

Justice for God's Beloved People

Charles sat in the metal chair, occasionally studying the faces of his family. His wife, Sharon, looked worried. The expression on his daughter Lela's face was of slight fear and his oldest son, Adric, wore a scowl.

The Moore's had been waiting for three hours outside the courtroom for a verdict in the shooting of Kolby, Charles's youngest son. Kolby had been getting into his car after lunch out with friends when he was hit by several bullets in a drive-by shooting—meant for another target. The target died at the scene. Kolby had injuries that almost threatened to paralyze him from the waist down.

"What's taking them so long?" asked Lela.

"Right. It should be quick," interjected Adric. "They should get death row."

Charles listened. He was scared, worried, and angry. His son was a good young man who loved God, his family, and his friends. It seemed like these days people couldn't even go out and enjoy themselves without craziness and evil getting in the way.

Charles didn't know what to expect from the courts, but he knew God was still in control. He also knew God does and will punish sin, because He is righteous.

"Even with everything that has happened, I don't say this lightly," Charles offered. "Regardless of today's decision, a time is coming when God will punish the unrighteous and His enemies."

"Amen," was the soft response of Sharon.

1. *How do you respond when you experience or see injustice?*

2. *Why is justice needed for all people?*

3. *Do you believe that God cares about the injustice in the world?*

God's Slow but Sure Judgment

Nahum 1:1-3, 6-8, KJV

1 The burden of Nineveh.
The book of the vision of
Nahum the Elkoshite.

2 God is jealous, and the
LORD revengeth; the LORD
revengeth, and is furious;
the LORD will take ven-
geance on his adversaries,
and he reserveth wrath for
his enemies.

3 The LORD is slow to
anger, and great in power,
and will not at all acquit
the wicked: the LORD hath
his way in the whirlwind
and in the storm, and the
clouds are the dust of his
feet.

6 Who can stand before
his indignation? and who
can abide in the fierceness
of his anger? his fury is
poured out like fire, and
the rocks are thrown down
by him.

7 The LORD is good, a
strong hold in the day of
trouble; and he knoweth
them that trust in him.

8 But with an overrunning
flood he will make an utter
end of the place thereof,
and darkness shall pursue
his enemies.

Nahum 1:1-3, 6-8, NIV

¹A prophecy concerning
Nineveh. The book of the vision
of Nahum the Elkoshite.

²The LORD is a jealous and
avenging God;
the LORD takes vengeance and
is filled with wrath.

The LORD takes vengeance on
his foes
and vents his wrath against
his enemies.

³The LORD is slow to anger but
great in power;
the LORD will not leave the
guilty unpunished.
His way is in the whirlwind and
the storm,
and clouds are the dust of his
feet.

⁶Who can withstand his
indignation?
Who can endure his fierce anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire;
the rocks are shattered before
him.

⁷The LORD is good,
a refuge in times of trouble.
He cares for those who trust in
him,

⁸but with an overwhelming
flood
he will make an end of
Nineveh;
he will pursue his foes into the
realm of darkness.

As verse 1 says, God not only gave Nahum a vision concerning Nineveh but a “burden”(KJV)—it would be a difficult message to deliver. But unlike Jonah more than a century earlier, Nahum appeared ready to deliver his message from the start.

Nahum reminded Nineveh that God was “a jealous and avenging God . . . [who] takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies” (vs. 2). By his time, the northern kingdom of Israel had been under Assyrian rule for at least 60 years; in addition to oppressing God’s people, the Assyrians had systematically blended their idolatry into Jewish culture, deporting Israelites to Assyria and importing Assyrians into Israel (2 Kings 17:29-41). The Lord would not stand for this, and He would judge.

At the same time, Nahum also reminded Nineveh that the Lord was not a capricious god like theirs: “The LORD is slow to anger but great in power.” His judgment would be both fair and certain, and His power was already evident in His creation: “His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet” (vs. 3).

And yet, for Israel, God’s judgment did not simply mean punishment but justice; it was an indication not only of God’s anger but even more so of God’s love for His people: “The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him” (vs. 7). Even in the midst of captivity, God cared for those who trusted Him; even now they could find their refuge in Him. However, it would be different for those who opposed Him: “with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness” (vs. 8). God’s goodness could not be separated from His judgment—it was required to make all things good.

4. *How did Nahum describe God’s judgment to Nineveh?*

5. *How did Nahum describe God Himself to Nineveh?*

6. *On the other hand, how was Israel to view God’s judgment?*

The Deliverance of Judah

Nahum 1:12-13, 15, KJV

12 Thus saith the LORD;
Though they be quiet,
and likewise many, yet
thus shall they be cut
down, when he shall
pass through. Though I
have afflicted thee, I will
afflict thee no more.

