God Has No Equal

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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. Turn with me to Nahum.

We were here two weeks ago to give an introduction. We'll be here for the next number of Sunday evenings. And so you might just put a ribbon or a marker in your Old Testament in Nahum.
If you're with us on Sunday nights, which I hope that you will be. And you'll be able to follow along. Just a real quick overview or review from where we were a couple of weeks ago.
Nahum 1 just simply introduces that this is an oracle concerning Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum. So Nineveh is the capital of the Assyrian Empire.
And we looked a couple of weeks ago that Nahum is the sequel to the book of Jonah. And so I gave you a three-point outline to help you to remember the connection between Jonah and Nahum.
[1:05] Let me remind you of that. It kind of tells the story of what happened over those 100 years. Number one, an unhappy preacher drives a people's repentance.

The unhappy preacher was Jonah. And his preaching was what was used to drive the people's repentance, the people of Nineveh.
The second thing we looked at was that an ungodly people demonstrate a people's rebellion. An ungodly people, that's the Ninevites, demonstrate a people's rebellion.
Because about a century after the book of Jonah, with the revival that happens in Nineveh, a century later we pick up in Nahum and they are filled with sin and rebellion again.
And that gives way thirdly to an unknown prophet that declares a people's ruin. An unknown prophet, that's Nahum, that the Lord raised up to declare a people's ruin, the people of Nineveh.
[2:16] The Assyrians at the time of Nahum are a strong power. They ruled with force. They ruled with cruelty. The Assyrians dominated this part of the world from about 900 B.C.

to right before their destruction in 612 B.C. So about 300 years, the Assyrians were the dominant power. And the capital of that empire was Nineveh.
Nineveh was a strong city, a commercial center, a highly fortified city. And now about 100 years after Jonah the prophet, here comes Nahum and the Ninevites again are steeped in sin.
Nahum lived in a dark day. The king of Judah was Manasseh who led the people astray. You might just make note of 2 Kings 21 verse 9.
It says, That's what's happening as Nahum now comes into his ministry.
[3:34] We're going to look today at this first part of chapter 1 in verses 2 to 8. And the first thing I want you to make note of is God's unrelenting passion.

God's unrelenting passion. We see it in verse 2. There's a couple of things that we see his passion for. And first is the passion for the sake of his name.
God has an unrelenting passion for the sake of his name. Verse 2. The Lord is a jealous and avenging God.
The Lord is avenging and wrathful. Now one of the things I want you to notice, if you look at verse 2, you'll see three different times the word LORD in all caps is used.
This is God's covenantal name Yahweh. So look at your text. The Lord, Yahweh, is a jealous and avenging God. The Lord, that's Yahweh, is avenging and wrathful.
[4:35] The Lord, that's Yahweh, takes vengeance on his adversaries. Three times here in verse 1, you see the divine name used.

You're going to see it 10 times in chapter 1. If you just take a careful reading of chapter 1, it becomes very apparent that the key character here is not Nineveh, and it's not Nahum.
The key character is the Lord. You see that just by the repetition of the name. And it's interesting because in chapter 1, you're only going to see Nineveh referred to one time, and it's the very first

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phrase, an oracle concerning Nineveh.
If you just turn to chapter 2, verse 8, Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away. That's the only time you'll see Nineveh mentioned in chapter 2.
Chapter 3, verse 7, And all who look at you will shrink from you and say, Wasted is Nineveh. Who will grieve for her? And that's the only time you'll see Nineveh mentioned.
[5:50] Once in chapter 1, once in chapter 2, once in chapter 3. And yet, in the very first verse of Nineveh chapter 1, or the second verse, you see the name Lord used three times.

