

## **Nahum 1:1–8**

“Have We Finally Found a Really Minor Prophet”

**God is just: the vengeance of God.**

**God is impressive: the majesty of God.**

**God is near: the goodness of God.**

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are welcome to listen to the audio recording, which you may find via [tinysa.com/hopewellarp](https://tinysa.com/hopewellarp))**

---

Our passage this morning comes from. Ney on chapter 1 verses 1 through 8. If you like to turn there in your Bible text. We've been looking at in our short conference. Perplexing prophetic or if. Any others repeats in it. Perfecting matters in in prophetic passages and so we did one in Joel a couple of in Jonah and now we're in day.

I'm chapter one. I'm not perplexed about name one. This is a perplexing path of situation in the prophets for other people not so much for me. The other ones that we looked at I found perplexing myself, what do you do when in Joel it's a, Passage about repentance but it doesn't specifically say what you have to repent of a little conundrums in Jonah and so once surprising behavior on the prophets part and also the Lord's part but now when we come to name chapter one, this is more of a perplexing matter for other people sometimes.

And so we look today and they have one one to eight have we finally found a really minor profit. And I apologize to those who were joining us electronically from faith OPC because there. Was an earth. Earlier edition of this sermon preached there one day. I had to supply there.

Yeah, it's been revised somewhat and so on but too bad they have to if they tuned in because of power outage they might say oh no, we heard that once another power outage, you know in a way but we'll look at name chopper one and verses one to eight let's look at the text burden about Nineveh the book containing the vision of Nahum the elkishite.

Yahweh is it jealous? God an avenging Yahweh is avenging in furious? Yahweh's avenging toward his foes and he keeps his anger alive toward his enemies. Yahweh is slow to anger but great in power and He will by no means clear the guilty. Yahweh his way is in whirlwind and storm and clouds are the dust of his feet.

He shouts a rebuke at the sea and makes it dry and all the rivers he dries up fashion and caramel wither and the blossom of Lebanon withers mountains tremble because of him and the hills melt away and the earth heaves before him the world and all who live in it who can stand his ground before his rage and who can rise up against his burning anger.

His furious. Poured out like fire and the rocks are smashed because of him. Yahweh is good. A stronghold in the day of trouble and he knows those who take refuge in him but with an overwhelming flood, he will make a total end of her place and he will pursue his enemies into darkness.

I was in graduate school and I was a graduate assistant to my to the Old Testament professor that I was serving. I was a kind of a lackey. I would grade the papers of his students and that sort of thing and like it. And there was I would sit in on the class because I wanted to know what it was teaching the students and so on so I kind of know how to grade their papers and not sort of thing and we were we were in the prophets and we were in the minor prophets and we, Were coming on this particular day to the prophecy of Nahum and this professor that I worked for I began by saying now.

Holy come to Naaman. We really have a minor prophet. Now he uses that in a was doing a kind of a take on the term minor prophets, you know that the minor prophets are minor not because they're unimportant but because they're shorter or briefer than the major prophets like Isaiah Jeremiah and Ezekiel those are longer and so we call them major prophets and Hosea through Malachi or minor prophets in the sense that they're shorter, but my my prof that I worked for was trying to do a take and and use the term.

Mind or not. Just in the usual word but is a real name is really a minor prophet that is unimportant basically or less an importance and why did he say that well? I think he said that because he thought of Nahum's focus and names concern on the one hand the language of names seems to be very vicious so on and on the other hand he seems to be very prevential he's just concerned about Nineveh were.

The Empire of Assyria, it doesn't have a wide scope of his interest and so he said yeah here we have a really minor prophet well. In way I suppose some would think name minor because he just comes behind Obadiah as the shortest book in the Old Testament a mere 558 Hebrew words, so it's not long and name doesn't help himself either in a way you notice in verse 1, it doesn't say name the son of what's his name the son of who's his face.

It's just his name he doesn't have any pedigree. I don't have any. Family connections etc and we don't have a clue calls himself the elkishite or he's a native of the village of Elkish and nobody knows where alkash is he didn't give a clue didn't say near Shakum or near Kansas City or anything like that but Elkish and you can read the Bible dictionaries or commentaries and there are three or four possibilities but nobody knows where it is.

He has no curriculum vita at all. He faces himself so a multifolium. Bible dictionary says this about the prophecy of name it says name has been accused of misogyny nationalism vengeance and the promotion of violence indeed few books have been castigated more for their violence and quote. So. Have we found then a really minor prophet in there.

