

6 Perspectives on Persecution

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[0:00] Nahum chapter 2. You might think this doesn't sound much like grace.! As we read again of the judgment of God upon Nineveh.

So let's heed the word of God.

Nahum chapter 2. An attacker advances against you, Nineveh. Guard the fortress. Watch the road. Brace yourself. Marshal all your strength.

The Lord will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines. The shields of his soldiers are red.

The warriors are clad in scarlet. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day they are made ready. The spears of pine are brandished. The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares.

[1:19] They look like flaming torches. They dart about like lightning. He summons his picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the city wall.

The protective shield is put in place. The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses. It is decreed that the city be exiled and carried away.

Its slave girls moan like doves and beat upon their breasts. Nineveh is like a pool and its water is draining away.

Stop, stop, they cry. But no one turns back. Plunder the silver. Plunder the gold. The supply is endless.

The wealth from all its treasures. She is pillaged, plundered, stripped. Hearts melt. Knees give way. Bodies tremble.

[2:17] Every face grows pale. Where now is the lion's den, the place where they fed their young? Where the lion and lioness went and the cubs with nothing to fear?

The lion killed enough for his cubs and strangled the prey for his mate, filling his lairs with the kill and his dens with the prey. I am against you, declares the Lord Almighty.

I will burn up your chariots in smoke. And the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth.

The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard. I ask you to keep your Bibles open there to the prophet Nahum in chapter 2.

Having just heard Nahum 2 read and following along in your Bibles, perhaps if you're honest, you might admit you're wondering how in the world such a passage might be relevant to you.

[3:27] I admit wondering something similar when I read it. The details are very vivid. It's a remarkable picture that Nahum paints for us.

But the details are so specific to Nineveh and Judah, you begin to wonder how it could apply to us in Bremen, Indiana in the year 2007.

But we have the promise of God that all of His Word is profitable. And this portion is profitable too. It's a matter of determining how it's profitable. We've seen in chapter 1 that God announces judgment is coming.

There's punishment coming for these people that have oppressed the people of God and Judah. Judgment is going to come on them. It's announced. It's certain. And here in chapter 2, He describes that judgment.

It's a very vivid portrayal. And we'll see some of that tonight. Some of His vivid language that He uses. It's a picture of an advancing enemy who will destroy the people of Nineveh.

[4:26] It leaves the people of Nineveh weak, slack-jawed, knock-kneed, in terror at the advance of an enemy. And this is a once great and strong people who feared no one.

They fear the Lord now. How is this relevant to us? Let me answer that question with another question. Are you or anyone you know of currently suffering persecution? That word persecution is pretty broad. It could be punishment. It could be persecution for the cause of Christ. But is anyone that you know of, are you yourself, currently suffering persecution? Or have you ever suffered persecution? Or do you anticipate ever suffering persecution? Well, if so, and I suspect we would all have to answer yes to at least we have or we are currently or we expect that we will, then Nahum chapter 2 has something to say to us tonight. It gives us perspectives on persecution and the suffering that follows it. And we want to consider those perspectives tonight. What should the attitude of children of God be who are undergoing trials of persecution?

[5:37] If you are enduring it currently, these perspectives should be helpful to you in bearing up under it and enduring it. If someone you know is enduring persecution, you will be able to help encourage them with these perspectives.

And you can file them away and know that when persecution comes, these things are just as true today as they will be tomorrow and the next day and the next day after that.

So, perspectives on persecution from Nahum chapter 2 tonight. There are six of them all together. And the first one, we actually go back to chapter 1 for just by way of review.

The first perspective is that God is the one who brings persecution into our lives. God is the one who brings affliction. Notice verse 12 of chapter 1. The second part of the verse.

Although I have afflicted you, Judah, I will afflict you no more. And it's God speaking. Affliction comes from the hand of God. We talked about that last time we looked at Nahum chapter 1.

[6:39] It's God who brings it. We say that understanding that God is in no way the author of evil or temptation. And so it's not for us to blame or accuse God. But neither is it for us to despair.