It's not hard to see what Nahum is doing. He's not putting Nineveh on equal footing as God. This is an oracle concerning Nineveh.
The whole book is about the coming destruction of Nineveh. But it's not as if you have two equal players, God and Nineveh. It's very clear that the key character in the entire book is the Lord Himself.
It says the Lord is a jealous and avenging God. Now, typically, we think of jealousy being a sinful thing. If a sinner is jealous of something somebody else has, that's a sinful thing.
If you desire something that does not rightly belong to you, that kind of jealousy would be a sinful thing. But when we're talking about the Lord, we're talking about the Lord who created all things and who rightly deserves to be glorified by every creature.
[7:13] When the Lord is jealous for His name, He is jealous for that which rightly belongs to Him. That's the big difference. If you get a new car and I'm jealous of that, that car doesn't rightly belong to me.

But my praise rightly belongs to be given to the name of the Lord. And so it is proper and fitting for the Lord to be jealous and avenging.
The Lord is avenging and wrathful. Why? For the sake of His name. Because His name deserves to be glorified and praised. This is true in the 23rd Psalm that we know so well.
You lead me in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. Everything the Lord does is for the sake of His name. But He has an unrelenting passion, not only for the glory of His name, He has an unrelenting passion for justice.
Keep looking in verse 2. The Lord is jealous and avenging God. The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries and keeps wrath for His enemies.
[8:32] This is not, as one author well put it, this is not vindictiveness, this is vindication. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries and keeps wrath for His enemies.

God keeps wrath for His enemies. That is a frightening truth. To keep means to watch.
It means to guard. It means to protect. To say the Lord bless you and keep you, number six is to say, may the Lord watch over you.
May the Lord protect you. May the Lord guard you. May the Lord shield you. That's a wonderful thing when it speaks of guarding His children.
But here, He keeps wrath. Guards over His wrath. Protects His wrath. And it will one day be poured out on His enemies.
[9:47] God's unrelenting passion for the glory of His name and His unrelenting passion for justice. In the end, the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the water covers the sea.

And all sin will be dealt with. Verse three, we see a second truth and that is God's undeserved patience.
God's undeserved patience. Look at verse three. The Lord, Yahweh, is slow to anger and great in power.
And this is really interesting that this is here in Nahum because remember, it was a century ago that Jonah walked the streets of Nineveh. His message in the original text was really just five words.
Yet 40 days, Nineveh overthrown. That was his sermon. Yet 40 days, Nineveh overthrown. Jonah knew it was the character of God to express grace and mercy to an undeserving people.
[11:14] And because he did not want to see Nineveh come to a place of peace with God, he had no interest to go and preach or even if it was to declare judgment because he knew that that preaching of judgment would be used by the Lord to draw them to a place of repentance.

So it's interesting that a century later, as the Ninevites have gone right back into sin, that Nahum declares, the Lord is slow to anger and great in power.
God's undeserved patience is poured out upon those who love Him. But please note this, God's undeserved patience has a limit.

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The Lord is slow to anger and great in power and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. God does pour out undeserved grace and undeserved patience on the guilty who trust in Him, but that patience has a limit.
In the days of Noah, Genesis 6, we understand from reading that text that the Lord gave us a sign to display His grace.
[12:41] He put a picture in the sky of a rainbow and that rainbow was a reminder of the grace and the mercy and the patience of God.

And today we live in the days of grace. But when you read the book of Revelation, it begins to describe the sound of thunder.
And as that thunder begins to roll, metaphorically, the days of grace come to an end. And the time of wrath comes raining down.
God does have undeserved patience. He pours out on those who love Him, but His patience has a limit.
Psalm 711 says, God is a righteous judge and a God who feels indignation every day. God is a righteous judge. It's true that in Christ, the Lord has poured out His love on the world and for all who believe, they will be saved.
[13:54] That's true. It's true that all who confess the name of Christ will be forgiven. It's true that all Christ holds in His hand, and no one can take them out.

