

Trust God in the easy, and in the hard.

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[0:00] We are going to be in two passages of scripture mainly today.

! The book of Nahum and the book of Matthew. So, the book of Nahum and the book of Matthew.

Okay. Next week will be Easter, but... There's basically two groups of people here today.

Group one are those who really don't trust God. Some acknowledge that, others fake it. They are the group that asks really wise questions like, how can God be good and all-powerful?

If He's good, then with all the evil in the world, He cannot be all-powerful. And if He is all-powerful, then He certainly cannot be good. If that's you, then today's message is for you.

[1:26] I'm not going to use a lot of cold logic or amazing textual references. I'm just going to lay it out. Full strength and let God sort it out.

The second group are those who are true believers who quite possibly are struggling. You may be young and immature and you see all this evil in the world and you don't know how to handle it.

You may be unsure and you want to trust God, but you're not quite certain what that looks like.

Perhaps you're deep in the battle. You've endured so much over your faith.

You're even beginning to wonder, how long will this last? Is God really paying attention? Is there really a purpose for the struggles that I'm going through?

Then today's message is for you. I'm not going to... I don't need to show that type of believer amazing strings of text linking one passage to another.

[2:33] You know the Word. You've studied it for years. You've shared it with others. It is your stay. The Word of God is your security, your guide, your teacher.

Today, I'm just going to allow God's Word to wash over you with comfort and love. Take heart, strong one. You rest in God's love.

Now, to be honest, there's a third category of people here today. That's the group that when the preacher says, open your Bibles, they instantly begin to take a nap, tune out.

They begin to worry about whatever else, right? They're not paying attention. Anything but paying attention. And if you're in that group, I pray for you to stay tuned.

This message can truly save your eternal soul. If you're group two and this has happened, I pray that you resist Satan's pull. This message can encourage you in your darkest hour.

[3:35] And if you're the pastor, that would be really interesting. If I fall asleep, call a doctor, for I do not have narcolepsy.

Something is very wrong. So basically, we've got two groups of people. We've got the maybes and we've got the deeply invested.

And I'm concerned about both groups. Because wherever you fit into one of those groups, it's not always easy.

And today should be a day that not only challenges, but it should also be a great deal of encouragement. If you've got your Bible open to the book of Nahum, you're probably right around page 873.

Anybody? No? What? 783. Well, you've got the right numbers in there. Here we go. We see the real spiritual blessed on the same page.

[4:41] Yeah. We all wish we could aspire to that. One, two, three. Yeah. I'm going to start off in the book of Nahum.

Then we're going to end up in Matthew chapter 21, which is the triumphal entry. But as we get started, if you look on the back of your, in the bulletin, you've got a handout. And on the back, as requested, there is this illustration.

Now, if you look right about here, you'll see Jonah. Right? If you look on here, there's Jonah. And if you look right here, there's Nahum.

It's about 100 years after Jonah. Okay? Just for a reference point. And today we're dealing with Nahum. And our key idea today is that God has both authority and power to either judge or redeem. God has full power either to judge or redeem. God knows his own. Let's read the first nine verses of the book of Nahum.

[5:54] An oracle concerning Nineveh. That's why I started off with Jonah, right? Because Jonah went to Nineveh. Remember that story? An oracle concerning Nineveh.

The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh. Nobody's particularly certain of where Elkosh is, but they believe it's in Israel somewhere.

The Lord is a jealous and avenging God. The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.

The Lord is slow to anger and great in power. And the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm.

And the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry. He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither. The bloom of Lebanon withers.

[6:57] The mountains quake before him. The hills melt. The earth heaves before him. The world and all who dwell in it. Who can stand before his indignation?

Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire. And the rocks are broken into pieces by him. The Lord is good.

A stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overwhelming flood, he will make a complete end of the adversaries.

And will pursue his enemies into darkness. What do you plot against the Lord? He will make a complete end. And trouble will not rise a second time.

Oh man. Is that a description or what? And you've got to understand, this is the word of God coming to Nahum, specifically addressing Nineveh.

[8:07] And the first thing I want to point out to you, and I want to remind you, God's word is truth. God's word is truth.

It's not a suggestion. It's not a maybe. It's not something to consider. God's word is truth.

And Nahum got the message Jonah wanted. If you were here a couple weeks ago, Jonah, you know, when he got the message from the Lord to go and preach to Nineveh, Jonah ran away because he knew that God was willing to forgive.

He knew that God would deliver this message. And if the Ninevites repented, he'd forgive them. And that's what happened. Jonah wanted the message Nahum got.

The next couple of chapters, the rest of the book of Nahum is all about the destruction that's coming to Nineveh. And so, you know, if Jonah was around, he'd have volunteered.

[9:17] But God had him go and preach a story of repentance or a message of repentance. But this is about 100 years later. And while under Jonah's preaching, everybody from the leader on down to the scullery maid repented and God spared them.

In 100 years, they've forgotten that. And now they're back to their evil and wicked ways. And God's done with it. And he's bringing vengeance. You see, God has wrath for and power over all who oppose him.

