## God Is | Nahum 1:1-9 | 3/8/15

- The minor prophets
  - o The Minor Prophets make up 12 books of the Old Testament.
  - o They are only "minor" because they are short books as compared to say Isaiah.
  - Each of these books contains important revelations from God that applied both to the people during the time period in which they were given but also equally to us today.
  - The books give warnings.
  - o Prophecy regarding Christ
  - Repent and turn to God
    - They don't say hey you guys are perfect!
  - o The Israelites were scattered so there were several Prophets
- The Book of Nahum
  - o This book was written by the Prophet Nahum around 650 B.C.
  - In short the book of Nahum was God's prophecy to the Israelite people where God is foretelling the destruction of the city of Nineveh, which is the capital of the Assyrian empire.
    - This would be reassuring to the Israelites because they Assyrian's were there enemies and were cruel and evil people who were harming the Israelites.
    - The Assyrians were cruel and evil
      - The Assyrians were not know for being nice or kind, in fact they were known and feared for their cruelty and evil that they posed upon their enemies.
      - The city also was severely influenced with idolatry and sexual immorality.
    - The world would be happy with their demise.
      - Nahum 3:19
    - God's prophecy would be fulfilled in 612 B.C by the Babylonians.
  - The oracle concerning Nineveh
    - This opening is common in other books of the Bible when a divine message of judgment is given against a foreign nation.
  - o God's Word was revealed in a vision to Nahum
    - This is of course how God's message was revealed to the prophet Nahum through a vision.
- Who is Nahum?
  - Other than the fact that he was God's chosen prophet and an Elkoshite we don't know much about him.
  - This is common with a few of the other prophets as well, were we have very little focus on the background of the prophet but we have a great focus on the Word that was brought to them from God.
- Background and Setting
  - o This book gives us God's condemnation for the city of Nineveah.
  - Nineveh may sound familiar because a century prior Jonah was a witness to these people and he proclaimed God's truths and called the evil city of the Assyrian empire to repentance.
    - Jonah 3:1-5
    - Jonah 3:10
  - For a time the city did in fact repent and turn to God, however roughly a century later we see that the next generation chose not to follow God and they have returned to their evil ways.
  - o God is now bringing His just punishment upon this wicked city.

- Nahum 3:4-5a
- God's Vengeance | Nahum 1-3a
  - o Read Nahum 1-3a
  - God Is God's character revealed
    - In the opening verses of this book before God reveals the fore coming destruction of Nineveh we see that God is making part of His character and personality known.
    - God makes it clear that He is not a passive God that will sit idly by forever, but a God that will show His vengeance when He chooses to.
    - God reveals that He is a jealous God, an avenging God, but at the same time God is patient and slow to anger. He is good and just and He loves those who take refuge in Him.
    - Old Testament/New Testament
      - Some like to say that in the Old Testament that God's character is primarily that of wrath and vengeance.
      - Then the God in the New Testament is one of love and forgiveness.
      - While there may be certain passages of Scripture that stick out in our minds to make us think this, the truth is that God is exactly the same God that He was then that He is in the New Testament and the same that He is today.
      - The OT and the NT alike are full of God's vengeance and wrath but also His love, mercy and great compassion that He has on His people and the world.
  - o God is a jealous God
    - But not perhaps in the way that we might think when we look at jealousy today.
    - Because jealousy is often seen as a sign of weakness or something that isn't desired.
       We look down upon those who have jealous tendencies.
      - If you have a couple and one is overly jealous it can show insecurity and lack of trust.
    - However this is not the type of jealousy that is seen in the character of God.
      - Now it is similar in the fact that just how a someone would be jealous if their spouse was being unfaithful so to is **God if we are spiritually unfaithful** to Him.
        - Look at what happened with the Israelites when they would worship idols instead of God.
      - However God's jealousy is never because of weakness or insecurity but instead because of His love for us.
      - His jealousy is also shown in His vengeance against His enemies.
  - o God's jealousy is portrayed in two different ways in the Bible.
    - It is portrayed in His steadfast love for us in that He does not want spiritual imperfection or unfaithfulness in His children.
      - If we look back in the Book of Exodus we can see an example of God's jealousy in the form of His love for His people.
      - God is jealous in that He loves His people so much that He does not want us to do anything that would cause us spiritual harm or to be pulled away from him.
        - He doesn't want us to be unfaithful or sinful in our actions and behavior.
        - Exodus 20:3-6
      - As part of the Ten Commandments God made it clear regarding our worship of other idols.
        - God does not want us to worship idols or something that God has created instead of Him.