But to be biblical, your theology of the living God has to have room for Psalm 7. That because of the sin and the wrath He has protecting and keeping watch over for those who oppose and reject Him, He is a God who feels indignation every day.
So if you have this idea that to say God is love means God affirms all things, you did not get that from Scripture. He is a patient God to undeserving people, but that patience has an end.
Look at the end of verse 3. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. The whirlwind comes through with powerful winds, and whatever the winds did not knock down, and the picture here gets pummeled by the rainstorm, and the clouds of the storm that look so ominous, so threatening, and so big are nothing more than what's stirred up by the dust of His feet, meaning when the wrath of God is poured out, no one can stand.
And you don't have to wonder or worry about can God deal with sin and sinners. He's got it.
[15:34] And when the storm of God's wrath is poured out, it is not missed. My wife and I have an ongoing, not argument, but difference between us.

I believe it's raining when the radar on my phone shows it's raining. My wife believes it's raining when she sees rain falling outside.
Yesterday, out of nowhere, she says, it's raining. And I looked on my phone, and I said, no rain. And she said, Michael, it's, I can see it, I can hear it, it's pouring down, if you go outside, you're going to get wet. I'm looking at the radar, there's no rain.
Well, it doesn't take a real brilliant scientist to figure out who's the right and the wrong one in that meaningless argument. But for whatever reason, even if I see rain falling outside, I go to the radar.
[16:45] Is it really raining? I feel better if it's confirmed by an app, not what my old eyes can see. But I'll tell you this, when I read Nahum, when God's wrath is poured out, nobody's asking, is it raining?

You know. And our God, who yes, is patient, and yes, is full of grace, that patience and grace has a limit.
And the whole book of Nahum is about the limit of God's grace that will be poured out in judgment on the people of Nineveh.
God has unrelenting passion for His glory, for justice. God's undeserved patience is poured out on those who love Him, but it has a limit. Verses 4 to 6, we see thirdly, God's unequaled power.
Look at how the prophet here speaks of God's unequaled power. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry. He dries up all the rivers.
[18:00] Bashan and Carmel wither and the bloom of Lebanon withers. This is a reference here to the Red Sea during the time of the Exodus and the Jordan River as people crossed over in dry land.

He rebukes the sea and makes it dry. Who else can do that? Now, as you read about the Red Sea crossing or the crossing of the Jordan River, it's true God uses nature to accomplish His purposes, but the Scripture affirms clearly that the one who is at work is the Lord Himself.

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So much so, He even mentions here in verse 4 that these areas, including the bloom of Lebanon, withers. And what's interesting about that is geographically, these aren't places that were prone to drought.
The only reason why it would dry up is because the Lord Himself had unequaled power first, over the waters. Second, verse 5, over mountains and land.
The mountains quake before Him, the hills melt, and the earth heaves before Him, the world and all who dwell in it. Mountains, in Scripture, are a picture of strength.
[19:20] And as you even think in our world today, mountains are an image of that which is immovable. But, watch this, the mountains are no match for the marvelous might of the mighty God.

That's Nahum's point. You look at the mountains and you think they're strong, you think they're immovable, you think they're impenetrable. The might of those mountains is no match for the might of mighty God.
God has unequaled power over the water, verse 4, over the mountains, verse 5, and verse 6, over humanity.
Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the heat of His anger?
As one author put it, if the glory of nature shrivels up before the Lord, how much more the pride of man. God has unequaled power over the water, over the mountains, and over humanity.
[20:40] 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. To endure, who can endure at ask?
To endure is to stand up under. It's to be able to hold the load. Who can? No one.
If we took any one of you in the sanctuary tonight and took you to a gym and put you under a squat rack and we put that barbell across your back and your shoulders and we put 10,000 pounds on it, not one of us would stand up under it.
We would be crushed. Much less 100,000 pounds or 1 million pounds.
[21:48] Much less the wrath of God stored up for those who trampled the eternal glory of the eternal God. Nahum says, Nineveh, right now, it looks like you're strong.