But you have to realize don't you that name is not really about Nahum. You you note our text chopper one versus one to eight this opening him of Nahum's prophecy. It's as if he is saying if I could put it reverently but bluntly it's as if name is saying I would you need to get a load of God.

That's not really about name. Now you get in problems. When you don't have the right focus. That was a time during the Second World War in the Philippines there was a POW camp in which there were a number of American and British prisoners of war confined and the Japanese of course had them there and they were severe conditions and so on.

And there was a concern that since Japan was beginning to lose the war and they knew it that they might well that they might just execute all these POWs in the, Camp. And so a rescue mission was appointed a hundred and twenty army rangers were appointed to travel in March a good ways to this POW camp and by a surprise attack liberate these I think five hundred POWs.

Well, it was a success and it was going as a success but they had to move quickly less word got out to other Japanese forces who would come back then and attack the undermanned Army Rangers. So, they're getting. These POWs out there getting them out the front day. Go to the front gate get out go to freedom.

We've we're going to take you on a long trip to Freedom and so on. Well here is here's Marvin Kinder one of the Rangers and he's exporting one of the prisoners there out to the gate and so on and suddenly the man resists. And he says, I need to go back and get some documents.

I hid Kinder says, oh we can't do that. We have to keep moving. He said but I need my documents when I get back to the States, I'm going the court marshal the man who ate my cat. A beautiful cat it was I tell you who ate my cat.

Well, the poor fellow was maybe partly deranged at that point. But there's freedom. You go out the gate. That's what matters and what is he focused on? He's focused on the fact that some skinny. POW-8 is skinny cat. And he wants to get come up and swore it. Yeah, he had to keep your focus in the right place.

And they insane. Bronx, he's not about me. You need to get a load of God. Now, so we don't know much about Nahum. We don't know was he happily married. Did you like frosted flakes or okra? Nothing of his family. We don't know that we have no clue about his correct zip code.

We just have this book from about 6:55 BC. And if his first segment of the prophecy is any clue name thinks your biggest need in the present hour is to get a clear view of God. So, what's he saying to us? Well, he says first of all. You need to see the vengeance of God versus one through the first part of verse three.

Notice how he speaks there in verse two, he always a jealous God an avenging Yahweh's avenging infurious Yahweh is avenging toward his foes and he keeps his anger alive toward his enemies and so on. You need to see the vengeance of God. He's that's a little bit of a surprise because of you talk to the proverbial man on the street.

That's not the way he wants to think of God. He would rather have a flabby flimsy folksy view of God, so this comes this is kind of anti-cultural forces and it but look at the look at the text there. Notice it says talks about the intensity of vengeance. Three times in verse two.

Yahweh is avenging avenging infurious avenging toward his foes and so on. And then it's as if names saying I want to put this right in your face and then and then he talks about the patience of vengeance. Did you notice what he says in verse three? Yahweh is slow to anger.

We've seen that already. We saw it in Joel 2. We saw it in Jonah 4 and now comes up again in name one the in other words this vengeance is avenging aspect of God's work is is not that he flies off the handle. It's not that he erupts in an irrational.

Rage. No, he slowly anger. Miss considered. The kind of vengeance and so on. Now then you notice that he speaks of the justice of vengeance. The last of or the next line of verse 3 and he will buy no means clear the guilty. The vengeance is just it's right.

Now in other words, he won't turn the other way he won't ignore the need to put things right? I think we need to clarify that a little bit to see the rightness of God's vengeance here. Some people think immediately they hear vengeance, they think either something automatically defective in that that's that's negative that's that's bad but note node verse one.

Who is the object of this prophecy? Burden some translation said Oracle burden a heavy message about Nineveh. None of the chief city of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian empire was the superpower of the day. Now back in Isaiah chapter 10. God called Assyria the rod of my anger in the sense that he used this pagan nation as Syria to overrun for example the northern kingdom of Israel and wipe it essentially from the map and he also used it to afflict the kingdom of Judah the southern kingdom and to bring great pressure on them almost within an inch of their life.

You can read about it in Second Kings 18 and 19.

But it's a burden about miniva. The problem though when God uses a super power like that to judge his own people. The super power that he uses the instrument that God uses tends to get too big of international pants and they they get a deity complex and they want to go further than God's boundaries allow.

Strange about nations getting cocky about themselves, isn't it? Seems like it always occurs. And so then God has if he uses such a nation like a Syria to bring judgment on his own people as the instrument of judgment on his own people then he has to in turn judge the instrument of his judgment for going beyond their bounds.