Thinking our affliction, our trouble, our persecution is something that's beyond God's control. That He doesn't have any say in. And so, He's not really able to help us in the midst of it. Because He doesn't know what's going on either.

No. It comes from the hand of God. That's simply by way of review. That's the first perspective. That persecution comes from God's hand. Secondly, and now we're into chapter 2.

God is the one who scatters the persecutor. Assyria in this chapter, Nineveh are the persecutors. They've been afflicting the people of Israel.

They've scattered the northern kingdom. Taken some of them captive and scattered the rest of them into the rest of the land. And now they're pressing the southern kingdom of Judah. They're the persecutors. But it's God who scatters the one who does the persecuting.

[7:41] Look at verse 1. An attacker advances against you, Nineveh. The word attacker there. That's the one who scatters. The one who disperses.

The picture that you get is of a flock of ducks beside a pond. And you can feed the ducks and throw bread.

But the little child gets so excited that he runs right into the flock. And the flock scatters. It's gone. In a second. Or of a cat running into a group of birds. And it just scatters.

It disappears. They're gone in a moment. That's the picture that you get here. The scatterer comes. The one who disperses. The one who sends them packing so that they're never able to regroup again.

It's exactly what a kingdom doesn't want to happen. A kingdom consolidates its power. It doesn't want to be dispersed. Now they want to bring other kingdoms in. They want to conquer others.

[8:34] But they want power centrally located. It's what the people that built the tower of Babel didn't want. Let's build this tower so we won't be scattered out to the ends of the earth.

And then God comes, same word, and he scatters them to the ends of the earth. He makes them all speak different languages. Instead of being all in one place, he scatters them. It's what God promised to do to the enemies of his people in Numbers 10 and verse 35.

Whenever the ark set out, or what Moses prayed that God would do, Moses said, rise up, O Lord. May your enemies be scattered. May your flows flee before you. It's what happened to Israel.

The northern kingdom, it was threatened. You can read about it in Deuteronomy chapter 4. And carried out, although they would be restored from it, having been scattered to the world in Deuteronomy chapter 30.

And so Nineveh and Assyria will be scattered. God is the one who takes the persecutor and does away with them. Sends them packing. And it's God.

[9 : 32] Now he's going to use the Babylonian army to do it. He's going to use, and they're allied with the Medes at that time. And those two armies come and they attack Nineveh and they destroy it. And that's the physical instrument that God uses.

But God is the one who does it. He's the one that scatters them. And we're going to read all about this Babylonian and the army of the Medes that comes attacking. It's all here in the chapter. But it's God.

An attacker advances against you. A scatterer. And so whatever enemy it is that you are facing, know that it's God who is the one who is able to destroy that enemy.

You don't face the enemy alone. The people of Judah weren't alone in facing the Ninevites. God stood with them. And he went before them to scatter the enemy.

God promises to do it for Judah. And he does. What Nahum prophesied comes true. The language that Nahum uses is so vivid, you almost think he's there watching it. It's as though he's there in a seat above the city.

[10 : 32] And he's seeing it all happen. But this is prophecy. This happens. He prophesies years before it actually takes place. But this did happen. Anyway, it's very vivid. And he sees it. God promises to do it.

And he does. Now our persecutors might not look like the Assyrians. We might not have an army bearing down on Grace Fellowship Church that's dressed in red and riding in chariots. But surely we have enemies.

We have those who would persecute us. You may have people at school that mock you for your faith, that are attacking you. You may have co-workers that are trying to seduce you into their worldly ways.

A government of a nation can persecute the people of God if it restricts the free exercise of Christian religion. Certainly our culture is our enemy as it seeks to fill our minds with anti-Christian thought, with temptation through movies and music and magazines and mature content over the Internet and all of these things.

And so to destroy us, we're attacked. We're hard-pressed on every side, like the people of Judah were. But just like the people of Judah, we're not alone. The church might have enemies.