13 For now will I break
his yoke from off thee,
and will burst thy bonds
in sunder. . . .

15 Behold upon the
mountains the feet of
him that bringeth good
tidings, that publisheth
peace! O Judah, keep thy
solemn feasts, perform
thy vows: for the wick-
ed shall no more pass
through thee; he is utterly
cut off.

Nahum 1:12-13, 15, NIV

¹²This is what the LORD says:
“Although they have allies
and are numerous,
they will be destroyed and pass
away.

Although I have afflicted you,
Judah,
I will afflict you no more.

¹³Now I will break their yoke
from your neck
and tear your shackles away.

¹⁵“Look, there on the mountains,
the feet of one who brings good
news,
who proclaims peace!
Celebrate your festivals, Judah,
and fulfill your vows.
No more will the wicked invade
you;
they will be completely
destroyed.”

God now used Nahum to address the southern kingdom of Judah, which had already withstood many assaults by the Assyrians in the decades after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel (see 2 Kings 18:13–19:37). Although Judah’s kings had not always been faithful to the Lord, many had; the final decline of Judah and its fall to the Babylonians was still decades away.

Here, God called the nation of Judah to restore their hope in Him. Although Assyria had many powerful allies, “they will be destroyed and pass away” (vs. 12). Likewise, while Judah had been disciplined by God on many occasions—with the Assyrians often being that instrument of

discipline in recent years—they could look forward to a day when the Assyrians would no longer be a source of oppression: “I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away” (vs. 13).

In verse 15, Nahum looked even past Judah’s current affliction and imminent deliverance, and to a future where God’s people would worship faithfully and joyfully: “Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace!” This pronouncement is very similar to Isaiah 52:7 (and echoed in Romans 10:15), where it was used to describe the coming Messiah, Jesus. Several decades after Isaiah, Nahum used this phrase to describe the good news of God’s liberation of Judah from her enemies, particularly Assyria. There would not only be deliverance, but peace, for God’s beloved people.

At that time, God’s people would respond fully to His goodness: “Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfill your vows” (vs. 15). Because they would no longer be besieged by the Assyrians, Judah could turn their focus from war

and self-preservation, and return to joyful faithfulness to God’s ways.

7. Who did Nahum address in this passage? What was their current situation?

8. What did God call these people to do, through Nahum?

9. What did Nahum describe in verse 15, and what were the people to do in response?



This relief of Assyrian soldiers attacking a rival city mirrors what later happened to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, as Nahum predicted.

Photo: © Mike Peel/British Museum.

Justice Prevails

Anita and her two friends developed a plan to distract the local store owner's attention away from the back of the store. Then, one of them would quickly put make-up kits inside her backpack. They continued doing this throughout the school year. Right before the last day of school, they had planned to steal double the make-up kits. Unknown to them, the store owner had installed a hidden camera when his inventory kept coming up short. On that last day of school, the store owner arranged for the police to come and watch the video from the hidden camera as the girls entered the store. Just as the girls were about to leave the store with the stolen kits, the police came and checked their backpacks. The girls had to work for the store owner throughout the summer without pay.

Brother Smith struggles with his secret addiction to pornography. He often justifies his actions by telling himself his wife cannot meet all his "needs." Brother Jones secretly has relationships with the young single women in the church. He justifies his actions by buying the women expensive jewelry and paying their school tuition. Sister Harris starts gossip in the church that leads to many broken homes. She says she is just informing the other women how to pray for their sisters in need. All three have forgotten the Scriptures that say, "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12:2, KJV).

Whether through parents, law enforcement, or God Himself, justice prevails for God's children. Justice may not be immediate or even here on earth, but our sovereign and just God does bring forth justice.

10. *What role do authority figures have in providing justice in our world?*

11. *Why is it important to believe in a just God?*

12. *How have you seen God bring justice in your life?*

God Loves Justice

Innocent people killed, property being destroyed, the unrighteous prevailing over the righteous—we often see injustice instead of justice. As Christians, we must turn to God’s Word and seek His perspective on all that is happening in our world. As Psalm 37:28 says, “For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. . . . The offspring of the wicked will perish.”

► *Reflect on a situation of injustice in your life or the life of a family member or friend. Briefly, write a prayer to God asking Him to bring forth justice in this situation. Then take a few minutes and pray this prayer silently and thank God that He will answer this prayer. Do you trust God to bring forth justice in His way and time?*

KEY VERSE

For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches. —Nahum 1:2, KJV

The LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines. —Nahum 1:2, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of December 27 through January 2

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Acts 7:54-60—Stephen Prays for Mercy for His Persecutors.
- Tue.** Matthew 2:1-8, 16-18—Herod’s Vengeance.
- Wed.** Revelation 6:9-17—Martyrs Long for Justice.
- Thu.** Psalm 94:1-10—Shine Forth, God of Vengeance!
- Fri.** Psalm 94:11-23—God’s Just Acts.
- Sat.** 1 John 3:4-13—Love One Another.
- Sun.** Genesis 4:1-15—Abel’s Blood Cries Out for Vengeance.