And so now under Nahum though under Jonah Yahweh spared Nineveh for a time now the judgment is coming and they are meeting their

comeuppance. But you still have to see the justice the rightness of this vengeance. God perpetrates upon Assyria. Maybe a couple of excerpts will help. Let me just read you a couple of things.

Try not to go to sleep for the reading. I apologize for that, but they're rather brief. Two hundred years before Nahum's time there was the Assyrian king Asher Nasser Paul the second. And he gives us a little record gives you a flavor of what the Assyrians were like. He talks about a certain land and city that he conquered.

Here's what Asher Nassar Paul the second said in strife and conflict. I besieged and conquered the city. I felt 3,000 of their fighting men with the sword. I carried off prisoners possessions oxen and cattle from them. I burnt many captives from them. I captured many troops alive. I caught off some of their arms and hands.

I cut off of others their noses ears and extremities. I've gouged out the eyes of many troops. I made one pile of the living in one of the heads. I hung their heads on trees around the city. I burnt their adolescent boys and girls. Welcome to Assyria. Or how about Asher Banapal?

Who was the king who would be the contemporary of the prophet? Nahum at his time. Here's what he said at the command of Asher and Ninlil his deities. I board through his now when he says his It was apparently another king and opposing King I board through his jaw with my cutting dagger.

Pulled a rope through his cheek and the sides of his face. And to attached a dog chain to him and let him guard decaged at the East Gate of Nineveh. A really nice fellow. That's a Syrian. That's Neneva. Do you wonder why God might be bringing vengeance upon that people and that nation?

Well, that's why Palmer Robertson and his commentary as it were in the light of a serious traditional cruelty sums it up as if he's addressing Assyria and he says this shallows whose eyes, you have gouged out shed tears at your death shall those whose ears and noses you've cut off lament now shall the tongues you've chopped.

Off recite your praises. No. Well all of that to say this matter of vengeance is not some defect in God, it's what to be done. It's just thing Vengeance is not the same as vindictiveness and viciousness vengeance is a category of justice. And we as God's people do not have the right to carry out vengeance ourselves see Romans 12, for example, but God does.

You leave vengeance with God but it's what ought to be done. It's right and there ought to be an encouragement to us. That God does that? It's God's people right? In this came home to me, one time we were our our three boys were small and usually every evening.

I would read them a Bible story and and then we would have prayer together and often times they would have sentence prayers. They would pray. This was before bedtime. On one occasion, we were reading a story. It was very well done from Missouri Synod Luther and Bible storybook. And it was on Second Kings 9 and 10.

It was a story perhaps you remember when Jay who became king of Israel he was overthrowing bringing a he was engaging in a coup and becoming king and because of that he was wiping out all the the loyalists to former King Ahab, and that meant that he would also take out Ahab's wife just.

Ifiable. Who was wicked as anything you may remember that that Jezebel was was the woman who instigated and tried to perpetrate bail worship in Israel and not only that but she slaughtered and killed many of the Lord's prophets there was no one quite like Jezebel well when J who came to power he came into the town and Jezebel had gussied herself up with her Revlon kit she.

Was going to go out in style and she looks down from the window of an upper story of the building where she is and she calls Jehu a murderer and so on and Jay who hollers up and says who's with me up there in several men looked out and so they gave her a lift they flipped her out to window and she fell splat on the street.

I was killed and Jehu and his horse trampled on her that's the story and the text the second king's nine we were reading this story it was tastefully done and so on. But very direct. And there's prayer time. And our oldest oftentimes in the prayer time would would try to pray something based on what we had read.

Luke I suppose was around eight years old at the time and Luke's prayer was this dear. God, thank you for letting Jezebel die. Now it sounds a little bit nasty. But I kept my mouth shut and then I thought he's hit it on the head that's good news and this is the good news of God's vengeance you see if God never takes vengeance on his people's enemies then he's not much of a savior.

If he never gives the comeuppance to those who crush his people then what hope those people have now, sometimes he brings that vengeance in this age against Nineveh for example, where he brings some of that vengeance in this age or he brings it against Jezebel and second king's nine and so on and sometimes that occurs but sometimes he doesn't bring his vengeance, he doesn't put things right in this age, it waits till the end of the age at sometimes and that's a problem sometimes.

With the Lord's people you remember those souls under the altar in the fifth seal and revelation chapter six verses nine to eleven those stalls those people who were slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony that they bore and they pray and what did they say how long oh Lord holy and true until you judge an avenge our blood upon those who are upon the earth how long Lord will it be before you put things right?