[11 : 43] These false teachers who seek to lead the church astray with doctrine that's subversive and untrue. Some people add to God's revelation. Some people take away from it. Some people water it down.

These are enemies of the church that are coming against us. Do we need to cower in fear at these enemies and say, what are we to do when people are marching against us?

No, you've got the great scatterer. You've never heard that name for God before, have you? The great scatterer. He charges into that enemy, whoever it is, and He scatters them, and they are no more.

And they cannot stand before this God. Just like Nineveh couldn't stand before the approaching Babylonian army because it was God who sent them. With a word, He drives them away so that they'll never be able to regroup and attack again.

We have God fighting for us. It's comforting when we face a very complete enemy. We saw how strong, how complete, how allied the people of Assyria were last time. There was no weak point.

[12 : 41] There was no soft spot. No problem. We have God who will destroy them, disperse them. That's the second perspective on persecution. God, persecution comes from the hand of God, and God is the one who's able to scatter it and destroy it.

The third perspective comes to us in verse 2, and here's great comfort for the people of God. God restores those who have been persecuted. God restores those who have been persecuted.

Look at verse 2. The Lord will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and ruined their vines. God would not allow His people to be oppressed forever.

He would return them to their former glory. He may punish His people for a time, and He does. The northern kingdom is scattered to Syria, and later the southern kingdom will be taken into exile by the Babylonians.

God would punish His people, but He would not leave them. He would save a remnant. He would bring them back and restore them to their land in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. God had promised in Deuteronomy 30 in verse 3, Then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where He scattered you.

[13:57] God had scattered His own people because they had been disobedient. He would restore them. He'll bring them back. And so it is with us today. Our persecution may be for various reasons.

Maybe it's because we've not been faithful to our God. God disciplines His children as a loving, heavenly Father. His hand is heavy on us at times.

But it's heavy on us so that we'll be restored to Him. It's not to drive us away from Him. It's to show us our sin and to see where we've fallen short and to punish us for and to bring us back.

God's discipline is to restore us, to bring us back. And so God always restores His people. He always brings them back. Whether it's for discipline, as we've said, or persecution for the cause of Christ.

Even this, where we're suffering for righteousness' sake, God will restore us. You might suffer for the rest of your life on this earth at the hands of those that hate the Gospel.

[14:55] And yet God will call you home to Himself. And He will have restored you. And kept you safe. And given you grace to hold up in the midst of it. So in the midst of your persecution, you don't despair.

You remember that God is the one who restores His people. He doesn't leave us without hope. It won't last forever. That's the third perspective.

Another perspective on suffering. Our fourth one tonight. All of this means that fighting against God or persecuting His people is futile.

Fighting against God or persecuting His people is futile. And it sort of flows out of what we've already said. If God scatters the persecutor, then of course, persecuting God's people is going to be a fruitless effort.

But here is where Nahum's language becomes so vivid for us. And we want to take a little time and plow through this passage and see just how foolish it was for the Assyrians to think that they could stand before this God.

[15:57] That they could attack the people of God without facing the wrath of God Himself. And so, in verse 1, Nineveh is warned. An attacker, a scatterer is coming against you.

And then there's a little bit of sarcasm. Better get ready, Nineveh. Prepare yourselves, okay? Guard the fortress. Make preparations. Get your troops ready.

Close the gates. Man the walls. Get your chariots ready. Get ready because the attacker is coming against you. All they're getting ready in the world isn't going to do them any good. Because it's God that's coming against them.

It's a little sarcasm from Nahum. Get ready. Do everything you can, but you're not going to be able to stand before this God. Watch the road. You better put somebody on the lookout tower so that you can see what's coming down the road that leads to the city.

Pay attention so that the person who can see it can announce it to the city and they can get ready. Put somebody on watch. Not going to do you any good, but get ready. You better marshal all of your strength.

[16:52] You strengthen your loins and you make firm your great strength. He multiplies words. And Assyria was a strong people. The people of Nineveh were mighty. And they did have great strength that they could marshal.

