

Woe to Ninevah

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[0:00] Nahum chapter 3. Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims.

! The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses, and jolting chariots, charging cavalry, flashing swords, and glittering spears.

Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses. All because of the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft.

I am against you, declares the Lord Almighty. I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame.

I will pelt you with filth. I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. All who see you will flee from you and say, Nineveh is in ruins.

[1:19] Who will mourn for her? Where can I find anyone to comfort you? Are you better than Thebes, situated on the Nile, with water around her?

The river was her defense. The waters her wall. Cush and Egypt were her boundless strength. Put and Libya were among her allies.

Yet she was taken captive and went into exile. Her infants were dashed to pieces at the head of every street. Lots were cast for her nobles.

And all her great men were put in chains. You too will become drunk. And you will go into hiding and seek refuge from the enemy.

All your fortresses are like fig trees with their first ripe fruit. When they are shaken, the figs fall into the mouth of the eater.

[2:20] Look at your troops. They are all women. The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies. Fire has consumed their bars.

Draw water for the siege. Strengthen your defenses. Work the clay. Tread the mortar. Repair the brickwork. There the fire will devour you.

The sword will cut you down and like grasshoppers consume you. Multiply like grasshoppers. Multiply like locusts. You have increased the number of your merchants till they are more than the stars of the sky.

But like locusts, they strip the land and then fly away. Your guards are like locusts. Your officials like swarms of locusts that settle in the walls on a cold day.

But when the sun appears, they fly away and no one knows where. O king of Assyria, your shepherds slumber. Your nobles lie down to rest.

[3:27] Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them. Nothing can heal your wound. Your injury is fatal.

Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall. For who has not felt your endless cruelty?

Please turn again with me in your Bibles to the prophet Nahum in chapter 3. Tonight brings us to the fourth and final message from this minor prophets.

I don't think they should really be called minor prophets. They're very important prophets. It is one of the shorter prophets though. And remarkably, we've managed to string this series out from the end of January all the way into April.

Just four messages covering four months. You know by now that in this prophecy, God is dealing with the wicked city of Nineveh in particular.

[4:30] The wicked nation of Assyria on a broader scale. And we've seen that their judgment was announced publicly in chapter 1. It was vividly depicted for us in chapter 2.

And here in chapter 3, we see that their judgment is certain. It is coming. It's unavoidable. And there's vivid depictions of it here in chapter 3 as well. And don't forget who we're dealing with as we saw back in chapter 1.

This is the Lord before whom the whole earth trembles. He's not one to make a promise and then not keep it. He's not one to make a promise and then not follow through on it.

And so if he says judgment is coming on Nineveh, then it's coming. And it came. What was prophesied came to pass in history. The stench of the sin of the Ninevites in the Lord's nostrils can be born with no longer.

They're trampling underfoot the chance that they had with Jonah. You remember, they heard the truth from Jonah. And they repented. And it appeared to be genuine.

[5 : 38] At least for a time. But either it was very short-lived or it wasn't passed on to the next generation. They've trampled that chance underfoot. And it will only add to their guilt.

Their wanton cruelty against the surrounding nations, including Israel and Judah. God's people will now be turned against them. Nahum doesn't mince words in this chapter.

You heard it even now as we read it. It's not a pretty picture that's portrayed for us in Nahum chapter 3. And so it's challenging. It's hard to read.

It's hard to listen to. And yet, as in all of God's word, there is profit for us. From this profit. And so we want to see from Nahum chapter 3 tonight four things.

Sin. Self-confidence. Sure destruction. And a safe refuge. All S's tonight.

[6 : 40] Sin. Sin. Self-confidence. Sure destruction. And a safe refuge. First of all, we see sin in this passage. And we want to consider Nineveh's sin, but we want to think about your sin too.

And my sin. Nineveh's sin was blatant. It begins in verse 1. They were a city of blood. There was blood on their hands.

