describe that power of God. But lest you think God's threats of vengeance are idle threats, take heed.

God is powerful. You stand warned. God is able to take vengeance on you. And He will. And He does not leave the guilty unpunished.

The Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. Unless you think you somehow might escape. And God won't really punish you. Know that in no uncertain terms, He will not leave the guilty unpunished.

This is part of that frequently used description of God in the Old Testament that Nahum is clearly drawing on here. The Lord is gracious, abounding in loving kindness, slow to anger, but not leaving the guilty unpunished.

He will by no means do that. Nahum's leaving no wiggle room here for the wicked. He's a jealous God. He's slow to anger.

[24 : 33] Okay, then we're alright. No, He's a vengeful God. He will take vengeance. And He's full of wrath, and so that vengeance has teeth. It's not just something that's going to be no big deal, a little slap on the wrist.

No, it's full of wrath. And God is powerful to carry it out. Well, okay, maybe for somebody else, but probably not for me. No, you're guilty. And God will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. And now He's going to describe something of the greatness of God in creation so that these Ninevites might tremble. And you tremble tonight too if you're an enemy of God. Remember, this is the same God that's on the throne today.

A powerful God. See Him in terms of creation. The name is describing God in what we call theophanic language. A theophany is when God appeared on the earth.

And the appearance of God on the earth brought with it all sorts of supernatural phenomenon in the earth. And some of those are described here. It's the language of a divine warrior coming to destroy His enemies and to deliver His people.

[25 : 38] God is the divine warrior. And that is what is being described here. And we could turn to other passages to see similar descriptions. We're not going to do that. Just feel the weight of the power of this God.

Verse 3, His way is in the whirlwind and the storm. Wherever God goes in the earth, it's as though a storm follows Him that's whipped up about Him because of His great power and fury at His enemies.

We've seen what great storms can do. You saw what a whirlwind could do to the Gulf Coast. Utterly destroy it. This is the power of God to send wind and storm upon the earth.

You've seen straight line winds blowing across northern Indiana. Wind like I've never seen anywhere else before. Apparently because there's nothing to stop it and everything is so flat. It blows the shingles right off my roof.

That's no big deal. But that wind can go to such a strength that it can level houses. And it can destroy all that man in his might and strength has made. We build great cities like New Orleans and God levels them.

[26 : 41] And He shows that He is the One who is powerful. He is the great God who is in the whirlwind and in the storm. And the clouds are the dust of His feet. When you walk down a dusty road, a little cloud of dust comes up behind you.

Or maybe better, in northern Indiana, you go out in the evening on a fall day and you see a harvester going to a field and you can see it from miles away because of the cloud of dust that's coming up behind it.

Well, the clouds of dust that come up from God's feet are the clouds in the heavens. God walks about. That's the picture. God walking about in the heavens and the clouds are the dust coming up from His feet. He's a great, a mighty, a huge God, so to speak, is the picture that we're getting. Not someone to be trifled with. Not someone you want to go into battle against. This God rebukes the sea and it dries up with a word. He's demonstrated it.

You saw it at the Red Sea when the Israelites were fleeing the land of Egypt. And God dries the sea up before them, holds it back with the breath of His mouth so that they walk through on dry land. God put the water on the earth.

[27 : 45] You think He can't control it? Dry the sea up in a moment? And the rivers? God can withhold rain and rivers that were once rushing in full can become dry, empty riverbeds.

Wadis, as they're called in the Old Testament in the land of Palestine. Void of any hint of water. And then He can send His rain and they're rushing rivers again. He can stop rushing rivers again as He did for the people of Israel when they crossed the Jordan River because He made the river.

He can do with it as He pleases. He's the God of the universe. A God not to be trifled with. And so if He promises judgment, you can rest assured He has the power to do it.

Rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither. Lebanon fades. Places that were known for their beauty, for their abundance of life as fruitful places.

Mount Carmel was a place of great greenery. It was verdant. And things grew there. God can wither in a moment.

[28:48] The cedars of Lebanon were well known. Lebanon was known for two things. Their cedars and their high icy mountains. And we read about those in Jeremiah 18 this morning. But it was also known for its trees.

