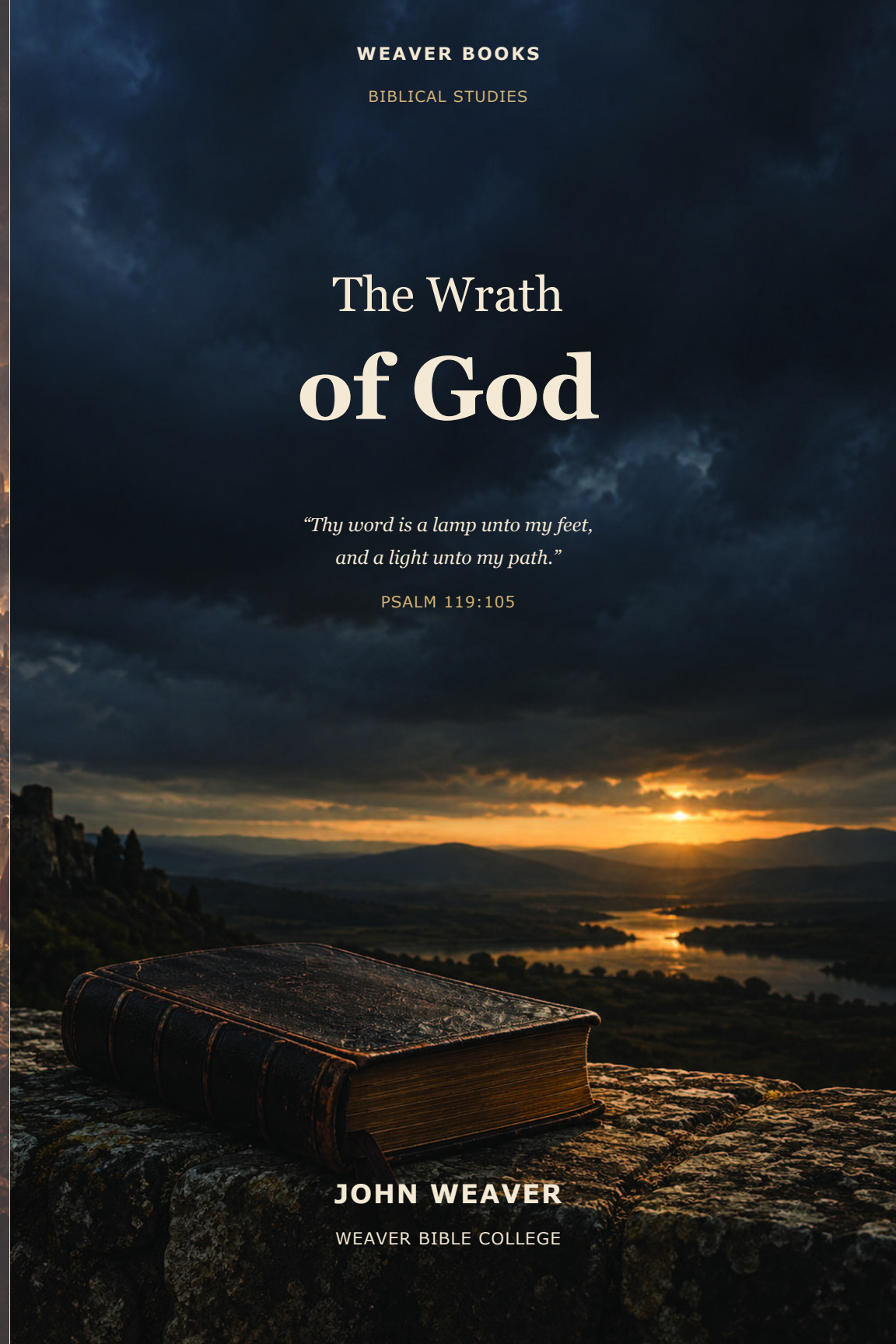
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The Wrath of God

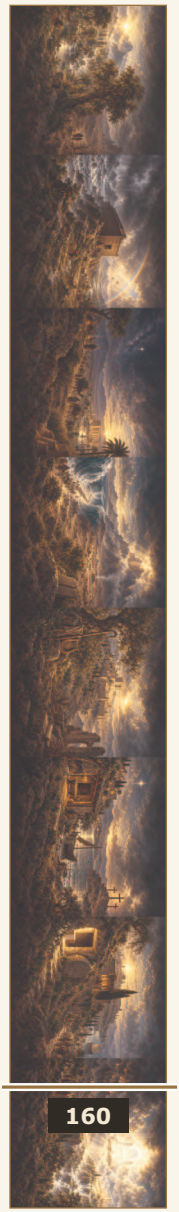
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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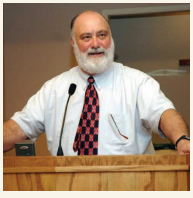
The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.

NAHUM 1:3, EXCERPT

The wrath of God calls the reader to consider the seriousness of sin and the character of divine judgment. John Weaver examines these themes through Scripture, connecting warning with the responsibility to respond. These messages invite sober reflection on justice, repentance, and the danger of presumption.

“Some will glorify His grace, while the rest will glorify His justice.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

The Wrath of God - 1 of 5

Introduction to Nahum and the Wrath of God

Nahum chapter one in your Bibles, Micah, Nahum, and then Habakkuk. Nahum chapter one. I want today to begin a brief series on the book of Nahum. I encourage you to read this book every day. There are only three chapters, and it is going to take us five or six weeks to get through it. The general theme is the wrath of God, as you are going to find out as we cover it today. I was going to read the entire first chapter today, but due to my sinus and allergies, I will probably only read a few verses. I probably will not even get past verse one today.

Look at Nahum chapter one, verse one: "The burden of Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum, the Elkishite. God is jealous of the Lord and revenging, the Lord revenging and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and dryeth up all the rivers. Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him."

The general theme that I am going to be dealing with for the next several weeks is the wrath of God. The wrath of God is an awesome subject. You must remember that God's wrath is related not only to His power, but also to His holiness. In fact, God's wrath is an exhibition of His defense of His law and His holiness. It is also a demonstration of His power against all who rebel against Him.

Let me give you a brief definition of the wrath of God. The wrath of God would include that it is indeed a holy revulsion of God's being against all that is a contradiction to Himself, especially His holiness. The justice of God is the penal infliction upon the ungodly due to the exercise of God's wrath. God's wrath is the eternal detestation of sin by holy God. If you really want to know what the wrath of God is, it is a holy revulsion of God to all that is in contradiction to Him. It is a holy detestation of sin.

The Meaning of Nahum's Name: Comfort in Judgment

Although the book of Nahum deals with the wrath of God, it is extremely interesting that the name Nahum actually means comfort or consolation. How could a name meaning comfort and consolation belong to a book dealing with judgment and the wrath of God? I believe his name is indicative of the fact that God's righteous judgment—that is, God's holy wrath against His enemies and against the enemies of His people—is, and should be, understood as a comfort and consolation to His people. In fact, the Bible teaches that.

Look in your Bibles to Psalm 58. All of Psalm 58 deals with God's judgment against the wicked. God says, “The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance,” that is, God's vengeance. “He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.” Many years ago, I preached a sermon on this entire Psalm entitled “Washing Your Feet in the Blood of the Wicked.” This is exactly what God says: “He that is the righteous shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked so that a man

shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous. Verily, he is a God that judges in the earth." The Bible says that when the righteous seeth the vengeance, he shall rejoice; yea, he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

Biblical Basis for Rejoicing in God's Judgment

Revelation 19, beginning with verse 1, also shows that it is scriptural for the righteous to rejoice when God judges the wicked: "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Hallelujah, salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are His judgments. For He hath judged the great whore, who did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Hallelujah."

"And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." So here the saints are rejoicing at God's righteous judgment in the earth. The very name Nahum means comfort or consolation, in the fact that we know that God shall indeed judge His enemies, our enemies, and shall destroy them. Scripture teaches that God's wrathful judgment should be a source of profound praise from His people. It teaches us that God will not allow the wicked to escape. God is still on His throne, no matter how much the wicked wish otherwise. He is still God, He is still sovereign, He is still omnipotent, He is still omniscient, and He is still able to defend His holiness and His law.

The Wicked's Deception and God's Certain Judgment

The wicked wrongfully imagine these things against God. In Psalm 10, verse 6, the Bible tells us that the wicked say, "I shall never be in adversity." In other words, they are never ever going to be in a position where they need God, or need deliverance, or need anything like that. Verses 7 through 10 show the wickedness that proceeds from them because of their wrong thinking. When we come to verse 11, the Bible says, "They believe that God hides His face, that God will not see, that somehow God will not know what they do." Very obviously, God does not come down with Alzheimer's.

He knows exactly what sinners do, and He knows exactly how to judge them. When they vainly believe that somehow God will not

judge them, they are extremely deceived. Romans 2:16 says, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." God is not only going to deal with the open acts of rebellion; God is even going to deal with the secrets of men. The Bible says that some men's sins are open, going beforehand to judgment. In other words, everybody knows about their sins, their wickedness, and their rebellion. But the rest of that verse says that some men's sins are secret, and they follow after. Their sins may not be known openly, but they are not hidden from God, and they are still moving toward His judgment.

Just because someone does something and seemingly never gets caught, and gets by with it in this world, in this life, does not mean that he shall escape the righteous judgment of God. Certainly, he shall not.

Key Verse and Historical Dating of Nahum

Nahum 1:3 is basically the key verse in this book: “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and in the clouds, and in the dust of His feet.” I am not giving an exposition of this verse today; I will deal with it later. But notice this: “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.”

It should be a comfort and a consolation to all the people of God to know that the wicked shall not escape punishment. They shall not get away with their sins. We look around today and see the corruption, filth, and vileness, even in our own government. We want to shake them. Well, God shall do more than shake them. They shall not escape.

Remember, the word Nahum means comfort and consolation. Nahum the prophet also prophesied and was a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah. Nahum, Isaiah, and Micah all prophesied at the same time.

By way of introduction, consider the date of the book of Nahum. No one can know the exact date, but it can be known generally and very closely. When you study the book, you find first that Nahum is

addressing Judah and Jerusalem. The ten northern tribes were taken into captivity in 722 BC. Thus, in chapter 1 and verse 15, he says, “Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, O Judah, keep thy solemn feast, perform thy vows.” He is addressing Judah because the northern kingdoms had already gone into captivity. Secondly, chapter 3 and verse 8 helps settle the date because of the reference to No.

Nahum 3:8 says, “Art thou better than populous No, that was situated among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?” No refers to No-Amon, or Thebes, in Egypt. Thebes was overthrown in 665 and 664 B.C. by the Assyrian monarch Ashurbanipal. Nahum, then, is writing after 722, after the overthrow of Thebes, which means that, in all probability, the date of this book would be somewhere from 663 to 626 B.C.

The Identity of Nahum and the Meaning of 'Elkishite'

Go back to verse 1: “The Burden of Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkishite.” What does the word Elkishite mean? Even the scholars are divided upon that word. Some say that it refers to his city, which is what I would think, while others say that it refers to his father.

Let me give you a reading of Calvin in his commentary. Dealing with the phrase “Nahum the Elkishite,” he says: “Nahum calls himself an Elkishite. Some think that it was the name of his family. The Jews, after their banners, say that it was the name of his father. And then they add this, their common gloss, that Elkos himself was a prophet. For when the name of a prophet's father is mentioned, they hold that he whose name is given was also a prophet.”

“But these are mere trifles, and we have often seen how great is their readiness to invent fables. Then determination of the word leads us to think that it was, on the contrary, the proper name of a place, and Jerome tells us that there was in his time a small village of this name in the tribe of Simeon. We must therefore understand that Nahum arose from that town and was therefore called an Elkishite.” Jerome and Calvin say it was the name of a town. John Gill says: “He is called the Alkoshite from Alkosh or Al-Keshi, a village of Galilee,

pointed out to Jerome as a place of note among the Jews, having traces of ancient buildings." The name Capernaum—that is, the village of Nahum—seems to take its name from Nahum, who resided in it, though he was born in Elkosh in the neighborhood.

In all probability, Elkosh was a town or city, but no one actually knows where it was located. No one knows how long Nahum lived, how he died, or where he is buried. Any additional information, other than that in the Bible, is pure speculation. There are even debates as to where Elkosh was.

Some side with Jerome and say it was a small village in Galilee. Others locate it twenty-four miles north of Nineveh, while others place it south of Judah. No one really knows where Nahum was from other than the name of the town, Elkosh.

The Unity and Aim of Nahum's Prophecy

When you look at Nahum's prophecy—and I want you to read the book of Nahum every day for the next month while I deal with this passage—you should see the unity of his aim. Nahum's object was to inspire his countrymen with the assurance that, however alarming their position might seem, God would deliver Judah and Jerusalem from the attack of the Assyrian army. The Assyrians had already carried away the ten northern tribes. God would not only deliver Judah and Jerusalem, but actually destroy the Assyrian Empire and its capital and overthrow its king because of the iniquities of the Assyrians themselves. Nahum was exhorting, encouraging, comforting, and consoling his people: God would deal with this wicked Assyrian monarch. The whole theme of Nahum is the destruction of Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire. Nahum was not only a prophet, but a prophet during the time Assyria was in its zenith.

Assyria had power and prestige; it stood in its glory and strength and was exceedingly terrible to all its neighbors. Nahum, along with Isaiah, prophesied of the death of Sennacherib and how he would die. You remember how Sennacherib and the whole Assyrian army had surrounded many of these towns and had come to Jerusalem to threaten Jerusalem. Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, the Lord heard Hezekiah, Isaiah came on the scene, and Isaiah prophesied.

In the book of Nahum, chapter 1, verse 14, there is a prophecy concerning the death of Sennacherib. "And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown," that is, Sennacherib and Assyria, "out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image, and the molten image, I will make thy grave, for thou art vile." Notice what he said: "out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image." No more of his name would be sown.

Let me show you how that happened. Look back in your Bibles to the book of Isaiah, chapter 37. This is a wonderful passage, one that I really enjoy reading, and you cannot help but smile each time you read it, because this is where God smote the Assyrian army. Verse 36 says, "Then the angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand," that is, 185,000 men.

"And when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." Everybody simply woke up dead. Of course, this means those whom God did not kill, but He killed 185,000. Now look what God did in verse 37: "So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Armenia, and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead." What did God say in the book of Nahum? "I'm going to kill you. I'm going to kill you in the house of your gods."

“Your name will not be sown anymore.” And that is exactly what happened. Nahum prophesied this while Assyria was in its zenith—in its power and glory. I am going to tell you before I finish today how dangerous Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire really and truly were.

