A Losing Cause

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Okay, let's draw attention back to the Old Testament of Nahum.

! Right now, Philippians and Nahum, purposely Sunday morning and Sunday night, Old and New Testament, very different kinds of scriptural books.
And so if you think, well, it's kind of hard for you to keep track of the differences, I mean, at least you're not the one up here having to do it in front of people. So I'm doing the best I can to keep up with these differences too.
So let's jump back in to Nahum. We didn't meet last week, and I want to try to help you reorient your mind around Nahum. By way of note, you might just make it, this as introductory note, to remember. Nahum has a twofold purpose. It speaks of condemnation. That's for Nineveh. And it speaks of comfort for God's people.
[1:16] Okay? Condemnation that's coming for Nineveh. And comfort to God's people. So, if you would just remember that about the book of Nahum, you're going to understand for the rest of your life what's going on here.

Nineveh's getting a word of condemnation coming their way. God's people getting a word of comfort that the Lord is going to keep and protect them. Remember, the king of Assyria defeated the northern tribe of Israel in 722 B.C.
And that's important because here we are 75 years or so later, and the people of God here in the southern kingdom know what happened to the northern kingdom.
And the question is, are we going to be conquered too? Are we going to be, in one sense, wiped out too? And the book of Nahum is speaking that word of judgment coming to Nineveh, but a comfort to God's people that the Lord is going to deal with Nineveh.
So, we've got a couple of slides here just to help you to remember where we've been. And so, first, just by way of overview of Nineveh, of Nahum, remember that Nahum is the sequel to what book?
[2:42] To Jonah, okay? Jonah goes and speaks this word of warning to Nineveh, and then about a century later, here comes Nahum. So, here's the three points we looked at for an introduction about a month ago.

Number one, an unhappy preacher drives a people's repentance. The unhappy preacher is Jonah, okay? Jonah goes to Nineveh, and his preaching drives them to repent.
You remember in Jonah that Jonah did not want to go preach to them because he says, I knew you were a gracious and forgiving God. And Jonah did not want the people to repent, and so he was running from God.
The Lord redirects him back to Nineveh, and this unhappy preacher, Jonah, drives a people's repentance. That's the people of Nineveh.
Fast forward to the book of Nahum, and an ungodly population, that's Nineveh, demonstrates a people's rebellion. By the time Nahum comes around, Nineveh's right back to where they were.
[3:51] The response that took place in Jonah's day does not last, and when Nahum arises on the scene, the ungodly population of Nineveh is back to rebellion.

At that point, God raises up an unknown prophet, that's Nahum, to declare a people's ruin. That's the message of the book of Nahum, that the people of Nineveh are coming to ruin.
Okay? So Jonah goes to preach to Nineveh. They respond. Fast forward. They go back into rebellion.
God raises up Nahum, and Nahum then speaks and declares of the people's ruin. Then we looked at chapter 1, verses 2 to 8, which gave us not only some history, but some good theology.

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Number one, by the way, I think we've got this on some slides for you too to help you out. So first, we looked at God's unrelenting passion. And we saw that God had an unrelenting passion, first for the sake of His name, and second for justice.
[5:05] So, if you want to make sure that your passions align with God's passions, then make sure you're living for the sake of His name, and to do what is right.

Verse 3, we looked at God's undeserved patience. God is a patient God, a God of grace. His patience is poured out on those who love Him, but His patience has a limit.
And we see that in the book of Nahum. Third, verse 4 to 6, we looked at God's unequaled power. It described His power over the waters, His power over the mountains and land, and His power over humanity.
And then fourthly, verses 7 and 8, we looked at God's unyielding purpose. He has a purpose that will not stop. Number one, to shelter those who trust in Him, and to judge those who oppose Him. Verse 7, the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows those who take refuge in Him, but with an overflowing flood, He will make a complete end of the adversaries and will pursue His enemies into darkness.
[6:16] He shelters those who trust in Him. He judges those who oppose Him. Okay? Let's go forward today. Verses 9 to 13. What we see here in this part is that it's a losing cause to be aligned against the purposes of God.