But it wouldn't be anything before God. So screw up your courage. Make sure every resource is at your disposal. You're going to need it. Assyria is a joy.

Great success. They've cruelly oppressed the people around them. They've met only token opposition. No one has been able to stand before them. And so perhaps they didn't take these warnings seriously.

We don't know. But they should have. Matthew Henry says, When the God of heaven goes forth to contend with the people, neither the palaces nor their kings, neither the temples nor their gods can protect and shelter them, but must all inevitably fall with them.

Your gods aren't going to help you. Your kings aren't going to help you. Your big wall around your city. Not going to help you. You can get ready. But you're not going to stand. And the rest of Nahum chapter 2 bears that out.

[17:56] How do we know that their efforts to prepare were futile? I'll start in verse 3. There's the guy. And this is from the perspective of someone in the tower. Watching. On the wall.

And they can see the road coming into the city. And they can look down into the city and see what's going on there. And what does he see when he looks out? Oh, he sees a fearful sight. An army advancing.

The shields of his soldiers are red. The shields of the soldiers of the great scatterer, the great attacker. His warriors are clad in scarlet. Now their clothing probably was red.

Clad in scarlet. The red on their shields? Quite possibly blood spattered there from their previous battles. Not a pleasant thought, but it's a fearful sight to see an army advancing.

Clad in red. Their chariots flash in the distance like iron that's on fire. The spears of the soldiers can be seen swaying in time as the soldiers march toward the city.

[18:58] The spears swaying. You can see them. It's a horrifying picture that the man in the tower sees. It's a sea of blood and fire advancing towards them.

And he calls down into the city to warn them. And what happens? In verse 4, it seems that the scene switches now to inside Nineveh. Some of these verses are, it's unclear whether it's the advancing army or what's going on in the city of Nineveh.

And it reflects some of the confusion of actual battle, of actual warfare. But it looks as though verse 4 is inside the city. The watchman has told them what's coming.

And now they're trying to get ready. The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the square. They act madly. It's pandemonium. The backlash from this fearful announcement. They're unused to such a sizable force coming against them.

They're used to be the ones marching on other cities. They're having other cities in fear. And now Nineveh is the ones that are in great fear. And they're trembling. Rushing around, trying to get ready.

[19:59] They too look like flashes of light, like the chariots that are advancing. It's a terrified Nineveh. Perhaps Nahum's prophecy now ringing in their ears. He said an attacker would come.

He said we would be destroyed. And maybe that adds to the fear. There is an attacker coming. Maybe we won't be able to stand before this enemy. And so in verse 5, the leader of Nineveh, he summons his troops.

But while they're on their way to defend the wall, they begin to stumble. They're in such a rush, in such chaos, in such fear. They stumble on their way to protect the wall. And the advancing army is already at the wall.

And when an army attacked a walled city, they'd try to undermine the wall. And they would have a protective shield that they would put over them as they undermined the wall so that those protecting the wall and shooting their arrows down and dropping rocks down, they'd be protected from that. Well, that protective shield's already set up. And so the soldiers inside the city are in a rush to defend their wall. And you can feel the fear. It's palpable. In verse 6, the river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses.

[21:06] They probably had something like sluice gates that controlled the flow of water into the city from a tributary off the Tigris River. And if they opened the gates, they could increase the level of the water and then they could close the gates as they didn't need any more water.

Well, now the gates are thrown open and water is flooding the city. And the palace walls begin to disintegrate even as their hearts melt within them. The city is crumbling.

They're being destroyed. And so it's fixed. Verse 7, it is decreed. It's fixed that she, the city is personified now as a woman, that she be stripped and carried away, exiled. Her slave girls moan like does because they realize their end is near.

They're beating their breasts. It's a sign. They realize now the defeat is certain. All their efforts to fight against God were futile. And so they're giving up. They're mourning.

They're crying out. They're wailing. And now the people are fleeing. In verse 8, Nineveh is like a pool that was once a pool filled with brave men and soldiers and great wealth and riches. And it's all draining away.