As you read the three chapters of Nahum, each views the destruction of Nineveh from a different angle. In chapter one, we see the certainty of Nineveh’s overthrow. In chapter two, we see the depiction of the siege and capture of the city. In chapter three, we discover the wickedness of the Assyrian Empire that provoked the divine wrath. Look at the last verse, Nahum 3:19, and the last question God asked: “For upon whom hath not thy wickedness

passed?" God is saying, "You have been a wicked, vile people, and I shall destroy you."

The Burden of Nineveh and the Severity of God

Now go back to Nahum chapter one and look at verse one. We found out who Nahum was, but the Bible begins with these words: "The burden of Nineveh, the burden of Nineveh." You must understand the usage of the word burden. When we think of burden, we think of a heavy load, something extremely difficult to bear. In the Bible, however, burden is something heavy, and it denotes the utter destruction of a people or a city.

For instance, turn back to Isaiah 13 and notice verse one: "The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah, the son of Amoz, did see." The rest of the passage concerns the destruction of Babylon. Look in chapter 15, verse 1: "The burden of Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste and brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste and brought to silence." Notice that it is called the burden of Moab. Then, in chapter 17, verse 1: "The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city."

"It shall be a ruinous heap." Then, in chapter 19, verse 1: "The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." Every time you see the word burden, it means that God is going to judge a city or a people, whether it is Moab, Egypt, or Assyria; it does not matter.

When the Bible speaks in verse 1 of "the burden of Nineveh," Nineveh basically was the capital of Assyria. Nineveh is therefore a synecdoche, which means that it is a part that represents the whole. When God proclaims judgment against Nineveh, He is proclaiming judgment against the entire Assyrian empire. Assyria, especially Nineveh, was originally built by Asshur, the son of Nimrod; hence the word Assyria. It was built by Asshur, but later it was enlarged by Ninus, who gave his own name, Nineveh, to the capital city.

The moral teaching in the book of Nahum is this: God is holy, and God must deal with sin. Not just sin in His people, which He shall

deal with, but even sin in the heathen. He must deal with sin. That is why Nahum 1:3 is a very important verse: “and He will not at all acquit the wicked.” Nahum has been labeled the most impassioned of the prophets because of the strong feeling expressed in his writings. “The Lord is slow to anger and great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm and the clouds are the dust of His feet.” You can hear this man preaching and proclaiming very passionately the sovereignty and the greatness of God.

As you read through the Bible, especially the line of prophets, you will find two books that deal with Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire. One of them is Nahum. Does anybody remember the other one? Jonah. Nahum and Jonah. Before turning to Jonah, look in Romans 11:22. Then turn back a few pages to the book of Jonah. Look at Romans 11, verse 22, and see what the Scripture says.

"Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Now look what he said: "Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God." When you look at the book of Jonah, you see the goodness of God in sparing a wicked people. When you look at the book of Nahum, you see the severity of God in judging a wicked people.

Everybody thinks about Jonah running from God. In the book of Jonah, chapter 1, verse 3, we read, "But Jonah rose up to flee into Tarshish from the presence of the Lord and went down to Joppa and he found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare thereof, and went down unto it, to go with them to Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord." So twice we're told that Jonah is running from the presence of the Lord. Verse 10 says, "Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them."

Jonah's Flight and the Reason for His Anger

Now let me ask you: How do you flee from the presence of the Lord? Do you remember that passage in Psalm 139 that talks about God's omnipresence? David says this: "O Lord, thou hast searched me and

known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising. Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

David says, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

David is saying, I cannot escape the presence of God. God is omnipresent. He is everywhere at once in the totality of His being. If Jonah was a prophet of God, and he was, how then could Jonah think that he could escape the presence of God? Jonah was running away from the temple. The temple was the place where God had manifested Himself particularly and peculiarly. Jonah was saying to himself, I’m getting out of the presence of God because I’m leaving the temple.

That’s why he went to Joppa and bought a ticket going to Tarshish. God had told Jonah he was going to send him to Nineveh to preach, but Jonah didn’t want to go. Why did Jonah run? Why did he not want to go to Nineveh to preach? Jonah gives us the answer himself. “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.”

“And he prayed to the Lord and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful and slow to anger and of great kindness and repentest thee of the evil.” Jonah ran preaching through Nineveh, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” and the people repented, from the king on the throne to the lowliest handmaiden. They repented, and Jonah got angry.

Here was a preacher who did not want any converts, anyone saved or spared. Jonah said, “God, didn’t I tell you before I ever fled? I knew what you were going to do. I knew that you’d be merciful and gracious to these people.” But Jonah did not want God to be gracious and merciful to them. Why? It was common knowledge among the prophets that God was going to use the Assyrian Empire not only to destroy the ten northern tribes and take them captive, but also to whip up all the southern tribes as well.

The reason Jonah fled was that he did not want God to be merciful to those people. He wanted God to destroy them so that Israel might be saved. This is not fanciful. Isaiah 10, beginning with verse 5, shows us what God said: “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.” God sent the Assyrians—Sargon II, for one of those kings, and, I believe, Ashurbanipal, though I forget the other one—against the ten northern tribes. God said, “The Assyrian is the rod of mine anger. The staff in his hand is mine indignation.”

God said, I will give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Isaiah knew this. Isaiah was a contemporary with Nahum. In Isaiah 37:14 we read, “And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their countries.” And he goes on. Here is Sennacherib against Judah and Jerusalem.

This was common knowledge among the prophets. In Hosea 9:3, God says, “They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria.” In

chapter 10, verses 6 and 7, we read, “It shall be also carried into Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.” Where are they going to carry it? Into Assyria. Hosea 11:5 says, “He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.”

It does not matter whether you read Isaiah, Hosea, Jonah, Micah, or Nahum; they all knew that God was going to use the Assyrians to whip the land of Israel. Jonah did not want that to happen. Amos 3:7 says, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, except he reveal it to his servants, the prophets.” Whatever God is going to do, he tells his preachers first, and they preach and warn the people. That is exactly what these prophets were doing. They were telling all the people that the Assyrians were going to come and destroy this land.

In Nahum 1, beginning with verse 9, this passage refers to Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. Verse 9 asks, "What do ye imagine against the Lord?" We read a little of Isaiah 37: "He will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time."

"For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor," Sennacherib. "Thus saith the Lord; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder. And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile."

God is here referring to the Assyrians, and especially to Sennacherib as he invades Judah. Shalmaneser II and Sargon I were the kings under whom the ten northern tribes fell in 722 BC. This can be read in 2 Kings 17 and 18.

Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire were known for two things: their vastness and their vileness. We will look first at their vastness.

In Jonah 3:3 we read, "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord."

The Vastness and Vileness of Nineveh

"Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey." It took three days to travel through Nineveh. In chapter 4 and verse 11, God says, "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" A score is 20, so sixscore is 120,000 persons who could not discern between their right hand and their left hand. That means there were probably a minimum of 120,000 babies and children who were not old enough to know the difference between left and right. I know some adults who are not old enough to know the difference between left and right, but this speaks of 120,000 babies. Someone has said that, based upon this verse, there were probably over a million people living in Nineveh.

Professor C. F. Keil, in his Archaeology of the Old Testament, gives this description: "The conclusion which recent discoveries lead is that the name of Nineveh was used in two senses. First, for one particular city, and secondly, for a complex of four large primeval cities, including Nineveh proper, the circumvallation of which is still traceable, the mounds of which cover the land. The names of these four component cities which made up vast Nineveh quadrangle are Nimrud, Kuyunjik, Khorsabad, and Kermales. To go around these would be to cover a distance of 60 miles, which would be to the old reckoning of 20 miles a day, would be a three-day journey." This is the same thing Jonah says. This quadrangular picture of ancient Nineveh is borne out by Diodorus Siculus, the famous Sicilian historian and contemporary of Julius Caesar.

He asserts that it was a quadrangle 150 stadia in length, 90 in breadth, and 480 in circumference: a parallelogram with its longer sides measuring 36 miles and its shorter sides 24 miles, the circumference being about 60 miles.

The walls were 100 feet high and broad enough for three chariots to be driven abreast. That would make them a minimum of 12 to 15 feet thick. The width of railroad track is still the width of the Roman

chariot; three railroad tracks, with a little extra width, give an idea of the necessary breadth. These walls were fortified with 1,500 towers, each 200 feet high.

Based on a trigonometrical survey of the locality, the full area of the Assyrian metropolis has been computed as 350 square miles, which is some 20 miles more than that of London today, and fifty square miles. Of course, it must be understood that Greater Nineveh included great gardens, orchards and even pastures and cornfields. This need not surprise us. The great walled towns of Babylonia seem to have enclosed large spaces for cultivation and pasture, so that in case of long siege, they were largely self-contained.

It is this fact which explains the mention in Jonah 4 and verse 11 that there was also much cattle there. Nineveh was a vast, vast empire, and you are thinking of 350 square miles. But Nineveh is not only known for her vastness; she is also known for her vileness. Nahum 1:14 says, "And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile."

I will deal with this phrase a little later, but notice their vileness. Nahum 3, the end reading of verse 1, gives an illustration: "Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the pransing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts."

"Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her?" "Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?" And the

last question in verse 19 is, "for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?"

If you were to read some of the Assyrian reliefs, you would find that they bragged and were boastful concerning their vileness and torture. Out of consideration, especially for the women here, I am going to read what John Urquhart tells us rather than explain the gruesomeness of their torture:

“No considerations of pity were permitted to stand in the way of Assyrian policy. It could not afford to garrison its conquest, and it practiced a plan which largely dispensed with the necessity for leaving garrisons behind the Assyrian armies.

“There was unsparing slaughter to begin with. The kings seemed to gloat in their inscriptions over the spectacle presented by the field of battle. They describe how it was covered with the corpses of the vanquished. This carnage was followed up by fiendish inflictions upon individual cities. The leading men, as at Lachish, when Sennacherib had conquered that city, were led forth, seized by the executioners, and subjected to various punishments, all of them filled to the brim with horror.

“Some of the victims were held down while one of the band of torturers, who are portrayed upon the monuments gloating fiendishly over their fearful works, inserts his hand into the victim’s mouth, grips his tongue, and wrenches it out by the roots. In another spot, pegs are driven into the ground. To these, another victim’s wrists are fixed with cords. His ankles are similarly made fast, and the man is stretched out, unable to move a muscle. The executioner then applies himself to the task, and beginning at the accustomed spot, the sharp knife makes its incision. The skin is raised inch by inch until the man is skinned and flayed alive.

“These skins are then stretched out upon the city walls, or otherwise disposed of in such a way so as to terrify the people and leave behind long enduring impressions of Assyrian vengeance. For others, long sharp poles are prepared. The sufferer, taken like all the rest from the leading men of the city, is laid down. The sharpened end of the pole is driven in through the lower part of the chest. The pole is then raised, bearing the writhing victim aloft.

“It is planted in the hole dug for it, and the man is left to writhe in pain and die.”

The late Professor Sayce says this: “The barbarities which followed the capture of the town would be almost incredible were they not a subject of boast in the inscriptions which record them. Ashurbanipal’s cruelties were especially revolting. Pyramids of human heads marked the path of the conqueror. Boys and girls were burnt alive or reserved for a worse fate. Men were impaled, flayed alive, blinded, or deprived of their heads and feet or their ears and noses.”

"While the women and children were carried into slavery, the captured city plundered and reduced to ashes, and all the trees in the neighborhood cut down. Nor is this all about the horrible Assyrian mania for blood and vengeance, but we forbear." The Assyrians were not only a vast empire; they were exceedingly vile.

The book of Nahum can be outlined in three simple points: chapter one, Nineveh's doom declared; chapter two, Nineveh's doom described; and chapter three, Nineveh's doom deserved.

Salvation and Judgment Are Inseparable

The name Nahum means comfort or consolation, and you must understand this to grasp the significance of the book. Nahum comforts and consoles the people of Judah and Jerusalem with the fact that these vile, wicked people, who were in control of the then-known world, would be destroyed. He tells them that this would be a vindication of God's holiness, God's truth, and God's justice.

God will defend His own. God will defend His law and His holiness. We must learn a very important principle. If you are taking notes, write this principle down: the salvation of the godly entails the destruction of the wicked. The salvation of the godly entails the destruction of the wicked. God delivered Noah and his family as He destroyed the old world. God delivered Lot as He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. God delivered Israel from Egypt as He destroyed the Egyptians. God delivered His people in the book of Judges, and each time He did, He destroyed their enemies.

It is impossible to have salvation without judgment. Salvation and judgment go together. Do you realize that even our salvation in Jesus Christ is based upon judgment? For instance, look in your Bibles to the book of Romans, chapter 3, verses 23 and 24. This shows that our salvation in Jesus Christ is based upon judgment. Romans 3, notice verse 24: "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,". We are talking about justification by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Now look at verse 25: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." I want to call your attention to verse 25. "Whom God hath set forth"—we are talking about Christ—"to be a propitiation through faith." What in the world is a propitiation? The Greek word is hilasmos, and it literally means to placate, to appease, to satisfy.

What are we talking about? The wrath of God was against us. Why? We are sinners. We violated His law. We are rebels. We are wicked. We are ungodly. We are undone. The wrath of God was about to fall upon us, but Jesus Christ came as our substitute. He came and stood in our place, and the wrath of God fell upon Him. As our propitiation, He satisfied and placated the wrath of God so that God is no longer angry with His people. You see, we only have salvation because Jesus Christ was judged in our place.

You cannot have salvation apart from judgment. Someone says, "Well, Brother Weaver, I don't like all this stuff about judgment and the wrath of God, and all I'm going to do is I'm just going to pray for the Lord to come back and take us out of this mess." Well, you go ahead. But I want you to know what you are praying for. Look at it in 2 Thessalonians 1, beginning with verse 7.

The Apostle Paul writes, “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.” You cannot even pray for our Lord’s return without praying for judgment.

When He comes back, He is going to judge the wicked. All I'm trying to show you is that salvation and judgment go together. You cannot have one without the other. Now let us tie this together with the book of Nahum. Look at Nahum chapter 1, verse 15. God says, "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off."

Good Tidings of Judgment and Grace

What is the theme of the book of Nahum? The wrath of God against the Assyrian Empire. Look at verse 15 again: "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!" What is the good tidings that Nahum is bringing? God shall destroy His enemies. Now look at Romans 10, verse 15. In the context, we are talking about preaching: "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

Isn't that amazing? When you look at Nahum 1:15, it is the good tidings of judgment. When you look at Romans 10:15, it is the good tidings of grace. Remember Romans 11:22: "Behold the goodness and the severity of God." Notice, if you would please, the truth of God's judgment is good tidings. It is good tidings to His people. It is not good tidings to His enemies, but it is good tidings to His people.

One last passage: 2 Corinthians 2:14. There is one word I want you to really note, and I will explain this passage. "Now thanks be unto God, which always

Paul says that God "causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." How often does God make us triumph? Always. We never fail. God's preachers never fail; we always triumph. This does not mean that everybody is saved every time we preach. Paul explains: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."