Verse 9, What do you plot against the Lord? He will make a complete end. Trouble will not rise up a second time. For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink.
They are consumed like stubble, fully dried. What I want to do tonight is I just want to give you an outline to kind of lay over on your notes. And then at the end, I'm going to go back and just read this second half of the chapter.
And I think you'll see exactly the point that's being made. One of the things that's a challenge when you're studying the Old Testament, the prophets, sometimes it can be confusing. Who are we talking to? Are we talking about this nation?
Are we talking about this nation? Are we talking about these people, this ruler? Let me walk you through it. And then when we go back and I'll just read it out loud for you to follow. I think you'll understand. I think very clearly what Nahum is saying.
[7:26] Number one, we see tonight the folly of trying to oppose the Lord. The folly of trying to oppose the Lord. What do you plot against the Lord?

He will make a complete end and trouble will not rise up a second time. Nineveh will plot and plan and scheme, but Nineveh and Assyria will be no match for the Lord.
That showed you two weeks ago how rarely Nineveh is even spoken of. One time in each chapter, Assyria one time, and yet the name of the Lord is spoken of often because the enemies of God are no match for Him.
They're not presented as two equal dueling powers. Verse 1, God is clearly the one in control and Nineveh clearly His subject. God has shown them grace, but that grace is about to run out for them as a nation.
What do you plot against the Lord? He will make a complete end. He says this is pure folly for you to oppose the Lord. Trouble will not rise up a second time.
[8:37] He's going to deal with it. Verse 10, they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink. They are consumed like stubble fully dried.

From a human perspective, Nineveh looked well guarded. If you could go back in time and look at Nineveh, it looks like it's going to be nearly unbeatable.
From a human perspective, they are good and they are safe. In fact, in Jonah's day, the people of Nineveh, the city there was struggling a bit.
In Nahum's day, they're stronger than they've ever been. But from a divine perspective, look how they're described. Like thorns that are used for kindling that would ignite and be burned up.
Like a drunk man who cannot walk straight. From a human perspective, Nineveh looks impenetrable. From a divine perspective, it's a drunk man that can't even stand up straight.
[9:44] This is no match for God. They will be confused like drunkards and consumed like stubble. By the way, that's exactly what takes place in history when you go fast forward.

Verse 11, from you came one who plotted evil against the Lord. My translation, ESV here says a worthless counselor. Some translate that as a wicked counselor.

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Verse 11, Ahum now speaks about the king of Nineveh. And he's called a worthless or a wicked counselor. He plotted against the Lord.
It will not go well for him. It will not go well for the nation. Why is he a worthless counselor? Because his schemes and desires are contrary to the word of God.
Now it's interesting here if you think about the juxtaposition between that description and the well-known passage in Isaiah 9.
[10:51] Speaking of the one who would come. He will be wonderful what? Counselor. Wonderful counselor. Counselor. The mighty God, Prince of Peace.

You have this description of the Lord who is the wonderful counselor. And here in Nahum, speaking of the leader of Nineveh, the one who is called a worthless counselor.
And he's worthless because he is not aligned with the purposes of God. So again, be very careful who you take counsel from.
Somebody just having degrees or intelligence or a high IQ, if they're not aligned with the purposes of God, their counsel would be worthless for you.
I'm thankful for teachers and I'm thankful for authors. I'm thankful for people who have content that can be helpful.
[11:54] But I would rather have a common, normal, church-going person who loves their Bible and knows their Bible than I would someone of high IQ to give me counsel.

Because if someone is intelligent but not converted, I'm going to get the words of an intellectual blind counselor. And I'm not looking for a blind counselor if I need someone to show me the way.
I want someone who has the light that can only come from the Lord. And he's described here as a worthless counselor.
Verse 12, thus says the Lord, They are at full strength in many. Though they are at full strength in many, they will be cut down and passed away.
Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. Remember, this book is a word of condemnation and comfort. The condemnation is they're going to be cut down.
[13:00] The comfort I will afflict you no more. The army of Nineveh will be cut down. Now, don't forget this in your world and Old Testament history here.