The people they had killed were countless. It was a shameful sight when they had come through a city and destroyed it. They had blood on their hands and so were guilty.

Could be ignored no longer. They had deceived. They were a city full of lies. They had led nations astray. Leading them to believe one thing when the reality was far different.

And so they entrapped and ensnared and enslaved nations by their deceit. And then destroyed them. They were obsessed with wealth and had plundered nations. Leaving them, those nations, nothing while filling beyond any usefulness even their own treasures.

[7 : 46] They had so much money they couldn't use it all. And so it plundered the nations. They had taken many victims captive as prey in addition to those that they killed. And these weren't the legitimate wars of a kingdom defending itself and its land.

These were greedy, cruel, bloodthirsty people. And so Nahum is right. Woe to them. It's a funeral cry. They're as good as dead in the eyes of God. Because of their great wickedness.

Their great sin. The blood on their hands. But Nahum goes on to describe them as a harlot. He's not talking about literal harlotry here. Although certainly lust and prostitution were no doubt sins that plagued the city.

He's talking about their wanton lust for power and wealth and land. And how Nineveh seduced the nations. That's part of her deception. And led them astray. And then conquered them.

Much like Solomon's description of the adulterous woman in Proverbs 7. Come, let's drink deep of love till morning. Let's enjoy ourselves with love. And you can imagine the Assyrians deceiving a nation.

[8 : 50] We can enter into a pact. And it will be a treaty together with us. And it will be good for you. And you'll be blessed. And you'll receive protection from us. And they dupe the nation.

They deceive them. And then either destroy them or take them captive. And it's no partnership at all. It's a dictatorship. They seduce them. And so they find that as the young man in Proverbs 7 finds.

All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter. Like a deer stepping onto a noose. Little knowing it will cost him his life. Her house is a highway to the grave leading down to the chambers of death.

That's what Nineveh was. It was a highway to the grave for all that encountered her. The great seduction of the nations. But instead of glory and wealth and power, the nations found death.

She led them astray with sorcery and witchcraft. Wicked people. A wicked city. A wicked nation. But God's about to expose it all. He's about to show them for what they are.

[9:50] And He uses that language of the harlot in exposing her. And Nineveh is going to be exposed. And she'll be seen for the corrupt, murderous, torturous, violent people city that she is.

One commentator puts it this way. Yahweh will lift the metaphorical skirts to show the world the detestable truth of Nineveh's enslavement and torture.

The lies of the glitter and the false glamour are stripped away. And the naked truth of the abuse is fully exposed. And so Nineveh is seen for what it is. Wretched people when God exposed them. She becomes a spectacle that people hurl filth at and punish her. And she will be punished at the hands of God and the hands of the Babylonians and the Medes.

But no longer is she the star of the ancient Near East. The great queen of the nations. She's nothing but an ugly, filthy, dirty prostitute.

[10:49] And so her sin is summed up down in verse 19. The very last two lines. For who has not felt your endless cruelty? Endless cruelty.

Violence, wickedness, cruelty without any end. Without any bounds to it. Their wickedness knew no measure. And so judgment is about to come.

Well, so much for Nineveh's sin. What of your sin? I'm nothing like that. No, no. Never killed anybody. Not me. My hands don't have anybody's blood on them.

I haven't deceived and duped and led people astray like that. No, not me. Well, maybe your sins look a little bit different than Nineveh's. But at root, they're similar.

Deceit, obsession with money and wealth and power. Unbridled lust. Surely these are things we struggle with. Deceit is the tool of many young people who don't want their parents to know what they're doing.

[11:53] Or spouses who don't want their spouse to know what they're doing. It's the tool of those who lead their friends astray. Getting them to think the sin that they're being enticed to is no big deal.

The fight with lust is an ongoing one. It may not be lust like Nineveh's. Maybe it is the physical, sexual lust that's consuming you. Maybe it's the obsession to gain wealth.