“And who is sufficient for these things?” Consider a hundred unsaved people in a room. I stand and preach Christ and His Word, and the power of God falls. Suppose all one hundred are converted by the grace of God. Paul's illustration comes from the Old Testament sacrifices, where there was a sweet-smelling savour, a sweet odor from the sacrifice upon the altar. It is like smelling a steak as it is being grilled. When all are converted, God says, “My Son is preached and I am satisfied.”

Now consider the other possibility. I preach to one hundred unsaved people, and at the end they all shake their fists in my face, clench their teeth, and say, “If you don't get out of here, we'll kill you right now. We don't ever want to hear you again. Don't you ever come back here.” What does God say? “My Son is preached and I am satisfied.”

We are the savour of life unto life and death unto death. When the Word of God is preached and people receive it, we are the savour of life unto life. When it is preached and people reject and hate it, we are the savour of death unto death. Both will ultimately glorify God: some will glorify His grace, while the rest will glorify His justice. Behold the goodness and the severity of God. God will do what is right, and the wicked shall in no wise escape. God will not acquit the wicked. In Nahum's doctrine of the wrath of God, we will see that God is righteous, holy, and just in punishing the wicked.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ to speak to our hearts, help us. Encourage us, build us up in holy faith, and may your will be done in our lives. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Wrath of God - 2 of 5

Nahum 1:1-6 reads: “The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers. Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.”

Introduction and Review

Last week we began our study in Nahum, whose general theme is the wrath of God. Verse three is one of the key verses in the chapter. The word Nahum means comfort or consolation, and in this book he teaches us that God’s judgment against the wicked is a comfort and

consolation to the people of God. We looked at this in Psalm 58 and also in Revelation 19.

God is still on His throne, no matter how much the wicked wish otherwise. God is sovereign, and the Bible teaches that God will deal with the wicked. Nahum the Elkoshite refers to the town in which he lived, though no one really knows where Elkosh was. We do not know the time of his death or where he died. The theme, however, is the wrath of God, particularly against the Assyrian monarch and the Assyrian empire.

Assyria and Nineveh were known for two things. First, their vastness: Nineveh was a three days' journey, basically sixty miles at twenty miles a day, and has been computed to be approximately 350 square miles, as big as or larger than London, England. It was a huge place. Second, it was known for its vileness. The Assyrian monarchs were wicked, vile individuals; they mistreated people and captives and were so fierce and furious they needed not to garrison troops in the cities that

They conquered because everyone was so deathly afraid of the Assyrians. So you have here in the book of Nahum God's judgment against the Assyrian Empire.

Remember, I gave you a definition of the wrath of God. The wrath of God is God's holy revulsion against all that is contrary to His holiness. It is truly God's wrath, demonstrating His eternal detestation of sin. God cannot stand or abide sin. We looked briefly at the word burden last week—the burden of Nineveh—and saw how the word is used throughout Scripture. It indicates a heavy weight, something pressing down, and it always deals with judgment. When we think of a burden, we think of a heavy weight pressing us down, and what a relief it is to have that burden lifted or taken away. So it is the same truth here.

When God executed His righteous vengeance against the Assyrian Empire and the Assyrian monarch, it was indeed a blessing to His people. Assyria had oppressed, attacked, tyrannized, humiliated, and sought to destroy Israel over and over.

The Principle of Divine Retribution

There is a principle in Scripture which each of us understands: you reap exactly that which you sow. Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." So God is not deceived.

Psalm 7:16 illustrates this principle. Before we are through with our study in Nineveh, I will show you that God is going to give them exactly what they deserve. Nahum teaches the destruction of the Ninevites as well as the destruction of the Assyrian Empire. Remember, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Speaking of the wicked man, Psalm 7:14 says, "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood." Then verse 15 says, "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made." He dug a pit for someone else, but he fell into the pit which he dug.

God says, “His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.” So God has said, I am going to give him back exactly that which he has done. His violent dealing is going to come down upon his own head, and it is going to come down upon his own pate. The pate is the roundness, or the top, of the head.

This is known as the lex talionis of Scripture, that is, the law of retribution. It is where God makes the punishment fit the crime. This principle is clearly enunciated in Scripture. David prays in Psalm 28:4, “Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.” In other words, God gives them exactly that which they deserve. He gives them according to that which they did. He gives them according to their deeds, according to the wickedness of their endeavours, after the work of their hands, and renders to them their desert.

Again, in Psalm 94:2, David prays, “Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.” That is, give them exactly that which they deserve. David is once again asking the Lord, the

Judge of the earth, to render a reward to the proud according to their works.

Jeremiah offers exactly the same prayer against the Babylonians in Lamentations 3:64-66: “Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them. Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the LORD.” Once again, he is praying and asking the Lord to judge the wicked. He asks the Lord to render unto them a recompence according to the work of their hands.

Nahum 1:3 says, “The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.” This is one of the key verses in the book of Nahum. Thus, in Nahum chapter 1, we have the certainty of Nineveh’s doom, the assurance of it. That which is true of Nineveh in Nahum chapter 1 is equally true of every nation, every people, every tongue, and every individual who rebels against God and becomes God’s enemy.

The Character of God Demands Judgment

God will certainly destroy them. In Nahum chapter 1, God gives us three reasons we can be assured not only of the destruction of Nineveh, but also of the destruction of other nations that rebel against Him. God assures us that He will deal with His enemies in wrath and judgment. First, the character of God demands it. Secondly, the power of God assures it. Thirdly, the inability of man to hinder it guarantees it.

Let us begin with the first: the character of God demands that His wrath be executed in judgment upon the wicked. In verse 2, the Bible says, "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies."

Nahum begins where each of us should begin with any and every problem: with the character, nature, and person of God. The problem today is that we are basically man-centered instead of theocentric, that is, God-centered. We think the world revolves around man. It does not. It revolves around God. God is the center.

Therefore, if we are going to resolve anything, we must begin with the person, nature, and character of God.

He tells us, "God is jealous." Consequently, because God is jealous, the LORD revengeth and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries. "He reserveth wrath for his enemies." Once we understand the character and nature of God, we will be drawn to the inevitable conclusion that God must deal in wrath with sin.

What does it mean when Scripture declares God to be jealous? It certainly does not mean what modern definitions usually mean: resentful suspicion or an inability to cope with a rival. That has nothing to do with God. Two dictionary definitions, however, come close to the biblical truth. The first is “very watchful or careful in keeping or guarding,” as being jealous of one’s rights. Thus, jealousy means, first of all, being very careful in keeping or guarding what belongs to one.

God's Jealousy for His Glory and His People

God's jealousy signifies that He requires exclusive loyalty. When the Bible says that God is jealous, God does indeed very carefully watch and guard His character, His person, His honor, and His glory. God does demand exclusive loyalty. Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." What is God saying? He is saying, I am going to guard My honor and My glory. I am not going to give My honor, My glory, and My praise to graven images. God is jealous because He cannot bear injuries and wrongs to His glory, to His honor, and to His person.

God is jealous, first of all, of His own honor and glory. He is jealous of His own ordinances. He is jealous of His own worship. God is not going to give His praise and His honor to idols, or to men who fake their God, or to nations that want to play God. God's going to deal with the Assyrians. And we are going to find, secondly, that God is also jealous for His people. God cannot bear to see them injured, and He is going to avenge all the affronts that are done unto them. Isaiah 42:13 says, "The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war. He shall cry, yea, roar; he

shall prevail against his enemies." What is God going to do? Stir up jealousy like a man of war.

Jealousy is not just merely an attribute of God. According to the Scripture, it is a name of God. Exodus 34:14 says, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." God's name is Jealous.

The jealousy of God actually refers to the energetic character of His holiness, especially as it revenges itself against all impieties and rebellion. The Scriptures show this truth. Look in Exodus 20:5: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

Everyone should recognize this passage. Of course, it is in the Ten Commandments, the giving of the law. Exodus 20:5 says, “...thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...”

In context, it continues: “...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” God says, “I am a jealous God,” visiting iniquity. In other words, God says, “I have to deal with sin. I have to defend my honor, my glory, my character.” Deuteronomy 4:24 gives another word.

And it is synonymous with God's jealousy. Deuteronomy 4 and verse 24, "For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." Deuteronomy 4 verse 24, "For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire." Hmm. That consuming fire, it seems to me like there's another verse in the New Testament, which we're going to get to just shortly, that has a direct quote from here and explains this even better. But notice He's a consuming fire. Why? Because He's a jealous God. Look in Deuteronomy 5 and verse 9. Deuteronomy 5, verse 9, God says, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God," same as Exodus 20, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Look in chapter 6 and verse 15, "For the LORD thy God is a jealous God

among you, lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth."

Now, note, if you would, how the jealousy of God is closely connected with the anger and the wrath of God. Now, if you would turn over to the minor prophet Joel—Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos. Look in Joel chapter 2 and verse 18. Joel 2 verse 18. I told you earlier that God was not only jealous for His honor and glory, His worship and His ordinances, but that God was also jealous for His people. In the book of Joel chapter 2 in verse 18, "Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people." Hmm.

Let me give you one last passage. I'll just read it from the book of Zechariah, chapter 8 and verse 2. Listen to this: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury." Isn't that interesting? Jealousy and fury and anger and wrath are equated.

Now, I told you there was another word and we're going to look at in just a moment that sometimes is synonymous with jealousy. It is the word zealous. And by the way, the Hebrew word qana, which is translated jealous, is also translated zealous. It's the same word. Look in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 19. I'm going to show you why this is important. 2 Kings 19. If you look at verse 31, then I want you to compare that with two verses. 2 Kings 19, verse 31.

Notice what the Bible says in 2 Kings 19:31: “For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.” Or you could read that, “the jealousy of the LORD of hosts shall do this.” It is the same word, but here it is translated “the zeal of the LORD of hosts.”

Psalm 69:9 reads, “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.” I hope you know that this is a messianic psalm, and this passage applies directly to Jesus Christ. So you could read it, “For the zeal—or the jealousy—of thine house hath eaten me up.” In John 2:17, our Lord applies this passage to Himself: “And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” Or, “the jealousy of thine house hath eaten me up.” When the Bible speaks of God's jealousy, then, it is speaking of God's zeal.

Several things follow. First, God is jealous, or zealous, for His own honor and for His own glory, and He is not going to share that honor or glory with anyone or anything else. George W. Bush notwithstanding, or Hillary Clinton notwithstanding, God is not going to share His glory. God is not going to give His glory to idols or to puny men. Therefore, all those who oppose Him and all those who try to steal His honor and glory must perish.

Second, God will deal with all such people in wrath directly. He will deal with all those who seek to destroy His throne, His kingdom, and His rule. Third, God will always vindicate His people who trust in Him.

I say this because I want you to remember Zechariah 2:8: “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.” The eye is the most tender part of the body. Just as somebody trying to touch the pupil of your eye would affect you, God says that whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye.

God's jealousy is God's zeal, and that jealousy and zeal are intimately connected with God's wrath and anger. Hebrews 10:30–31 says, "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

What do we know about God? We know that He is a holy God and a jealous God. He said this in Nahum 1:2, after declaring that God is jealous: "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord." He said, "And again, The Lord shall judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God.

Can you imagine what the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, immutable, infinite God of the universe could do to puny men and puny nations? What do we know about the nations? You can read it yourself in the book of Isaiah. Scripture says that they are nothing but a drop in the bucket. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. Why? Because the character of

God demands His wrath against all who oppose and rebel against Him.

The Power of God Assures Judgment

Secondly, not only does the character of God demand this judgment, but the power of God assures this judgment. In Nahum, it is actually verses 3 through 5, but verse 3 says, "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet."

Now notice what the Bible says: “The LORD is slow to anger and great in power.” John Gill, the great Baptist preacher, said this concerning Nahum 1:3: “He is slow to anger, that is, He is not in haste to execute it; He takes time for it, and gives men space for repentance. None have had proof of this when it repented at the preaching of Jonah, upon which the Lord deferred the execution of His wrath. But lest they should presume upon this, and conclude the Lord would always bear with them, though they had returned to their former impieties, they discover that his forbearance was not owing to the want of power, or will of him to punish; since he is great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked; he is able to execute the wrath he threatens, and will by no means clear the guilty, or let them go free and unpunished.”

“Though he move slowly, he may seem in the execution of his judgments, yet they shall surely be brought on his enemies, and shall be fully accomplished.”

Here is the problem when we talk about the wrath of God. The Bible says the Lord is slow to anger and great in power. It says that He reserves wrath for His enemies. Most people think that when they sin and do something bad, wrong, wicked, and rebellious, they have gotten away with it simply because God does not instantly smite them and slap them down. They do not understand God’s longsuffering.

God has the ability—thank God for it—to control His anger and exercise His forbearance. But controlled anger and forbearance do not imply a lack of will to judgment or a lack of power to judgment.

God has both the power and the will to judge, and He shall do so in His time.

The Bible says that He reserves wrath for His enemies. He lays it up; He maintains it; He reserves it for the day of His vengeance. He is conscious of His sovereignty, His superiority, and His power. God does not have to strike instantly. But when He does strike, it will be fully and completely.

Hold Nahum chapter one, but look first in your Bibles at Deuteronomy 32. Here it is, Deuteronomy 32. I have a message just on this passage entitled "God's Peculiar Treasure." Deuteronomy 32, verse 34, says, "Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?"

Stop and think about that. Something is sealed up among God's treasures. What is it? Look in verse 35: "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence."

Now, what does God say about His enemies? "Their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." God has something reserved for His enemies. He has something maintained and laid up in His treasures. Their foot shall slide in due time. God's paydays are not always on Friday. God has it laid up for them.

They are not going to escape. We may think, "Look how many years he has gotten away with that. Look how many years she has gotten away with that." No. They have not gotten away. They cannot get away. Why? For God, by no means, will acquit or clear the wicked.

Look in your Bibles at Romans chapter 2, the New Testament equivalent of Deuteronomy 32, beginning with verse 4. Romans 2, verse 4. Paul asks, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

What are people despising? The riches of God's goodness. Think about how many people enjoy God's air, God's earth, God's provision, and God's bounty every day and never even have a thought of God. They are despising the riches of His goodness. What happens when they despise the riches of His goodness? God still

does not instantly smite them. His forbearance comes into play. What happens when they despise His forbearance? He still does not instantly smite them. His longsuffering comes into play. What happens during that time?

We'll look in verse 5: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds." God says the wicked are just laying up treasures for themselves. They are treasures of judgment and wickedness. Had it not been for God's goodness, God's forbearance, and God's longsuffering, the Assyrians—and every other sinner included—would have been destroyed a long time ago. I am thankful that I am not God, for had I been God, I would have killed me and a whole lot of other folks many, many moons ago. But God is patient. Why is He patient? Because He's all-powerful. Many, like the wicked Assyrians, interpret God's longsuffering as impotence. They think God is unable to strike, or powerless to strike, and that somehow they will escape with their sins and wickedness.