[22:10] Now they're running for their lives. They're fleeing. They're not fighting anymore. They're just running because it's futile to fight against God. And the city is emptied out. Even a cry for them to stop and defend avails nothing.

The people know they're defeated and so they run and then the city, the army comes in and plunders. Plunder to the silver, the gold, the supply is endless. The Assyrians had been all over conquering other nations.

Taking their wealth. Bringing it back. Storing it up. Rich man's wealth is like a high wall in his own imagination. Here we are with the great Assyrians. We've got a great army. We've got a great walled city at Nineveh.

We've got all the money and the treasure in the world that we need. We're fine. But in a moment, it's all gone. It's futile to fight against God. So even their wealth does them no good as God advances against them.

And neither will your wealth do you any good. When God comes in wrath, all your accumulation of things won't save you. And then verse 10 sums it up.

[23:17] Such a descriptive verse. The first, she is pillaged, plundered, and stripped. It's all, in Hebrew, it's the same root word three times and it grows a little bit each time.

And one commentator tries to give you the way it sounds almost in Hebrew. Destruction, devastation, decimation. Or if you take that same root word, ruin, ruined, ruinous, it's utter despair for the city.

They're gone. And you see what it's done to the inhabitants of the city. So, so vivid. Hearts melt. Knees give way. Bodies tremble.

Every face grows pale. This is a picture of an empty, broken, totally fearful man.

These are bold soldiers they're talking about. And their hearts are melted. These who were so bold and could conquer anyone. Their heart is not ready to face anyone. Their knees are knocking.

[24:15] Their whole bodies tremble. And they shake for fear at what's coming. And their faces grow ashen and pale. Because God is advancing against them.

And isn't that what happens when people face God? Nahum warned them back in chapter 1, verses 5 and 6. The mountains quake before Him. 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 wrath? His wrath is poured out like fire. The rocks are shattered before Him. Nineveh finds out that it's true. These who have persecuted God's people are now persecuting themselves.

They can't stand before God. They're no match for Him. If you're a mocker of God's people, He will scatter you like He did the Ninevites.

You think people that need religion are weak. They need a crutch to help them. I'm strong enough, but if you need God, you take your crutch and you use Him.

[25:27] You'll find out how weak you are. You'll find out how strong God is. If you continue with that attitude, I don't need that religion business. I'm okay. I'm out. You're a fool. You're a fool because it's futile to fight against God, to persecute His people.

That's the fourth perspective on persecution for God's people. The one who persecutes can't stand before God. There's a word there for the persecutor and there's a word there for God's people.

There's great comfort for God's people. The one who's coming against you is no match for God.

And if you are against God's people, you are no match for Him. Similarly, but put in another way, a fifth perspective is that safety is not found in the strength of man, but in God.

Notice with me again the last three verses. Verses 11-13. Nahum takes up a bit of a taunt against them and he uses the imagery of lions because the Assyrians had chosen that imagery for themselves.

The Assyrian kings thought of themselves as lions. They had carvings of lions in their palaces. They thought they were something. They were the mightiest among men like lions are the mightiest among beasts.

[26:48] You remember the language of Proverbs 30. There are three things that are stately in their march. Four that are stately in the way they carry themselves. I'm paraphrasing here. But one of them is the lion who is mighty among beasts and doesn't retreat before any.

And the other one is a king when his army is with him. And that's the picture here. Proud Nineveh. Bold Nineveh. Without equal in whole the world.

Mighty among the nations. Untouchable. Just like a lion is mighty among beasts. And so, Nahum takes up that imagery of the lion. Verse 11, Where now is the lion's den?

The place where they fed their young. Where the lion and lioness went and the cubs with nothing to fear. The lion killed enough for his cubs and strangled the prey for his mate. Filling his lairs with the kill and his dens with the prey.

I am against you, declares the Lord Almighty. I will burn up your chariots and smoke and with the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth.

[27:53] The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard. This cruel, strong people were like lions. They were mightiest in the land and they were cruel as a lion rips and sheds its, or shreds its prey with its claws and its teeth.

