

Nahum 2:1-9

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[0 : 00] Shall we pray? Father, even as we hear your word read this morning, we are sobered at what we see from Scripture and hear from Scripture.

I pray, O God, that these words would grip our hearts in ways that are life-changing and life-shaping for the glory and honor of your name, for the well-being of our souls, and ultimately, Lord, for the well-being of this city.

So be glorified this morning as I pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. By the time that we get to Nahum chapter 2, we have enough information to remind us who is actually in charge in this world among the nations of men.

And chapter 1 has left no question about that. The Lord is in charge. And even though the nations rage today, as we think about what's going on in the world, as we think of the different places of skirmish and challenge and conflict, it's good to know that our God reigns even in this world and in the kingdoms of men.

By the time we get to Nahum chapter 2, we're no longer at 30,000 feet viewing things from a distance, from a high level. Through the pin of the prophet, you and I get to go to the war zone.

[1 : 40] That's where we find ourselves. It's a judgment scene, if you will. What we see in our text reinforces the truth that those who oppose the Lord will ultimately be opposed by the Lord.

That's what we can see in this particular text. And really, you might even say that's a broad theme for the book as a whole. As we consider the verses that have been read, verses 1 through 10, I want you to think of these verses in three different headers.

Here they are. Verses 1 and 2, we see or hear destruction decreed. In verses 3 through 7, devastation is depicted.

And in verses 8 through 10, desolation is declared. Destruction is decreed. Devastation is depicted.

And desolation is declared in the verses that are before us. What's actually going on in the text as we enter this chapter? Naam is actually seeing a future event, but he's seeing this future event in real time, present.

[3 : 04] See the text? The scatterer has come up against you. And man the ramparts. Watch the road.

Dress for battle. Collect all your strength. It sounds like a military alert. I remember the times that I was in the army, and John and others who have been soldiers would know about this.

They get you ready. You go to the motor pool. You get everything packed up. You are on call and waiting to be deployed to wherever you're going to be sent.

The scatterer has come up against you. Who is he talking about, particularly as it relates to the you? Look at chapter 1, verse 1.

An oracle concerning Nineveh. That's who is being referred to. This is consistent with what we also see in chapter 1, verse 11.

- [4 : 0 6] Notice what we see there. From you, from you Nineveh, came one who plotted evil against the Lord. A worthless counselor was such a person. Some feel that that person was Sennacherib.
- And then look at chapter 1, verse 14. The Lord has given commandment about you. All of these references refer to Nineveh.
- So, when we're in chapter 2, in verse 1, the scatterer has come up against you. That is, against Nineveh.
- The scatterer has come up. What about this word, come up? What's the idea there? If you look elsewhere in Scripture, you will see that this refers to hostile military operations.
- Where different ones have come up. You see that in Judges chapter 1. You see it in 1 Samuel 7 and 7, 1 Kings 20, 22. Someone is coming up.
- [5 : 0 8] And when they're coming up, they're coming up for conflict. That's the idea. Did you notice who it was that was coming up?
- The scatterer got the call. The scatterer. That sounds like a professional wrestler or somebody, huh? When I was a kid growing up, there was a professional wrestler known as Dick the Bruiser.
- It was no question what Dick the Bruiser's agenda was. He was out to go with somebody's head, huh? That was his agenda. I grew up with a young man that became a professional football player.
- Played for the Oakland Raiders back in the mid-70s. He was a defensive back. And he would hit so hard that he got the name in the professional football circles.
- He was known as Dr. Death. He had an agenda. I mean, the offensive, the offense. I mean, in football, you have to be aware.
- [6 : 1 4] But Dr. Death, Skip Thomas was out to get them, huh? I love the way that King James puts this. They don't say scatterer, but this is what King James says.
- He that dashes in pieces. Now, how do you like that one? That makes it pretty clear what we're talking about. I mean, he's a wrecking ball.
- That's what's happening. He that dashes in pieces. It's come up before your face. Who wants to be around somebody that dashes things in pieces, let alone people in pieces?
- And I trust, can I say it this morning, that there's no one like that among us? I trust that that does not characterize your relationship.
- And I think that we would be naive to think that even in Christian circles, there's not that kind of thing happening within sometimes the context of families.
- [7 : 3 0] God forbid. If that's you, stop it. We dash people with our words, don't we?
- Stop it! It's ungodly. It's wrong. It has no place in family. The image is the one who destroys.
- And one who crushes. The Syrians were such a force in the ancient world. Their cruelty was legendary.
- But here, they would be the object of the crushing of another. A coalition of nations that included the Medes and the Babylonians, they were on target to do Nineveh in.
- And so we see the call to readiness in the rest of the verse, don't we? Man the ramparts. Watch the roads. Dress for battle.
- [8 : 3 6] Collect your strength. Ramparts, these were these earthen mounds, earthen embankments. Look out for the people. Get the people in. Get the lookout people in place.
- Dress for the battle. Get properly clothed. Collect your strength. Marshal your forces. Guess what's going on here? Basically, mockery and ridicule are in play.

