

## Lesson 108 - CHRIST, THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD *Nahum 1*

**(Nahum 1:1)** - God had sent the prophet Jonah to Nineveh because it was His purpose to bring them to repent of their evil and to serve Him. But 150 years later, Nineveh had returned to idolatry and arrogance (*Nahum 3:1-4*). God, then, sent another prophet, Nahum, to announce His judgment upon the people for their sins. This time God did not bring them to repentance, and the city was eventually conquered. As we consider Nahum's prophecy with Jonah's before him, we can consider the following - *"Behold therefore the goodness and 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"* (*Rom. 11:22*). We need to understand that God is faithful both to His threats of eternal damnation upon all who continue in unbelief and come before Him without Christ, and to His promises of eternal life and glory for all who come before Him in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. The severity of God is judgment unto damnation for all who die in their sins. The goodness of God is judgment unto eternal life by His free, sovereign grace for all who die in Christ.

*"The burden of Nineveh"* - *"Burden"* describes a very serious message that was heavy upon the heart of the prophet. It was a matter of life and death. This is the nature of the Gospel message of salvation by God's free and sovereign grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 2:15-17; Mark 16:15-16*). As believers, we understand the issues of God's justice, wrath, and condemnation, because we are well aware that by God's grace in Christ, we have been saved from what we deserve and have earned (*John 3:18-21; Rom. 5:6-10; 8:1,33-39*). Salvation is totally by God's grace in Christ!

**(Nahum 1:2)** - *"GOD IS JEALOUS"* - The jealousy of God is not the sinful jealousy or envy to which we are subject. God is jealous for His own glory, and this belongs to Him alone. God will not share His glory with another (*Isa. 42:8; 48:11*). He will not give to another that which belongs only to Him. When sinners reject, ignore, or deny Him the glory that belongs to Him in salvation, they are His enemies and can expect nothing but His just wrath. God alone is to be worshipped, and the only way sinners can worship Him in a way that glorifies Him is through the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 5:22-23; 17:1-3; Php. 3:3*).

**(Nahum 1:3)** - The LORD being *"slow to anger"* does not mean that He is waiting on sinners to do anything before He acts in justice or mercy. It is His *"forbearance"* (*Rom. 3:25*) showing that, in His purposes and intents, He holds back the judgment that sinners deserve. If not for God's forbearance, humanity would have been destroyed completely when Adam fell. But God had already purposed to save a people by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, a people whom He had chosen in Christ before the world began. And one of the main purposes of His holding back the judgment of the wicked throughout time is to show His elect the necessity of salvation by His grace in Christ and the necessity of sinners fleeing to Christ for salvation and looking only to the Lord God for mercy and grace in Christ. Again - *"Behold therefore the goodness and 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"* (*Rom. 11:22; cf. Rom. 2:1-4*). But make no mistake about this - God *"will not at all acquit the wicked."* All who live and die in their sins will stand before God under the just charge of their sins and will perish.

**(Nahum 1:4-6)** - God's power is unmatched in heaven and in earth. He will punish the wicked, and He will save His people from their sins. No one and nothing can stop this. Our only hope is to flee to Christ for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. God's wrath is always just and according to truth (*Rom. 2:1-11*).

**(Nahum 1:7-8)** - The goodness of God does not dissuade His wrath against all sinners to whom sin is imputed. But that same goodness provides salvation full and free to all who “*trust in Him*” as they stand before God in Christ and submit to His righteousness for all salvation and glory (*Rom. 10:1-4*).

**(Nahum 1:9-10)** - No matter what men try to imagine or do to stand against God and justify themselves, it will not work. Men by nature stand together in opposition to Christ, His church, and His truth (*Acts 4:26-27*). Their unholy confederacy will not be victorious. God’s judgment is always successful, always right and complete. We see this in God’s wrath falling upon Christ for our sins imputed to Him - “*For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*” (*Heb. 10:14*).

**(Nahum 1:11)** - This “*wicked counselor*” probably is Sennacherib, the King of Assyria (*2 Kings 18:13-16; Isa. 37:14-38*). He was bent on conquering Jerusalem, and he first attacked forty-six of Judah’s fortified cities and captured them (*Isa. 36:1*). Then they laid siege on Jerusalem. In desperation, King Hezekiah sent gold and silver as a peace offering to Assyria, hoping to appease the power-hungry Sennacherib (*2 Kings 18:13-16*). The Lord sent word to Hezekiah that Sennacherib would not step foot inside the city of Jerusalem (*Isa. 37:33*), so Hezekiah stood firm and refused to give in to the Assyrian king’s boastful threats (*2 Kings 18:28-35; 2 Chron. 32:17*). He commanded the terrified citizens of Jerusalem not to answer taunts from Sennacherib’s men outside the wall (*2 Kings 18:36*). Instead, Hezekiah encouraged the people to look to the LORD (*2 Chron. 32:7-8*). Sennacherib and his army are typical of all ungodly leaders and false prophets who stand against Christ and His people. We who believe are not to fear these sinful men. We are to look to Christ and find our peace and security in Him (*Heb. 12:1-2*).

**(Nahum 1:12-14)** - The LORD assured them that even though the Assyrians were settled in a self-confident victory, they would be “*cut down,*” and the “*yoke*” and “*bonds*” they had already placed upon Judah would be broken and removed. But God also said that He would remove the “*affliction*” which He had put upon Judah in using the Assyrians as instruments of judgment upon them for their sins. Though God did bring final judgment upon the Northern Kingdom through the Assyrians, He spared the Southern Kingdom. This was according to His covenant promises to Judah, Abraham, and David (*Gen. 49:10; 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:10-17*) to bring Christ into the world for the salvation of spiritual Israel, God’s elect out of every tribe and nation. It is true that, eventually, the LORD did bring final judgment upon Judah, but that did not take place until Christ was sent according to God’s purpose (*Gal. 4:4-6*). As we who are saved by God’s grace in Christ are constantly afflicted by the world, the flesh, and the devil, we need to realize constantly that Christ has already won the victory and assures us of victory because of His righteousness, wisdom, love, and power that He has engaged on our behalf (*Rom. 8:28-29*).

**(Nahum 1:15)** - As God gave them the assurance of the defeat of Assyria against them, He gave them the assurance of temporal salvation from their stronger enemy. This is the same that Isaiah published to Judah concerning their deliverance from Babylon later in their history (*Isa. 52:7*). The Apostle Paul applied this to the eternal and spiritual deliverance of God’s spiritual Israel, His elect, by the Lord Jesus Christ as He saved us from sin and death by His blood and righteousness for our justification and redemption, and by His life-giving Spirit to give us spiritual life and faith in Him (*Rom. 10:15*).