- When we do this we are hurting not only God but also ourselves because of sin and unfaithfulness.
- We must not give our hearts over to things that are not of God.
- o But we are also hurting ourselves because God is our Heavenly Father the creator of the world and us.
  - He desires an intimate and person relationship with Him, but how can we have it if we give our hearts over to something not of God?
  - Just like how a married couple can become jealous of each other if the spouse has given their heart to someone else.
- God desires for His people, His children to be holy and righteous. He wants us to be like Him.
- God's love for His people is made known in that He will show faithful love to a thousand generations of those who Love Him and keep His commands.
  - o God deeply cares for us and he doesn't want us to go astray.
  - He desires our relationship and through love He will chastise or discipline those that He loves so that they will stay on the righteous path.
  - So there are times where God will discipline His children so that they will turn from their evil ways and return to Him.
- What does God's jealousy for the Christian say about how He truly feels about us?
- God's jealousy is portrayed in His vengeance against His enemies | Nahum 1:2
  - Read Nahum 1:2
  - God's vengeance on Nineveh
    - The prophet's purpose in receiving His vision from God was to give the people of Israel the message that God would avenge the evil of the Assyrian people.
    - The city of Nineveh was given an opportunity to turn from their ways and they did so for a generation but it did not stick.
    - They returned to their evil ways and God's vengeance was going to be taken upon His enemies.
      - o The city of Nineveh was going to be destroyed.
  - God will take vengeance against His enemies
    - The Bible is clear that God is not a God who will stand idly by to those who are against Him.
    - o But that God will take vengeance against His enemies.
      - The world though likes to say that God doesn't exist because they believe Him to be inactive and idle.
        - Even Christians make sometimes think this, however this couldn't' be farther from the truth.
      - Now this does not mean that God will act and take vengeance when we want Him to or when we think He should.
        - Scripture tell us that God's mind is far beyond ours.
        - So His perspective, plan, patience and timing may not make since to us.
        - Sometimes God uses the evil of man for His good.
      - We must never think that God doesn't care and will not avenge the evil in the world.
      - We must trust and have faith that God will take care of it according to His holy will.

- There are numerous times in the Bible where God has taken his vengeance out on those that are against Him, this isn't something new.
  - Those that have sinned and rebelled to a point that God has chosen to punish them severely.
  - We see God's wrath against Nineveh, as this is the premise of the vision that came to Nahum.
    - Nahum 1:8
      - "But He will completely destroy Nineveh with an overwhelming flood, and He will chase His enemies into darkness."
  - We also see Gods' vengeance on Babylon
    - Jeremiah 51:11
      - "Sharpen the arrows! Fill the quivers! The LORD has put it into the mind of the kings of the Medes because His plan is aimed at Babylon to destroy her, for it is the LORD's vengeance, vengeance for His temple."
  - We see God's vengeance on Sodom and Gomorra
    - Genesis 19:12-14
      - "Then the angels said to Lot...for we are about to destroy this place because the outcry against its people is so great before the LORD, that the LORD has sent us to destroy it."
  - Then of course the great flood in the time of Noah
    - Genesis 6:11-13
- The Bible makes it clear that God will take vengeance upon His enemies and also the enemies of His people.
- God does not enjoy evil and sin in the world, there will come a time where God will avenge the wrong and the sins of the world.
- o God will not leave the guilty of the world unpunished.
- We must be sure that we do not forget that God is also just in His vengeance.
  - While God will show His vengeance on the guilty we must remember that God is just.
  - He will not take out His vengeance on those that do not deserve it, God is the supreme of all of the supreme courts and His decisions are always holy.
- How does seeing God take vengeance upon His enemies make you feel?
- It is God's responsibility to avenge our enemies.
  - Vengeance is not something that is unique to God, we has humans have a desire to seek vengeance on those that do us wrong.
  - We desire to get back at them and to punish those that wrong us.
  - However this is contrary to God's instruction to us, as God has said that vengeance is His and that we must let God take care of it.
    - Romans 12:19
      - "Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay, says the Lord."
    - God will repay those that do us wrong even though we would rather take matters into our own hands.