Seen in your desire to always have more things. More clothes. More gadgets. Better. Bigger. Bigger. More. Your lust for wealth.

Perhaps power. Your sins can be like Nineveh's, though perhaps not so violent. Not so visible to the rest of the world. Just as wicked. Just as sinful.

Never killed somebody, perhaps. But you have that look that would kill if looks could. That hatred in your heart for a particular person. Sin? Well, what's going to come of your sin?

[12:57] Well, first of all, it will be exposed. Should you continue in your sin like Nineveh, it will be exposed. Just as Nineveh's was. Don't think you can hide it forever. God is against you.

And He will expose all of your faults and you'll have no excuse. You might be able to hide it now. Or gloss over it. You might be able to hide it from your parents. You might be able to hide it from your spouse.

But God knows. And one day, so will everyone else. And then you'll be a spectacle and an object of contempt. Might be in this life. Certainly, you'll face judgment in the life to come.

More of that later. You can run, but you cannot hide from the all-seeing eye of God. He will expose you for what you are, should you continue in your sin. And see that sin is deceptive, just like the Assyrians were.

They deceived and they were consumed. They were deceived themselves. They were consumed by the illusion of wealth and power and grandeur. And so are many today. Satan still works to deceive.

[13:57] He wants you to see the potential pleasure in sin, but he doesn't want you to see the certain pain and heartache and destruction that will always follow sin.

Don't be deceived. Again, a commentator says, The exposure of Assyria and our own exposure demonstrate that what any culture offers, believes and promises, apart from Christ, is a lie.

If this world promises you something, if your friends promise you something, if Satan tries to trick you into something, know that if it's not one of those glorious benefits purchased for us by the blood of Christ, then it is no benefit at all.

There's no pleasure. There's no profit in sin. But Satan will try to tell you otherwise. But see as well here that your sin is repulsive.

A lot of people think, especially young people, think sin makes them more attractive. Makes them more attractive to their peers. Everybody else is doing it, and so if I do it too, I'll fit right in with them. [15:03] But I hope you see the disgustingness of sin when you read Nahum chapter 3. It's not pretty. It's not attractive. It doesn't make you look good. You see that horrid picture of the exposed woman with filth slung all over you.

That's you and your sin. It's not a pretty picture, is it? And so you can pursue likeness to the world all you want, but it just makes you uglier and uglier and uglier.

You can try to make yourself attractive by the world's standards. The reality is that clothing and makeup and any sort of other thing can't hide the ugly reality of sin.

It's unmistakable. Your sin makes you repulsive, and one day you'll find yourself with no friends, and the pigs die like the prodigal son.

And one other note about your sin. Know that it affects more people than just yourself. Again, look at the very last part of verse 19. For who has not felt your endless cruelty?

[16:07] Over whom has your endless cruelty not passed? Your sin affects more than just you. It affects those you seek to deceive and drag with you into your sin.

And Jesus talks about the danger of making one of His little children stumble. Better for you if you string a millstone around your neck and be thrown into the ocean than should you drag someone else into sin.

Your sin affects other people when you seek to drag them into it. Your sin affects people in other ways. You know it kills your parents. It breaks their hearts. You know it hurts your family members and your friends.

Do you know it pains your pastors when you're living in sin? It affects everyone around you. Don't be so selfish that you can't see that. That your sin touches those all around you.

Sin puts blinders on us. It doesn't want you to see all those effects. It just wants you to see the potential pleasure. But Nahum 3 unmasks all of that.

[17:10] Your sin is ugly. It's repulsive. It will be exposed. And it affects other people. And so, be aware of your sin. And what it will bring.

And we'll speak more of that in a moment. Sin is the first striking thing we see in this passage. The second striking thing that we see is self-confidence. Nineveh is confident in herself.

She is a grand city. She's never yet met her match. No one is her equal. And Nahum's writing at the height of Assyrian power.

No one in the land can touch them. And they're quite confident in themselves. And we saw this morning the foolishness of confidence in the flesh. In a different way, Paul was talking about. But here's something similar.