Those trees withered, dried up in a moment at the presence of God. They wilt before the heat and the fire of His presence. It's a glorious picture of the divine warrior coming.

Mountains quake before Him. Mountains quake. If you've never experienced an earthquake, firsthand, it is a humbling thing.

You know, about the most solid thing I can think of is the ground that we walk on every day, that we build our roads on, that we sink our houses in true and build our buildings on. The ground, it's firm, it's huge, it's massive, these continents.

But to feel one of those continents shifting under your feet all of a sudden makes you feel very, very small. Who but God could shake the whole earth?

[29:53] I was asleep in my bed in California. And there's a cabinet above that bed in my apartment. And I heard the door rattling. And I just reached up and hit the door and held it shut.

And it kept shaking. It didn't stop. And I realized that everything in the house was shaking. And it couldn't stop. And it's a powerless, empty, helpless feeling to tremble when the earth shakes. It was an earthquake out in the middle of the desert. It was a strong one, but it didn't do much damage. And here I'm on, hundreds of miles away, feeling the ground shake. At the presence of God, the mountains quake.

They tremble. And it's not just a figure of speech. When God descended on Mount Sinai, the whole mountain trembled violently. This is the presence of God. Hills melt away before Him.

Rocks, in verse 6, are shattered before Him. The things that He made, He can bring down and destroy. And He sums it up in verse 5. The earth trembles at His presence.

[30:58] John Calvin says, The world cannot for a moment stand except as it is sustained by the favor and goodness of God. For what we see would immediately be as soon as God manifests the signals of His judgment, the earth begins to tremble and quake when God comes in judgment as the great divine warrior.

This is not a God to be trifled with. It is not a God that is unable to fulfill His promises of vengeance. And so, at the end of verse 5, the whole world and all who live in it tremble as well.

Not just the physical earth, the people in it shake with fear at the presence of God. It's not, hmm, ho-hum, God is no big deal.

Not a person to be reckoned with. Not someone to think much of. No. No. My friend, if you don't tremble at the presence of God, then you're a fool. And this is for foe and friend alike.

All the world. All who live in it tremble. And so, when we come into worship, we come with reverence and awe because we come to a great God before whom we tremble.

[32:08] And if you are an enemy of God today, this should make you tremble, shake in your boots that God is able to destroy you in a moment.

And so he goes on, who can withstand his indignation? You can't stand before his fierce, burning anger, his wrath that is poured out like fire.

You want to see fire being poured out? You take a tour of the foundry with Stan or Charlie. And they'll show you molten iron being poured out of that.

And it looks like liquid fire. That's a picture of the wrath of God being poured out. It's not something you can stand before. You get under that vat of burning iron and have it poured out on you and it will kill you.

It will destroy you. The wrath of God will torment you forever. You cannot stand before it. It's not something that can be resisted. You can't dodge it and avoid it somehow.

[33:11] Say, well, God's not really serious about punishing me so I'm not worried about it. No, it's inescapable. You cannot stand before it. And so he says in verse 8, but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of its place, probably of Nineveh's place.

The NIV puts Nineveh in there. It's not actually there. He will make an end of her, of it, the city's place. And it's striking that Nineveh, part of its downfall was one of the rivers nearby.

It flooded and began to eat away at the walls of Nineveh. And that was part of its destruction. It couldn't stand before God's overwhelming flood. And God pursues then in verse 8, his foes into darkness.

The God of light pursues his enemies to darkness. In other words, it's not a pretty picture for the enemies of God. It's a terrifying picture. Horrifying details will be spelled out for us in the rest of the book for Nineveh but for us tonight.

This is God's position towards his enemies. It's not a pretty picture. It's not something that we like to talk about. You say, oh, that's the God of the Old Testament.

[34 : 22] But God doesn't change. Sinners are still sinners and God still must punish sin. And so his judgment is inescapable should you continue in your sin.

This is God's position towards the ungodly. Towards his enemies, his foes. But what of God towards his people? The focus of this book is God's judgment.

But there's truth here concerning God's dealings with his people as well. Again, Pastor John said after he read the passage, there's frightening things here for the foes of God but blessed truth for the friends of God.

