

FEASTING ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Faithful in the Midst of Darkness

Nahum

INTRODUCTION:

Great to see you! Those here in person, those who have joined us online.

Moving forward, one small step at a time!

- Grateful to the Lord, Bro. Mark, Karen, Bro. Rick all were exposed to the virus, but none got it. They went through quarantine and tested negative.
- Some of our building maintenance staff did catch the virus – Dennis, Justin. Both are well now.
- Others in our church family who have caught the virus, as far as I know, all are improving. For that, we thank the Lord!

Still, these remain dark times, to a degree around the world, but I believe especially in our country. I remain deeply burdened by the godlessness and lawlessness in our land. And it is not only the practice of this great wickedness that disturbs me, but the blatant approval of it from people in leadership in our nation.

As I share with you yet another testimony of the faithfulness of God this morning from His Word, I tell you that the man to whom God showed His faithfulness lived during a dark time in the history of his own country.

I can tell you his name was Nahum, but the only thing that will tell most of you is that he has a book of the Bible bearing his name. From his prophecy, we can gather only a few things about Nahum, the man; but those few things are important. They are in fact the reasons, I believe, God put this example of His faithfulness on my heart to share with you today.

- Nahum lived in the small town of Elkosh, a part of the nation of Judah.
- He lived a little more than 650 years before Christ was born.
- Nahum ministered during Judah's darkest days, shortly before the Lord brought judgment upon Judah by allowing it to be conquered and Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonians because God's people forsook their worship and obedience to Yahweh, the one true creator God.

- Interestingly, Nahum's prophecy is not about Judah or Babylon. It is about the capital city of the Assyrian Empire, the city of Nineveh.

So what has that to do with us, and how does this Word from the Lord speak to us?

Assyria and Nineveh seem so far removed from America. What could a word of prophecy to or about Nineveh have to do with us in America and particularly us in Panama City, FL? Well more than you might imagine.

What if I told you that the site of ancient Nineveh could be seen from the city of Mosul, Iraq.

Yet even with that update, Nineveh admittedly seems so far away, both in distance and in time. Yet if you will lend me your close attention for the next little while, I think that you will see why God caused this word to be preserved across the ages for us. For this message about Nineveh is also a message about today. I believe you will see that this word reveals God's faithfulness to you and me, even in the dark times in which we are living.

So let me tell you about Nineveh. Although Nineveh was for the most part a pagan place, the leaders and people had extensive dealings with God Almighty across the years of their history. While the prophecy of Nahum refers to several parts of that history, it only extensively deals with one of four parts. Other portions of the Scripture lead up to the part God addresses primarily through Nahum.

First, the Scripture declares,

I. GOD WAS FAITHFUL TO SHOW NINEVEH HIS MERCY.

- A. God allowed Assyria to become a mighty empire and for Nineveh to become one of the largest and mightiest cities of the ancient world.
 1. This ancient city was so large that even today it has not been fully excavated.
 2. It was built along one edge of the Tigris River.
 3. Historians tell us that the walls of the city were 100 feet high and 50 feet thick, allowing 3 chariots to run abreast on top of the colossal structure.
 4. It had guard towers reaching up to 200 feet in height and 15 gates around the perimeter of the city which stretched some 7 miles.
 5. The parts of the city not protected by the Tigris River itself was surrounded by a 150 foot wide mote filled with water to slow if not stop altogether the advance of any army.
 6. All of this greatness and grandeur, the Lord God of heaven allowed to be theirs by His mercy.

- B. And when the wickedness of the city came up before God, (violence, greed, licentiousness, hatred, cruelty, murder, all caused by refusing to believe in God, America today!) God sent the prophet Jonah to go and preach to the city.
- C. When God's prophet said, "I'd rather go to Tarshish than preach in Nineveh," the Lord said, "Let's see if a little fishing trip will change the prophet's mind." Only Jonah did not catch the fish. The fish caught Jonah!
- D. Jonah preached the Word of the Lord, and the people repented.
- E. And the repentance of the people was followed by an outpouring of the mercy of God upon them and their generation.
- F. The outpouring of God's mercy on Nineveh was so great that Jonah was both angry and perplexed, leading to the last sentence of the Book of Jonah that has also confounded many a reader.

Jonah 4:11 NKJV And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?

I believe Jonah left the city of Nineveh overwhelmed by the magnitude of God's love. I picture him walking down the road leading away from the city, saying, "Even the cows, even the cows. God loves them all, even the cows!"

- G. Do you know, that even today in the excavations of Nineveh, there is a building that has been found dedicated to Jonah, the son of Amittai? Sadly, it is one of the buildings destroyed when ISIS was tearing down monuments like the rioters in many American cities are doing today.

