

God's Judgement

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 March 2007

Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Nahum 1.1. 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. Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger?

[1:10] His wrath is poured out like fire. The rocks are shattered before him. The Lord is good, a refuge in times 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. The Lord says, I ask you to turn again in your Bibles to the prophet.

[2:37] 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. I ask you to turn again in your Bibles to the prophet Nahum and the first chapter.

Nahum chapter 1. Let's pause for a moment to pray again and ask for God's blessing.

Amen. Our Father, we thank you that you have given your son to us as prophet. And so we pray that he would be our teacher tonight.

Bless the preaching and the hearing of your word that it might be unto edification, that it might be unto your glory. Come and give us help, we pray in Jesus' name.

[3:40] Amen. It's been some time since we've looked at the book of Nahum. This sermon was originally to be preached on February 4th, a month ago, if that gives you any idea.

And so a week prior to that was the first message in this, what looks to be a very brief series in this short prophet of Nahum. But you'll remember perhaps that we saw that our prophet answers the question, Who is the Lord?

He's coming with a prophecy against a wicked people, the people of Nineveh. And he's coming with a prophecy of judgment on them. They're going to be destroyed. They're in deep trouble.

They have worn out the patience of God, and judgment is imminent. But before he tells the Ninevites and the people of Judah about that judgment, he's going to tell them about the Lord.

This is no idle threat. It's not just some man spouting what he thinks is going to happen. This is a messenger of God, and the God he serves is a God of vengeance.

[4:47] A God of wrath. A God before whom the whole earth trembles at His presence. He's not a God to be trifled with. He's a God to be feared. And so Nahum describes the God that they're dealing with.

And we saw that we should fear this God. But He's a good God as well. He's a refuge to those who take refuge in Him. A refuge to those who trust in Him.

And now having described who this God is, Nahum is going to now proceed to pronounce God's judgment, His curses upon the people of Nineveh. And so I have a question for you tonight. And the answer, I think, would be the same for all of us. But I'm going to ask the question anyway. Would you rather be judged? Would you rather be cursed? Or would you rather be blessed? Okay. I would rather be blessed. And I think all of you would say the same. Well, there are judgments pronounced here in Nahum chapter 1 against God's enemies.

[5:48] And there are blessings pronounced on God's friends. On His people. And the question for you tonight is, which side of this divide are you on?

Are you one of God's friends? Or are you one of God's enemies? Which side you land on determines your eternal well-being? God's friends will be blessed not only in this life, but for eternity.

And God's enemies will face judgment not only in this life, but for eternity. And so which are you tonight? A friend of God? One of His children?

One of His people? Or an enemy of God? It's the difference between blessing and curse. There is judgment to be had for His enemies. Now Christ has come into the world as our priest.

And He was the sacrifice for sin. And He has taken the curse. Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. He has taken that curse on Himself. And so if you are trusting in Christ tonight, then you need not fear the curse.

[6:51] You need not fear judgment coming upon you because Jesus has taken that judgment on Himself. But if you are not trusting in Christ, then you are His enemy.

And the curse still rests upon you except you come and trust in the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The curses and blessings we see tonight are pronounced on some people back in history that might seem a little bit irrelevant to you.

Nineveh. Okay, Nineveh is not even a city anymore. The Assyrians were destroyed. Which just goes to show the point that Nahum's prophecy comes true. And the people of Judah, they're a little bit more relevant because they were God's people and the people of Israel and were the new Israel and the people of God.

You say, but those things were for them way back. That's true. But you'll see they have great relevance for us today as well. Because there's still that dividing line. Those who are God's children and those who are His enemies.

Blessings for the one. Curses for the other. Which are you tonight? Just a note. In my Bible anyway, in the NIV translation I have, the words Nineveh and Judah have little brackets around the bottom corners of the words and the verses where they occur.

[8:11] And that's because they don't actually occur there in the Hebrew. They're added there for clarity. And so we know who the prophet is talking about. It's possible that he was being ambiguous on purpose.