The alert is sound to readiness is issued, but in reality, there would be no viable defense in Nineveh. D-Day had come to Nineveh.

That was God's agenda. Though there were instruments of scattering, ultimately, God was behind it. God had dispatched them in a way. And perhaps they're doing it not even knowing about it.

Because that's the way the sovereign God rolled back then, and even so today. Though you muster all your resources and strength, it would be to no avail.

[9 : 40] Nineveh was a marked city. Destruction was the divine agenda for the opposition. But at the same time, friends, and oh, again, while challenging and issuing sentences of judgment from God against Nineveh, at the same time, God's people were being comforted in the process.

So, destruction. But then, in verse 2, there's deliverance. For the Lord is restoring the majesty, the glory, the splendor that goes along with being people in the covenant, people with promises.

For the plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches. God's people were people in need of restoration. And restoration, friends, assumes a previous state of glory.

Something being put back together to the way that it was, to the way that it should be. Like a car rolling off the showroom floor for the first time.

No scratches. No dings. No dents at all. 1969, we purchased our second car. It was in Germany. Green Volkswagen Bug.

[11 : 04] Brown leatherette. It was looking good, huh? Paid just \$1,500 for it. Brand new. Those days are long gone, aren't they? Shipped ahead.

It shipped back to the States. Boy, that car would take a beautiful, turtle waxed shine. But as things go, stuff began to happen.

A scrape here. A dent there. An accident over time. And the shine and the sheen eventually were gone.

By the time I got rid of the car, it didn't have a running board on it. I had a blue door on a green car. Some of y'all know something about that. Huh? Well, there were two choices.

Either the car was right for the junk pile or it was right for restoration. We chose the junk pile on that one, huh? But such often can be the case with God's people.

[12 : 07] Sometimes they've been beat up pretty badly. Huh? And most recently, the Syrians had been those who had knocked Israel around. They had plundered them.

Huh? Huh? And being plundered was not new to God's people. As far back as the period of Judges, Judges chapter 2 verse 16 reads thusly, Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them out of the hands of those who plundered them.

Huh? Plundering of God's people was not something new. Huh? Interesting word. Plunder. Huh? It means to empty out, to make void.

God's people had been laid waste. They had been stripped of their fruit. Ravaged. Branches were empty. Huh? The glory of their covenant relationship was gone.

The glory days of the United Kingdom were long past. Huh? God's people were not what they were designed to be. But as such, they were ripe for restoration.

[13 : 11] A restoration that mirrored the glory of the days gone by. Huh? Huh? While the reference is to a plundered people, I asked you this morning, ever feel plundered?

Battered? Emptied out? Hmm? Like a field that's ravished in need of replanting. Like a vineyard that's been picked and plundered.

Like a masterpiece that's been defaced. Ever feel that way? Huh? What are ravished and plundered and stripped people and individuals to do?

Huh? Glad to see our west side people here on this morning. They're planting anew. Huh? Listen up because I believe there can be application for you even in what you're doing.

How does one position oneself to go from devastation, the devastation of being plundered, to the glory of restoration? Our passage doesn't address that.

[14 : 19] But let me take you to a passage that I believe applies. Turn to Psalm 80 with me if you would please. Psalm 80. And listen to the words that in ways mirror words in our text this morning.

Three times the psalmist prays in this psalm, Restore us. Restore us.

Look at beginning at verse 3. Restore us, O God. Let your face shine upon us that we may be. Save that we may be.