The prophet Nahum assures us that this is not so. He will in no wise acquit the wicked. When the Bible says, "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious," let me point something out: God is the Lord, or master, of fury. Man often cannot control his anger. He gets so mad that he cusses somebody out, tells somebody off, or suddenly flies off the handle. I confess that I have done it a few times, and a few times I enjoyed it, especially when it was a governmental bureaucrat.

But when the Lord is the master of fury, that means He controls it. He is not like man, who spouts off or suddenly turns furious and pours it out, whether seasonable or unseasonable. God is the Lord of anger; He is the Lord of fury. He has the power to control His anger and to execute it at His own time.

In the latter part of verse 3 through verse 5, we see poetic and beautiful pictures of God's devastating destruction when He executes His judgment. For instance, He says, "The LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers."

"Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein."

These images are given to us in many places in Scripture. Psalm 83:13 says, "O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: that men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."

Notice the words, "persecute them with thy tempest, make them afraid with thy storm." Isaiah 29:6 says, "Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire." Here are all these same pictures denoting God's judgment.

Verse 3 says that "the clouds are the dust of his feet." In Ezekiel 26:10, we find that man at war stirs up plenteous dust. God is so far superior to man. He does not raise dust; the clouds are the dust of His feet. He moves in the heavens.

Verse 4 says, "He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth."

Psalm 66:6 says, "He turned the sea into dry land." This just hit me this morning. This is one of the few pages in the Bible that has a 666. Isn't that amazing? Isaiah does. There are 66 chapters in the book of Isaiah. But in Psalm 66 and verse 6, the Bible says, "He turned the sea into dry land."

"They went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him." Over and over, the Bible speaks of God's power over the seas and rivers. Psalm 106:9 says, "He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness." The Bible repeatedly speaks of God's ability to dry up rivers and oceans. What is he saying? There can be no line of defense

against God. It does not matter where you draw your line or where you put your battle in array. God can always outflank you.

Stonewall Jackson and Nathan Bedford Forrest were masters of flanking movements, but God is far superior. One of my favorite stories told about Stonewall Jackson concerns his death. They said the Lord sent angels to recover his body. The angels came down to earth and searched for Jackson but could not find him. They returned to report that they could not find Stonewall, only to discover that he had outflanked them and beaten them to heaven by himself. Nobody can outflank God.

The Bible teaches plainly that God is able to overcome all obstacles. In verse 4, he mentions Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon. Bashan denotes fertile, well-watered plains that are excellent pastureland. Carmel denotes a fertile mountain area with a garden-like appearance. Lebanon is noted for its snow, mountain streams, and mighty forests. These three areas were usually untouchable when it came to drought, blight, and disease. But they are not untouchable when it comes to the judgment of God. God is able to strike anywhere.

Verse 5 says, "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein." Jeremiah 23:24 asks, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD." It would do no good to hide in Bashan, Carmel, Lebanon, the mountains, oceans, seas, or rivers. Scripture tells us that mountains which seemingly have endured forever are nothing to God. He overturns them and breaks them open.

The Inability of Man to Hinder Judgment

None can escape His power. The character of God demands that His wrath be executed against the wicked, and the power of God assures that it shall be executed against the wicked.

Thirdly, the inability of man to hinder it guarantees it. Look at the questions in Nahum 1:6: “Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?” His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. Probably each one

of these questions deserves a sermon. Who can stand before His indignation? Who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?

Notice one little word that is vitally important: can. In our English language, “can” is a term of ability; “may” is a term of permission. It does not say, “Who may stand before Him?” or “Who may abide?” It says, “Who can?” Who has the ability to stand in front of God and abide the fierceness of God's anger? There is no man, no matter his rank, power, or prestige; there is no army, no nation, and no people that have the ability to withstand God. Why? God is an all-consuming fire.

The rocks being thrown down are known for their hardness, strength, and resistance, yet they are easily destroyed by God. Who can stand before His indignation? Not the Assyrians, not Nineveh, not the Babylonians, and not the Israelites. No one. No one can abide His indignation. No one can stand before Him.

Jeremiah 10:10 says, "But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation." The earth shall tremble; the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation.

Revelation 6:15-17 gives an excellent illustration: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

Applications and Conclusion

The answer is, no one, because man does not have the ability to hinder or prevent the wrath of God. His wrath will fall on wicked, rebellious nations and people and individuals.

Let me make a couple of applications and tie this together. God is not the sweet, effeminate, sentimental, helpless old man that the world makes Him out to be. The world fondly believes and dreams

that somehow God is inherently powerless, or at least that He will not strike. They imagine Him as a gray-headed old man—the man upstairs, as they call Him—in a rocking chair, rocking back and forth, who does not like to say Himself, but fondly engages His creatures to indulge in it every now and then with understanding.

I have news for you. That is not the God of Scripture. The God of Scripture is the holy, majestic, sovereign, just, righteous, omnipotent, omniscient, immutable, eternal, infinite God of heaven and earth, who can in no wise stand sin. He will in no wise acquit the wicked. The world seems to think that God is so helpless and powerless that somehow He is in that old rocking chair, hoping some will let Him save them and the rest He hopes will let Him damn them. It is not like that. God has His way in the whirlwind and the storm.

He dries up the rivers, the mountains, the streams, and the oceans. He overthrows whatever He needs to overthrow. He is God, and He will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord is jealous; He revengeth, and is furious. That does not sound like a sentimental old gray-haired man to me. It sounds like He is an awesome God. Therefore, we are commanded to bow before Him.

Secondly, look back in your Bible at Nahum chapter 1 for this application. After the question, “Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him?” look at verse 7: “The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.” The only safe place in the day of God’s wrath is in Jesus Christ, for the Lord knows who trusts in Him.

You say, “I thought the Bible taught that our God was a tender, compassionate God.” It does. But it also teaches that He is a holy and just God. Sometimes God uses mercy and love to draw men to Him, but sometimes He uses judgment and threatening to drive men to Him. Hebrews 11:7 says, “Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” Our Lord and John the Baptist preached, “Flee from the judgment to come.”

We must understand that God is not what we want Him to be; God is what Scripture reveals Him to be. He is tender, loving, just, and kind, but He is also holy, righteous, and jealous, and vengeance belongs to Him. Verse 3 is still true: God is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.

God will judge the wicked in time and history in some degree, but He will judge them totally, fully, and completely in eternity. He is the righteous God to whom belongeth vengeance.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would speak to our hearts. Help us to see that Thou art indeed a holy, righteous God, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right. Give us grace that we may bow before Thee and serve Thee in reverence and godly fear. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Wrath of God - 3 of 5

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Open your Bibles to the book of Nahum, chapter 1, and also turn to Psalm 10. Although our text is taken from Nahum chapter 1, I will be explaining the text from the tenth Psalm. In Nahum chapter 1, beginning with verse 7, we read:

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him. But with an overrunning flood, He will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue His enemies. What do you imagine against the Lord? He will make an utter end; affliction shall not rise up the second time. For while they be folded together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. There is one come out of thee that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor. Thus saith the Lord, though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder."

Review of Previous Sermons on God's Wrath

We have been dealing with the subject of the wrath of God for the last two weeks. The book of Nahum deals with God's wrath and judgment against the Assyrian Empire, especially Nineveh, its capital. We have considered the chief verse, verse 3: “The Lord is slow to anger and great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked,” and how the Lord hath his way in the world when in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

There are two books in the Bible that deal with Nineveh: Jonah and Nahum. The Bible says, “Behold the goodness and the severity of God.” Thus, we see the goodness of God in Jonah and the severity of God in Nahum. Last week we dealt with verse 6: “Who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide the fierceness of his anger?” His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

There are three things we need to understand about the judgment of God. First, the character of God demands it. Secondly, the power of God assures it. Thirdly, the inability of man to hinder it guarantees it.

The question in verse 9 is, “What do you imagine against the Lord?” I would remind you of the definition I gave concerning the wrath of God: the wrath of God is God’s holy revulsion, in the entirety of His being, against that which is a contradiction to Himself. It is His holy revulsion against sin. The justice of God, then, is the penal infliction upon the ungodly due to an exercise of God’s wrath. God has a holy, eternal, and immutable detestation of sin.

When the question is asked of the wicked, “What do you imagine against the Lord?” it is difficult for a child of God to conceive of men imagining against the Lord. Why? Because the true child of God submits his mind, his life, and his actions to his Lord and to His Word.

The Question: 'What Do You Imagine Against the Lord?'

But the unregenerate and unconverted have swallowed the lie of Satan hook, line, and sinker. He came to Adam and Eve in the

garden, in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 5, and told them, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” In other words, if you disobey God, you shall be your own god. You can determine for yourself right and wrong, good and evil. Those who believe that lie believe, basically, that they have become gods—not some fallen god, but a god in and of themselves.

That is why Psalm 2 and verse 1 begins, “Why do the heathen rage,” and “the people imagine a vain thing?” The word “vanity” usually means useless or worthless. Why, then, are they thinking these useless and worthless thoughts? In Jeremiah 4 and verse 14, God asks, “How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?”

“Vanity” sometimes refers in the Bible to idolatries. The word “vain” means useless and worthless, and that is exactly what idols are. When men think wrongly concerning God, they are thinking worthlessly and uselessly; they are engaged in idolatry because it is self-idolatry.

God does know their thoughts. In Isaiah 66, verse 18, God declares, “I know their works and their thoughts.” Since God knows their thoughts, He knows that they are vain. Psalm 139 declares the omniscience of God: “Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thought afar off. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, thou knowest it altogether.”

He said, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain unto it.” And certainly God is omniscient. He does know.

Now look down in verse nine: “What do you imagine against the Lord?” The word “imagine” is the Hebrew word “chashab,” which literally means to invent, to scheme, to devise, to impute, to plan, to charge, and to imagine. So the question is literally, What are you inventing? What are you scheming? What are you devising? What are you planning? What are you vainly imagining against the Lord?

What are some of the vain thoughts that the wicked foolishly imagine against the Lord? A lot of those thoughts are revealed to us in Psalm 10. I want you to note that the wicked vainly refuse to acknowledge or reckon with God. You will find that in verse 4. Secondly, the wicked vainly imagine they will never be in a position

to need God. You will find that in verse 6. Thirdly, the wicked vainly imagine that God does not notice their sins, or, if He does, He forgets them. That is in verse 11. Fourthly, the wicked vainly imagine that even if God does see and does not forget, He will not judge them. You will find that in verse 13. Then I am going to conclude with some applications. These are the thoughts I want to show you from Psalm 10.

In Psalm 10:4, the Bible says, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. God is not in all of his thoughts." The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. God is not in all of his thoughts.

First Vain Imagination: Refusing to Acknowledge God

John Gill, the old Baptist expositor, expounds Nahum 1:9, which leads us to Psalm 10. Nahum 1:9 says, "What do you imagine against the Lord?" John Gill explains: "O ye Ninevites, or Assyrians, do you think you can frustrate the designs of the Lord, resist His power, and hinder Him from executing what He has threatened and has determined to do?"

"Or what mischief is it you devise against his people, which is the same as against himself? Can you believe that you shall prosper and succeed and your schemes be carried into execution when he, the all-wise and powerful being, opposes you?" This explains the question, "What do you imagine against the Lord?" Evidently, the Ninevites thought they were dealing with mere mortals. They thought they were dealing with man and not God, and they did not reckon with or count on the sovereign God of heaven and earth.

Psalm 10:4 says, "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. God is not in all of his thoughts." Some of the old scholars read it as, "No God in all his crafty, presumptuous purposes." Others read it, "All of his thoughts are, there is no God." The meaning is not only that, among the swarm and crowd of thoughts that fill his mind, the thought of God is seldom to be found and comes started among the rest, which is yet enough of the purpose and end.

Further, in all of his projects, plots, and consultations of his heart, whereby he contrives to lay the plot, form, and draught of all his actions, he never takes God or His will into consideration or consultation, to square and frame all accordingly. He proceeds and carries on as if there were no God to be consulted with. He takes Him along with him no more than if He were no God. The thoughts of Him and His will sway him not.

In other words, the wicked not only try to deny God, but refuse to reckon with Him. They think they have no dealings with Him.

There is a difference between theoretical atheism and practical atheism. When we think about a theoretical atheist, we think of someone like Voltaire or some of the other noted infidels. They deny God on the basis of their own intellect. What they say is this: "There is no intellectual understanding for the existence of God, and therefore God does not exist." Basically, they have made a god out of their own mind, denying God based upon their own intellectual presuppositions. So we refer to them as theoretical atheists.

But there are those who are practical atheists, and many times professing Christians are nothing more than practical atheists. The difference is very simple. Whereas a theoretical atheist will say, "There is no God," based upon his understanding and intellect, the practical atheist will admit that there is a God. He will confess it; many times he will say, "God does indeed live and God does indeed exist." In fact, you will find many of them in churches today, parading around and saying, "He is risen, He is risen!" Yet they live their lives as if there were no God. They never pray, study the Scripture, or consult Him. They totally ignore Him in all of their lives.

Here is a very practical illustration of a practical atheist. In James chapter 4, beginning with verse 13, God says, "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow."

"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that." What are they doing? They are

planning without God. They do not need God: “This is what we are going to do. We are going to go into that city, stay there for a year, and buy and sell and get gain.” This is their plan. But God said, “You had better consult with me. You had better think this through. You had better find out what my will is and what you ought to be saying, ‘If the Lord will.’” That is, if He allows it, if He permits it, with His permission, this is what we are planning to do.

A practical atheist may acknowledge that there is a God, yet lives as if there were no God. He does not seek after God, just as the theoretical atheist does. The practical atheist lives as if God had not spoken—which, according to Romans 3:11, is the character of every unregenerate man.

What do the wicked do? They live according to their own will because of the pride of their heart. Psalm 10:4 says, “The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. God is not in all of his thoughts.” It is the pride of heart: “I don’t need God. Why should I reckon with him? Why should I include him in my plans?”

“I’ll do what I want to do.” A God forgotten is no God at all. This is one of the main distinctions between the godly and the ungodly in Scripture. The Bible teaches that, for the wicked, God is not in all of his thoughts. For the godly, we think about God. We pray, read His Word, seek His will, and want His blessings upon everything that we do.

When you look at Proverbs 21:4, God says that even the plowing of the wicked is sin. Is it a sin to work? Did not God command work? Did not God say, “By the sweat of your brow you’re going to earn your bread”? Yes, God commanded work, but work is still evil and sinful for the ungodly man. Why? Because he does not plow in faith; he does not work in faith. The Bible says, “Without faith, it’s impossible to please him,” and, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

That is why even the plowing of the wicked is sin. Why does he plow? Without faith, because of the pride of his heart. He does not think he needs God or that he needs to consult with God. He simply does it.