A lot of people think they can get away with things. A lot of people think that God's not paying attention.

God may be slow to wrath. He may be slow to anger. But when his anger is roused, did you read that description? When God works up ahead of steam, it's devastating.

He has all of the power and all of the authority to work his wrath on those who oppose him. And did you catch this in, what was it, verse 9?

[10:38] No, no, no. Where is it? Where is it? Verse 7. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows those who take refuge on him. God knows and watches over those who love him.

Yes, God can be a terrible, vengeful, wrathful God. But he knows and watches over those who love him.

Which, by the way, brings us to our first problem. Okay. Okay.

Point number two. What? We'll get to it. Be patient. Point number two.

God knows what he is doing. So, the introduction versus the first passage that we read there is just describing God and how God is going to respond to his enemies.

[11:40] And, by the way, God watches over those who love him. But the rest of the book, God describes the destruction of Nineveh.

Now, understand, Nineveh was a great city, mighty walls filled with terrifying warriors that had a river that flowed through it.

They were siege-proof. They had been attacked time and time again. And they were all like, you know, if you've seen Monty Python, those guys on top of the castle walls, they're not worried about anything.

And that's the way it was. But look at this. Chapter 1, verse 14. The Lord has given a commandment about you.

This is speaking of Nineveh. No more shall your name be perpetuated. From the house of your gods, I will cut off the carved image and the metal image.

[12:43] I will make your grave, for you are vile. Now, come on, tell me, what do you really think? Right? How about chapter 3, verse 19?

What does that say? Chapter 3, verse 19 says, There is no easing your hurt. Your wound is grievous. Your wound is grievous. All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you. For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil. God is speaking and he's declaring the end of Nineveh.

And basically the Assyrian Empire. By the way, after the Lord speaks against Nineveh, he declares that Nineveh will be destroyed by water and fire.

Chapter 2, verse 6. The river gates are open. The palace melts away. Chapter 3, verses 14 and 15. Draw water for the siege.

[13:49] Strengthen your forts. Go into the clay. Tread the mortar. Take hold of the brick mold. For there will the fire devour you. The sword will cut you off.

It will devour you like locust. First, here's this impregnable city that has been attacked time and time again by great armies.

And God declares to Nahum that it will be destroyed by water and fire. Praise the Lord this last eight months.

Water did not get into our basement here at the church. Because we had the water rise a couple times, right? And we've had it in the basement before. What happened to Nineveh was like that. You go back and read the history books and there was a huge deluge. And this river swelled. And it surrounded and undercut the walls of Nineveh.

[14:57] The raging water actually undercut the walls. You know how that works, right? We had it up to Tumwater last year, right? And what happened to the walls? The walls fell down, which allowed the enemy to come in and they burnt the place to the ground.

Nineveh was destroyed exactly as God had said it was. By water and fire. Then, here's Nineveh. This great empire. The Assyrian empire. And nobody came to their defense. Chapter 3, verse 7. Look, nobody cares.

Go away. You've been vile. We read verse 19. There's no easing your hurt. All who hear the news clap their hands over you. Yay! Look at Nineveh! Right?

So, God spends His time and He speaks into this incredible empire. And it's destroyed exactly as He said it would be.

[16:16] And nobody was there to defend them. Nobody came along to help them out. Everybody plundered them and ran away. But look at chapter 2, verse 2.

Chapter 2, verse 2. For the Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel. For plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches. God is going to restore Israel.

Which brings us to our second problem. We've got these two problems. Huge, glaring, obvious problems. Can I get an amen? Okay, I don't know what we're amening, but all right, sure. Matthew chapter 21. So, the story of Nahum is about 100 years after the repentance of the Nineveh people.

They had gone back to their ways. And God promised to destroy them. And it turns out God does destroy them. And there are two situations in there that speak to real life problems that you and I experience today.

[17:45] And they're highlighted in the triumphal entry. Matthew chapter 21. Matthew chapter 21. Now, when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethpage to the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples saying, Go into the village in front of you and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with it.

Anybody not familiar with the story? Okay? Right. So, he sends his disciples in. What do they do? They find the donkey. Who's this? It's for the master. They bring him. And what happens? People are laying down their cloaks. Verse 8. Verse 6. The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and they put on them their cloaks and he sat on them.

Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowd that went before him and that followed him were shouting, Hosanna to the son of David.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up saying, Who is this? And the crowd said, This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.

[19:01] Just for fun. Take a look at the next verse. And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

Wait a minute. That doesn't sound very congruent. Jesus just showed up. Everybody's like, Hosanna! Hosanna! Woohoo! And he goes and he kicks down the door in the temple. He makes a mess. And when we think about the triumphal entry, I want to point something out to you.

Many of those who shouted, Hosanna! Were the very same ones shouting, crucify him. In one week they went from, yay, Jesus! To, yay, kill Jesus!

[20:07] To, yay, kill Jesus! Which is the first problem.

And the first comfort. God knows those who trust him. If you were back here in Nahum and you were looking at what it was said in there.

I went too far again. Chapter 1, verse 7. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows those who take refuge in him. God knows. He's not deceived.