Sort of heightens the tension. Who's the judgment coming on and who's the blessing coming on? And eventually where you see those names, like down in verse 15, you see Judah. And it doesn't have those little brackets around it.

It actually occurs in the text there. But where it has those brackets around it, it's added for the sake of clarity. That's just to explain what those are. But perhaps a little bit of tension when you leave those out.

Who is the blessing coming on? Who is the curse coming on? Because many times God had to pronounce judgment on his own people for their sin and wickedness. And so what's it going to be? This probably came in the days of perhaps this prophecy during the days of Josiah when there were reforms going on in Judah.

And when the people of Judah were obeying their God. And so it is blessing on God's people. And they're right when they add Judah and Nineveh. But they're not there in the original.

[9:15] Without out of the way, we want to see very simply the judgments here that are pronounced on God's enemies. And the blessings that are pronounced on God's people.

On his friends. And we start with the judgment. The curses. The verdict for the guilty. This is the outcome for the wicked. Those who have set themselves against the Lord. And it begins in verse 9 is where we pick up.

Whatever they. And you notice who he's talking about. You go back up to verse 8. He will pursue his foes, his enemies into darkness. Whatever they. Whatever his foes. Whatever his enemies plot

against the Lord.

He will bring to an end. Trouble will not come a second time. And look at verse 11. From you, O Nineveh, one has come forth who plots evil against the Lord and counsels wickedness.

And you go back up to verse 9. Whatever they plot. That's actually you. Whatever you plot. It's an accusation against the people of Nineveh. Whatever you plot against the Lord. He's going to cut it off.

[10:13] It's not going to work. And they might throw up a smoke screen and say, Well, we haven't actually plotted against the Lord. We've attacked his people.

And that's no excuse at all, as we'll see. But had they known the wisdom of Solomon. Now, these are pagans over in Nineveh. And so they probably didn't know the wisdom of Solomon. But if they did, they would have known that there's no wisdom.

No insight. And no plan that can succeed against the Lord. And so plotting against God or plotting against his people is not going to succeed.

They were fools to march into Judah and try to overthrow Jerusalem. And God wiped out 185,000 of them when Sennacherib tried it. But still, they're plotting against the Lord.

You know what? We haven't plotted against God. We've just been attacking every people we come into contact with and conquering them. We're not concerned about who their gods are. None of the other gods have been able to stop us.

[11:11] And so it's nothing against the Lord, the God of Israel, although he's not going to be able to stop us either. We're plotting against the people of Judah. Against the people of Israel. Well, if you mess with God's people, you mess with God.

If you pick a fight with his people, you're picking a fight with God himself. And there's great comfort here for the people of God to know that he's the one who is with us in the midst of battles.

In the midst of those plotting against us. And it ought to inspire fear in anybody that would plot against God and his people. It ought to inspire fear in the enemies of God.

Who would make fun of his people. Listen to what John Calvin says. Whenever the ungodly cause trouble to us, they carry on war with God himself. For God sets up himself as a shield and declares that he will protect under the shadow of his wings all those who commit themselves to his protection.

Whosoever then will rise up against us will have God as his enemy. And so when your friend at school mocks your faith or your co-worker ridicules you for your stand of truth and holiness, they're not just mocking and ridiculing you.

[12:24] They're attacking the God that you serve. And there's no plan. There's no attack. There's no mocking of God that will stand against him. They will not succeed.

Indeed. Verse 11 speaks of one who comes forth plotting wickedness and evil. The word is Belial. It's a word Paul uses for Satan himself in 2 Corinthians.

A devil has come forth out of Assyria planning wickedness and evil. Probably a reference to any one of the kings of Assyria. They were all wicked men. Perhaps with the exception of the one that called for repentance when Jonah preached.

But by and large the leaders of Assyria were wicked people that were plotting evil and wickedness. Again Solomon's wisdom is appropriate. Proverbs 16 and verse 27.

