

The God Who Comforts – Part II

A Sermon on Nahum

by
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1. Introduction

2. The One who scatters will be a comfort to Judah, but a cause of wailing for the scattered (2:1-7).

- a. God will punish the wicked and restore His own (2:1-2).
 - i. Before we get into the details of the passage itself, I want to draw your attention to vv. 1 and 13, as they form bookends to this chapter.
 1. In essence, the main point is that Yahweh has come against Nineveh and everything they will do to just try to survive will be futile
 2. This is the ultimate reality behind any case of judgment that happens in history.
 - ii. In futility, Nineveh will prepare for their inevitable destruction (2:1).
 1. You have this being called “the One who scatters” that has come up against them.
 2. They are given a series of commands here in v. 1, all of which are designed to call them to put all of their might into defending themselves.
 - iii. In hope, Jacob will prepare for their inevitable restoration (2:2).
 1. Yet just as the Lord would scatter His enemies, we see in v. 2 that He will restore Israel to its former glory.

2. The promise in v. 2 looks well beyond the downfall of just one nation, and Israel's immediate redemption.
 - a. When he speaks to the splendor of Israel, remember, Israel is the name that was given to Jacob when God renewed His covenant with Him.
 - b. The downfall of Assyria, and any other wicked nation, including our own if it happens, serves as a pledge to the saints that God is faithful to uphold His promises.
- b. The oppressor will become the oppressed (2:3-7).
 - i. The nation that threw others into chaos would be thrown into chaos themselves (2:3-6).
 1. Vv. 3-4 gives us an incredible depiction of the invading Medes and Babylonians who will sack Assyria.
 - a. This would have been an awesome, and terrifying scene to behold.
 - b. Everything about them gives the appearance of being covered from head to toe in blood.
 - c. On the wheels of the chariots were steel blades that stuck out, flashing from the sun with every rotation of the axle.
 - d. Imagine the panic-stricken citizens as they see this carnage unfold before them.
 2. Then we see the response of the Assyrian king as his city is enveloped in the wrath of the Chaldeans.

- a. V. 5; he calls on his nobles to defend this city and they stagger in their panic.
 - b. A decisive blow is dealt to the Assyrians in v. 6, as the gates of the rivers are opened and the palace is dissolved.
 - c. The reason for this is found in v. 7; the downfall of the Assyrians is fixed.
- ii. Her downfall is fixed: even the slave will mourn and wail (2:7).
 - 1. This simple truth stands behind the rise and fall of any nation in the history of mankind.
 - 2. Notice then how he describes the totality of their destruction and undoing.

3. The wealth and strength of the lions and their whelps will be consumed by Yahweh (2:8-13).

- a. The once placid waters of Nineveh will give way to chaos (2:8-10).
 - i. Like waters rushing out of a broken dam, the mighty men of Nineveh flee in terror (2:8).
 - 1. The imagery used here is poetically beautiful, but the scene it paints is one of abject terror.
 - 2. Those in command yell for them to stop—but no one turns back.
 - ii. The dread of Nineveh's fall would come upon all who witness her ruin (2:9-10).
 - 1. In v. 9 we see the invading army is given two commands; plunder the silver! Plunder the gold!
 - 2. Nineveh had spent centuries collecting wealth of every sort through conquests, taxation, tributes, and trading—but all of this changes rapidly.

- a. Yet if that were not enough—look down at v. 10; hearts are melting and knees knocking! Every single person who saw this great city fall was terrified.
 - b. And the reason for this is quite simple: if Nineveh could fall so quickly and so harshly, could anything be secure?
 - c. If Nineveh could fall—is any nation safe?
- b. The once ravenous hunter has now become the prey of Yahweh (2:11-13).
 - i. The mighty Assyrian lions who plundered and preyed upon others will be removed from their hunting grounds (2:11-12).
 - 1. Going back to the final three verses of chapter two, we see the hopelessness of Nineveh proclaimed once again.
 - 2. Vv. 11-12 depict this once savage and fearsome enemy brought low. They boasted of their brutality.
 - a. They likened their actions to the ferocity and fearlessness of a lion.
 - b. Yet Nahum calls them lions without a den—without a place to even feed their young.
 - 3. The rhetorical question of v. 11 rings through. Where is mighty Nineveh now?
 - ii. “Mighty” Assyria will go head to head with the Lord of heavenly armies (2:13).
 - 1. The final verse then brings us to a close and I want you to hear the certainty of judgment in this, “Behold, I am against you,” declares the Lord of hosts.

- a. The Lord calls them to attention to announce a challenge—He makes a formal declaration of war.
 - b. Notice He gives four indicators of their destruction:
 - i. Their weapons of warfare will be utterly destroyed by fire.
 - ii. Enemies will slay their mighty warriors with incredible ease
 - iii. They will no longer terrorize defenseless people and devour the helpless.
 - iv. Their messengers would no longer be able to threaten, extort, and subjugate others.
2. Yet it is important for us to remember that everything Nahum is saying right now is at the height of Nineveh's strength, wealth, and prominence.
- a. The whole chapter up until v. 13 has been delivered in the present tense.
 - b. Notice that this is a future judgment: I will burn up; the sword will devour; I will cut off your prey; and no longer will the voice of your messengers be heard.
 - c. Israel is still in exile—yet now they have hope. They have a hope in the certainty that God will act on their behalf and judge the wicked.
 - d. Their hope is our also hope, because the hope of the Lord's judgment is bound up in Christ's return.

4. Conclusion: Make Room for the Wrath of God

- a. Read Romans 12:14-21
 - i. We will make several observations and then we'll tie it all together.
 - ii. The command of V. 14 is bound up in the fact that God has been merciful to you.
- b. Then we pick back up in v. 17 where the Apostle Paul says, "Never pay back evil for evil with anyone."
 - i. V. 17 gives us a very clear indication that God's design for justice is not vigilante justice.
 1. Vengeance is built into the fabric of every society as the authorities are to punish the evil doer.
 2. Yet private or personal revenge has no place in the life of the Christian.
 - ii. V. 18 is interesting because Paul acknowledges there is a possibility you won't be able to keep at peace with all men.
 1. You are to do everything in your power to be at peace with everyone—no exceptions.
 2. Yet sometimes there comes a time where peace is not an option.
 - iii. V. 19 brings us full circle to the same argument Nahum makes for the Israelites.
 1. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.
 2. Your responsibility is to bless those who persecute you, never pay back evil for evil, do whatever is possible to keep at peace with all men, and leave room for the wrath of God.
 - iv. So how do we leave room for the wrath of God?

1. Vv. 20-21: But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
2. The idea Paul speaks to here is that by us not returning evil for evil, we will bring our enemies to open shame by doing good. A burning shame. But a shame that Lord willing, can lead them to repentance rather than wrath.

Small Group Questions

- 1.) How does leaving room for the wrath of God enable you to be bold for the sake of the gospel with people who despise everything you stand for? Think missionally here.
- 2.) How does the book of Nahum help you better understand our current global context and inform how you live in light of the reality that God will judge all the earth one day?
- 3.) Explore practical, tangible ways you can be a blessing to people you currently know who are antagonistic towards you for being a Christian.
- 4.) What are things you can settle in your mind to do to try and make peace with them that do not end in compromise?