It is the Assyrians who overtook in 722 BC the northern kingdom. The capital of Assyria is Nineveh. Nahum is directing this prophecy toward the headquarters of the Assyrian Empire. Why would the people have reason to be concerned about Nineveh and Assyria?
Because they just saw in 722 what happens when Assyria wins. And the question for them is, is this coming for us too?
Are we about to be overpowered and run out? And the Lord says, though they are at full strength in many, they will be cut down and pass away.
[14:01] There's the condemnation. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. There's the comfort. The Lord is going to use Nineveh for his divine purposes.

And they will be judged for their sin. This isn't the only place we see this. We see this in the book of Habakkuk too, don't we? Habakkuk's concern is about the Babylonians.
Babylonians come right after the Assyrians. Habakkuk says the Babylonians are so bad how are you going to use them to judge us?
And the Lord says, I'll use the Babylonians for my purposes but they will be judged for their sin. It's the exact same word that the Lord gives to Nahum about the Assyrians. Now this is very helpful for the people of God even today to remember this.
That nobody gets by with their sin. This is why you don't have to go around worrying. You can be grieved by it, be broken hearted by it, the sin of the world of course.
[15:08] But you don't have to go around trying to fix or right every wrong. The Lord will be your defense. And if the Lord sovereignly lets something come into your life and come into your way, you trust Him with it.

But the problem that Nahum has in his day is his people are looking and saying, is there hope for us? Is there future for us? And the comfort is yes, it's true.
Nineveh was used to judge the northern kingdom. But don't think that means I've abandoned you. I have not. Now that's important because there are times in your life where you may look at your circumstance and say, I feel abandoned.

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You're never abandoned. The Lord may be working in ways you can't see, doing things you don't understand, allowing things that you don't even particularly wish He was allowing, but you trust Him in His providence with what comes to you through His hand.
Verse 13 says, And now I will break His yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart. It's as if, He says, you've been kept in handcuffs and those are going to be broken.
[16:25] Now when Nahum writes this, Nineveh looks like it can't be overturned, can't be overpowered. The only thing Nahum has to go on is the promise of God.

And so he declares it. This is exactly what you and I are to do. Read the Word, believe the Word, declare the Word, and then live the Word.
And when you say, you know, the Bible says He's working all things together for good. This doesn't feel good. This doesn't feel fair. This doesn't feel helpful. And you have to trust God.
You have to take Him at His Word. He's working all things together for good. That's His promise. Read it, believe it, and live according to it.
It's folly to try to oppose the Lord. Verse 14, here at the end of the chapter, we see a second truth, and that is there's a future for those who oppose the Lord.
[17:35] Here's the future of those who oppose the Lord. He's going to reveal it. Verse 14, the Lord has given commandment about you. No more shall your name be perpetuated.

So the Lord is going to speak about the fate of the king of Nineveh here. Verse 11, address the city. Verse 14, addresses the ruler.
No more will your name be perpetuated. Your ruler will not have a successor. Now, if you remember your Old Testament promises and covenants, that is completely the opposite of Genesis 12.
The covenant God makes with Abraham in verse 3, I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
And the promise here is of land and seed and a blessing. There will be people who come after you more numerous than the stars in the sky.
[18:39] You wouldn't be able to count them. But when it comes to Nineveh, their time has come up. And they're going to be brought to an end.

This is continuing in verse 14, the prophecy from verse 12. Verse 12, they will be cut down and pass away. Verse 14, no more will your name be perpetuated.
That's going to happen three decades later in 612 BC. From the house of your gods, I will cut off the carved image and the metal image, and I will make your grave, for you are vile.
If you want a threatening verse and a scary verse in the Bible, there it is. How about God himself saying, I will make your grave. It's true that sinful, evil, unrighteous people can create trouble in the world.
That's true. They can do it on a national scale. They can do it on a personal scale. That's true. Let me tell you what happens for those who oppose and reject the Lord and come against his people.
[20:08] The Lord digs their grave. I don't have to worry about seeking vengeance on them and neither do you. They will deal with the Lord.