The God has the right to inflict that vengeance at some times sometimes it will be. At the last that's what second Solonians one says in verse seven, doesn't it? Paul says, you know, it's right God considers it right to give you believers who suffer persecution for Jesus's sake he considers it right to give you relief and when will he do that he says it in second Thessalonians one seven your grant relief when the Lord Jesus is

revealed from heaven with his mighty angels inflaming fire inflicting vengeance on those.

To do not know God. And it's still a problem for God's people as they wait for God to put things right? I was not long ago, maybe two months or something in northern Mozambique in Africa that 50 Christians were taken by. Islamic extremists. Into a soccer stadium and decapitated and then they took their bodies.

And hacked them up into pieces as if they were chunks of meat. Their blood cries out from the ground how long oh Lord. Until you will put things, right? And name says you need to see the events of God now secondly he says to you you need to see the majesty of God the last of verse three through verse six now.

I think what he does in the last of verse three depends on your translation. I think he cites the name Yahweh says Yahweh stands by itself and then a dash his way is in whirlwind and storm and clouds are the dust of his feet he shouts to rebuke it to see and makes it dry and you have this whole description through verse 6 of the majesty of, God.

Of the furor that takes place when God appears in his majestic judgment now what this does in the last verse 3 through verse 6 is basically flesh out that little phrase in the first part of verse 3 this said God is slow to anger and says but great in power, that's what it's showing in the last verse 3 through verse 6, it's saying God has the power.

To bring about the vengeance that needs to be brought about in his people's behalf, so that's what you have here in in these verses now so you have a view of the majesty of God but what a lively majesty this is I want you to notice that you see how neigh him paints a picture in those verses of what happens when Yahweh appears and overflowing rage against those who crushes people now, he could have said this very briefly he could have said instead of all of three and a half verses he could.

N't. He said God is very impressive that's the truth but he doesn't do that he could have used four words if he was speaking English but he didn't do that no no he used 45 Hebrew words and if you translated into English some night, he words in order to express the majesty of God, why did he do that why not economize well because name doesn't just want to express truth about God God's very impressed.

Of or something like that he wants to impress you with God and he has to give you a picture to grab your imagination among other things it's um. You see see nail had it disadvantage in a way he didn't have power point and he didn't have YouTube so if you don't have that stuff, what do you do if you want to try to grip somebody and give them a picture well you give them a word picture the Bible does this a number of times and so you have instead of making your Bible shorter you have three and a half more verses that depict our way in his blatant majesty in order to give you a picture of that yeah, you know, the difference a picture makes.

Um, let's say let's say you see a recipe for well let's say it's some kind of a stew or something and you see a recipe written maybe in the newspaper or something well yeah if you use your imagination lights, you can maybe cough up a what that might look like but you see the ingredients it's in black and white and there it is and you say I might look okay, but isn't it much better much better just rather than just seeing the bare recipe by itself to open?

The two-page spread in southern living magazine and see a full-color picture of this luscious stew and then the the recipe written in the bottom right hand corner and you say.

And grips your imagination and it's so much more helpful that's something of what name is doing here and he's trying to say among other things you need to see the withering creation unraveling rock-bashing power of the Lord. When he appears and he wants to give you a sense of that now.

I'm not going to go into the details that he describes there which we could but simply try to leave that general impression with you but besides this being a lively majesty notice that may him is saying it is a consuming majesty, did you see verse 6 who can stand his ground before his rage and who can rise up against his burning anger.

Answer. Certainly not super power hairy chested saint crushing. Assyria. No empires or tyrants of this age can stand their ground before this righteous rage. Contrary to popular Western belief the God of the Bible is no easy going blob a celestial protoplasm, but he is a righteous king whose wrath will consume those who blatantly crush his people.

But is this limited to Assyria? Something makes me just a little bit on the easy here. In verse 6 who can stand his ground before his rage and who can rise up against his burning anger. This isn't just meant maybe for his who can be very general candid. Can it also be individual?

Do we perhaps need to realize do? I perhaps need to see myself in that who? Has I see God in his majesty this way. Maybe this takes. Me. Under its purview as well Dr John Gersner was once lecturing and I don't know what the lecture was about. I think it was on tape.

I heard it on tape and he made an illusion that the Scottish elders when they were interviewing. I don't know that they all did this everywhere in Scotland, but but but in former years amongst some of the Scottish elders when they were interviewing someone for church membership. Here comes someone they want a professor faith in Christ, they wanted mission to the Lord's Supper and so on.