Restore us. That we may be. Restore us. That we may be. That we may be. Delivered. Oh, Lord God of hosts. How long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure.

You make us an object of contention for our neighbors and our enemies. Laugh among themselves. Listen to the prayer in verse 7. Restore us, O God of hosts.

[15 : 23] Let your face shine upon us that we may be saved. Ah, here it is. You brought a vine out of Egypt. That's Israel. You drove out the nations and planted it.

Planted it in a promised land. You cleared the ground for it. It took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade. Look at the beauty and the glory here.

The mighty cedars with its branches. It sent out its branches to the sea. It shoots to the river as far as the Euphrates. Why then have you broken down its walls so that all will pass along the way?

Pluck its fruit. The boar from the forest ravages its plundering folks. And all that move in the field feed on it. Turn again, O God of hosts. Verse 14.

Look down from heaven and seek. Have regard for this vine. The stock that your right hand planted for the son whom you made strong for yourself. They have burned it with fire.

[16 : 18] They have cut it down. May they perish at the rebuke of your face. But look at this. Verse 17. But let your hand be upon the man of your right hand.

The son of man whom you made strong for yourself. The person who is appointed. Then we shall not turn back from you. Give us life and we shall call upon your name. Here it is.

Here's the prayer. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts. Let your face shine that we may be saved. Oh, it's not simply right for the west side. It's right for our church. As we think of the days, the season that we're in.

See the city of Chicago transformed by the power of the gospel. May we never forget that. May we position ourselves well.

May, Lord, you restore us. Back to Nahum. So, what do we have in verse 2? It's a word of comfort for God's people.

[17 : 20] And may it be for you. Battered. Plundered. Tossed. Defeated.

Confused. Know, friends, that the Lord does allow us to be plundered. To be plundered as a way of disciplining us. It's temporal and corrective.

It's not terminal as it would be for Nineveh. But it's corrective. It's temporal. May we respond to the Lord. Individually.

And collectively. The destruction is decreed. But also look at verses 3 through 7. Devastation is depicted.

It's described. And what a picture it is that we see here. Here the scatterer is at work in an up-close and personal way. Guess what happens?

[18 : 22] The city gets blitzed. That's what we see. And notice the progression. You see it there? At beginning in verse 3. They're on the outskirts.

It's movement. It moves from the readiness of the military forces. In verse 3. And their weaponry. To the march through the streets and the squares.

That are leading up to the city. You see it? And then you see they go to the wall. In verse 5. And finally they get to the palace.

In verse 6. There is this movement. And even you see the response of the people. Who are affected by it. In verse 7. There's movement here.

Prophet has taken us through. Here's a city. Wrath has arrived. Judgment has come. In the city of Nineveh.

[19 : 21] And what we see here friends. Is absolutely stunning. Did you notice that? The instruments of judgment. Are not a ragtag militia.

These are not mercenary forces. These are the best troops. With the best equipment. With the best armaments. And the description is clear.

You see that? In verse 3. Red shields. Either by reason of the sun's reflection on the copper. It could be that the leather shields were dyed red.

Or it could even be the blood. Of conflict. That was there. Notice the scarlet clothing. These are brilliantly dressed warriors. It could be elite forces.

If you will. Check out their transportation. These are some mean chariots. The chariots come with flashing metal. The chariots. This is you talking about fast and furious.

[20 : 19] Folks. This is it right here. They're moving. They're attacking. That's what we see here. These scattering forces.

Look at verse 5. Because this likely refers to the offensive forces of Nineveh itself. He remembers his officers. He calls for them. But guess what?

They're stumbling as they go. Huh? They're unable to repel the attack of these scattering forces. They hasten to defend. But ultimately it is useless.

It doesn't happen. The city systems built for good of the city. The water systems are sabotaged and used against it. Huh? Forces make their way to the palace.

And its occupants, they're overcome. Again, the movement. Wrath has arrived. Judgment has come. The scatterers on the ground. God's instrument of discipline and judgment on the ground.

[21 : 22] And then the city, verse 7, is stripped and her people are sadly carried away. Destruction decreed. Devastation depicted.

Huh? Huh? But then desolation is declared. Look at verse 8, would you please? Huh? Nineveh. It's like a pool whose waters run away.

