Crisis
Russell Lowell (1819–91)

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403 CLOB (Senate Committee Room) and also use Zoom. The members' only Bible Fellowship will be held every Wednesday from 7:00-7:50am in 403 CAP.

The Capitol Commission Bible Study is open to the entire Capitol community, and is held weekly every Tuesday during the legislative session. We have an in-person Bible study (with social distancing) in 328 CLOB (Senate Committee Room) and also use Zoom. The members' only Bible Fellowship will be held every Wednesday from 7:00-7:50am in 403 CAP.

The Capitol Commission Bible study and the Members' Bible Fellowship are both nonpartisan and non-denominational. The sole intent of the ministry of Capitol Commission is to serve you, as a resource for pastoral attention, counsel, and prayer. The present Bible study is just one aspect of that desire to serve.

— Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission Bible Study
Tuesday, 30 March 2021

Nahum 1 – “Keeping Watch”

The prophet Nahum wrote to comfort God's people and to give assurance of victory over their tormentors. The prevailing theme of Nahum's prophecy is deliverance for God's people as a result of the righteous vengeance of the Lord. American poet and critic James Russell Lowell (1819–91) could have composed his “The Present Crisis” as a summary of the prophecy of Nahum.

Careless seems the great Avenger;
history's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness
'twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold,
wrong forever on the throne,—

Yet that scaffold sways the future,
and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
keeping watch above his own.

Second Kings 6 records a war between Israel and Syria (Aram). The king of Israel was able to elude the Syrian king because the prophet Elisha warned him as to the method of attack. The king of Syria was enraged that Israel eluded him and decided to capture Elisha. The king surrounded Elisha's house yet the prophet did not fear because he knew God had surrounded the Syrians.

With the Syrian host surrounding Elisha, the prophet's attendant trembled in asking, “What shall we do?” Elisha “answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed, . . . And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (vv. 15-17).

Conflict seems uncertain and sometimes it appears the darkness is certain to succeed when the forces of wickedness (cf. Eph 6:12) assemble themselves against the good. When the apostles suffered contempt and threats, the believers sought the Lord in prayer, and God answered with boldness and courage granted to his servants (Acts 4:23-31). Will you have the eyes to see “so that you will know what is the hope of His calling” (Eph 4:18)?

GOD IS GREAT, GOD IS GOOD (Nahum 1:1-8) Nahum's prophecy is designated an “oracle,” which is a message from God that announces judgment. Sometimes the “oracle” is termed a “burden” because it frequently contained an intense message. The vision that Nahum the Elkoshite received was from the Lord. The book of Nahum is not a narrative like Jonah; rather, it resembles other books that have a prophetic message.

Nahum's prophecy concerned Nineveh, the principal city of the Assyrian Empire at the time. Nahum likely prophesied around 650 BC. Jonah's message is dated to 780 BC. More than one hundred years earlier, God sent a reluctant prophet to a “great city” that He declared as wicked (Jon 1:2). God announced, through the prophet Jonah, that he was going to overthrow the city. Nineveh experienced one of the greatest revivals in response to that message because the king and “the people of Nineveh believed in God” (3:5).

Nahum demonstrates that every generation is responsible for its own moral and spiritual decisions (Ezek 18:20-24). In the time of Jonah, the Ninivites repented in response to the proclamation of God's word. However, in the time of Nahum, the people of Nineveh made different choices and for this reason they were guilty before the Lord. God announced judgment on Nineveh for her cruelty, idolatry, oppression, and wickedness. While exceptional leadership in the past is a blessing, it can never replace one's faithful responsibility in the present.
The love of God will never allow what his righteousness condemns. God simply cannot excuse or ignore sin. The truth of this assertion is something that should cause rejoicing in divine justice and judgment because it represents the triumph of holiness.

Verses 2-3 establish the tone for Nahum's entire message. Nineveh was in trouble with God. Despite the good work of the reluctant prophet Jonah, the city returned to its wickedness. The Ninevites oppressed other countries, performed cruel acts, and worshipped idols. “The Lord is slow to anger” (v. 3a) as evident in his “relingent concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon” Nineveh (Jon 3:10). Now the Lord decreed his verdict through the prophet Nahum: this time, He would not relent.

THE LOVE OF GOD WILL NEVER ALLOW WHAT HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS CONDEMN.