I could read you, I'm not going to do it. If you're interested, I'll type up the quotes for you and send them to you or hand them to you. But I could read you gruesome accounts of how the Assyrians treated their prisoners, those they took captive.

Torturous things, much like a lion. It's a fitting image of who they were. And they thought they were something special, something strong, but they did kill their prey. And they were secure.

They had a place to dwell, to prowl back and forth in their lair and be proud of what they had done. Filling their dens with food for their children. Plenty of prey to feed their young. They were bold and confident.

But trusting in their own strength was a huge mistake. Where is your den now? The walled city of Nineveh has been destroyed. Where is your fearlessness?

[29:04] You notice he says at the end of verse 11, with nothing to fear, with no one to make them fear. That's who they thought they were. Nothing for us to be afraid of. Nothing can make us fear. Where is your supply of food now?

God is against you. And so you're helpless. I'm against you. Oh, may God never say to anyone here, I am against you. But he will if you continue in your sin.

If you continue in your own strength. He'll come and he'll say, I am against you. And he'll bring you low. For them, their chariots were burned, their young were devoured, no prey left, and the voice of their messengers no longer heard.

The messenger in Judah was, remember, he's on the mountaintop shouting peace, peace, but the messengers of Assyria are no longer heard. Oh, Palmer Robertson comments on how the tables are turned.

Those who had made a career of gleefully pursuing others suddenly discover the terrors of being hunted down themselves. Those who had made themselves wealthy by terrifying others now find themselves impoverished and in terror.

[30:08] They who for generations had made a way of life of striking fear in the hearts of others now know firsthand the horrors of divine judgment. And the lesson here for us is that we must find safety and refuge only in the Lord.

Not in your own strength. We're still on this fifth perspective. Safety is not found in the strength of men, but in God. If you trust in yourself like the Assyrians did, you'll disappoint yourself.

You'll be brought low. One of the rewards for Israel's obedience was that they would have no one to fear. Listen, Leviticus 26 and verse 6.

I will grant peace in the land and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. That's the same phrase that's used of Nineveh here. What happened? You used to have no one to make you afraid, but now they are in fear because God is against them.

You will lie down and no one will make you afraid. Promise from God. I will remove savage beasts from the land. What are savage beasts if not lions? And the sword will not pass through your country. Or Micah, the prophet, chapter 4 and verse 4, speaking of the people of the Lord, not just from Israel, but from many lands.

[31:22] He says, every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree and no one will make them afraid for the Lord Almighty has spoken. Do you know what it is to live without fear?

If you're a child of God, you can live every day of your life without fear. Because you rest in the strength of the Almighty. Now, the Assyrians lived every day of their life without fear, but it was a false confidence.

A while back, I think this was probably back when I was in high school, so I might be dating myself, especially for some of you young people, but we used to have shirts that said, no fear. And it was on bumper stickers and you put it on your truck and whatever else.

No fear. And that was the thing. It was a great sign of your confidence if you could wear a shirt that said, no fear. It was a great sign of your stupidity if you were counting on yourself.

The Assyrians might as well have been walking around with shirts that said, no fear. But they were fools to wear them because they had everything to fear.

[32 : 28] Because their confidence and hope was not in the Lord. There's only one way you can genuinely live without fear, and that is under the protective hand of God. So dwelling in God's love, John says in 1 John 4.18, there is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment.

The one who fears is not made perfect in love. And so you can be just like the Assyrians. You can take confidence in your walled city and in your great wealth.

Say, well, I'm comfortable with him. I'm in my house. That's my comfort zone. We love those words, comfort zone. In my house, I feel safe. My house is my palace.

It's where I'm comfortable. It's where I'm safe. You know that God can level your house in a moment, bring a tornado through. Your house is gone. Well, even so, I've saved up money.

I've got various funds here and there that even if I lost my job today, I'd be okay because I've got money saved up for the future. Well, a rich man's wealth is like a high wall in his own imagination.