A scoundrel. That's a Belial. A wicked, a worthless person plots evil. And so when you have a wicked person in power you expect that they're going to plot evil. And that's what the king of the Assyrians had done.

[13:26] And by their devising against the Lord they show themselves worthy of judgment. And judgment will come on them. You know Psalm 2. Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

All their plotting is in vain. The Lord will cut it off. Why do they conspire? Why do the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord.

And against his anointed one. Oh no. Oh no. Nineveh's plotting against the Lord. Should we fear? Should we tremble? That people are plotting against Christians in our day?

Seeking to destroy Christianity? The one enthroned in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.

Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath saying, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill.

Do we need to say anything further about the fate of those who plot against the Lord? God laughs at them. He scoffs at their feeble efforts to bring down his kingdom. Because he's installed his king on Zion, his holy hill.

[14 : 32] He's on the throne. And if you attack God's people, you're attacking God himself. All such plots against God are futile. They are useless. Whatever you plot against the Lord, he will bring to an end.

Trouble will not come a second time. And what a blessing that is for us as God's children. We're talking about judgment on God's enemies. He's going to cut off their plans. But judgment on our enemies is a blessing for us.

It would be a blessing for Judah when they were relieved of the oppressive Assyrians. They would be gone. And that's a blessing. And so judgment on enemies is a blessing for the people.

And what a blessing it is for us. There are those that hate us. That discriminate against and plot against and persecute and devise how to overthrow Christians and their faith.

And whether those devising evil against us are politicians seeking to restrict the free exercise of religion. Whether they're social activists seeking to limit the influence and the rights of Christians in the world.

[15 : 31] Muslim extremists whose goal it is to exterminate the infidels. Dictatorial or communist governments of countries that persecute any who don't follow the state-sponsored religion.

Your co-worker who mocks your stand of not going out with everyone drinking after work. Your friend who makes fun of you for praying before your meal.

Any who would devise and plot and scheme against God's people are plotting against God Himself. And sometimes it might seem like they're succeeding. And we start to worry. And we start to wring our hands.

The Assyrians were in power for a long time. God had allowed them to even scatter, disperse, and destroy, and take into captivity the northern kingdom of Israel. And you can bet there were people in Judah that were wringing their hands with worry.

What are we going to do? They were in power for a long time. But they were only there so long as God allowed it. Of their devices, their plans, their plotting, God made a complete end.

[16 : 36] And He will of our enemies as well. We're distressed. We're sickened at the secularization of the world around us. We see open wickedness and debauchery and people not shunning it and saying, I can't believe we're seeing that, but delighting in it and reveling in it.

And that's right that it sickens us. But we don't need to fear. Because all of the schemes and plots of men against God and His kingdom, God will destroy.

There's a good reason God tells us not to worry. Because He is on our side. We might fear a terrorist attack, but we don't have to.

Even if you should lose your life at the hands of a radical Islamist, you'll go to be in the presence of your God, and He will answer for His actions before that same God.

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord. And so we need not fear when troubles and trials arise all around us, when people persecute us for Jesus' sake.

[17 : 46] Jesus says we're blessed when that happens. We don't need to fear. We don't need to despair. That doesn't mean we don't do anything about these things. No, we take action where we're able. We pray.

We pray. Hezekiah, when the Assyrians were knocking on Jerusalem's door, and Sennacherib was blaspheming in the name of God, Hezekiah goes and he begs. He prays before the Lord. Yes, we do something.

We pray. We take action, but we don't fear. We don't despair because God who is on the throne fights for us. And so he says, trouble, at least from this enemy, won't come a second time.

Don't be a fool. Don't plot against the Lord. You will not succeed. And don't despair when you see others plotting against you because they cannot stand against God. Well, judgment continues to be pronounced.

Verse 10, they will be entangled among thorns, drunk from their wine. They will be consumed like stubble. And Nahum flashes a little glint of the poetic. Remember, we'll see especially in chapter 2 and chapter 3, Nahum is a master writer, and he uses vivid imagery, and we catch a glimpse of that here.

