

Session 31

NAHUM

Nahum 1:1-15

Memory Verse

The Lord is good, a stronghold in a day of distress; he cares for those who take refuge in him.

– NAHUM 1:7, CSB




Nahum


THEOLOGICAL THEME: Nahum warned Nineveh of the coming destruction they would face as a punishment for their wickedness. God's people were strengthened by the fact that God has His eyes on both the wicked and the righteous.

CALL TO ACTION: Brentwood's Goal #6 Key Ministry Strategies. This is our opportunity as the people of God to show the community, "the LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him!"

Sometimes big news can be good for one group of people and hard for another group. Think about election results. The same news is great for one side while it can be devastating for the other. An engagement announcement can be the best of times for the couple while a former significant other may realize the hope of reconciliation is gone. A great job promotion for one person means another candidate will be turned down.

Perspective and position play a huge role in how certain types of news is received. Today we are studying a book of the Bible centered on a prophetic word given about one group of people that also had implications for another group. The perspective in Nahum comes down to the people's relationship with God. It was destruction and devastation for one group and encouragement and hope for the other.

 When have you received positive or negative information that would have impacted another person or group of people in the opposite way?

 How does perspective make a difference when receiving the same information?

Session Summary

Although Nineveh repented when Jonah preached to them years earlier, they slipped back into all their evil ways of idolatry, wickedness, and oppression of God's people. The Lord gave a vision to Nahum and sent him to proclaim the coming judgment and punishment God was going to bring. God promised there would not be a second judgment because this first one would be completely devastating.

This message gave encouragement to God's people who were suffering under daily abuse. It was a reminder that God was watching out for them, and He takes the mistreatment of His people very seriously. Regardless of the opposition, God is our source of strength. Despite evidence that Nineveh was strengthening and seemingly impossible to defeat, God was at work preparing to put them in their place and pour out His wrath on them. God also had a plan of redemption and planned to bring victory to His people. Nahum stressed that God is good, loving, kind, and patient. He was not reacting hastily according to the moment but delayed giving the people time to decide if they would repent or face the consequences.

1. The Setting (Nahum 1:1)

The book of Nahum begins with an introduction to what was coming. The prophet Nahum received an oracle against the city of Nineveh. This message Nahum received was for the people of Nineveh but also had implications for the people of Judah and Israel.

? How is a Word from God always good news for some and bad news for others?

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire and is the same city that Jonah preached repentance to about a hundred years earlier. Nahum's call was to preach to these people who had slipped back into sin and needed to repent. The message given to Nahum was more than words; it was a vision that enabled Nahum to paint a picture of what he had seen in the prophetic vision through his words. Nahum's prophecy is also a reminder that God deals with both individuals and nations.

Nineveh had been a long time enemy of Judah and Israel. Nahum's name meant "comfort," and his words did bring comfort to Israel and Judah while warning Nineveh of the judgment, divine wrath, and devastation they would face. Hearing that God saw the actions of Nineveh and would respond uplifted and encouraged both Israel and Judah. Throughout the Bible, God continually reminds His people that wickedness will not have the last word in the world.

? How does the reminder that God will not allow injustice and wickedness to go on forever serve as an encouragement to God's people? How does it motive us to persevere?

Imagine how it would have felt to those who had been suffering under the Assyrian rule to hear God was about to judge the Assyrians and pour out His wrath. Fear, abuse, oppression, and mistreatment were daily occurrences. Nahum's prophetic oracle describing how Nineveh was going to meet justice was something the people of God had longed for. This was great news for Israel but terrible news for Nineveh.

? Application: Where do you currently need the reminder that God knows what is going on with you (and the world) and will act justly?

2. The Judgment (Nahum 1:2-8)

Nahum began his prophecy with a description of the Lord as a reminder (or introduction) to the people about the character of the One who was bringing the judgment against them. Telling them of who they had sinned against was crucial to how they would receive and respond to the judgment. Knowing the truth about God establishes His authority and right to rule in our lives.

? How does recognizing God's authority in our lives reorient everything we do? What happens when we fail to recognize His authority as the Assyrians did?

Nahum first said God was jealous and avenging. It was important for the people to remember that God was jealous for them. He refuses to share our worship and deserves our whole-hearted devotion because of who He is. This laid the foundation for where they had gone astray and why the vengeance of the Lord was coming against them. Ultimately, any people who set themselves up against the Lord will face vengeance.