Blessed truth for his people. Let's see God's position towards his people. We've noted already that God is jealous. That has implications for his people as well, not just his enemies. He is a jealous husband who doesn't want his people running around.

It's like a husband doesn't want his wife running around on him with other men. God doesn't want us running around with other gods. And so, after he says that we're not to make an idol in the form of anything, he says, you shall not bow down to them or worship them for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.

[35 : 32] He's jealous. He does not want us worshipping others. And if this is so, and it is, then God demands our undivided worship, our undistracted affection and praise given to him.

When you allow anything to become more important than God, his jealousy is aroused. And we've seen what God is able to do in his jealous wrath and anger. And so, keep your love for God hot so that you won't be tempted by other things that demand what belongs to God alone.

Well, if you keep your love for your wife, your spouse, if you're a woman, your love for your husband hot and burning hot for that person, then other things that seek to attract you won't be so attractive because your love for her, for him, is hot within you.

And so it is with God. You draw near to God and you stay near to God and let your heart be warmed with his love for you and warmed with love for him. And so, you draw near to him in his word and in prayer and in hearing his word preached.

And so, when other things vie for your attention and your time and your affection and your worship, they don't have such a great attraction because your love for God is burning hot within you.

[36 : 45] One commentator says, we too must make certain that our love for the Lord never begins to grow cold because the Lord is a jealous God and he will allow no rivals for the affection which should be given to him alone.

God, what is it that consumes you that demands so much of your time and attention and affection that God's place of priority in your life has been lost or is in danger of being lost?

It can be people that you love, the pleasures of the world, money, celebrities that you love and worship and adore, power, popularity, whatever you feel getting a grip on your heart, remember a jealous God and say, I want no part of that.

My duty is to worship God and him alone. He's a jealous God. That's his heart towards his people. He's a God who is also slow to anger.

And don't we know this? If God wasn't slow to anger, none of us would be here tonight. We all would have perished in our sin. And so we've experienced the slowness of God to anger and it ought to fill us with gratitude that he hasn't destroyed us.

[37 : 56] It's because of this that there are any at all who aren't enemies of God, who are his friends because he's slow to anger. Verse 7, lest you should mistake this just and wrathful and powerful God for some sort of capricious madman who deals out wrath on a whim.

No, that is not so. The Lord is good. That is his stance towards his people. The Lord is good. It is injustice that he reigns and all that he does is right.

In evidence for that goodness, he is a refuge in times of trouble. What a sweet promise. God is a refuge.

A refuge to his people in times of trouble. Instead of bringing punishment on them, he shelters them and keeps them.

It's something that Nineveh will seek for. A refuge. And they won't find it. But God's people, when they seek refuge in him, will find it. And if you're a child of God tonight, haven't you found this to be true?

[39:06] Notice, it's not a promise that there will be no trouble. It's a promise that God will be your refuge in the midst of that trouble. And so don't be surprised when difficulty and pain and suffering come.

But be thankful when there's a shelter to guard you, protect you, to keep you from stumbling, to keep you from falling, to hold you up in the midst of it. Because he is a shelter in trouble. God is good indeed. And he knows those who seek refuge in him. At the end of verse 7, or he cares for those who trust in him. Literally, he knows.

He knows those who trust in him. That is, he sets a special covenant affection and knowledge and protection on those who seek refuge in him. Sheltering and keeping them.

If you seek him, he will not turn you away. He will protect and keep you. And Nahum is such a marvelous author under the inspiration of God. Notice the end of verse 7.

[40:07] He cares for those who trust in him. And then the beginning of verse 8, but with an overwhelming flood, he will make an end of Nineveh. We saw the overwhelming flood as God's attitude towards the Ninevites.

But that phrase serves a double purpose. It's the overwhelming flood that brings an end to the place of Nineveh. But it goes with the end of verse 7 as well.

He cares for those who trust in him in the overwhelming flood. And so when the flood of God's judgment comes, it destroys his enemies, but his people are protected in the midst of it.

They are sheltered in the midst of that judgment that comes. What a difference. You can either have the mighty Lord fighting for you, protecting you, keeping you, or fighting against you to destroy you.