Halt, halt, they cry, but none turns back. Resources are plundered. The city is done, if you will. Being overrun.

Several things highlight the demise of the city. The pool, like a pool whose waters are being drained. Her majesty is drained, slipping away like water.

Huh? The plunderers are having a field day. The sights and sounds of desolation are seen and heard. Listen, do you hear the voices there? Halt, halt! They cry.

[22 : 25] None turns back. Huh? What had been done by them to other nations is now being done to them by the scattering forces. Huh?

See the attackers, they're making their way to the vast store of treasure. Check this out. One writer helps us to see. This is actually on the, some of the, in the annals of the Assyrian sovereigns, the conquerors.

It mentions some of the booty, some of the treasures that they had taken. Chariots supplied with equipment for men and horses. Numerous talents of silver, gold, lead, copper, iron, brightly colored garments of every fabric.

Gold, golden bowls, golden beakers, golden goblets, golden pictures, camels, oxen, elephants, monkeys, apes, ivory couches, inlaid and bejeweled, elephants, hides, lambs, birds, horses, mews, cattle, sheep, camels.

These were the things that they had plundered others and filled their treasures with these things. And so now the command goes out to plunder them, plunder their gold.

[23 : 32] The treasure stores are filled. The precious things. Desolation and ruin comes to the city.

The people were impacted. You can see it. The faces are flush and ashen. They're feeling it in the gut. Here, friends, people under the rod.

And in Assyria, in Nineveh, it was terminal. The mercy of God that had been received but subsequently shunned.

And now, going forward, 612, the city would be done. Huh? With the arrival of the scatterer, wrath had arrived.

God's judgment had fallen on a rebellious nation, a God-rejecting nation. That pictures a future day of wrath for the rebellious.

[24 : 36] We're reminded in God's word. In Psalm 9, 16 and 17, the Lord is known by the judgment which he executes. The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

The wicked shall be turned into hell, into Sheol, and all the nations that forget God. The scene foreshadows, in times, judgment of those who reject God.

Revelation chapter 6 speaks about that time when the wrath of God has come and the question is asked, who shall be able to stand? Huh? Huh? Great question.

Here, friends, is a judgment scene. Plain and simple. Causes me, as I think of Nahum chapter 2, to think about another judgment scene.

Where the wrath of God fell. But this time it fell on the sinless Son of God. The ugliness of sin is seen in the extent of the punishment of God's Son on the cross.

[25 : 48] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live into righteousness. The cross is a judgment scene where the wrath of God is placed on the Son of God for sins that he did not commit, but you and I committed.

Shirley and I met Shirley 4603 East Linwood in Kansas City, Missouri. That's the place where we used to worship. A little quaint Pentecostal church that's set on the boulevard.

One of the things that I remember about that place was the sign that was in the yard. And this was what it said. The light shining on it, on that thoroughfare.

It said, Meet God in church before you meet him in eternity. Oh, that message was such, so powerful and sobering to my tender young soul at that time.

I would adjust that saying some, perhaps make it a little more accurate. Meet God at the cross before you meet him in eternity.

[27 : 08] The cross, in reality, is a place of judgment and wrath. God's wrath poured out on his Son. But at the same time, friends, mercy there is great and grace is free.

Calvary was a judgment scene. A place of judgment. Wrath arrived at Calvary. Jesus took the blame and he bore the wrath for all who receive him.

The text helps us, friends. Those who oppose the Lord will be opposed by the Lord. But those who receive the payment that God's Son offered bearing the wrath of God will be received of him for whosoever believes in him is received of God and has eternal life.

The cross teaches us that we can flee wrath. You and I can flee ultimate wrath by running to the one who is born the very wrath of God.

Even Jesus. Have you run to him? Do you keep running to him in your times of being plundered and stripped and pruned and disciplined and corrected?

[28 : 40] May that be for us today. Therefore, don't oppose the Lord but run to the one through whom restoration comes.

Jesus is the one. Let's pray together. Father, we bless you this morning. And I pray that there would be none who would oppose you but all will run to you humbly with repentance and confession recognizing need so we offer ourselves to you this morning.

Be glorified is our prayer in Christ's name. Amen.