Next, God's Word tells us,

II. GOD WAS FAITHFUL TO SHOW NINEVEH HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

- A. God not only allowed Assyria to be exalted among the nations and feared by all,
- B. God chose Assyria to be an instrument to bring God's judgment upon the northern kingdom of Israel because of Israel's sin and rebellion against the Lord.

And then the Scripture shows us,

III. GOD WAS FAITHFUL TO SHOW NINEVEH HIS POWER.

- A. After conquering the northern kingdom of Israel, Assyria went after the southern kingdom of Judah.
- B. The King of Assyria, Sennacherib, sent a letter to Hezekiah, the King of Judah, who lived in Jerusalem. And rather than acknowledge that they had been

victorious because of God's sovereignty, Sennacherib boasted of his great power. He told Hezekiah that he would destroy Jerusalem just as he had many other cities.

- C. Hezekiah took the letters to the temple and spread them before the Lord and prayed.
- D. God sent a message through Isaiah that God would send the army of the Assyrians packing without harming Jerusalem.
- E. One night, the angel of the Lord went out and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.
- F. When those who were not killed awoke and saw the slaughter, they packed up and went back to Nineveh.

Mercy, Sovereignty, and Power! There was one more thing Nineveh was to experience.

IV. GOD WAS FAITHFUL TO SHOW NINEVEH HIS JUDGMENT.

And this was the focus of the message of Nahum.

Nahum 2:13 NKJV "Behold, I *am* against you," says the LORD of hosts, "I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more."

Nahum 3:18-19 NKJV 18 Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; Your nobles rest *in the dust*. Your people are scattered on the mountains, And no one gathers them. 19 Your injury *has* no healing, Your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap *their* hands over you, For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?

- A. And how did God bring that judgment to pass upon Nineveh?
- B. First He allowed the king and his army to be cocky with pride. They camped outside the walls and got drunk. The attacking Babylonians got word of their state and attacked them. The army suffered major losses but retreated into the city.
- C. Then God sent a flood of the Tigris and Khosar Rivers and knocked down a portion of the wall. The Babylonians entered, conquered, and destroyed the city.
- D. The judgment of God had fallen.

CONCLUSION: Now look at the cumulative lesson here.

Nineveh forgot the mercy,

**sovereignty, and
power of God.**

Therefore, she experienced His judgment.

Now that is a lesson that transcends time and national boundaries.

That truth applies to the United States of America.

That is a truth that speaks to the lives of individuals as much as to nations.

Let me ask:

1. Have you experienced the mercy of God?

I have. Last week Bro. Jeremy told you of God's mercy to him and two other men and their sons in rescuing them from a pop up thunderstorm on St. Andrew Bay when their kayaks were driven by 65 mph winds and caught in 4 ft. waves, flipping them over like toy boats in a bathtub with a toddler.

One of those men was my son Kyle, and three of those boys were my grandsons. I believe they would all be dead right now except for the merciful intervention of God.

I have experienced the mercy of God.

- But experiencing the mercy of God like this does not save me.
- Benefitting by God's abundant mercy does not guarantee that I am saved.
- To be saved I must trust in Christ, who because of the love and mercy of God, died for my sins upon the cross.
- It is that specific act of mercy that offers us salvation.
- All of God's other acts of mercy simply testify of His love and goodness and draw us to Christ.
- But we can experience those acts of mercy without being saved.
- Do you get that?

Have you experienced the mercy of God yourself? Good! God did that to draw you to Christ.

You know that does not mean you are saved. God shows His mercy to the lost to draw them to Himself.

2. **Have you experienced the sovereignty of God?** The control of God? Where God just worked something out that only He could do?
3. **Have you experienced the power of God?** Seen unusual things happen that you would say, "That was a miracle!" My other son, Jeremy, was on life support. The nurse told us, "Nobody gets better once they are like your son." Karen and I prayed. The next day another nurse said, "Something happened last night!"

Most of us would say yes to the above 3 questions.

4. Now, **what difference has this working of God in your life made?**

- a. Have you trusted Him?
- b. Are you living for Him?
- c. Are you serving Him?
- d. Are you His faithful steward?
- e. Or are you ignoring the working of the Almighty God in your life in mercy, sovereignty, and power, and inviting God's judgment to fall upon you?

Some are thinking, "I may not be living and serving the Lord well, but I'm saved, so don't preach to me about the judgment of God!"

- f. The difference in judgment and chastening is its purpose.
 - Judgment is the just penalty executed on the lost who are guilty of all their sins.
 - Chastisement is a just penalty executed on the saved whose sins have been forgiven to cause them to return to a faithful walk with Christ.

So, where are you today in the midst of the dark days of America?

Have you experienced the mercy, sovereignty, and power of God?

- Do you need to now turn in faith and trust the Lord Jesus?
- Do you, as a believer, need to repent of sin and turn back to a faithful walk with Christ?