[18:53] And even in his writing, there's alliteration in the Hebrew, the same sound repeated, and you almost get the idea of a drunk person stuttering his way as he speaks of here.

They're drunk from their wine. But he uses some imagery here to describe their downfall, the judgment coming against them. They'll be entangled in thorns. Perhaps thorns that they used as a hedge of protection in battle, as a line of defense against those who would attack them.

Those very thorns will now entangle them. They'll be trapped in their own devices. You ever been trapped in thorns? You know it's painful. They're going to be trapped in thorns.

The drink which they drank and celebrated with would make them drunk beyond any semblance of usefulness. Isaiah describes the foolishness of such in Isaiah 56.

Calm each one, Christ. Let me get wine. Let us drink our fill of beer, and tomorrow will be like today or even far better. And no doubt that was the Assyrians thinking.

[19:54] They would celebrate in their revelry of victories, drinking, and say, tomorrow will be like today or even far better. But they'll soon find that their drunkenness leaves them helpless.

But they had defeated nation after nation, and they celebrated, believing they would go on and on. But God has other plans for them. Possibly an allusion here to being drunk on the wrath of God.

That's imagery from Isaiah as well. Isaiah 51 and verse 17, Awake, awake, rise up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of His wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes men stagger.

Whatever it is here, their foolish, drunken revelry in their victory, or drinking the cup of God's wrath, it's bad news for Nineveh. If they're celebrating, it will be short-lived.

If they're drinking God's wrath, it will be forever. And so judgment is coming. If you're an enemy of God tonight, please don't be so foolish as to think that you can go on celebrating your wickedness, thinking each day will be better than the one before it.

[21:02] I love my sin. I'm getting rewards from it right now. And surely tomorrow will be better. And the day after that, even better. Not so. Not so.

You'll eventually be sick of your sin and wallowing in your drunken vomit. You'll find yourself not drinking down your sweet sin, but the dregs of the cup of God's wrath, and it will be too late.

Judgment is coming. It's coming on Nineveh, and now Nahum makes it explicit. He's hinted at it in their entanglement and the thorns, their drunkenness from their wine, but now he says they will be consumed like dry stubble.

Incinerated. This is the nature of who God is. He must punish His enemies. He can do no other. Exodus 15.7 And the greatness of Your majesty, You threw down those who opposed You.

You unleashed Your burning anger. It consumed them like stubble. And this isn't just any burning material. It's stubble. It's chaff. It's completely, fully dry.

[22:05] It says. Completely dry. Not a hint of any sort of moisture in it. When is there the greatest danger of wildfires, forest fires? Well, it's usually out west in areas where it's very dry, and when there hasn't been any rain for days upon days upon days, and everything is so dry that it's crispy, crunchy when you walk on it.

It's longing either for a drink of water to refresh it, or one tiny spark that will ignite it into a blaze that destroys thousands and thousands of acres.

They're the days when you see the sign entering the forest. Fire danger? High. And you're not allowed to have a campfire even, because one spark will ignite it.

One flicked cigarette butt. A careless camper or a malicious arsonist, because it's so dry, and acres will be set ablaze. And that's how Nahum describes Nineveh.

They're so dry, that just the slightest flash of God's anger, and they'll be destroyed, incinerated in an instant. And that's what you are if you're continuing in sin.

[23:20] You've dried up. And the water of life is held out to you every week. You come and you hear the Word of God preached. And you could drink of the water of life, and so be saved by trusting in Christ.

Or if you continue to reject the water of life, you get drier and drier, until just the slightest flash of God's anger will come against you, and you'll be destroyed in an instant.

Judgment will come on the unrepentant wicked, even as it is promised here against Nineveh. It's too late for them. God has pronounced their destruction, and it is coming.

It's not too late for you tonight. You can still come and run to Jesus, who has taken the curse in our place, and find refuge.