Dr. Edward Payson, who died in 1827, wrote an exposition of Psalm 10:4: “The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God, God is not in all of his thoughts.” Listen to Payson’s words: “The pride of the wicked is the principal reason why they will not seek after the knowledge of God. This knowledge prevents them from seeking in various ways. In the first place, it renders God a disagreeable object of contemplation to the wicked and acknowledge of him as undesirable.”

Pride consists in an unduly exalted opinion of oneself. It is therefore impatient of a rival, hates a superior, and cannot endure a master. In proportion as it prevails in the heart, it makes us wish to see nothing above us, to acknowledge no law but our own wills, to follow no rule but our own inclinations. Thus it led Satan to rebel against his Creator, and our first parents to desire to be as gods. Since such were the effects of pride, nothing can be more painful to a proud heart than the thoughts of such a being as God, who is infinitely powerful, just, and holy, who can neither be resisted, deceived, nor deluded, who disposes according to his own sovereign pleasure of all creatures and events, and who especially hates pride and is determined to abase and punish it.

Such a being pride can contemplate only with feelings of dread, aversion, and abhorrence. It must look upon him as its natural enemy, the great enemy whom it has to fear. But the knowledge of God brings this infinite, irresistible, irreconcilable enemy fully into view. It teaches the proud man that he has a superior, a master whose authority he cannot escape, whose power he cannot resist, and whose will he must obey or be crushed before him and rendered miserable forever.

It shows him what he hates to see: that in spite of his opposition God's counsel shall stand, that he will do all his pleasure, and that in all things wherein men deal proudly, God is above them. These truths torture the proud, unhumbled hearts of the wicked. Hence they hate the knowledge of God, which teaches these truths, and will not seek it. On the contrary, they wish to remain ignorant of such a being and to banish all thoughts of him from their minds.

With this view they neglect, pervert, or explain away those passages of Revelation which describe God's true character, and

endeavor to believe that He is altogether such a one as themselves. How foolish! How absurd! How ruinous! How blindly destructive of its own object does pride appear? By attempting to soar, it plunges itself in the mire; while endeavoring to erect for itself a throne, it undermines the ground on which it stands and digs its own grave.

It plunged Satan from heaven into hell, banished our first parents from paradise, and will similarly ruin all who indulge in it. It keeps us in ignorance of God, shuts us out from His favor, prevents us from resembling Him, and deprives us in this world of all the honor and happiness which communion with Him would confer. In the next, unless previously hated, repented of, and renounced, it will bar forever against the door of heaven and close upon us the gates of hell.

"Oh, then, my friend, beware. Above all things, beware of pride. Beware lest you indulge it imperceptibly, for it is perhaps of all sins, the most secret, the most subtle and the most insinuating." No wonder the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. He does not want a master, a ruler, a Creator, or God. Fallen, proud, arrogant, haughty man tries to be his own God.

Look at verse 5 of Psalm 10: "His ways are always grievous. Thy judgments are far above, out of his sight. As for all of his enemies, look now, he puffeth at them." What does that mean? The Bible says God destroys His enemies with the blast of His nostrils. He blows them away. That is why the psalmist says, "Let your enemies be as smoke before the wind." God blows them away, and now the wicked thinks that he can do as God—that he can snort and all his enemies will disappear. How vain, foolish, and wicked! The man thinks he can dispose of his enemies as quickly and easily as God does of His. That is pride. David said in Psalm 119:59, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet into thy testimonies."

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not think on his ways. He will not think about God or God's Word, for if he did, he would have to confess and acknowledge that God was right. The wicked do theologically what many people do practically. The average person thinks that if he ignores his problems or pretends he does not have them, they will go away. Many likewise think that if they ignore God and pretend He does not exist, He will disappear.

As Gomer Pyle used to say, "Surprise, surprise, surprise!" Wait till judgment day. The Bible says in Philippians chapter two, "Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Men will bow and confess either in salvation or damnation, but every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Ignoring God will not make Him go away. The wicked vainly refuse to acknowledge God or reckon with Him, thinking that if they ignore Him sufficiently, He will disappear. No.

Second Vain Imagination: Never Needing God

Look at Psalm 10:6. Here is the second vain imagination: the wicked vainly imagine that they will never be in a position to need God. “He,” that is, the wicked, “hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved, for I shall never be in adversity.”

Shouldn’t a god be able to work out his own problems? That is what the wicked say: “I’m never going to be in adversity. I’m not going to be moved. Why should I need God?” Really and truly, wicked, vain, fallen man not only thinks he is immutable; he thinks he is omnipotent. He thinks he will be able to control every situation and work out every detail.

Look in Psalm 12. David cries, “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men.” There was a good reason David cried for help. “They speak vanity, every one with his neighbour.” He is talking about the wicked now: “With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.”

Now look at what the wicked say: “With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?” We do not need God; we can talk our way out of any problem.

Does it work like that? You will find that your lips will not prevail, especially when it comes to God. I think of my oldest granddaughter. She is eighteen, will be nineteen this year, and most of you know Renee. She is a tiny little thing and cute as a button—of course, I am prejudiced. I was riding with her over in Albany. They own some land not far from their house, and she was driving a golf cart. Those

golf carts are not supposed to be on the highway. Most of the time she was on private land, but there was a little spot where she had to come to the edge of the road to turn toward home. Just as we reached that edge, state troopers drove by. I looked at Renee and said, “Renee, you know this thing is not supposed to be on the highway.”

She said, “Oh, Pop, don't worry about it. They're not going to stop me.” I said, “Well, why not?” She said, “I'm too cute.” I said, “Well, sweetheart, you just go on believing that. One day you're going to find out a little differently.” He was just in a hurry, or he probably would have turned around and said, “Don't put that thing on the highway.”

The wicked have the attitude that they are never, ever going to be moved and never, ever going to be in adversity. “With our tongue, we will prevail.” You look at the attitude of the wicked, and it is directly opposite to the attitude of the godly. The godly will say, “Look how the Lord has blessed me.” The ungodly say, “Look what I did, and look how much I made.” In other words, God is not in all their thoughts. The godly think, “Look at how much we owe the Lord. Look at the help and the blessings that He's given us.” The wicked say, “I don't owe Him anything. I made it all myself. I did it all by myself.”

They refuse even to acknowledge Him. Their attitude is like Pharaoh's in Exodus 5:2. When Moses said, “Thus saith the Lord, let my people go,” Pharaoh responded, “I know not the Lord. Neither will I let Israel go.” Pharaoh was saying, “I don't recognize Him. He has no authority over me. Why should I obey His commands? I don't acknowledge Him at all.”

Some of you have heard of William Ernest Henley. Henley wrote a very atheistical poem called “Invictus.” It is blasphemous, but here it is: “Out of the night that covers me, black is the pit from pole to pole. I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud.

“Under the bludgeonings of chance my head is bloody but unbowed. Beyond the place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade, and yet the menace of the years finds and shall find me

unafraid. It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishment the scroll. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." They vainly imagine that they are the masters of their fate and the captains of their soul.

Consequently, they think, "I shall never be in adversity. I shall never be moved. With my lips I will prevail." Such attitudes are blatant, belligerent, bold-faced blasphemy. There is only one God, one Sovereign, and that is not wicked man. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. How vain it is for man to imagine that he is in control. "I shall not be moved. I will never be in adversity." That is the idea of the wicked.

Third Vain Imagination: God Does Not See or Forgets Sin

Thirdly, the wicked vainly imagine that God does not take notice of their sins, and if He does, He will forget them. Psalm 10:11 says, "He," that is, the wicked, "has said in his heart, God hath forgotten. He hideth his face. He will never see it."

Most of you will understand what this means, but in vain do the wicked smoke behind the barn. When you were raised in the country, if you ever wanted to do anything your parents did not want you to find out, you went behind the barn, lit those cigarettes, looked at those magazines, or whatever. Well, I have news for you: there is no barn to hide behind when it comes to God, because He is omniscient. Their attitude is, "God has forgotten it. He hideth his face. He will never, ever see it."

Isaiah 29:15 says, "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" God says, "Woe to them." They are trying to hide from Him, thinking that He does not see them or know what they are doing.

It is true that some men, and women are included in that, have only a peace of mind that comes from their own forgetfulness. We forget what we did. David said in his prayer, "Remember not the sins of my youth." Some of us are old enough to have forgotten a lot of our sins, but God does not forget.

In Psalm 50:21, we see the charge that God levels against the wicked: “These things hast thou done, and I kept silent. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such as one as thyself, but I will reprove thee and set them,” that is, your sins, “in order before thine eyes.” God said, “Here’s where you messed up.”

You thought I was just like you. You thought because you forgot that I forgot. “Oh no,” said God, “I didn’t forget. I will set your sins in order before your eyes.”

Psalm 94 says, “How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves. They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people, and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?”

How foolish can you be? God that made your eyes and gave you sight, do you think He’s blind? God that made your ears and gave you hearing, do you think He can’t hear? “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.” How wicked. “That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.”

God does not forget. Look at Amos chapter 8, beginning with verse 4: “Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances of deceit, that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat.”

“The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.” Wow. When God does not judge sinners instantly and immediately, when God does not slap them down right away for their sins, they either think, number one, that God has not seen them or noticed them; or number two, that God has forgotten their sins; or number three, that He will never judge

them for their sins. The problem is, men do not understand the graciousness or the longsuffering of God.

God is kind of like a bee in one sense of the word. You know how bees give honey naturally, and they only sting when they are angered and upset. God is naturally gracious. But there is a longsuffering of God that will expire when the wrath of the cup is to the brim.

Look in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 15. You remember the children of Israel went into Egypt for 400 years. And I do not know if you have ever wondered why they had to be there for 400 years. Here is the answer. God is entering into a covenant with Abraham, and He says in verse 13 of Genesis 15: “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.”

“And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again.” Why? “For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” After 400 years, when God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, you know what He did?

He put a sword in their hand and said, "Kill every one of them." The amazing thing is that God, in His graciousness, waited an additional 400 years before He smoked the Amorites. But when He smoked them, it was to be a full and final smiting. God said, "Kill every one of them."

Fourth Vain Imagination: God Will Not Judge

The wicked vainly imagined that God did not notice their sins, or that, if He did notice them, He would forget about them. But that was not all. The wicked vainly imagined that God would never judge them for their sins. "Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. Thou wilt not require it." Why does the wicked contemn, or condemn, God?

Here are three stupendous facts. First, an astounding fact: the wicked condemn God. Second, an amazing reason for their

condemnation: God will not require—that is, God will not judge—them. Third, an apparent purpose for their vain imagination is to quieten their own conscience. They said in their heart; that is, they were giving themselves some assurance. They quietened their conscience for their sins by saying, "Oh, look, if God sees it, He'll forget it. If He doesn't forget it, He will never judge us."

All the self-assurance in the world that the wicked have does not change the reality of God's judgment. "Thou hast seen it. For thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless." God does see it, and God will indeed requite it.

The Bible talks about the hope of the hypocrite, but here is the hope of the wicked. The hope of the hypocrite and the hope of the wicked is basically twofold. First, they hope that God will not judge them at all, that somehow they will escape the judgment of God. In the book of Job, chapter 8 and verse 13, God says, "So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." So are the paths of all them that forget God. Their hope, as well as the hypocrite's hope, shall perish. Their hope of escaping the judgment of God is a false hope. It will vanish away. It is a hope that will destroy the sinner. Again, God asks in Job 27 and verse 8, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?"

What good does it do you for all the people in the world to praise you if, when you die, God condemns you? The second part of this hope is that somehow, if God does judge them, God will be more lenient with them in the day of judgment than the law demands: “Well, he may judge me, but it won't be that bad.”

Let me remind you of something. In Romans 8:32, the Bible says, “For God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” If God did not spare His only begotten Son, who was sinless; if God did not spare His own Son when our sin was imputed to Him; if God smote Him, judged Him, and executed His wrath upon Him, what makes you think that He will spare a wicked, vile, rebellious sinner who hated Him all of his life? I don't see the reasoning. Yet somehow, sinner, you hope that if God judges them, they will be the

exception: either they won't be judged, or God will be far more lenient than His Word demands.

Go back to Nahum chapter 1 and look at verse 9 again: “What do you imagine against the Lord?” I have shown you what the wicked imagine, what they think, plan, scheme, and devise. But look at this question: “What do you imagine against the Lord?” Now look at the rest of it: “He will make an utter end. Affliction shall not rise up a second time.”

Let me put this in good South Georgia language: God doesn't need a second blow. His first is going to be quite sufficient. When He slaps you down, He won't have to slap you down twice. He will make an utter end; affliction shall not rise up the second time. You think you're going to imagine something against the Lord and escape? Oh no. His first blow will be quite sufficient. Look at how God explains it in verse 10.

He says, “For while they be folded together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.” Have you ever seen stubble fully dry burn? Believe me, I have. My father and I were burning off a field of old sage grass. I went to the far end to back-burn against the wind. After it had back-burned fifty yards, I threw up my hand for Dad to set the fire with the wind. It took all I could do, running as quickly as I could, to escape the flames. When the wind caught that sage grass fully dry, it blew mightily. God says that is the way the wicked are going to be before Him.

When Sennacherib, the leader, comes out as a wicked counselor against the Lord, God says, “I’ll destroy them.” Then God says, “Thus saith the Lord, though they be quiet and likewise many, yet they shall be cut down. When he shall pass through, though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.” In other words, once God passes through in judgment, that is it. All false hopes and all false, vain, and wicked imaginations are gone. God does not need to smite twice.

Sometimes we sit back and think, “Look at the wicked; they are getting away.” No, they are not getting away. God is going to judge them in this life in some degree, but He will certainly judge them

fully, totally, and completely in the Day of Judgment. Paul, preaching on Mars Hill, brought his sermon to a close: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." God commands all men everywhere to repent. Why? "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." That man is Jesus Christ.

"Whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Let me explain that. The Bible says that God is going to judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ. He has given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead. So, just as surely as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, just that surely God is going to judge His enemies. If you can overthrow the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you can stop the Day of Judgment. But if you could not have stopped Jesus Christ from raising from the dead—and you could not—then you cannot stop the day of judgment.

It is sure. It is absolute. Certain. Because God did indeed raise His Son from the dead, God says, "Therefore, I've given assurance unto all men in that I will judge the world."

Applications and Conclusion

Now let me make some applications. The first one should be obvious: it is useless to imagine vainly against the Lord and His Word. It is useless to listen to the fables of men and the wishful thinking of those who are deluded and deceived. Do you think for one minute that I would waste my time watching the Gospel of Judas on television? Why would I sit and watch the History Channel, "Jesus Christ, fact, fiction, or myth?"