[33 : 44] It's not really a high wall. And God can make your money disappear in an instant too. The stock markets crash and your bank goes under and it's gone. Well, I've got a job.

I'm a good, hardworking man and I'll always be able to get a job. Your job could be gone tomorrow.

Your ability to work could be gone the day after that. And if that's your trust and that's what's keeping you from fear, then it can be gone just as quickly as Nineveh was off the face of the map.

Well, my family, there's where my comfort is. My confidence is in my family. They're always there for me. Even if I lost all of my money in my home, my family would take me in.

Job lost all of his children in a day. And if your hope is in your family, then you'll be disappointed if that's your confidence.

Well, then I've still got my friends and I'll count on them. And they've never, never really let me down on anything big anyway.

[34 : 50] And so I'll trust my friends. You know, your friends can be gone. Everything that you have in this earth to put your confidence in can be gone in a moment. And your fear, your no fear is all of a sudden fear because everything you trusted and everything you hoped in is gone.

Everything Assyria hoped in was gone in a moment. And so if your comfort zone is in your house or in your wealth or whatever, then we need to redefine what a comfort zone is.

We talk about stepping outside of my comfort zone. I'm going to do something I'm not used to. Your comfort zone should be in the Lord. It should be your confidence in God. And so wherever you go, whatever you should do, you should be in your comfort zone because it's in the Lord.

It's not in your house. It's not in your family. All of those things are good. And those things are, God uses those things to comfort us and to bring us help through our family and so on. But if that's where our hope is based and not in the Lord who gives those good things, then our comfort, our confidence is all misplaced.

Sadly so. But if your confidence is in the Lord, then you never really have to step out of your comfort zone. You're always in it. You're always in the no fear zone because you're in the hands of God.

[36 : 10] What is your confidence? What is your hope? The Assyrians melted away. Does verse 10 look like no fear to you?

Hearts melt. Knees give way. Bodies tremble. Faces go white with terror. It doesn't have to be that way for the child of God. In fact, we can boldly stand before an army like that coming against us knowing that God is against them.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? No one. Paul doesn't even need to give the answer.

No one can be against us. He who did not spare his own son, but freely, or gave him up for us all, how we not also with him freely, graciously give us all things. Here is a true refuge and shelter.

Not our own strength, but the strength of God. If your confidence isn't in the Lord, when you hear the approach of God's justice, what is your response?

[37 : 18] I hope it melts away all your proud bravado. I hope it brings you to the point where you're weak-kneed and fearful because you can't stand before God any more than Nineveh could.

You might be foolishly bold in your own strength, but God is against you. Your end will be their end. You cannot stand against Him. And so don't try.

Don't fight against this all-powerful God. Come running to Him. And the last perspective on persecution is this. And it's taken from this imagery of the lions.

And that is that there is a lion greater than your enemy, lions. There is a lion greater than your enemy, lions.

Satan is compared to a lion. He is proud like Assyria was. He prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. We didn't mention this enemy earlier.

[38:21] We talked about how God scatters the enemy. We talked about friends and co-workers and the world around us. We didn't mention the devil, but here is the greatest enemy. And he is the one who stirs these other up against us.

We see it with Job. He will unleash his whole arsenal against us attacking our family, our health, our well-being, everything that we have. All under God's sovereign control.

Not forgetting the very first perspective. Satan is a great enemy. A fearful enemy if you don't serve the God of Job. Job was ready to face that painful trial.

He had his issues, but he never forsook his God. But here, Satan is our greatest enemy. He's coming against us. He's filled his lair with those he's already destroyed.

But you don't have to fear even Satan. His triumph will be short-lived. In fact, his defeat is already certain. How can you be so sure? Because my Bible tells me in Revelation 5 and verse 5, do not weep.

[39:29] See, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed. There's a greater lion. One that fights for us and not against us.

Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah, has already dealt the death blow to Satan at the cross. Our persecutor is already defeated and will finally be defeated at the last day when He, along with His angels and all who will fight against Him will be cast into the lake of fire and there suffer for all of eternity.