But for the Assyrians, it was done. Look at verse 12. Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be cut off and pass away.

[24 : 22] The Assyrians were complete. Although they're complete, they don't lack anything. And they had demonstrated that time and again in their military victories over the surrounding nations.

There were many of them. They had nothing to fear. But their enemies had everything to fear. It's a frightening picture of a foe. There's no weak point. No soft spot. No point of vulnerability for them. There's no soft underbelly here. They are invincible. They are impenetrable. They're complete. And to boot, they have lots of allies. There's not even the hope of mustering a numbers advantage against them.

Problem for God? Not in the least. Not even a little bit. He will pass over them and cut them off like a sheep is sheared of its wool. Nineveh will be cut off by God. You think your enemy is insurmountable?

The difficulty that you face? There's no weak spot? It's not just one person at work or at home or at school that's against you. You're the only Christian there. You have no allies.

[25 : 28] And the wicked around you are prospering. And so you can't even point out the bad effects of their sin because there aren't any that can be seen anyway. And they're smarter and quicker with the tongue than you.

And so your feeble arguments for Christ and His gospel and against their wickedness don't stand a chance against them. They cut you right down and cut you off. And your enemy is so complete and perfect that you begin to despair and think, there's no hope for me.

I can't stand against this enemy. Just as Assyria would find out they were no match for God, neither is your trouble. He will either give you the grace to bear up under it or deliver you from it.

But what a blessing that even though our enemies seem insurmountable, we have the great God.

Don't forget verses 1-8 of Nahum 1. This is the God who fights for us.

And He will not let us be destroyed. He will bless us. He will keep us. Even against great foes. And so the judgment continues to be pronounced down in verse 14.

[26 : 42] The Lord has given a command 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 your vile. If we wanted to sum up this verse, we could say, no descendants, no gods, and no life for you, Assyria.

No descendants, no gods, and no life. This is God's judgment. His curse upon them. Your name will not be sown. It will come to an end. And what a curse for a dynasty. The Assyrians had been in power for years.

And the kingdom had been passed down from father to son. And there was some backstiving and a brother snuck in and took the throne. But the dynasty had continued. And the great curse on a dynasty is that it will come to an end.

You'll have no more seed to carry it on. You'll be completely cut off in the earth. And that's what God did to them. There is no Assyrian empire because God destroyed them. He used the Babylonians and their allies to wipe them off the face of the earth.

[27 : 45] They were cut off in a moment. No one to carry on their seed. Great curse for a kingdom that there's no one to carry it on. No descendants or no dynasty.

No gods, he says. Their gods would also be shamed. The images of their gods destroyed and their names disgraced. Their temple violated. And what a comfort to Judah who endured the rants of wicked King Sennacherib.

You remember when he came storming in towards Jerusalem and he sent a message to King Hezekiah. Do you remember what he said? He said a message for the people of Judah.

Do not listen to Hezekiah. That's their king. Don't listen to your king. For he is misleading you when he says the Lord will deliver us. Has the God of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Seservaim, Hanna and Iva? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save His land from me?

[28 : 46] How then can the Lord... You hear the disgust in His voice? How can the Lord... The contempt...

How can the Lord deliver Jerusalem from my hand? Such blasphemy against God will not be tolerated. And so He will come in judgment against their gods.

Their so-called gods that are no gods at all. Part of their curse is that their so-called gods will be proved false. They will be destroyed. Their images torn down. Their temple violated. No descendants.

No gods. And this is true today as well. One day every knee will bow before Christ the King. We heard it this morning. And all the gods that are worshipped today from Buddha to Allah to the empty god of liberal theology to the sacred feminine to fame to popularity to wealth to power.

All of them will be shown for what they truly are and that is no gods at all. Whatever it is that you're worshipping tonight that's in the place of God, it won't stand.

[29:51] You might think your popularity with your friends, your love of sin, your love of pleasure, your pleasure can be a god. You might think that is far more valuable than any dry religious Christianity stuff that your parents make you listen to on the Lord's Day.

