

The Severity of God

Nahum, Part Four

Nahum 1:2-8

Stuart W. Bryan

- A. Introduction (1:1)
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I. The Kindness and Severity of God (Ex 34:6-7 cp. Romans 11:19-23)

God's kindness, His mercy is His preeminent attribute. But God's mercy is not alone for in Yahweh, the Living God, kindness and severity meet. And just as we worship God for His kindness, so we must honor Him for His severity.

⁶*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.*

II. The God Who Judges

Nahum 1:2-8

²*God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; The Lord avenges and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies; ³The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, And will not at all acquit the wicked.*

The Lord has His way In the whirlwind and in the storm, And the clouds are the dust of His feet. ⁴He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, And dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, And the flower of Lebanon wilts. ⁵The mountains quake before Him, The hills melt, And the earth heaves at His presence, Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.

⁶*Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, And the rocks are thrown down by Him. ⁷The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble; And He knows those who trust in Him. ⁸But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place, And darkness will pursue His enemies.*

A. The God of Patiently Jealous Vengeance (2-3a)

The opening verses identify certain of God's *attributes* and certain of His *actions*.

- *God is jealous.* When Israel was preparing to enter the promised land, the Lord declared, "But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)" (Ex 34:13-14). God's *jealousy* relates especially to _____.
- *God is furious or "wrathful"* (ESV). When peoples persist in idolatry, this arouses God's *anger* (cf. Rom 1:18-19). "Biblically speaking, divine wrath is the right and righteous response of God to _____."
- "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power" (3a). At no point does God lose control; His *power* is never threatened. Thus, He is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9-10 cf. Ezek 18:23).

Because God is *jealous, furious, slow to anger, and great in power*, He acts in certain ways:

- *The Lord avenges* (2). To *avenge* or *take vengeance* is to vindicate that which is good and right and true. "In this case, vengeance is a just retribution, recompense or punishment" (Webster). The _____ of all the earth will do right (cf. Gen 18:25).
- *He reserves wrath for His enemies* (2c). He stores up His *wrath*. He patiently works to bring about repentance and judges righteously in His time.
- *He will not at all acquit the wicked* (3ab). God will not declare those who are guilty innocent. His _____ does not amount to indifference (cf. Ps 50:21).

B. Creation and God's Presence (3b-5 cp. 1 Kgs 19:12; Ps 33:8)

C. Humanity and God's Indignation (6-8 cf. Jn 3:36)

What does God's wrath mean for humanity?

¹⁵And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev 6:15-17)

III. The Severity of God

A. God's Severity and the Cross of Christ (Mt 27:50ff; Lk 23:44ff)

John tells us, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (Jn 3:36). Why? Because we are all, by nature, children of _____ (cf. Eph 2:3). But Jesus endured that wrath for us.

- ⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵²and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. (Matt 27:50-53)
- ⁴⁴Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. ⁴⁵Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. (Luke 23:44-45)

Why did Jesus tremble in the Garden of Gethsemane? "For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, And the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth Drain and drink down" (Ps 75:8). Jesus drank that _____ (Mt 26:39).

B. God's Severity and the Comfort of the Saints (2 Thes 1:3-10)

³We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ⁴so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, ⁵which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ⁶since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

C. God's Severity and our call to Compassion (Rom 12:19-21)

¹⁹Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

IV. Conclusion