I know what they are going to say. They want it to be myth; they want it to be fiction. Why? That way, they will not have to face the judgment of God. I am not going to waste my time. God is truth. His Word is truth. If you think I am going to listen to the deluded, deceived, vain imaginations of fallen man, who try to hope that somehow this whole thing is not true so that they can escape judgment, you are mistaken. I am not going to listen to them. I am

not going to believe them. God is the Creator, the Savior, the Sustainer, and the Judge.

Therefore, he will call all into an account. The second application is this: we must endeavor to bring men into an epistemological self-consciousness. Epistemology refers to your source of knowledge or your source of truth. To be epistemologically self-conscious means that I recognize my source of truth. What is my source of truth? It is the Word of God, not my own mind.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? We need to point men to this: reality is determined by God, not by man's wishful thinking and vain desires. Reality is truth, and it is God's truth.

I love the word "utopia." You hear about the socialistic utopia and all these utopias. The word "utopia" comes from two Greek words, "u," which is a negative and means "no," and "topos," which means "place." Utopia means "no place." It does not exist. The only place it exists is in someone's deceived brain. It is not reality. God gives us reality, not man. As long as men are not epistemologically self-conscious—that is, if they do not know their source of knowledge—they will always vainly imagine wicked things against God.

The answer to all our problems is found in Nahum 1:7: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him." When I die and stand before the Lord, I want Him to know that I trusted in Him through Jesus Christ, that I lived my life by His grace in obedience to His Word, and that I have no righteousness of my own. His is the righteousness that I cling to. He is my strong tower and my place of defense in judgment, in this life and in the next. Because in Christ we have already been judged, we may stand before Him in the righteousness of Christ.

Do not entertain wicked, vain thoughts and imaginations. It is useless and worthless. We have the truth.

And we need to think righteously and truthfully about God, about our lives, about the world now and the world to come. We need to know that our source of knowledge is God and His Word.

Speak to us and help us. Help us, Lord, not to vainly and foolishly and wickedly imagine anything against Thee, but may we submit to Your Word and bow to Your lordship in Your sovereignty. Give us grace, Lord, that we may serve Thee effectually with reverence and godly fear. Make us holy and godly. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 4

The Wrath of God - 4 of 5

SCRIPTURE READING - Nahum 2:1-13 (KJV)

Introduction to Nahum 2 and the Theme of God's Wrath

He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face. Keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. For the Lord hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel. For the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariot shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken. The chariot shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved. And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering

> upon their breasts. But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back. Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture. She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness. Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid? The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

God's Declaration: 'Behold, I Am Against Thee'

In chapter 3 and verse 5, God says: "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame." We have been dealing with the subject of the wrath of God, and the theme of the book of Nahum is God's wrath, especially against Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire. Nineveh was known for her vileness and for her vastness. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, and the Lord will take vengeance. Who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? We have also considered the question, "What do ye imagine against the Lord?" Here are all these questions, and Psalm 10 shows us how the wicked imagine things against the Lord. They imagine deceitful things and vain things, but they do imagine against the Lord. Now we come to this phrase in chapter 2, verse 13, where God says, "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord."

He repeats that in chapter 3 and verse 5: "Behold, I am against thee." Most people do not immediately grasp the significance of that statement. Meditate on this just for a moment. Consider this: there are some whom God is against. God said, "Behold, I am against thee" ten times in the book of Ezekiel alone. God tells his enemies,

"Behold, I am against you." In fact, you will find that phrase throughout the entirety of Scripture.

The truth is simply this: God is indeed against all of his enemies—not just the Ninevites, not just the Assyrians. God declares, "Behold, I am against thee."

The Perversion of God's Love

It is difficult for us to conceive of the reality that God can be against people. Why is that difficult for us to conceive? The answer is that most of us have heard preached a perverted doctrine of the love of God that makes sinners feel satisfied and secure in their sins. There is no rush to repent on their part because they have been assured that God loves them exactly the way they are in their rebellion and wickedness. How many of you have heard, how many of you have been taught all of your lives, "God hates the sin, but He loves the sinner"? You have heard that over and over. When people are taught that God hates the sin but loves the sinner, the unsaved then reason, understandably so, that since God loves them, it is their sin that he hates. Therefore, God will not punish those that he loves. He will find a way to deal with their sins without actually dealing with them. It never once enters their minds that they are the reason for sin.

One cannot have sin without sinners. It is sinners who sin.

Now, without me developing this today, let me make a blanket statement. If I had the time, I could show you from Scripture. The doctrine of the love of God is a doctrine concerned with God's people. It is a comfort and consolation to the people of God alone. The wicked pervert the doctrine of God's love, interpreting it always to mean that if God loves me, He will not judge me. Therefore, to the wicked, God does not say, "God is love." To the wicked, God says, "Behold, I am against you."

Calvin's Insight on God Speaking Directly

John Calvin comments on the phrase, "Behold, I am against you." Look at it in verse 13 of chapter 2 of Nahum: "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts." Calvin says, "Nahum has been hitherto, as it were, the herald of God, and in this character gave an

authoritative command to the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, to plunder Nineveh. But when God Himself comes forward and uses not the mouth of man, but declares Himself, His own decrees, it is much more impressive. This, then, is the reason why God now openly speaks, 'Behold, I am against thee,' He says. We understand the emphatical import of the demonstrative article, 'Behold,' for God, as if awakened from sleep, shows that He will be at length at His work to undertake the cause of His people and also to punish the world for its wickedness. 'Behold, I am against you, saith the Lord.'"

Everything that you read in the book of Nahum comes through Nahum, the prophet and mouthpiece of God, except the declaration, "Behold, I am against you, saith the Lord." Calvin is pointing out that in this instance God does not use Nahum. God speaks Himself and says, "Here it is, I am against you."

Stop and think of the import that God is against sinners. God must necessarily be against sinners because sinners are against God. To understand and comprehend this reality, we must understand the doctrine of reconciliation, which is plainly taught in Scripture. Until there is reconciliation, only enmity exists between God and sinners. God is not simply against sin. God is against sinners.

Biblical Proof that God Hates Sinners (Psalm 5)

Sin is not some little abstract thing floating around somewhere out in the universe. Sin does not simply come into being. The truth is that sinners sin, and if there were no sinners, there would not be any sin. Sin comes from sinners. Therefore, when you have been taught all your life, “God loves the sinner, but God hates the sin,” you have been taught an unbiblical dichotomy. It is patently untrue.

Scripture will show us this. When you talk about love and hate, especially in relation to God, you must understand that love and hate are an act of the will. Even with us, love and hate are an act of the will. It is true that our emotions are involved, because we are unable to control our emotions; we are not God. But even with our emotions involved, love and hate are an act of the will. I love my wife because I choose to love my wife. It is an act of the will. We hate because we choose to hate. The same is true with God.

Hold the book of Nahum. Remember that God is telling the wicked, “Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord.” Now look at Psalm 5. As we read this passage, remember two things: first, how God tells the wicked, “Behold, I am against thee”; and second, this unbiblical and ungodly dichotomy, “God loves the sinner but hates the sin.” See whether Scripture really teaches that. I can assure you it does not.

In Psalm 5:4, David is speaking about the character of God: “For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing.”

“The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.” Now, in these short verses, there are at least six truths that are given to us. I want to take them one at a time. First of all, in verse 4, Scripture teaches that God has no delight in sinners or in their wickedness: “For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.” God has absolutely no delight in sinners or in their wickedness. How could He? The Bible tells us in 1 John 1 and verse 5 that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. When you look in Ephesians 5 and verse 8, speaking of what man is by nature, it says, “And you were in darkness,” total darkness. What does John 3 say? Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. The truth of the matter is that God has no delight in wickedness, and therefore God has no delight in sinners who commit wickedness. That is what He says: “For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.”

Secondly, look in verse 4: “Neither shall evil dwell with thee.” That is, the wicked cannot dwell in God's presence. There are two verses that we really need to underline in our minds. The first is Revelation 15 and verse 4, where the Word of God declares concerning God, “Thou only art holy.” Then 1 Samuel 2 and verse 2 says, “There is none holy as the Lord.”

Now let me ask you, how could God hold sinners or sin in any other light than extreme detestation, since God is absolutely holy? When you stop and think of what sin actually is, and how offensive sin is to God, how could sin ever dwell with God, or how could God ever delight in it? Sin is the rape of God's mercy, the jeer of God's

patience, the scoff of God's promises, the upbraiding of God's providence, the slight of God's power, the dare of God's justice, and the mocking of His wisdom. In short, sin is the hatred of God itself. If sin could, and if sinners could, they would dethrone God and enthrone themselves. How could sin ever dwell with God?

You must remember that sin is rebellion. It is defiance of God, His will, and His law. Therefore, it is unholy, unrighteous, and ungodly. Look in Psalm 7, verses 11 and 12: “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked.” What are the next two words? “Every day.” Then verse 12 says, “If he turn not, he will whet his sword.”

"He hath bent his bow, and made it ready." Very obviously, the wicked cannot dwell with God. "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness. Neither shall evil dwell with thee." Thirdly, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight." The wicked have no status before God; they cannot stand and have no standing. They have no room of acceptance. God will not recognize them or honor them.

It does not matter if the wicked be the President, a king, a congressman, or a ruler; he still is not accepted by God. He still has no standing before God. Romans 8 and verse 7 says, "For the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Man's mind by nature is total, absolute hatred toward God. It is not subject to the law of God; neither, indeed, can be. Do you think for one moment that God is going to honor those who dishonor Him?

And the answer is no. God set forth His own principle in 1 Samuel 2:30: “Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” God said, “I’ll tell you who I’ll honor. I’ll honor those who honor me. And I’ll tell you who I’ll despise. I’ll despise those who despise me.”

God is not delighted with wickedness. Wickedness cannot dwell with God, and the wicked have absolutely no standing before God. They have no room of acceptance. God does not accept their persons. It does not matter who they are or where they are.

Fourthly, look in verse 5: “The foolish shall not stand in my sight. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.” Let me put it to you very plainly. Here is the fifth truth: sinners are hated by God. It is not just sin that

God hates; it is sinners. You have to remember, people, you cannot have sin without sinners.

Someone says, “But, Brother Weaver, that’s just an isolated passage. That’s Psalm 5. This says God hates sinners.” Well, I can show you where the Bible says that God loves sinners. Yes, but this is not an isolated passage. You have to take the entirety of Scripture, not just certain portions of it.

Psalm 11:5 says, “The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.” God loves the righteous, but “the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.”

Proverbs 3:33 says, “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.” Does God curse those whom He loves? No. The curse of God is in the house of the wicked, but the blessing of God is upon the habitation of the just.

Proverbs 15:29 says, “The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.” The Lord is far from the wicked, but He heareth the prayer of the righteous. Proverbs 22:14 says, “The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.” He that is abhorred, or hated, of the Lord shall fall therein.

Look in the book of John, chapter 3. I referred to this same truth a little bit earlier. Look at verse 18.

The Bible says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." There is a difference here. God says he that believeth is not condemned. But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

If God curses the house of the wicked, if God is far from the wicked, if the condemnation of God is upon the wicked, if the wrath of God is upon the wicked, and if God says His soul hates him, how

can we say that He loves him? Psalm 5:5 says, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

Spurgeon says, "It is not a little dislike but a thorough hatred which God bears for the workers of iniquity. To be hated by God is an awful thing. Oh, let us be faithful in warning the wicked around us, for it would be a terrible thing for them to fall into the hands of an angry God." Again, Spurgeon said, "Sinners may have many feast days, but they never have any safe days. For there's not an hour in which God's anger is not burning hot toward those who hate him."

You have to consider how forcible this word "hate" really is: "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." It shows the deep-seated hatred of the Lord against all who work iniquity. Throughout Scripture, the wicked are referred to as the enemies of God, the children of wrath, the children of the devil, slaves of sin, and many other terms that designate them as being hated by God.

I thought about taking Psalm 5 and verse 5 and putting it at the bottom of a bumper sticker, with big, bold letters above it saying, "Frown, God hates you." I am sure that would not be as popular as the one that says, "Smile, God loves you." But can you imagine Noah having on the back of his ark, as it traveled through those turbulent waters, a bumper sticker that said, "Smile, God loves you," while the antediluvians were drowning? Could you convince them that God really loved them? How about Lot? Do you think as he escaped from Sodom and Gomorrah, he had that sign on his back saying, "Smile, God loves you"?

I have news for you. If Sodom and Gomorrah and the flood are an example of God's love, I do not want God to love me that way. In fact, the Bible says in Jude 1 in verse 7: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Sodom and Gomorrah is not a demonstration of the love of God. It is a demonstration of the wrath and vengeance of God.

God is angry with the wicked every day. That is all there is to it.

In Psalm 5, verse 6: "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing." There is the fifth thing. God will pour out His wrath of indignation upon the wicked: "Thou wilt destroy them that speak leasing."

The Hebrew word for "destroy" is the word "abad," which literally means to perish, to die, to be exterminated, to be destroyed, to be killed, to be blotted out, to be put to death, and to be struck with divine judgment. "Thou shalt destroy"—cause to perish, blot out—"them that speak leasing." The word "leasing" is the Hebrew word "kazab," which literally refers to a lie or the act of lying. It is to be deceitful, false, to speak untruths, and to use that which is deceptive.

How do the wicked live? Deceptively. Lyingly. Their very life is a lie against God and against God's Word. Their very life testifies that God is not true and that God will not judge them. In Psalm 10, there are their vain imaginations. The Bible says that God will pour out His wrath upon them. One last thing: here is the sixth point in verse 6.

"The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man." The word "abhor" is a very strong word for hatred. The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. This develops the phrase from Nahum, "Behold, I'm against you," showing how God is against the wicked.

The Eternal Hatred of God (Psalm 73)

The Bible tells us in Psalm 5 and verse 6 that the Lord will abhor, or hate, the bloody and deceitful man. The wicked shall be eternally hated by God.

Psalm 73 is the Psalm of Asaph. Asaph had a problem. He began looking around and saw how the wicked were prospering and had everything they could desire. He was trying to do what was right, honor God, and live for God, yet he was suffering. He really got bent out of shape, and he says:

"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart."

That was really his conclusion; he begins with his conclusion. But then he says:

"But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

"For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know?

"And is there knowledge in the most High?" Then he says in verse 12: "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches."

Here was Asaph's problem. He looked around at the wicked and said, "I don't understand this. Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than their heart could wish." You look at the wicked elite who run this world and this nation. They have billions and billions. They go where they want to go, do what they want to do, and have it all. They do not mind cursing man or cursing God. They do not mind depopulating a country or poisoning our food and water. They think they are gods.

Asaph, a godly man, saw all of this. These men had everything, yet they were blasphemers, wicked, and ungodly. He was trying to obey God and do what was right, but he was suffering, doing without, and had no money. The IRS was after him; he had it bad.