But God says He will destroy all false gods. Anything that you've put in the place of God is no god at all. And God will sweep it aside like it's nothing.

It is nothing. And as He would destroy the gods of the Assyrians, He will destroy yours as well. No descendants, no gods, and no life.

The end of verse 14, I will prepare your grave for you are vile. You only dig someone's grave when death is certain. It's either already taken place or it's inevitable that it's about to take place.

And God is preparing a grave for Nineveh because their destruction is inevitable. They are vile. The word is light. They're trifling. They're insignificant. Nineveh really thought they were something.

[31:00] The Assyrians thought they were something. And from man's perspective they were. But to God, just like their gods, they were nothing. He could sweep them off the stage of the earth with His word.

And so He would destroy them digging their grave. You probably think you're something special as you stand in rebellion against God. Look down your nose at all these silly Christians that are blindly following a faith that's not real.

You've got the upper hand on all of us, don't you? You think you're something. You know what God says? You're light. You're insignificant. You're vile.

And He'll prepare your grave for you if you continue thinking that. If you continue mocking Christians and the God that they serve. And so it will be a complete destruction.

The end of verse 15. No more will the wicked invade you. Speaking to Judah, they will be completely destroyed. The Assyrians will never again be a threat. Their destruction is certain and complete.

[32:06] And so it will be for all who plot against the Lord and His people. Fighting against God never works. It didn't work for Nineveh. It won't work for you.

Two main lessons for us here that we've already noticed as we've gone along in looking at the curses on the guilty, the judgment on God's enemies. For those tonight who are God's children, we can take great comfort that those who persecute you, those who come against you, will not prevail. They cannot stand before God. Whatever they plot will be brought to an end by Him. We've spoken of that. But those of you who are God's enemies and fighting against Him, be warned that you will not prevail.

It might be rolling your eyes at your parents or laughing at your friends who love the Lord. You're fighting against God and your wickedness will be turned back on your own head. You'll drink the cup of God's wrath.

Your so-called gods will not be able to help you when God comes against you. There will be no life for you, but it doesn't have to be this way. You come to Christ today and find yourself on the right side of the fight with the right man on your side.

[33:18] The God of the universe. And you'll be sure to find blessing. Otherwise, you'll be cut off. It doesn't matter how strong you are or how strong you think you are. You'll be cut off in an instant.

Consumed in a moment. You're nothing even compared to the great Assyrians. And God destroyed them. And He can you as well. So, if you're an enemy of God, come to Christ who God cursed in our place and find refuge there.

And you can enjoy the blessings that we're about to talk about instead of the curses that we've just spoken of. So, in the second place tonight, there are blessings for God's friends, for His people.

The very destruction of Nineveh of Assyria meant relief and blessing, but there are other blessings for God's people that He makes explicit here. Notice verse 12. 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, Judah, I will afflict you no more. See, God identifies Himself as the one who's brought affliction on His own people.

[34 : 28] Now, open theists and others wouldn't like this passage, but here it is anyway. God has used the Assyrians to afflict His people. They were a rod in His hands.

And now He's done with that rod and He's about to break it over His knee. You picture a parent who's gone out to the woods and they bring back a switch to discipline their child and when they're done with it, they can snap it and they're done with it.

There's a rod in their hands. That's what Assyria was. A rod in God's hands to afflict, yes, even His own people. But His usefulness or their usefulness to God is done.

The affliction came from God. Whatever it is you are facing, severe trial, pain, suffering, persecution, comes to you under the sovereign control of God.

We may not blame Him. We may not accuse Him of evil. But these things do come to us under His sovereign control. And they come for different reasons.

[35 : 29] Sometimes they come for discipline. That's why it came to the people of Israel. God used the Assyrians to discipline Israel and Judah. Sometimes it may be to help us grow in grace, to teach us something.

Sometimes we may not know why the affliction comes. But there's comfort in knowing that it comes from the hand of a good God who will not allow His people to be afflicted beyond what they can bear.