You see, God's promise to restore the glory of Jacob is really fulfilled in Christ. Jesus, from the root of David, the tribe of Judah has come. He's the glory of Israel. And He saves a people from God, not just from Israel and Judah, but from all the nations so that God restores the glory of His people. He's brought back those He's scattered and we're safe in the arms of the Savior. No persecutor can touch us there. No one can destroy us there. And so are you in the arms of the mighty lion, the slain lamb, the risen Savior tonight?

Are you trusting in this Christ as your only hope for salvation? Because He is your only hope. To fight against Him is futile. We've seen it. But to be resting in His arms, there's great confidence.

[40:51] There's no fear there. There need not be fear. So you come and trust in this Christ tonight. So what do we do when persecution comes?

Remember these six perspectives. We could divide them up different ways, but remember these things. Affliction, persecution, comes from the hand of God. God scatters the persecutor. God restores His people, the persecuted.

Instead, it's futile to fight against God. Safety is found not in our own strength, but in God's. And there is a lion greater than your lion. And remember what God has done.

The book of Nahum stands in our Bibles. Oftentimes, there's an overlooked minor prophet that is hard to understand and a bunch of things that don't really make sense to us.

But it stands as a witness to what God has done. When you face persecution, pick up Nahum, of all things, and see what God did to the persecutors.

[41:49] See what God did to the Assyrians, and know that He's able to do that for you.

Remember what He's done in the past. Don't just look at Nahum. Look throughout the pages of Scripture and see how God has delivered His people time and again, how He's a refuge, how He's a certain hope and trust, and see how God has blessed them.

Take a look at your own life and remember what God has done for you. Remember, remember. It's Israel's problem. They always forgot. It's our problem. We always forget. But remember what God has done when trouble comes against you.

And pray and trust that He will deliver you again. Anticipate His deliverance. Remember, all of this in Nahum is before it took place. He's prophesying it. He's looking forward.

Now, I don't have a prophecy about your particular nemesis, your Nineveh, your Assyria. But we do have the promises of God. And He who promised is faithful.

And we'll do what He has promised. And so, when it says, God is faithful and He will not let you be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it, you can rest assured that He'll keep His promise.

[42:55] When He promises to never leave you or forsake you, even in the midst of your persecution, you trust His promise. And so anticipate. Not facing any persecution now? It's going to come. Anticipate it, but also anticipate that God will give you grace to bear up in the midst of it.

That He is the one who protects you. That He is your strength. He is your hope. And then you need not despair. God will prove faithful to His promises even as He always has.

We want to conclude tonight by singing hymn 420. It's a hymn of confident trust in God our refuge. Blessed Lord, in Thee is refuge, safety for my trembling soul.

If we're honest, we sometimes fear. We shouldn't, but if we're honest, we do. And the hymn writer admits it. There's safety for my trembling soul. I'm fearful, but I don't need to be.

There's safety for me in the arms of my Savior. God is our refuge. He is our strength. Let's sing and praise Him for it in hymn 420. Let's stand together as we sing. Father, we pray that You would give us increasing measures of faith that we might know what it is to have faith triumphant, knowing not defeat nor fear.

[44:11] We thank You that hiding under the hollow of Your wings and the hollow of Your hands, we need not fear. Forgive us for our fear. Forgive us for our lack of faith, our lack of confidence in our great God who is able to deliver us.

Give us greater, increasing confidence in You and what You have done for us, believing that You will do it again and again until You bring us safely home. And we pray that for those that are foolishly fighting against You, that You would bring them to an end of themselves.

Show them the futility of fighting against God, the fearfulness of hearing You say, I am against You. and give them to run to the line of the tribe of Judah and find refuge in the arms of the dear Savior Christ.

We thank You for Him. We thank You that He is our confidence and our trust. Give us grace to go from here, not putting our trust in the things that we have and the things that we're able to do, but our trust in You, our God, and in You alone.

Give us grace to make it so, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're dismissed. Amen.