The Assyrians were confident in themselves. A self-confidence. Surely we're stronger than the city of Thebes. That capital in Egypt. Are you better than Thebes? Nahum's saying, no, you're not.

[18:12] God is saying, no, you're not. The Assyrians think that they are. And Thebes was a great city. It was well protected. It was on the Nile River. It had a series of canals around it. That made it like it was in the midst of the sea.

Very difficult approach for any attacking army. But Thebes fell. And you know who it fell to? The Assyrians. Nineveh.

They were the ones that conquered this city in Egypt. And so the Assyrians thought, we're surely greater than they are. But God says, no, you're not.

They were a great city and they fell. They were confident in themselves. And that confidence was misplaced. They were destroyed just as you will be. Nineveh, too, was situated on the Tigris River. She never defended the city on one side. She had great fortified walls. She had gates and bars that kept opposing armies out. Oh, she was a proud city and she was confident.

[19:15] We'll be fine. Nothing can make any entrance into our city. And so God mocks Nineveh just a bit here. Verse 12.

All your fortresses, your fortresses that you trust in, all your fortresses are like fig trees with their first ripe fruit. When they're shaken, the figs fall into the mouth of the eater.

He said, all your strong fortresses are nothing more than a bunch of ripe figs. Somebody takes that city and shakes it and it'll crumble. It'll fall just like figs falling from a tree.

Your troops, your so-called great army. Don't be offended, ladies. But look at verse 13. Look at your troops. They're all women.

This was before the days when women were in the armed forces. Only men were troops in those days. And women, the weaker sex, not great warriors.

[20 : 15] A city with an army of women would not be respected, would not be feared in this day. And so God says, all your supposed troops, it's a bunch of women.

No offense to you ladies tonight. You've got confidence in yourself, but you shouldn't. Your gates that protect your city, well, they've been thrown open.

They'll do you no good. The bars that enforce those gates, they're burned. They'll do you no good. The water that you've directed from the Tigris River into your city, well, you can store up water for the siege, but you won't be able to store enough.

The water will be cut off when the invading army comes in. So you draw water. Again, he did this back in chapter 2. Gave them some sarcastic commands. Guard the fortress. Watch the road. Brace yourself.

Martial all your strength. Everything that you do is not going to work. So more instructions like that. Draw water for the siege. Strengthen your defenses. Fortify those walls. Get your bricks and mortar out and make the walls even stronger.

[21 : 15] And the Nebuchadnezzar did. And they believed that those walls would withstand any attack. Confidence in themselves. They've got other reasons to be confident.

They've multiplied their number of merchants in verse 16 like locusts. They're more than the stars of the sky. But they've really done more harm than good by their deceitful dealing. They've hurt their city instead of helped it.

And so their confidence in their great wealth and those who peddled that wealth was misplaced. Your guards, your officials, verse 17, the people that are rulers of smaller groups within the city. Oh, you're proud of all your leaders. They're worthless too. When things are quiet and calm on the cold day, they're nowhere to be found. And when the heat of battle comes, they run.

They hide. They're cowards. And so all of your supposed strength, all of your confidence in yourself, all of that, Nineveh, is misplaced. And if you are confident in yourself tonight, your confidence is sadly, dangerously misplaced.

[22 : 22] You think you're better than other sinners? Think again. You think you're safer than others from the judgment of God?

It's not so. Listen to John Calvin. And whatever strength men may seek for themselves from different quarters, it will wholly vanish away. For neither forts, nor towers, nor ramparts, nor troops of men, nor any kind of contrivances will avail anything.

And were there no one to rise against them, they would yet follow themselves. Calvin says you can have all the best defenses. And even without an attacker, you'll self-destruct if your confidence is in yourself.