The psalmist acknowledges it as coming from God. Psalm 88, in verse 7, your wrath lies heavily upon me. You have overwhelmed. That's our word. Afflicted me with all your waves. Or Psalm 90, in verse 15, make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.

But the blessing here now is that the affliction will be lifted. God will afflict them no more. Although I have afflicted you, Judah, I will afflict you no more. Now some people struggle with this promise because not long after the Assyrians come the Babylonians, and they afflict the people of God too. Well this prophecy is about Nineveh, about the Assyrians, and Israel never faced, Judah never faced affliction at their hands again. And there's a sense in which some of these promises as is often true with prophecy are only fulfilled in Christ who God afflicted so that we need not be afflicted eternally.

[36 : 52] And so our relief from affliction may not come until we are in glory with Christ. But in the midst of your suffering, recognize that God is bringing it to pass for your good and His glory.

Whether it's to punish, to cause you to grow, to teach you, or whether you don't know, it comes from Him and in His time will come to an end. Even if your suffering continues as long as you live on this earth.

Maybe you have a physical affliction and you know that barring a miracle from God, you will endure it the rest of your life. Maybe there's a loved one in your family that endures an affliction that you'll be caring for for the rest of your life.

Something that will be ongoing. You can take comfort in knowing that there is eternal rest for you.

And so whatever comes, in comparison with eternity, Paul says it becomes a momentary light affliction when compared with the eternal weight of glory that is yours in Christ.

And so, see the big picture. God has afflicted you for some reason. Perhaps He'll relieve you of that affliction in this life. Perhaps not. But there is relief for all who are in Christ for all of eternity.

[38 : 14] And Paul doesn't mean to make light of your afflictions when he calls them momentary light afflictions. But when you weigh them in the balance with the eternal weight of glory, that's what they begin to look like.

Momentary. Light afflictions that God will deliver us from. It will come to an end in God's perfect time which is often very different from our time frame. Very different from what we would like.

But God will bring our affliction to an end. He also promises freedom for His people. Verse 13, Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away.

No longer in fear and bondage to the Assyrians, they would have that yoke snapped and set free. What an awesome God to deliver His people in this way. He grants them freedom from Assyria.

Bondage would come again at the hands of the Babylonians. But of course, true freedom can only be found in Christ who came to set His people free. And if the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed.

[39:19] He, again, is the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy. Freedom for God's people comes in the coming of Christ who died that we might be free from slavery to sin and self and Satan.

And that's good news. We're free from the prospect of punishment. from eternal punishment. We need not be enslaved to our wretched tendency towards sin and self-destruction any longer. There's freedom in Christ. And then, he concludes in 15 with good news. Look, there on the mountain, 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. Look, there on the mountain, feet, probably an indicator of the swiftness with which the herald came. And we see him coming.

Is it good news or is it bad news that he bears? Oh, it's good news. What is it he's shouting? Peace! There's peace in the land because God's enemies have been destroyed.

[40:27] And so, feast your feasts. Fulfill your vows. In other words, worship. This is the language of worship in Israel among the people of Judah.

Celebrate the destruction of your enemy by showing your devotion to God who brought about the deliverance. The wicked are destroyed. They invade no longer. It's sure, it's certain, and so worship God. Don't worship yourself.

Don't look and say, look how great we are. People of Judah turned back the people of Assyria. No, no. God did that. And so, don't celebrate yourself. Worship.

Celebrate your feasts to the Lord. Fulfill your vows to Him because He's brought peace. But far better news than even the destruction of earthly enemies is the good news that Paul talks about in Romans 10 where he references this verse and it's also found in Isaiah the prophet.

And he speaks of the importance of the church sending out preachers of the Gospel, the good news, to the ends of the earth. And the Gospel is the greatest news that you can have peace with God.

[41:37] That though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. That though you have fought and plotted and schemed against God and His people and mocked His people, you can be forgiven.