But look what he says: "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." Then, in light of what he saw in the world, he says, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." What good had it done him to be holy, godly, and righteous? "For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." If he spoke this way, he would offend against the generation of God's children. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me."

He could not even stand to think about it. But then: "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." Speaking of the wicked, he says, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image."

He was downcast and discouraged when he looked at the world and saw all they had. He was trying to live and do what was right, yet he was suffering. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me until I went into your sanctuary and I understood their end."

"Lord, you put them in slippery places. Lord, you are going to bring them down to destruction. In a moment," he says, "they're going to be utterly consumed with terrors." Then he said, "As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image."

Some people deny or do not believe in the reality of hell. Some teach annihilationism. But if there were no hell, no fire, torture, pain, or suffering—if you were merely flung into outer darkness where every day, every moment, every second for eternity you received nothing but a fresh baptism of the eternal hatred of God—that would be hell enough in and of itself. "So when thou awakest, O Lord, thou shalt despise their image."

None would be shocked at these declarations or think them extreme if we had a correct understanding and right view of the doctrine of God's holiness and justice. The reason most people do not think God is angry with the wicked is that they do not understand His justice or His holiness.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "He," God, "not only detests sin, but is angry with those who continue to indulge in it. We have no insensible and stolid God to deal with. He can be angry. Nay, He is angry today and every day with you, you ungodly and impenitent sinners. The best day that ever dawned on a sinner brings a curse with it. Sinners may have many feast days, but not any safe days. From the beginning of the year, even to its ending, there is not an

hour in which God's oven is not hot and burning in readiness for the wicked that shall be as stubble."

I hope you are beginning to see the import of those words that God spoke to the Assyrians.

The Meaning of 'Against' and Scriptural Examples

"Behold, I am against thee." Let me tell you what that phrase actually means; I want to explain it to you. Twice God told the Assyrians, in Nahum 2:13 and Nahum 3:5, "Behold, I'm against thee, saith the Lord."

First, the word "against" signifies a state of enmity and ill will. Secondly, it signifies motion toward with an evil intent. Now, that does not mean that God is evil, but it means that He intends to do that which the wicked do not want done to them. Thirdly, it denotes a state of war.

Now, let me show you how this word is used in Scripture. In Genesis chapter 4, verse 8, the Bible says, "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." This is a word and a verse that everyone knows, but note the word that is used. Cain rose up what? "Against" Abel his brother. What is entailed in the word "against"? There was ill will, movement toward, and a state of war, or he killed him.

Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah 21, verses 13 and 14. Notice how God tells people He is against them. These are just some of the verses; there are a multitude of others. God says, "Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the Lord; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations? But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the Lord: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it." God said, "I'm against you."

You said, "Who can destroy us? Who can come against us?" God said, "I'll show you I can. And when I get to you, I will judge you and destroy you."

Jeremiah 50:31-32 says: "Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him." Note what God says: "Behold, I am against thee." And what does God do? God judges; God destroys.

Again, in Jeremiah 51:25-26, God says: "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth. And I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the Lord." When God says, "Behold, I am against you," it means He is moving toward you in an act of war to destroy you.

Ezekiel 5:8-9 says: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations." What does He say? "I'm against you." What is He going to do? Destroy.

Ezekiel 13:8 says: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God." The judgment of God is going to fall. Verse 20 continues: "Wherefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly."

God is talking about their idolatries. In Ezekiel 28:22, He says, "And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her." This phrase occurs just ten times alone in Ezekiel.

One last passage is 1 Peter 5:5: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another,

and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Note this carefully: "God resisteth the proud." The word "against" means, first, ill will or evil intent; second, motion toward; and third, a state of war. When God tells us that He resisteth the proud, the word "resist" literally means to fight against. What does God do to the proud, to the wicked? He fights against them. He moves toward them to destroy them. God oftentimes allows the evil that the wicked plan to fall upon their own head.

Nineveh's Reaping What She Sowed

Psalm 7:16-17 says that the wicked have fallen into the pit which they had digged. In other words, they dug it for someone else, but they fell into it. God brings the dealings of the wicked down upon their own pate, that is, the top of their head. He lets their dealings fall back upon the top of their own head.

For instance, Haman was hanged on the very gallows that he prepared for Mordecai. It was Saul who was slain by an Amalekite whom he let go. In other words, God oftentimes allows the wicked to suffer that which they dish out.

In the book of Nahum, God is dealing with Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire. God says to Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire, "Behold, I'm against thee." It is pointed out that it is not just the Assyrians, but all of God's enemies, that He is against. Nineveh is to be made to suffer the agony, the disgrace, the destruction, and the humiliation that she inflicted upon others.

She has taken kings captive; now her king shall be taken captive (Nahum 2:8). She has besieged hundreds of cities; now her city is to be besieged (Nahum 3:14). She has spoiled other cities; now her city is to be spoiled (Nahum 2:10). She has massacred thousands of foes, and now a multitude of her own people are to be massacred (Nahum 3:3).

Her troops have desecrated and defiled the temples of vanquished peoples; now her temple is to be destroyed. She has set fire to hundreds of cities; now her city and temples are to be set on fire and inundated with floods (Nahum 2:6). Her troops have left the capitals

of conquered nations in ruins; now her capital shall be left in ruin (Nahum 2:11–12).

Nineveh is going to reap what she has sown. She has ruthlessly scattered people and sent them into exile; now her people are going to be scattered beyond gathering (Nahum 3:16–18). She has made her captives a gazing stock before her people; now her people shall be made a gazing stock to others (Nahum 3:6). She made others flee for their lives; now the Ninevites shall flee for their lives (Nahum 3:17). She has destroyed people; now she shall be destroyed. God said to Nineveh and the Assyrians, “Behold, I am against thee.” This means that God has an evil intent in the sense that He is going to afflict evil upon them. God is not evil, but He has ill will; He is moving toward them in a state of war. Every time that phrase is used, God destroys His enemies.

Applications: Repentance and Safety in Christ

There is a progression in Nahum, seen by asking questions and considering the statements God makes to His enemies. The first application should be exceedingly obvious: God does indeed make individuals, families, churches, and nations reap exactly what they have sown. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” When we understand that we will reap exactly what we have sown, we should be diligent to watch our attitudes as well as our actions.

The second application is this: it is a sobering exercise to contemplate what is involved when God says, “Behold, I’m against thee.” How can a sinner ever hope to win the battle against God? I might could whip Hobie, or I might could outrun Ed, but I can do neither to God. There is no hope for sinners when God takes up arms and moves against them.

God demands in Scripture that sinners repent. He does not demand that sin repent. He demands that sinners repent because there would be no sin without the sinner. The Scripture says, “commandeth all men every where to repent.” Why? Because men are sinners, and men commit sin. When our Lord began preaching in

Mark chapter 1, He began preaching, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Sinners are to repent because it is sinners who sin.

God is angry with sinners every day. I have told you for the past three weeks, and I will tell you this week, that the only safe place for anyone is under the protection and blood of Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist began preaching, “Flee from the wrath to come,” he also pointed out, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

For those of us who are in Christ, the doctrine of the love of God is a comfort and a consolation. For those outside of Christ, they will take it, pervert it, and say, “Well, if God loves me, he won’t judge me.” But to the wicked, God says, “Behold, I’m against you.” God is against every man outside of Christ, because every man outside of Christ is against God.

The doctrine of reconciliation deals with the sinner’s repentance and faith given by God, when the sinner turns back to God, and God through Christ forgives him. Thus the sinner and God become reconciled through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Without reconciliation, the only state between God and man is enmity. I want to be in Christ, with Christ, and live through Christ, because I want God to be pleased with my life. The only way He can be is to be in Jesus Christ.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for your grace, mercy, and love. We are thankful for your truth, and we know, Lord, that you’re against sinners. This should drive men, impel men, to come to thee and cry for mercy and grace. Oh, God, use this message to stir, convict, and draw to thyself men and women. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

The Wrath of God - 5 of 5

Introduction: The Severity of God in Nahum

Nahum chapter 1, verse 14, says: “And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.”

In the opening message on Nahum chapter 1, I gave a historical and biblical overview of how God has two books in the Bible against the Assyrian Empire, and particularly against Nineveh—Jonah and Nahum. These two books show both the goodness and the severity of God: Jonah the goodness of God, and Nahum the severity of God. Nineveh was known for her vastness and for her vileness. The key verse was verse 3: “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.”

God's Declaration Against Sennacherib and All Rebels

As we looked through this passage, I covered such questions as, “Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide the fierceness of His wrath?” and, “What do ye imagine against the

Lord?" Today we come to verse 14, where God tells Sennacherib, the king of the Assyrian Empire, "I will make thy grave; for thou art vile." This applies not only to Sennacherib and the whole Assyrian Empire, but also to all who are in rebellion against God.

In the last message, from Nahum chapter 2, I dealt with the phrase, "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord." God was not only against the Assyrian Empire and Sennacherib, but also against all who rebel against Him—all who try to thwart His sovereign authority and law. When God says, "Behold, I am against you," the word literally means motion toward with the intent to do evil or harm or destroy. It refers to God moving and acting in a state of war toward His enemies.

The Meaning of 'Behold, I Am Against Thee'

When God says, "Behold, I am against thee," He is referring to someone, some group, or some nation. It means that all the attributes of God are against those whom God is against. The wrath of God is moving to satisfy His righteousness. The wisdom of God has perfected righteous justice. The longsuffering of God is trying for vengeance. The power of God is flexing its muscles to do its worst. The faithfulness of God ensures His indignation against the wicked. The immutability of God guarantees that God will not at all acquit the wicked. The eternality of God cries for eternal punishment. The infinity of God makes sure that the wrath of His indignation will be without reprieve, and the sufficiency of God declares that God alone will tread the winepress of His wrath. The love of God admires His holiness in the infliction of His wrath, and the mercy of God is satisfied with His justice by vindicating His justice against wicked men who have long abused His grace and His mercy.

Secondly, when God says, "Behold, I am against thee," it implies that all the activity of God is against them. God is not a neutral being, some inactive God, or some stolid person. The Bible teaches that God is an active God. He is either actively blessing or actively cursing. God curses all those who disobey or rebel, and God blesses all those who submit, surrender, and obey.

When a man is outside of Christ, it means not only that all the attributes of God are against him, but that all the activity of God is

against him. God is dressed in full battle array, moving against that individual. So God says, “Behold, I am against you.” It means that God is moving with the intent to destroy.

A great overview of the doctrine of the wrath of God and of the book of Nahum can be gained by noting the progress of its statements. In Nahum 1:2, the Bible says, “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.” First, God reserves vengeance and wrath for His enemies.

Secondly, verse 3 says, “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.” God not only reserves wrath; He will not at all acquit the wicked. Thirdly, verse 6 asks, “Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?” His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.

Progression of Wrath in Nahum

Fourth, God asks in verse 9, “What do ye imagine against the Lord?” Men imagine vain things against the Lord. Then, fifthly, in chapter 2 and verse 13, God says, “Behold, I am against thee.”

Now we come to the final phrase in Nahum 1:14, where God says, “I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.” When God tells the Assyrian Empire that He is going to make their grave because they are vile, this is not some temporary judgment. It is a permanent, total, and absolute judgment. It is also a purposeful, deliberate judgment. The first part of verse 14 says, “And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee.” God has given a commandment concerning thee. Then He says, “I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.” This passage teaches and demonstrates the light esteem that God has for those who are outside of Christ.

The Light Esteem God Has for the Wicked

This message is going to show you the light esteem that God has for those who are outside of Christ. Before I finish, I think you will say that my statement was a kind and gentle expression of the truth. You will find that it is more than a light esteem that God has; it is an

absolute abhorrence and detestation. The pride and vanity of man like to think that God was created for us. Most people like to think that God is our little servant boy, that He was created for us and is there at our beck and command. We, as fallen, sinful, rebellious, wicked creatures, like to think that God was created to serve us and that He is just like us.

But look in your Bibles at Psalm 50:21. Here is what God tells the wicked: “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.” God says, You thought I was someone just like you, but you are mistaken. I am not anywhere near like you. To show you that I am not, says God, I will set your sins in order before your eyes.

Eight Biblical Analogies of Sin's Vileness

There are sufficient illustrations in the Word of God to deflate the proud, arrogant, haughty attitude of sinners if they would only heed His Word. Here are eight illustrations of the wickedness and vileness of our depravity. We will not take time to look up these Scriptures; you may look them up later. In the Word of God, sinners and our sin are likened to several things. First, our sin and sinners are likened unto the scum of a boiling pot wherein is a detestable carcass.

You will find that in Ezekiel 24, verses 3 through 12, where God commands Ezekiel to put this detestable carcass in a pot and boil it. Then God says this is what your sins are like.

Secondly, our sins and sinners are likened to the blood and pollution of a newborn child. You will find that in Ezekiel 16, verses 1 through 6. In fact, God says that in the day we were born, we were cast out in our filth and wickedness.

Thirdly, our sins and sinners are likened to putrefying boils and sores that have not been doctored. You will find that in Isaiah 1, verses 5 through 6: “Putrefying sores which have neither been bound up nor mollified with ointment.” From the top of the head to the toe of the foot, says God, we are covered with boils.

Number four, we are likened unto filthy, rotten rags: Isaiah 30, verse 22; Isaiah 64 and verse 6; Lamentations 1, verse 17; and Ezekiel 36 and verse 17.

Number five, sinners and their sin are likened to the noise and stench and poisonous fumes from an open grave, in Matthew 23 and verse 27. If you have never been around an opened grave, count yourself blessed. I was going to preach in a church one night in Cairo, Georgia, and a tornado passed through right before I got to the church. It tore down numbers of trees in the cemetery, and as the trees blew over, it pulled up the graves. That is what God says our sins are like.

Number six, He likens our sins to a dead and rotting body in Romans 7 and verse 24, where the Apostle Paul cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Back in those days, if a man murdered another man and the murderer was caught relatively quickly, they would take the murdered man and tie him face-to-face with the living man who murdered him—hand-to-hand, stomach-to-stomach, and leg-to-leg—until the dead man, the worms that ate him, ate the living man alive. That is the illustration the Apostle Paul is using when he says, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Paul was talking about his sinful nature and his wickedness. God says that our sins are likened to a dead and rotting body. Number seven: God likens our sins to the vomit of a dog and the wallowing of a sow in the mire. You will find that in 2 Peter 2 and verse 22. Lastly, number eight: God likens our sins—and our righteousnesses—as dung. You will find that in Philippians 3 and verse 8.

You remember what the Apostle Paul said about all of his righteousness? He did count it but dung. That is how God likens our sins.

The Word 'Vile' and the Meaning of 'Gilulim'

Out of these eight analogies, I am only going to develop one today, and that is number eight, where our sins and our righteousnesses are likened as unto dung. Look back at verse 14 of Nahum chapter 1, at

that last phrase of what God says to Sennacherib and the Assyrian Empire: “I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.” You must remember that the king of Assyria and his empire are representative of all who are in rebellion against God.