And so they come. Before the elders and he said that one of the one of the questions that the elders tended to tended to ask them was have you been to sign on? Now what do they mean by that? Did they mean to have did have you had enough money to go on a holy land tour and no no they didn't mean that.

Have you been to sign on? They meant? Have you have you since what it would be like to be there in Exodus? 19 to 24. Have you felt the threatenings of God's law? Have you seen your sins exposed and uncovered before heaven's gaze? Have you as it were seen your desires and

your motives and your thoughts and and your imaginations put into bold print and placarded with the in the full blaze of heaven's flood lights and realize how far you farce fall short of what the Lord demands.

In other words have not just a Syria, but have I have you yourself realize that there's no refuge from God, but only in God. And Am says you need to see the Majesty of God. In a sense, I think. He would say you need to feel it in your guts.

Now, then thirdly name says to us. You need to see the goodness of God versus seven and eight. Yahweh is good. A stronghold in the day of trouble and he knows those who take refuge in him. Now that kind of hits you as a surprise, especially if you remember all names emphasis in verse two and Yahweh being avenging of engine avenging and now he's as you always good.

That's quite a contrast we may think we might raise you my ways to raise the question. Is this a different God in verse seven? No. No, as sort of like this, maybe if an analogy would help. Let's say you have a pro football linebacker. What's his job as he's on the field?

Well, his job is to to give bone crushing tackles to the running backs and the wide receivers on the opposing team. That's what his job is as a defense of linebacker. Be as mean and hard as he can. That's his work. But let's say after he's done with that he comes home and his wife chose him his four-year-old daughter who sick with a fever and has the flu.

And what does he do? Oh, he picks her up in his arms and he carries or over to the recliner and he sits down and he holds her next to him and he strokes her fevered head and hair. With all the tenderness that a father can have. As I had different man.

Then on the football but no no, it just depends on whom he's dealing with. So too Yahweh is avenging yes, but he's good. It's the same God. He knows those who take refuge in him. Now notice we should say you have a clue here even in the text that he's the same God.

Not only to say Yahweh is good. He knows those take refuge in him but then in verse 8 notice what it says as well. It says bought with an overwhelming flood, he will make a total end of her place. Who is her? Nineveh? The end of nine of this place the end of a serious place and he will pursue his enemies into darkness, he will expunge.

Assyria from the map. But as far as his people are concerned, he always good your refuge as stronghold in the day of trouble. Now this day of trouble I think you know is not just some historical day of trouble that the people of Judah in Nahum's time may have been facing but rather the day of trouble can be any kind of day.

That you yourself in this day and age may be facing. You live in a fearful world. And you need to see the goodness of your Lord and you need to see that he's a stronghold in your day of trouble. It may be a day of heartbreak. It may be a day of disease may be a day of death may be a day of bereavement.

Maybe a day of divorce. It may be a day of betrayal. It may be a day of unemployment. It may be a day of persecution. But this is your Lord. You need to see the goodness of God. I have always been impressed by a little anecdote that Andrew Bonar the Scottish Pastor of the free church of Scotland records in his diary.

Now, Andrew Bonar was a Scottish pastor from about the mid-1800s to the late 1800s and in his diary for about October 15th 1864, he records the death of his wife. She had, Given birth in just given birth to another child and apparently there were complications from the delivery. I don't know if she was hemorrhaging or what but before the day was out he lost his dear wife Isabella.

His wife of 17 years. And he records this in his diary and then he says an interesting thing. He said, That in that on that day, maybe before she died on that day, he had been meditating on his usual verse between I think he said T and dinner or something like that, but apparently a late afternoon he had a practice of meditating on a biblical text.

And he said that day it was Nahum. One seven. The Lord is good. A stronghold in the day of trouble. And he knows those who take refuge in him. And then he said this. How little did I know how I would need that half an hour later. You may need that today.

You may not realize it yet, but you may need it half an hour later. Or tomorrow or next week. You need to see. The goodness of God a stronghold in the day of trouble. So, we're not really dealing with a minor prophet here. Her name's major focus is on God.

He tells you that God is just the vengeance of God that he's impressive the majesty of God. And that he is near. The goodness of God and there's nothing minor. About that. Oh God, our Father we pray that you would help us in our own nature and thinking to be what we might call big.

Goddess. We pray you would make us able to wait for your vengeance. Tremble at your majesty. And revel in your goodness. For our sake and in Jesus' name. Amen.