You can have peace with God. And so, Paul and Isaiah say, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things. Jesus is the good news of peace.

People in Jesus' day might have been looking for the Messiah and an incarnation of this divine warrior imagery that we see in Nahum 1. It's the image of a strong warrior, the picture that we get of God here.

And they're looking for an incarnation who would come and destroy their Roman oppressors and free them from their rule. And Jesus did come as the incarnation of the divine warrior.

But not in the way many people thought. He didn't come to give just another temporary victory over another earthly foe like the Roman Empire. He came to grant a permanent victory over our greatest enemy.

[42:42] The enemy of Satan and sin and death. A true, lasting victory for all who would trust in Him. And because of Him, trouble will not arise again.

We will not be afflicted any longer. The yoke is broken forever. The wicked will invade us no more. They will be completely destroyed. These things are fulfilled ultimately in Christ. Who is our hope? Who is our strength? The good news is that there is peace. There can be peace for you tonight. If you are an enemy of God tonight, you can run to this Christ and find peace with Him.

You are either God's friend or His enemy. You are either at peace with Him or at war with Him. And I want to tell you tonight that I have beautiful feet right now.

The only time I have beautiful feet is when I preach. The rest of the time, you don't want to see them because they are ugly. But right now, I have got beautiful feet because I have the message of good news.

[43:43] The message of peace. The message of sins forgiven. The message of a Savior has come and conquered all enemies so that we might be right with God.

You come and you trust in this Jesus tonight and you won't face the judgments that we're reading of here that came upon Nineveh. Life might be difficult for you. You might suffer in this life, but you won't suffer alone.

You'll have God with you every step of the way and there's an eternity of glory to be had with no suffering, no anguish, no pain, no enemies, no one to mock you, no one to persecute you.

And so what will it be for you? A brief moment of glory in this life where the world loves you and you love the world and an eternity of torment? Or a brief moment of the world hating you in this life and despising you and an eternity of joy and happiness and glory where Jesus has wiped away every tear and there is no more suffering and no more sorrow.

Which is it for you tonight? Are you a friend or are you an enemy? If you're a friend tonight, it's a great privilege and our response should be what Nahum calls Judah to here.

[44 : 56] Celebrate your festivals. Feast your feasts, Judah. Fulfill your vows. Worship. Show your devotion to God who's won the battle. Our first deliverance when God delivers us from affliction here in this life when some source of suffering is removed, our first response ought to be to praise God.

And of course, our response to relief from the greatest suffering we could face. That under the dominion of Satan and sin. Our response ought to be one of worship. God has delivered us.

How then could we not praise Him? How then could we not feast our feasts and fulfill our vows to our God? And so we want to conclude tonight by singing praise to God. By praising Him for His great deliverance.

That He's made us His friends. That He's drawn us in. And if you are not His friends tonight, pray that He would draw you in. That He would save you. Let's conclude by singing hymn 53.

Responding in worship and praise to our God who has delivered us from oppression. Father, we thank You for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is the good news of peace and sins forgiven.

[46 : 05] we thank You that that truth has been proclaimed to us. That You have granted many here to come to faith in this glorious Christ and so have poured out Your abundant blessing upon us.

We pray that others tonight who are abiding under Your curse, under Your wrath, would come and run to find shelter in this Christ who has taken the curse in our place.

Do come and save sinners tonight. That each one here might be greatly anticipating the blessing that You grant to us in this life and for all of eternity instead of dreading the curse that You will pour out on the wicked in the day of judgment.

Come and do a great work of salvation in our midst and do fill our hearts with thanks and praise tonight. We do worship You. Forgive us for our feeble attempts at worship. We long to honor You. Help us to do it in our worship here and in the way we live when we go from here. Give us grace to bring honor to You, the God who has been so gracious, so faithful, so good to deliver us.

[47 : 06] Give us grace to bring praise and glory to Your name and we'll give You thanks. In Jesus' name, Amen.