There is in the Bible what is known as case law. In case law, first of all, the Bible gives a very broad general principle, like the Ten Commandments. Secondly, the Bible gives a specific case that illustrates that commandment. Thirdly, we are to make the applications from that specific illustration. God says in the very first commandment, “I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods before me.” The second is that you are not to bow down to any graven images.

There are Scriptures that indicate the worth of those who hate God and rebel against Him. Look at two passages in your Bibles and mark them. The first is Deuteronomy 23, and the second is Ezekiel chapter 6. Hold the book of Nahum as we look first at Deuteronomy and then at Ezekiel chapter 6. Deuteronomy 23, and notice verse 12.

Here is a case law that God gives to the children of Israel, especially in relationship to their army. In Deuteronomy 23:12, God said, "Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: and thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: for the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."

This is a very interesting case law. God demanded that those in His army, when they were out in the field and had to use the bathroom, literally dig a hole, ease themselves, and then turn again and cover it. God was not giving this law merely for sanitary reasons.

Certainly, sanitation was involved. But there is another reason for this, and God says, here is why, in verse 14: “For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.” What God is

demanding is this: not just a holy army and not just a holy cause, but a holy camp as well.

In Ezekiel 6:4, God says, “And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols.” Pay particular attention to the word “idols.” The word in the Hebrew for idols is “gilul,” or “gilulim,” plural. There are a number of Hebrew words used in the Bible for idols.

There is “elil,” which literally means a thing of naught, a vile thing, a naughty thing, a vain thing. There is the word “shikkuts,” which means that which is detestable or an abomination, and the word “gilulim” occurs 39 times in the book of Ezekiel. So 39 times God uses this word, “gilulim,” just as He does in Ezekiel 6:4 when He is talking about idols.

Now go back to Nahum 1:14 and think about that which God is literally telling Sennacherib. In the latter part of Nahum 1:14, God says, “I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.” Look at the word “vile.” Let me give you what a couple of commentators say concerning the word “vile.”

The first one is John Calvin. Here is what Calvin says: God adds, “For thou art excreable. I will make thy grave, for thou art excreable,” or a thing to be abominated. Calvin writes: “It may indeed be referred to that history, but I take it by itself as meaning that Sennacherib was to be abominable, and not he alone, but also the whole royal family and the monarchy of Nineveh. For it is not consistent, as we have said already, to say that all these things refer to the person of Sennacherib, for the prophet speaks of the destruction of the city and the nation, and generally, at that time, this does not prevent him from referring, as it were in passing, to the person of Sennacherib.”

What Calvin is saying is that when God says, “I will bury thee, for thou art vile,” or, “Thou art excreable,” or a thing to be abominated, He is not just talking about Sennacherib. He is talking about Nineveh, the capital, and the whole Assyrian Empire. Calvin then renders the word “gilulim” as excreable, a thing to be abominated.

Now let me tell you what the word literally means. I am not trying to be ugly; I am just trying to tell you. The word actually means “gilulim,” that which is round, logs, or shapeless things.

Now you need to ask yourself this question: Why would God say to Sennacherib, “I will bury thee, I will make thy grave, for thou art vile”? And why would Calvin interpret and translate this word as excreable? Because Kohler and Baumgartner, in their lexicon, render the word “gilulim” as dung balls, dung pellets. Literally, what God is saying is this: “I will make thy grave.” Now you understand why God is talking about a grave, and why I read Deuteronomy 23. Why did God demand that soldiers who eased themselves abroad dig a grave and bury that which came from themselves? Because it was considered vile, a thing to be abominated. What therefore did God say to the Assyrian monarch? “I will make thy grave, I will bury thee, for thou art vile.” Some of us, in our younger days, had outhouses.

And they were not in our living room. I tell people that when I was a boy, my mother carpeted our bathroom. And she liked it so much she ran it all the way into the house. Well, we had an outhouse is what I'm trying to say. But it was some distance from the house. Why do we have septic systems? The answer is, because we consider it abomination and vile and useless and worthless and of no value. Now, you say, why in the world are you saying all this, Pastor? Well, I want you to look in your Bible. There's a biblical reason. Look in your Bible to Psalm 115, and let's begin reading there with verse 3.

Here's a passage where God is talking about idols. Look what He says, Psalm 115 verse 3. I love this verse. Psalm 115 verse 3: "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." Now look what He says about the idols. "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not."

"Eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat." Well, that's a pretty good description of idols, isn't it? Until you get to verse 8. "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." Now, wait a minute.

If one of the main words for idols—and remember it occurs 39 times in Ezekiel alone—if one of the main words is "gilulim," and it literally refers to dung balls and dung pellets, look what God says. "They that make them," that is the idol, the dung ball or the dung pellets, "are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." In other words, they become dung balls as well.

You have heard the statement—not the story, but the statement—you've heard the statement, "You are what you eat." Well, God changes that. He says you are what you worship. And let me show you that. Look in your Bible to Jeremiah 2 and verse 5. Jeremiah 2 and verse 5. In our Bible sometimes the word "elil" for idol is translated as "vanity." And when you talk about the vanities, he's talking about idols. So look at Jeremiah 2 and verse 5: "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" In other words, they became what the idol was. So what God is saying, you are what you worship. They walked after the vanity and they became vain, useless, worthless, and profitless.

Someone is going to say, “Wait a minute, Brother Weaver, all of that's Old Testament.” Well, as I love to say, you've got to remember we have one Bible, not two. It just so happens that our Lord teaches exactly the same thing in the New Testament.

Gehenna: The Outhouse of Jerusalem and Symbol of Hell

In Matthew 5:29, He says, “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.” Take note of the word “hell.” Verse 30 says, “And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

Matthew 10:28 says, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 23:33 says, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”

In each of these verses, the word for hell in the Greek is Gehenna. The word Gehenna occurs twelve times in our New Testament, and each time it is translated as hell. Why? Because it is a fit description of hell for three reasons. First, the valley of Hinnom—Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom—had been the seat of idolatrous worship to Moloch, to whom children were sacrificed. You will find that in 2 Chronicles 28:3 and 2 Chronicles 33:6. There the image of Moloch stood, and there they sacrificed their children to Moloch.

The valley of the son of Hinnom, or Gehenna, is also called the valley of Tophet. God said, "I have ordained Tophet of old." The word Toph literally means to roll like a drum. When these people were sacrificing their children to Moloch, they were burned alive, and the drum was rolled to drown the cries of the children as they were sacrificed. So Gehenna, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, has been associated with idolatry down through the ages.

Secondly, here is the second reason. The valley of the Son of Hinnom, or Gehenna, was defiled by Josiah, King Josiah, and became associated with judgment, desecration, and destruction. The related passages are 2 Kings 23:10, Jeremiah chapter 7, and Jeremiah chapter 19.

In Jeremiah 7:32, God says, "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place." So God says, "I'm going to change it from Hinnom and Tophet to the Valley of Slaughter because I'm going to execute all of those wicked, abominable, idol worshippers."

Jeremiah 19:11 mentions it again and associates it with judgment: "And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury." So what is God doing? God is judging and God is destroying, saying, "I'm burying all these bodies in Tophet."

Here is the third reason why Gehenna is translated hell: the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, or Gehenna, was south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned. It was a fitting symbol of the wicked and their destruction. Moreover,

the sewers of Jerusalem emptied into the valley. Consequently, it was a filthy, abominable place, and there was a perpetual fire that raged there to consume the filth and the corruption. Gehenna, then, is a fitting symbol of cruelty, misery, pollution, filth, defilement, perpetual destruction, and perpetual fire; therefore, it is a fitting symbol for the reality of hell.

The valley of the Son of Hinnom, Gehenna, was the outhouse of Jerusalem, the place of excrement for the city. What is hell? It is God's outhouse for the dung balls of this life. That's literally what it is.

In Deuteronomy 23, verses 12 through 14, we read earlier, but I want to emphasize something. Look at verse 12. God says, "Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: and thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: for the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."

Notice two things. First of all, verse 12: "Thou shalt have a place also." Where? "Without the camp." Not in the camp. Without the camp. It had to be a place away from the camp. Why? Because God is holy. God says, I walk among my people, and I do not want to see any unclean thing, and I demand that you be holy as I am holy.

Notice what he said in verse 13: "And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself"—"when thou shalt ease thyself."

The reason I am pointing this out is that God uses this same specific language when He is going to fully and finally judge. Remember what God said, “when thou shalt ease thyself abroad.” Now God says in Isaiah 1 and verse 24: “Therefore thus saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.” Notice that language: God will fully and finally judge. This is an absolute statement about God's final dealing with His adversaries and enemies.

Now look at Revelation chapter 21 and verse 27. He is talking about the eternal kingdom: “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth.

The word “defileth” is the Greek word “koinoo,” and it literally means to defile, pollute, or be unclean. It is rendered that which is unhallowed, defiled, or profane. Even the word in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, referred to that which would be Levitically unclean. God says there is nothing unclean going to be here.

If the Israelite army had an outhouse in the midst of their camp, it would be unclean. God said they had to put it outside the camp. What is God saying? In His kingdom, there is not going to be anything that defiles. Nothing is going to enter in. Then He says, “neither whatsoever worketh abomination.”

The word “abomination” is the Greek word “bdelugma,” which literally means a foul thing, a detestable thing, and it pertains to idols and idolatry as well. What is God telling us? “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

Now look at Revelation 22 and verse 15, speaking about outside the kingdom of God: “For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

Now, let me make a statement, then I want to make some applications. I want to try to tie this together for you. God gave His law. But God is not bound by His law. God is above law. God is the giver of law. He's the lawgiver. He is the judge. He is the king. But I want you to know what God does in Scripture. God still acts in principle according to His law.

So, therefore, in Deuteronomy 23, He said you're going to have a place outside the camp to ease yourself abroad. It's not going to be in the camp because I am holy and I demand a holy camp and a holy

people and a holy cause. It's going to be outside. And when you go to ease yourself, you go outside.

Now, what God is saying is this. Outside of His kingdom, it's going to be the outhouse. Nothing's going to come in this kingdom that defiles or works an abomination. All of that is outside.

Now, let me tell you, listen carefully. I hope you remember the message that I preached last week, where I developed the theme through Scripture, "Behold, I am against you." The message to the wicked and the message to the unrepentant is not, "Smile, God loves you." It is, "Behold, I am against you, and I will dig thy grave, for thou art foul." In other words, these are fearful words from a fearful God. You know what? The author of the book of Hebrews said in Hebrews 10 and verse 31, now listen: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Why? Because that living God can make thy grave, for thou art vile. Now, let me make some applications.

Applications: Worship, Humility, and Evangelism

The first one should be very simple. A principle that I enunciated earlier, I want to enunciate again. I said you've heard the statement that you are what you eat, but God says you are what you worship. It is true in reality to idols. God says, they that make them and they that worship them are likened to them. But if it is true in relationship to idols, it is also even more true in relationship to the one true and the living God. Now, I quote this passage, but I want you to see it. I want you to turn to 1 Peter, chapter 1. I want you to look at 1 Peter, chapter 1. And I want you to look, please, at verses 15 and 16. Because the principle is you are, or you become, what you worship. Look in 1 Peter 1 and verse 15. 1 Peter 1 and verse 15.

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." If you worship the one true and the living God who is holy, what will you become? Holy. You can't help it. He demands that. If you worship Him, you obey Him, you hear Him, you heed Him, and you bring your life in conformity to His Word. So it is true: you are and you become what you worship. Those who worship the idol become like the idol, according to Jeremiah 2 in verse 5 and Psalm

115 in verse 8. So if we worship the one true and living God, we are to be holy and godly.

The second application is this. In Philippians chapter 3 and verse 8, the Apostle Paul says: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

Here is the defining distinction between the saved and the unsaved. The saved is willing to count everything in this world and everything in this life nothing but dung, that they may win Christ, serve Christ, and love Him. They are not interested in fame, money, or popularity. Everybody needs money to live, and if God gives you money, you may use it for His kingdom and His honor and His glory. But money is not your goal. Fame is not your goal. Popularity is not your goal. Your goal is to serve and honor Jesus Christ, and you are willing to count everything else but dung. It is not worth anything to you; it is worthless.

You remember that little couplet, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last"? That is because you recognize everything else is but dung. But to the unsaved, they view the ministry of Christ, the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, and His service as dung. They do not want it. It is valueless and worthless to them.

Why would they waste a perfectly good Sunday when they could be fishing or at the beach instead of coming to church? Where we would count everything but dung outside of Christ, they count everything that is in Christ as dung and worthless. To them, the world is everything. Those who hate Christ, despise His law, and rebel against Him count His worship, His service, and His ministry as dung, worthless, useless, and unprofitable. Only the child of God whose eyes have been opened by the grace of God can see the value, beauty, wonder, and awe that are in Jesus Christ. Christ gives us purpose; Christ gives life meaning and direction. All who hate Him destroy their own souls.

Remember Proverbs 8:36, where our Lord said, “All they that hate me love death”? Thirdly, a true understanding of this message

provides ample ground for humility. If you truly grasp its significance, you have no ground for boasting as a child of God. You may say, “Well, bless God, I won't be in God's outhouse.” I understand that, but consider this question: If you are a child of God by grace, and you will not be there, why will you not be there?

Psalm 113:5 says, “Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!” Then, “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill.” The only reason we will not be in God's outhouse is that God humbly reached in, took us out, and made us what we are in Jesus Christ.

Without Him, we are nothing but dung, fit only for God's outhouse. Finally, if you understand this message, it ought to give you proper motivation for evangelism, witnessing, warning, and telling your friends, family, and loved ones that without Christ they have no hope. Without Christ, you are worthless and useless. Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, gives us hope—not only in this life, but in the life to come—because God has sovereignly reached down and lifted us up out of the dunghill.

Let us finish with verse 8. Go back to Psalm 113, verse 7: “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill.” Why? “That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.” Who is it that made us kings and priests unto our God? Jesus Christ. We are what we are only by the grace of God.

When we see the wicked, the rebellious, and the ungodly, we may warn them, and we must warn them. But at the same time, we must be humbled, grateful, and thankful to our God, who lifted us up and made us His people.

Let us pray. Father, we ask You in the name of Jesus Christ today that You would teach us. Above all, make us thankful and grateful to Thee for Thy great salvation in Jesus Christ. Thank You, Father, for the shed blood of Jesus Christ, for giving us Your Son, and for lifting us up out of the dunghill and making us kings and priests unto our God.

Thank You, Father, for Your infinite mercy and grace. May we walk humbly before Thee, acknowledging that we are what we are

only by the grace of God. Give us grace and mercy to serve Thee. Make us like unto Thee, Lord; make us holy as Thou art holy. May our lives be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and bring honor and glory to Thy name. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

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