Recognizing the Lord is slow to anger and patient is just as important. God is not like humans who often fly off the handle or overreact to something they don't like. God's anger is not random or quick. Because He loves us, and He loved the people of Nineveh, He offers ample time and opportunity for us to see our sin and return to Him. Nahum also described God's matchless power. Understanding God's people leads us to trust in Him and have a healthy fear of His judgment.

? Where do you need to be reminded of God's power right now—for the sake of encouragement or challenge?


Although He is great in love and mercy, God will not simply let the guilty go unpunished. For God to be holy and righteous, sin must be accounted for. Nahum further identified God's power as the only one who can control the mightiest forces of nature.

Nahum also emphasized God's goodness to those who trust in Him. This again is a message of comfort and warning. It is a comfort for God's people but a warning to those who oppose Him. God sees our tears, knows our hearts, our dreams, our struggles, and cares about every detail of our lives. The people of Nineveh, Israel, and Judah all needed to remember the truth about God. He is slow to anger but that patience does not mean He will overlook sin, and when His judgment came, it would be like an overwhelming flood.

 Application: Which description of the Lord in these verses stands out to you most and why?

3. The Result (Nahum 1:9-15)

Nahum made clear that once God acted, it would be swift and complete. The reason trouble would not rise up again was not because the people would have learned their lesson but because this destruction would be total the first time. The reference to tangled, dried thorns described how ripe Nineveh was for judgment. Think about what the comparison would be today for a person, people, or country ripe for the judgment of God. While Christians can be assured that God's judgment has been satisfied in Jesus, it is right for us to continually assess our hearts to be sure we honor Him with our lives.

 What are some ways we can regularly assess our own spiritual state before the Lord? Why is it important we do, even as those already following Jesus?

As He did throughout this book, God addressed both His afflicted people and their oppressive enemy. He stated that the enemies of Zion who appeared to be safe from affliction and so mighty that they could not be harmed would be devastated by His promised judgment. God's people, who were weak and afflicted, were promised strength and restoration. Even though God had allowed His people to be overtaken by their enemy, He promised to break the yoke of their oppressor.

At this point in history, Nineveh was a powerful city that was recognized as one of the great cities of the world. The Lord promised to punish them so severely that they would lose their legacy among the nations. He was going to end the wickedness they had been liberally dishing out and bring them so low their name would no longer mean anything.

? How did God's decree against Nineveh serve as a reminder of His faithfulness to His people?

Notice the contrast between the fate of the wicked and the godly. Nineveh would be wiped out but there was good news for the people of God. Nahum spoke of those who bring good news having beautiful feet indicating movement, action, and progress that reminds us of the active work of sharing the gospel (Romans 10:14-17). Every believer is called to share Jesus with others and that necessarily includes action.

This chapter closes with instruction for how God's people were to live moving forward. They were to keep the feasts as a means of staying in the right relationship with God. Knowing the grace and mercy of God is not a license to be careless and disobedient. Knowing who God is and knowing His characteristics should make us more careful to obey Him. It was time for God's people to live in the fullness of a right relationship with Him. Believers today are called to the same.


? Application: What practices do we have as a church to regularly put us "in touch" with the Lord? What individual ways do you seek to stay connected to Him?

Conclusion

Nahum spoke the vision from the Lord to the people of Nineveh, the powerful city in Assyria. They had been the enemy of God's people and were going to suffer the consequences for their evil wickedness. Nineveh turned to the Lord when Jonah preached to them but years later, they slipped back into their wicked ways.

God always punishes sin and there are consequences for those who choose a path of wickedness. God is patient, loving, merciful, gracious, and forgiving, but He will be just and judge evil. Nahum's words of warning to Nineveh were also words of encouragement to God's people that God had not forgotten them, and He was going to avenge the suffering they endured at their enemy's hands. Through Nahum, we are reminded God keeps His eyes on the wicked that He will punish and on the righteous He will restore and bless. God has been and will always be the defender of His people.

 Where do you need the reminder that God will always act on behalf of His people?

 What are some ways we can encourage one another in this truth as a group?

 How can you seek a gospel conversation with someone this week by sharing the message of Nahum?

Memorize

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