You know, you might think, I'm smarter than all of the other people that have sinned and faced God's judgment. You're wiser. You've got a system in place to keep you from getting caught. You've got yourself so well protected that your parents will never find out. You've insulated yourself somehow from the negative consequences of your sin. You've even set other people up to take the fall from your sin.

[23 : 26] And you've even got the right mix of religion in there to ease your occasionally still nagging conscience that you just can't stand. But go to church and that sort of soothes the conscience a bit.

And I maybe even read my Bible and might even pray every now and then just to keep the conscience down and do a good deed. And if there is a judgment day, which I don't really believe that there is, then I'll be all right because I'm all right.

I've done enough good and I'm okay. I'm smarter than all these other guys and these Ninevites. They were just blatant, wanton sinners. I'm not like them. I'm not like my friends at school that just are all out wicked.

I'm smarter than they are. A little better. I'm pretty confident in myself that I'll be okay should there happen to be a day of judgment coming.

Well, your self-confidence makes you ripe for judgment. You're a fool. The misplaced confidence sets you up to fall even harder. The more you trust in the smoke and mirrors that have become reality to you, the closer you come to judgment.

[24 : 34] And you don't even see it. And the harder your fall will be. The hardest fall comes when you're so proud that you least expect it. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Nineveh fell hard and so will you. Confidence in yourself is always misplaced. Always. Whether it's like Paul's and being a Jew or yours and being the child of Christian parents and going to church. Whatever your confidence is in yourself. For Nineveh, it was their great big city, their strong walls and their great army. If it's in yourself, then it's misplaced. God will come along and he'll shake you like a fig tree and you'll crumble.

And there'll be no one to save in the day of judgment. And so there's sin, there's self-confidence, and then there's sure destruction. There's sure destruction.

Here's some of the most vivid language in all of Nahum. In verses 2 and 3, there are sounds in verse 2.

[25 : 43] And there are sights in verse 3. There's the crack of whips, the clatter of wheels. Those things are personified. Literally, the voice of whips, the voice of the wheels. Galloping horses and dancing chariots.

Charging cavalry. You see the sun glinting off the swords and the tips of the spears. And then if you have the stomach for it, you see the carnage when Nineveh is destroyed.

In verse 3, bodies piled upon bodies. Casualties without number. And the few that are left stumbling around alive or falling over the bodies that litter the streets.

This is what's coming to Nineveh. All because of her great sin. And all will see, verse 7, and flee from you. And say, Nineveh is in ruins. But who will mourn for her?

There's several questions like this in this chapter. And the implied answer to all of them is none.

Who will mourn for you? No one will mourn for you. Where can I find anyone to comfort you?

[26 : 47] Nowhere. A little bit of irony here from Nahum. Nahum's name means comfort. That's the word here. No one to comfort you. Nahum is comforting God's people by proclaiming judgment against God's enemies.

But there's no comfort for the enemies. No one to come alongside of them. That's when a commentator says, The merciless will receive no mercy.

And no one's going to miss Nineveh. No one's going to be sad they're gone. No one to mourn them. You'll be like thieves. With God as your enemy. Verse 11.

You two, like them, will become drunk. Drunk on the wrath of God. Staggering about until you pass out. You fall down. You go into hiding. And you are no more. And you'll seek refuge from the enemy.

Verse 11. But you won't find any. They had a chance. You know, the Ninevites had a chance to have God as their refuge.

[27 : 48] When Jonah came. And for a moment there was that repentance. We don't know what happened. It was either fleeting and short-lived.

Or they failed to pass the truth on to their next generation. In these days. But they had a chance to have God as their refuge. They've trampled that chance. And now when the enemy is God.

There is no refuge for them. They'll look for it. But they won't find it. So their destruction is certain. And verse 15. There the fire will devour you.

It will eat you. Fire is personified. Like the whips and the wheels were earlier. Fire will eat you. The sword will cut you. Grasshoppers or locusts will consume you.

Multiply. And you'll be stripped bare. Like a field that's been consumed by locusts. Lazy leaders are a problem for you as well.