What was the benefit for God’s people to know Nineveh was to experience judgment? The answer is that it is important to know that the Lord is all-powerful and can be trusted to care for his people even while He brings justice to those who oppose Him (vv. 3-6). In contrast to those who “endure the burning of His anger” (v. 6b) is God’s promise to “those who take refuge in Him” (v. 7c).

God is great and He is good. Without his greatness to maintain order, the universe would unravel, yet without his goodness, evil despots would rule the world. God uses his greatness for salvation, and his goodness to draw people to Himself.

God provides comfort, help, and refuge for those who trust in Him, yet must outpour judgment against those who disobey his Word because He is holy and just. When you obey and trust God, you will enjoy the comfort of his refuge, even in distressing times. Cushing’s hymn “Hiding in Thee” (1876) expresses such truths.

How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe, I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe.
How often when trials like sea billows roll Have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul.

... IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT THE LORD IS ALL-POWERFUL AND CAN BE TRUSTED TO CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE...

The goodness of God does not mean He will not bring “His enemies” (and his people's foes) to justice. Verse 8 returns to the wrathful aspect of God's character because his anger toward brutality, pride, and wickedness is a focus of Nahum's oracle. God is too good not to punish sin. God is so holy and just that He cannot excuse or ignore unrepentant sin. The Lord is angry with those who abuse others, and will bring them to “a complete end.”

GOD IS INVICIBLE, GOD IS SALVATION

(Nahum 1:9-15) To resist God is futile because He is invincible. Whereas verses 2-8 emphasized the character of God, verses 9-15 focus more directly upon Nineveh. Whatever a person devises “against the LORD” will fail (cf. Ps 2:1-5). The Assyrians besieged Jerusalem once (1 Kgs 18) but would not do so again (Nah 1:9). To oppose God's people is truly opposition to the Lord himself, and He will not permit those plans to succeed.

Three images depict Nineveh's complete destruction: “thorns,” drunkenness, and “stubble” (v. 10). Nineveh was in trouble because the Lord will overcome any plots against Him or his people (v. 11). Even though the Assyrians were “at full strength and likewise many, even so, they [would] be cut off and pass away” (v. 12). Nineveh’s defeat would be a blessing to God’s people because they would be freed from Assyrian oppression (v. 13). Nahum emphasized that his message was not a personal verdict for the Lord had spoken (v. 12a), thereby guaranteeing the fulfillment.

Nineveh boasted that its gods were invincible and even claimed to be more powerful than God himself (Isa 36:18-20; 37:10-13), yet the Lord would cast those false deities upon the trash heap and empty their temples. When the Assyrians conquered other nations, they would take their idols to demonstrate superiority of their gods in contrast to those who were defeated. God would prepare the grave – in great humiliation – for Nineveh and its idols (Nah 1:14).

In response to Nineveh’s fall, the people of God would “celebrate” (v. 15). The celebration was not that of revenge; rather, it was rejoicing because justice was accomplished and their oppression had come to an end. The omnipotent God is able to deliver his people and to defeat their oppressors regardless of how powerful they may appear. Beware of anyone who would encourage your trust in anyone (or anything) other than the true God of the Holy Bible. The Lord is good and the Refuge for his people!

Thank you for the privilege in providing you with the Capitol Commission Bible study. If we can serve you in any manner, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Scripture calls the church to pray for the salvation of our leaders, resulting in them having knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:1-4). As churches are faithful in prayer and proclaiming the gospel of God’s grace, our society and government will be impacted. Capitol Commission is committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ and promoting the mandate to pray for those in the capitol communities throughout the United States and the world.

Romans 10:14-15 affirms, “How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent. . . ?” Please notice the reverse progression. If we desire anyone, including our government leaders, to (5) call upon the Lord and to seek Him and his Word for life decisions, they must (4) believe in Him, which means they must previously have (3) heard the Word of God, which means prior to that someone needs to (2) preach, which requires that others have first (1) sent someone.

Capitol Commission is committed to the second part: preaching (proclaiming) the good news of salvation, yet this cannot occur without someone doing the first part: sending. All funding and prayer for this work comes from people who want the light of the gospel of God's grace brought into our State Capitol. As you do #1 and we do #2, we can rejoice together as the Lord accomplishes in the Capitol what only He can produce in someone: #3, #4, and #5.

What an exciting co-mission! Please join us in this ministry!