Yay, Jesus! Woohoo! Hosanna! He's not deceived at all. God knows that in less than a week they're all going to be off with his head.

[21:15] He knows what's going on in the hearts of men. We could look in Hebrews, you know, the word of God, sharper than any sword, able to divide the soul from the spirit. We could do that.

But what you need to know is God is not deceived. He knows what's going on. And that should either terrify you or should give you incalculable comfort.

My friends, there are people who struggle. And their life is hard. And they want to love the Lord. They want to do what's right. And they are striving.

And God knows it. There are people who have talked to me and I just don't know if my salvation is right.

I don't know if I'm secure. I don't know what I'm supposed to do. And I tell you, God knows your heart. God knows what's going on. He's not deceived by people who are all Sunday Christians.

[22:24] Yay! And He's not deceived by those people that are in the grinder. That are doing what they can. That are living for the Lord because they know He is right.

They know He is true. And they love Him. And they are in the battle. Amen. The Lord is good.

A stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows those who take refuge in Him. Be terrified. Or find great comfort.

I told you I'd get to the problems. Many of those who shouted Hosanna soon shouted crucify Him. Number two.

The purpose of Jesus was to bring salvation. Not for you.

[23:33] For the glory of God. What are you talking about, preacher boy? It's all about the glory of God.

And this is a huge problem people run into today. They get this wrong. This is one of the greatest struggles and greatest problems people have in their walk with the Lord.

They get the idea that it's all about us. They miss it's all about Him. Chapter 2, verse 2.

It said, The Lord is restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel. You could think that God was doing this for the Israelites.

And you would miss the boat. God put His name on Israel. God chose them to be His special people. And God promised that He would care and watch over them.

[24:31] Did you think Israel was really doing a good job living for the Lord? No. No. No. God is restoring them because God said He would watch over them because they were His people.

And He was going to bring salvation through them. Not because of them, but for His glory. Don't get me wrong.

God loves you. God wants you to have salvation. God has sent His Son to provide salvation for you. But that's the second goal. The primary goal is for His glory.

And when you get that wrong, then you get wrong a lot of things that happen in life. Look, look, look, look. If it's all about you, if it's God wanting your life to be wonderful, then how come life is so hard for believers?

You cannot find in the Scripture that God wants you to be healthy, wealthy, and happy. It's not there. You will find that all who love God will suffer.

[25:39] You will find that God says, Yea, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will comfort you. That's Psalms 23 kind of warped a little bit.

Sorry. It doesn't say that God is going to fill your life with sunshine and roses and that you're going to trip over gold bricks and go to the bank and be wealthy.

He does say that His retirement plan is pretty awesome. But do you know when you retire? After this life.

You see, when God takes believers through hard times, He's not denying His Word. He's not forgotten you.

He's not rejected you. He is giving you an opportunity to fulfill the purpose of bringing glory to God.

[26:44] Yes, God wants you saved. He wants to be in relationship with you. That is truly one of His goals. And don't misunderstand what I'm saying. But it's number two.

1 Corinthians 10, verse 31. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all...

It's okay, I know you can read. Do all... Wow, that was almost okay. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all...

To the glory of God. How about this one? For Him and through Him and to Him all things. To Him be... Glory forever.

Whoever speaks is one who speaks oracles of God. Whoever serves is one who serves by the strength that God supplies. In order that in everything, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

[27:45] To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. And worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power.

For you created all things and by your will they exist and were created. The number one purpose of God is not your welfare.

It is His glory. Sometimes God takes you into the darkest regions of life. And says, bring me glory there, baby.

And it's not easy. Sometimes God lifts us up and puts us on the mountaintop. And says, bring me glory here. It's a lot more fun to do that.

I'm just going to point it out to you. I like being on top. You see, the first problem that we have... Is we forget God knows us.

[28:52] He can't pretend. You can't play the game. He is not deceived. People get that wrong all the time.

The second mistake they make. And sadly, both groups do this. Is they forget it's all about the glory of God. And they start getting angry at God.

God, my life sucks. Why aren't you doing your job? And God's like, dude, you're in the perfect place to give me glory. You want to give God glory?

Suffer with a word of praise on your lips. You want to give God glory? Endure hardship with words of praise.

You want to give God glory? Do the right thing at the hard time. For Him. The solution to both of those problems is to earnestly and honestly live by faith for God's glory.

[30:05] We know that for those who love God all things work together for good. You realize that good is not necessarily our good.

But God's good. You realize that when it says all things that includes finding 200 extra dollars in your wallet and finding a bill for 200 dollars.

All things work together for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. My friends, I don't know what group you're in. Hopefully you weren't in the third group falling asleep. But whatever group you're in, know this. God has provided hope. God has provided salvation. And nothing would give Him greater glory than for each and every one of us to earnestly and honestly live for Him.

If you've been walking the wrong road, He stands ready just like He forgave Nineveh. When we repent, He restores.

[31:13] And if you're laboring under heavy burdens, know this. We can bring God great glory in those times. It may not be easy, but it's worth it.

Let's pray. Let's pray.