It looks like you're powerful. It looks like you have might. It looks like you are in control. But our God has unequaled powers. Our God is able to control the water to move it so they can cross through the Red Sea.
to part it so they can walk through the Jordan River. Our God can cause a drought as the psalmist says. Our God can cause the flowers to wither as Nahum says.
And our God can crush His enemies. as we go later through the book later through the book you're going to see both in biblical history and world history how these prophecies came exactly and entirely to be.
But here's what you need to understand from the beginning of the book of Nahum. It is pointless to oppose God. He has unequaled power.
[23:05] verses 7 and 8 let me show you one fourth truth tonight God's unyielding purpose God's unyielding purpose two things that we see of His purpose number one to shelter those who trust in Him verse 7 the Lord is good a stronghold in the day of trouble He knows those who take refuge in Him God has an unyielding purpose one to shelter those who trust in Him just look at what is affirmed in verse 7 our God is good He doesn't just do good things He is good He doesn't just accomplish good things He is good and He's a stronghold in the day of trouble He's powerful He's without equal and

He's a refuge a place of protection a place of security and look at the end of verse 7 He knows those who take refuge in Him He knows His own the believer is never lost in the crowd with God He knows His own sometimes humanly speaking we feel lost in the crowd don't we at a new school you feel lost in the crowd sometimes you come to a new church you can feel lost in the crowd take a new job can feel overlooked or forgotten but the Lord knows those who take refuge in Him
He hasn't overlooked you He hasn't forgotten you He knows you the book of Nahum is all about the power of God now it's interesting because if I were to ask you in one sentence to sum up the story of Nahum it would be correct if you said the story of Nahum is a book about the coming destruction of Nineveh that's true but in three chapters you're just going to find the name Nineveh three times once in each chapter that's it Nineveh is the capital of Assyria you're only going to find the name

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Assyria once in the entire book this is the story of God this is the story of His grace
His power and ultimately of Him accomplishing His will His unyielding purpose to shelter those who trust in Him and secondly His unyielding purpose to judge those who oppose Him this is interesting verse 7 is the good news the Lord is good a stronghold in the day of trouble He knows those who take refuge in Him verse 8 but with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of the adversaries and will pursue His enemies into darkness God's God's purpose is to shelter those who trust in Him and to judge those who oppose Him the whole gospel is there in verses 7 and 8 good news
He knows His own He's a shelter for His own He's a refuge for those who run to Him the bad news for those who oppose Him He will pursue His enemies into darkness it's interesting verse 8 he pictures this as an overflowing flood it's not just symbolic language if you turn to chapter 2 verse 6 it speaks of an actual flood that soon will level the city the river gates are opened and the palace melts away we'll take a look at that in a couple of weeks but I want you to understand that this book which would rightly be described as the coming judgment for
[28:14] Nineveh is ultimately all about the power of God and for the one who belongs to him you need not fear for the one who opposes him you will not stand and so Nahum speaks at a very dark season in his nation's life a message about a people who at the time looked quite strong and if you were Nineveh and if you heard this sermon that Nahum gives you would say who do you think you are don't you see how strong we are don't you see how fortified our city is don't you see how powerful we are what threat could come against us and the answer over and over and over is their enemy is the

Lord and if that's true they have no defense that same thing is true tonight for any tonight who do not know the Lord is your Savior for any tonight who oppose him his wrath is stored up protected watched over and will be poured out but here's the good news the Lord is good a strong hold in the day of trouble and he knows those who take refuge in him and of course for us the ultimate expression of the Lord providing grace and refuge for his people isn't what Jesus Christ did on the cross the ultimate display of the love he has for his own is in the sending of his son to die in our place the ultimate evidence that the
Lord is good and gracious is the empty tomb from which Jesus arose on the third day proving his power over sin and death and the grave and so verse 3 tells us the Lord is slow to anger and great in power verse 7 the Lord is good and a strong holden day of trouble that good news is still true and for all who would cling to him you would find rest and at the same time for those who would oppose him it is still true that none can stand before his indignation and none can endure the heat of his anger if tonight you don't know the Lord as your Savior run to him cling to him oppose him no longer because you will not stand against his judgment but for those who are believers who have sought refuge in him we find covering protection and grace and we remember and celebrate that to the taking of the elements of the
Lord's Supper

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