And this word, hard as it is, is a comfort to the people of God to know that whatever you see happening around you, you trust the Lord.
Look what he says here again. From the house of your gods, I will cut off your carved image and the metal image. So here's the way this works. The house of your gods refers to the Assyrians' pagan temples.
When Assyria would go and conquer a land, what they would do is they would go into the houses of worship of those lands they conquered and they would take and steal for themselves the precious things from those temples and they would take them back to their own pagan temples and use them to adorn the temples.
And so the Lord says here, I'm going to take your carved image, that's an idol made out of wood or stone. I'm going to take your metal image, those are images made out of metal, and I'm going to take all of these precious things that you have adorned your own pagan altars with and I myself will make your grave for you are vile.
[21:33] Don't ever think that somebody gets by with their sin. Don't ever think that God is passive about sin.

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When Nineveh is judged, it will be a judgment against them for their idolatry and their rejection of God. This is a graphic picture of despair and defeat.
I will make your grave. He's saying you will be no match for the Lord. And I kind of just add to that, neither is anyone today who would oppose the things of God.
They are no match for the Lord. Thirdly, in verse 15, we see the faithfulness of God to His people. the faithfulness of God to His people.
Behold, upon the mountains the feet of Him who brings good news, who publishes peace. So Nahum tells the people, look at the mountains.
[22:48] Look at the feet of those who are bringing the good news. What's the good news? The good news is that God is going to deal with the Ninevites and God is going to save His people.

Nahum is telling them, look in anticipation. I've told you what God is going to do. Now, verse 15, behold, upon the mountains the feet of Him who brings good news, who publishes peace.
Well, the good news is what God has promised to do, but it hasn't happened yet. but He says with confidence, look, because soon you're going to see the messenger coming, running on the mountains saying, look what's happened.
How do you know what's going to happen? Because God said it would. This is a beautiful part of the book here. This reminds me of the Old Testament and the story of it hadn't rained, there was going to be rain.
Is there a cloud? No. Is there a cloud? No. Is there a cloud? No. Is there a cloud? Well, not really. There's just a cloud the size of a man's fist. That's all there is. And they say, you better get your umbrellas. Because if God said it, it's going to happen.
[24:03] Now, if that verse seems familiar to you, it should. This verse originally is Isaiah 52, verse 7. How beautiful in the mountains are those who proclaim peace, who proclaim good tidings, who say unto Zion, our God reigns.

When Isaiah spoke those words, that was their promise of deliverance from a different time. That's Isaiah 52. It's also used in the New Testament in Romans 10, 15 to talk about the spreading of the gospel.
There, Paul says, how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news. And here in Nahum 1, 15, behold on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news.
Isaiah 52, 7, Romans 10, Nahum 1, all using this language of a messenger who's announcing good news. In all three cases, the good news is God keeps his promise.
God keeps his word. Sunday school teachers, Awana teachers, this is what you're doing every Sunday morning, every Wednesday evening. You are a messenger.
[25:15] Your feet bringing the good news. God keeps his word. And it's a word of both condemnation for those who oppose him and comfort for those who trust in him.

Three times, three times it mentions the messenger feet bringing them to announce the word of God.
And the word of God is He keeps his promise. Now the faithfulness of God to his people is seen there. The second half of verse 15 tells what the people are to do.
Keep your feast, O Judah. Fulfill your vows. This is a call for the people of God to gather, to remember, to worship, to celebrate.
God's people were to gather together regularly to remember the promises of God and to celebrate his faithfulness throughout all generations.
[26:19] That's exactly what we do every Lord's Day, isn't it? We gather here together to remember the faithfulness of God. That's why we gather here. To remind ourselves God keeps his promise.