- God has told His children the Christians to turn those that do evil against us over to Him and He will take care of it.
  - Deuteronomy 32:43
    - "Rejoice, you nations, concerning His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants. He will take vengeance on His adversaries, He will purify His land and His people."
    - "He will" God will, we must not forget this important truth and turn over our desires of vengeance to God.
    - As hard as it is to not take vengeance on our own, we MUST give it to God.
- o God has promised our vindication, we however need to be patient.
  - Deuteronomy 32:35
    - "Vengeance belongs to Me: I will repay. In time their foot will slip, for their day of disaster is near and their doom is coming quickly. The LORD will indeed vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants when He sees that their strength is gone and no one is left –slave or free."
  - Sometimes we have to endure hard times and the persecutions of others, this to God has told us.
  - But God WILL
- o In fact God has called us not to vengeance, but to love.
  - Leviticus 19:18
    - "Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am Yahweh."
  - God has called us to do the exact opposite of what we naturally would want to do.
  - Now God never said that this would be easy to do of course, but this is His will for us.
  - That we are to give our desires of vengeance over to God who alone can give truly righteous judgment.
- Why do you think God wants us to refrain from taking vengeance against our enemies? What does God tell us to give it over to Him? Why is it so important to God?
- God is patient, because He desires repentance. However those that do not will receive their just punishment. | Nahum 1:3,9
  - o Read Nahum 1:3
  - While Scripture makes it clear that God will take vengeance upon His enemies there is another very import truth to God's character that we must understand.
  - o God is slow to anger, meaning that God is patient.
    - While God will punish the guilty it may not be immediately when they do wrong.
    - How many times do we see evil in the world and we think God why don't you just take them out, why don't you bring your vengeance upon them!
    - While we can certainly justify God's vengeance in our minds, we cannot see God's great and perfect will. Neither can we comprehend the holy justice of God. We cannot see the big picture.
    - There are many times where God is patient with people as He is giving them an opportunity to repent and to come around.

- How thankful is the Christian that God is patient and that He did not take out his vengeance upon us!
  - While we may think our sins are nothing compared to others in the world, to God our sins are still sins that deserve a just punishment and the wrath of God.
  - In fact we were once enemies of God!
    - o Romans 5:10
      - "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!"
  - But God being the patient and loving God that He is gives us time to turn from our evil ways and He extends this to those in the world.
  - Joel 2:13
    - "Tear your hearts, not just your clothes, and return to the LORD your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and He relents from sending disaster."
- God is patient because He desires our return to Him.
  - With God's patience He desires our repentance so that we can turn to Him.
     God would rather not punish us that is why He is patient to give us time to repent.
  - 2 Peter 3:9
    - "The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance."
- So when we think that God should act in vengeance in a particular circumstance, we must remember that God will decide when that appropriate time is.
  - If God is patient then it is for His holy purpose that we are able to understand.
  - We must rely on His Word that reassures us that God will act at the appropriate time.
- o God's patience however will not last forever.
  - While God is slow to anger and He has patience with us, this will not last forever.
  - There will come a time when God's patience will run out and His holy vengeance and justice will be served.
  - This book of Nahum shows us clearly how this was the case for the city of Nineveh.
    - God gave them an opportunity to repent when Jonah visited them, which they did for a time.
    - However they returned to their evil ways and instead of this time sending another prophet God's patience has run out.
    - Nahum 1:7-9
    - Nahum 3:4-5
  - Christians also must realize this that when we continue in a particular sin that we
    are unrepentant of that while God is patient with us, it won't save us from His holy
    punishment.
  - It is by far better that we turn from our evil ways before the patience of God runs out.
- God's is good and full of love | Nahum 1:7
  - While these passages were dedicated to seemingly a lot of doom and gloom we are assured that God is good and He is a gracious and loving God.
  - o Exodus 34:6