Which side would you rather be on? I hope the choice is clear to you. Which side are you on tonight? Are you a friend of God or an enemy? Listen to Matthew Henry.

[41:12] Let each take his portion from it. Let sinners read it and tremble. Let saints read it and triumph. The wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against his enemies.

His favor and mercy are here assured to his faithful, loyal subjects. And in his almighty power in both, making his wrath very terrible and his favor very desirable.

I hope you know the favor of God tonight. It's more than desirable. It's your only hope. And so for God's people tonight, there is great comfort. And do you know why God can be a shelter for us?

Do you know why God can have mercy on us? Why He can be slow to anger with us? Why He can be good to us? Why He can deliver us? It's because it's because God treated His own Son like an enemy.

Jesus is the enemy here. Who had the wrath of God poured out on Him at the cross? Jesus did. Who faced God's vengeance at the cross?

[42:23] Jesus did. Who is the guiltless man that took the punishment that we guilty sinners deserved? God by no means leaves the guilty unpunished.

So how is it that we go unpunished? It's because Jesus took the punishment that we deserved. All of these things that God is to His enemies, God was to His own Son so that He might be able to show goodness to us.

If you know what it is to have God know you and be a refuge and be good to you, then let your heart be moved to thanks and praise tonight. Don't despair when trouble comes into your life.

Give thanks to God that He will shelter you in the midst of it. God is gracious towards His people.

Thank and praise Him. Give thanks for the Son. We're right to glory in the cross tonight because it's there that we find shelter.

It's there that we find refuge. It's there that God has shown us His great goodness in the cross. But for the enemies of God, great terror.

[43:35] Great comfort for the people of God. Great terror for the enemies of God. One commentator says, the day of the Lord's vengeance indeed will come.

In that day, He shall consume the wicked with the breath of His mouth. The other destruction of the oppressive city, Nineveh, demonstrates in history the reality of God's commitment to judge.

Don't think that you're going to get away with your sin. Nineveh stands as a monument to you. An example. The Lord will destroy the wicked.

He will bring punishment. It's not an idle threat. Nineveh was destroyed. History is recorded for us. And He will punish you as well if you continue in your sin. It's as sure as the judgment that came on this city. And so, who can stand before Him?

[44:32] You can't. You cannot stand before this God. If mighty Nineveh couldn't, you cannot. If the world trembles before God, you must.

God is slow to anger, but as one commentator says, the consequences of sin cannot be delayed forever. Sooner or later, you will reap the consequences for your sin.

The wrath of God will be poured out on you. Now, if I told you that I was going to take you down to the foundry, and you could either stand under that molten iron as it was being poured out, or not stand under it, which would you choose?

I don't think there's anyone here that would choose to stand under hot fire being poured out on you. It would kill you. But I have something of far greater importance.

Don't fear the destruction of the body, but fear the one who can punish your soul forever in hell.

Here it is tonight. Would you rather have God be your friend and protect and keep you, or would you rather stand under His wrath being poured out on you and know that you will suffer that wrath for all of eternity?

[45:52] It's just as easy of a choice as what you would choose down at the foundry. But I fear that some of you will walk out of here tonight and say, I'll stick with God's wrath.

I'll stand under it. I like my sin too much. God's too jealous of a God. He demands too much of my time, my attention, my affections, my obedience. I'll take my chances.

You'd be a fool to go and stand under the hot flowing iron. You'd be a fool to stand under the wrath of God when you don't have to. You come to Christ tonight and find shelter in Him and He will deliver you.

He will save you. And He will be a refuge for you in time of trouble. He will watch over and keep you. So which are you tonight? Friend or foe?

Friends of God rejoice tonight. Foes of God be terrified and run to Christ tonight and there find a sure refuge. We want to conclude by singing Hymn 192 tonight.

[47:00] It's a hymn about Christ who is stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God in our place. The deepest stroke that pierced Him was the stroke that justice gave.

God poured out His justice on His Son so that we don't have to bear it. And so we do. Glory in the cross. We glory in our Savior. Hymn 192. Let's stand together and sing. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.