To remind ourselves our God is faithful to remember, to worship, to sing, to pray, to celebrate. The Lord says in Nahum 1.15, keep your feast, fulfill your vows, do what you've said you're going to do, live in obedience to me.
I have shown myself to be faithful. Now let that influence how you live your life. And that's how it should be for us. We gather here to remind ourselves God is faithful and God is good and yes, we have enemies and yes, there's real adversary and yes, there's real challenges and yes, there's people who really oppose the things of God.

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Yet, here's the good news, they will be dealt with by God. As for you, rejoice because he is your refuge.
So keep gathering to worship, he says. Fulfill your pledge, your promises. Jesus. And what you see even here in Nahum 1, 2,600 something years ago, is that God's people responded to his faithfulness in joyful worship and obedience.
[27:52] That's how we're supposed to live. Look at the end of verse 15, for never again shall the worthless, there's that word again, passed through you, he is utterly cut off.

The ruler is the worthless one because he fights against the purposes and the people of God. The point here is that the ruler of Nineveh is seen as the embodiment of wickedness, translated here as worthless.
worthless. As one author put it, all of this demonstrates that God's plan is certain, his promises true, and his prophecies are sure.
And they are to celebrate the faithfulness of God even before they see it happen in their lifetime. If God said, he's going to judge the Ninevites.
And he says, go ahead and look on that mountain because one day there will be a messenger running and his feet will bring the announcement that God has done exactly what he said he will do.
[29:11] Now, go worship and celebrate even before it happens because if he promised it, it will happen. Amen? That's what we're doing every Sunday.

God has promised that when we die we'll be with him. God has promised we have a home with him. Christ has promised he's returning and coming again, and so we gather every Sunday and celebrate Jesus is coming again.
We announce it, we proclaim it. Has it happened in your lifetime? No. Why don't we wait until it happens? Why wait? It's sure as it can be. Enjoy it today.
Celebrate it today. Because if he has declared it, he will bring it to pass. So, knowing that God is in control is supposed to bring peace to his people and promote joyful worship.
But notice in closing here, it does not eliminate trials in seasons of opposition. I mean, as joyful in one sense as the end of chapter one is, Nineveh is still strong.
[30:31] The Assyrians are still physically a threat. Then if you wonder how bad are these guys, I mentioned about a month ago, these are the guys who would go into a land, overtake a land, and take people, put a hook through the bottom of their lip, and drag them through the streets until their face pulled off.

That's how wicked these people were. So, don't think that the promise of judgment eliminates the reality of suffering and trials.
It just means they won't have the final word. The wicked never get the final word. never.
So, you're going through a season of trial? Respond with joyful worship because God is on your side and he's given you his promise.
And nothing of this world and no sinful desire of man will have the final word. Whether that's individually or in Nahum 1, nationally.
[31:42] but he is still a refuge for those who stand in need of a savior.

That's what chapter 1 verse 7 said. So, you can oppose him and live in folly or you can trust him and count on his faithfulness.
let me sum up Nahum chapter 1 this way. The wicked rebel, the righteous rest.
with that in mind, just listen as I read verses 9 to 15 as we close. What do you plot against the Lord?
He will make a complete end. Trouble will not rise up a second time. For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink. They are consumed like stubble, fully dried.
[32:41] from you came one who plotted evil against the Lord, a worthless counselor. Thus says the Lord, though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away.

Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart.
The Lord has given commandment about you no more shall your name be perpetuated. From the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the metal image.
I will make your grave for you are vile. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace.
Keep your feasts, O Judah. Fulfill your vows. for never again shall the worthless pass through you.

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[33:48] He is utterly cut off. The wicked rebel, the righteous rest.

Lord, we thank you for your word today and pray, Lord, that we would live in obedience and respond in joyful worship, trusting in your faithfulness in all things.
In Christ's name, amen. peace. Amen. axis two times one time one time for never here and don't tell me time is part of the■■■est one time fathers year this may 1 time fathers can come or see there he will know have know fathers he will but he will get get here fathers fathers got much fathers fathers fathers fathers come may fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers

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