[28 : 43] And they have assured your downfall. Verse 18. O king of Assyria. Your shepherds slumber. Your nobles lie down to rest. And the results. Your people are scattered on the mountains. With no one to gather them.

They weren't ready. They could have been ready. But they weren't. Because their leaders. Their shepherds failed them. Sheep without a shepherd. Or with a sleeping shepherd.

Are a sad. Pitiful. Hopeless lot. And that's what Nineveh was. And so for Nineveh. The wound is fatal. Nothing can heal your wound.

Your injury is fatal. Nothing can stem the bleeding now. Nothing can turn back the hand of God's judgment. It is sure judgment. It is coming. And all who see it will rejoice. Verse 19.

Everyone who hears about you. Claps his hands at your fall. They rejoice. At your destruction. And here one of the commentators. Rejoicing in this context.

[29 : 42] Excuse me. Rejoicing is not in this context. Gleeeful gloating. At the misfortune of others. An attitude which is unacceptable. For the people of God. Might have been that for some of the nations. But it shouldn't be that for God's people.

Rather it is pleasure. At the vindication of God. And his promises. His justice and holiness are upheld. Because not only is he gracious to bless those who turn to him in repentance. He is also righteous in his dealings with sin and rebellion.

Against himself and his people. So as all have felt their endless cruelty. All will take pleasure in the end of that cruelty. That God's justice has prevailed.

And just as surely as judgment came to Nineveh. It will come to all who persevere in their sin.

Your punishment might not look quite like theirs physically. Outwardly. But it will come. You might feel it this life. You will surely face it. In the next life.

[30 : 45] When you die. Should you continue in your sin. In your self-confidence. You will meet the same end. You read Nahum chapter 3 again tonight. And you see if you want that to be you.

You don't want it to be you. But it will be. God has a way of making sinners miserable in this life. And tormenting them for all of eternity in the next.

Listen to the words of Isaiah. And then the words of our Lord. Isaiah picks up this imagery in verse 3 of the dead bodies. But listen to what he says. Isaiah 66.24. And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me.

Their worm will not die. Nor will their fire be quenched. And they will be loathsome to all mankind.

And Jesus picks up that language. And speaks of hell as a place where their worm does not die.

And the fire is not quenched. You know that hell isn't a place where you're destroyed. And then you don't have any feeling or consciousness. You're just dead for the rest of eternity.

[31 : 45] No. Hell is a place that you experience for all of eternity. Very much alive and well. Your never dying soul joined to your body. Enduring the torments of eternal fire.

Your pleasure from sin is fleeting and temporary. The judgment that follows it is not fleeting. It is forever. Forever. It is eternal.

It will not end. And so it is for all who persist in their sin. Judgment.

But there's some other implications here as we think about God's judgment. And one has to do with shepherds. You notice that the shepherds of Nineveh were sleeping.

Where there is no shepherd, the people will be scattered. And we need faithful shepherds. What might help to avoid this judgment?

[32 : 42] What might have helped Nineveh to avoid this judgment? I think it all goes back to the day of Jonah. Somebody dropped the ball.

You remember that it was the leaders. It came down from the king of Nineveh that all the city was to repent. In sackcloth and ashes. You stop what you're doing and you repent so that God might spare us.

Well, God turned His wrath away. And then either those leaders or the next generation fell asleep on the job. They didn't continue to call their people to repentance.

They didn't continue to point them to the dangers of their sin. Their shepherds were asleep on the job. Maybe if they had had faithful shepherds, Nineveh could have avoided this judgment.

And what a witness and testimony to us that we need shepherds who will not slumber, who will not sleep, who will be faithful shepherds. Of course, Jesus is the great shepherd who is always faithful to His people, who always guards His sheep, and you can find sure refuge in Him.

[33 : 53] But Jesus has given us what we call under shepherds. Those who are under Him and are His representatives to shepherd the flock that He puts in their control.

They're pastors of churches. And so I'm going to ask you tonight to pray for your shepherds. Pray for your pastors that God would keep us from ever sleeping. From ever slumbering.

From ever not having the boldness of a Nahum. Can you imagine the boldness of Nahum? The people of Nineveh had destroyed and tortured people for far less provocation than Nahum's giving here.

Nahum knew that his life would be on the line when this word got out to the people of Assyria. And yet he proclaimed it boldly anyway. We need shepherds that are bold, that will not fall asleep on the job. Or shepherds that aren't afraid to talk about real and eternal judgment in hell.

I fear that our land is full of shepherds that fill people's minds with what they want to hear. Oh, we don't talk about sin here because I don't think that's what I'm called to talk about.

[34:57] And besides, it makes the sheep uncomfortable. Good. It should make the sheep uncomfortable. It should make all who come into their hearing uncomfortable.

And so we need shepherds that will not sleep on the job. What a sad sight it is to see thousands of people misguided by the very people that should be shepherding them. What did Jesus say when he saw sheep without a shepherd?

Matthew 9, verses 36 and 37. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

Ask. Ask. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Pray for the shepherds that you have and the shepherds all across this country that are ministering the gospel.

And pray for more. Pray for more. So that more people might avoid Nineveh's fate. We need shepherds that won't sleep on the job, that will have the boldness of a name.

[36:08] Not because shepherds can save their sheep, but because they point to the great shepherd. Who has accomplished salvation for his people. May God give us boldness.

And shepherds that will be faithful. Well, the fourth thing then that we want to see tonight. We've seen sin, self-confidence, a sure judgment coming. And now, a safe refuge.

A safe refuge is what Nineveh didn't have. We saw it in verse 11. You'll go into hiding and you'll seek refuge from the enemy. But they didn't find it. God can be your refuge.

Or he can be your enemy. Look back at the very words of our prophet in Nahum chapter 1, verses 7 and 8. 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.

[37:15] Do you see how God is one of two things to you? He's a refuge to those who trust in him. But to those like the people of Nineveh that have rejected him.

He is their enemy. And so when they go to seek refuge, there is none. What is God for you? Is he a refuge for you? Or is he your enemy tonight?

He was Nineveh's enemy. And they were destroyed. But you can come to him and find him a refuge. You can trust in him. You can trust in his son that he sent to you.

We heard about faith this morning. You can rest in Jesus by faith. And so be protected from the wrath that is to come. You know why? Because Jesus took that wrath in our place.

He suffered that punishment so that we don't have to. And yet there are people that would reject that refuge. And instead take on the God before whom all the earth trembles.

[38:14] And try to fight against him. When God says, I am against you, you can't stand. You cannot win. You will fail. You will be destroyed. And so your two options tonight are that you can trust in yourself like Nineveh.

You can be confident in yourself like Paul used to be. You can be sure in yourself and have God as your enemy and so surely be destroyed.

Or you can trust in the Son of God and you can have God as your refuge. And he will save you. And he will watch over and keep and protect you.

Which will it be for you? You run to Jesus and find shelter in him tonight. Only there is their safety. Only there is your refuge. And if you don't take refuge in him, it's your own fault.

You can't blame anyone else. And so one commentator says, jumping ahead to Paul. Paul knew that to be clothed in Christ meant that the nakedness of each person's unrighteousness was covered by Christ.

[39:25] You can be uncovered and exposed by God for what you are. A wretched sinner. Just like Nineveh was. Or you can be clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

That we heard about so clearly this morning. And so have a refuge that is sure, that is faithful. And so the questions that were for Nineveh are for us tonight.

Where are comforters for you? If you're in Christ, he is your comfort. If you are not, you have no comforters. Are you any better than any other sinner? No, you're not.

You'll face the same judgment. Who's not felt the effects of your sin? All those around you have. And the question for us is, do you have a refuge tonight? If you're in Christ, you do.

