

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
September 18, 2016

Nahum 1:1–3:19. The jealousy of God.

Acts 16:6–40. Paul’s and Silas’s love songs to the Lord during imprisonment.

Job 24:12–25. Life in this cursed, fallen world is often not fair.

COMMENTS.

Nahum 1:1–3:19. Nahum can be conveniently divided into three parts. **First**, the Lord’s wrath against Nineveh (**1:1-15**). The Lord may be patient and slow to express wrath, but once it is aroused, all the destructive forces of nature are at his command. God’s great wrath is to be poured out on Nineveh. She is to be judged for her hostility to God, and her thoroughgoing wickedness. Her idols will be destroyed. Nahum urges Judah to praise God in light of God’s wrath against willful evil and perversion. **Second**, the downfall of Nineveh (**2:1-13**). Nahum sees in vivid detail the red shields and cloaks of the Medes. He sees great buildings swept away and the palace collapsing. He also depicts the destruction as a pool being drained. Nineveh’s pride, strength and wealth are ebbing away. Nineveh which had been like a lion’s den—secure in its strength and a breeding place of violence—now lies destroyed. And it is the Lord who has brought about her downfall. **Third**, Nahum chants a battle-song against Nineveh (**3:1-19**). She is a ‘city of blood’—built on slaughter and maintained by stolen wealth. They slaughtered people without regard for age or sex, and they stacked up corpses like lumber as warning to anybody who would oppose them. The shedding of innocent blood is a serious sin that God notes, remember, and judges. She will get the treatment she has handed out to others. The prophet describes her as a prostitute, devoted to paganism and witchcraft, now exposed, stripped and humiliated before the eyes of the world. Assyria spread this evil influence to other nations and enslaved them by their sorcery. In ancient times, prostitutes were often shamed by being publicly exposed, and this is what God promised to do to Nineveh. God would expose Assyria’s nakedness before all the nations, and this would be the end of her evil influence. The magnificent wealthy city would become a heap of ruins. In sum, God punishes cruel nations that follow inhumane policies and brutal practices. Whether it’s practicing genocide, exploiting the poor, supporting slavery, or failing to provide people with the necessities of life, the sins of national leaders are known by God and He eventually judges corrupt nations.

By proper knowledge and proper love. The mention of God’s “jealousy” (**1:2**) in this reading points to God’s intense love (as well as His uncompromising righteousness). Jealousy is a sin if it means being envious of what others have and wanting to possess it, but it’s a virtue if it means cherishing a loving relationship that we have and want to protect. A faithful husband and wife are jealous over one another and do everything they can to keep their intimate love relationship exclusive. “Jealous” and “zealous” come from the same root, for when you’re jealous over someone, you’re zealous to protect the love relationship. Of course, God is not jealous of our possessions. This “jealousy” points to the fact that God will not share His people with false gods any more than a husband who loves his wife would share his wife with his neighbor. If a husband sees another man

attempting to be intimate with his wife, he is right to be jealous, for only he has the right to be intimate with his wife. This type of jealousy is not sinful. Rather, it is entirely appropriate. Jealousy is a sin when it is a desire for something that does not belong to you. Worship, praise, honor, and adoration belong to God alone, for only He is truly worthy of it. Therefore, God is rightly jealous when worship, praise, honor, or adoration are given to idols. Moreover, just as a husband who loves his wife, and seeks her good (morally, spiritually) does not want her to be harmed by getting involved in impure and illicit relationships that would hurt her and their relationship, so the Lord seeks our good. He teaches us that to love the world is to become a spiritual adulterer. James 4:4 *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?* By proper knowledge and love, the believer guards his heart and seeks to love and live for the Lord, pleasing Him in all things rather than living for the world and human approbation. The whole point of Scripture is to love the Lord with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Matt. 22:37-40), and just as a wife or husband who dearly loves his spouse is not tempted to get in bed with another, so the believer who dearly loves the Lord is not tempted to ignore the Lord and thus end up in bed with the world. We all long for the day when we will see the “face” of God’s love directly, in the meantime we are left with working through various propositions of Scripture that carry meaning but only dimly compared to face-to-face view of God’s love for us.

Acts 16:6–40. In this section, we see three divine openings: **(1) God “opened” up Europe (16:6-40):** The divine vision instructed them to go to Europe. I wonder how world history might have been changed had Paul been sent to Asia instead of to Europe. **(2) God opened Lydia’s heart (16:13-15):** One should not conclude that because God opened Lydia’s heart, Lydia’s part in her conversion was entirely passive. One must make a distinction between efficient cause (God) and formal cause (Lydia). As the formal cause, she stopped kicking against the universal grace, which, then, provided the opportunity of God to efficiently open her heart, a heart that was “positive” as indicated by her listening attentively to the Word, and it is the Word that brings the sinner to the Savior (John 5:24). **(3) God opened the prison doors (16:16-40):** God responded to Paul and Silas’s expressions of love in prison by shaking the foundations of the prison, opening all the doors, and loosening the prisoners’ bonds. They could have fled to freedom, but instead they remained right where they were. For one thing, Paul immediately took command; and, no doubt, the fear of God was on these pagan men. The prisoners must have realized that there was something very special about those two Jewish preachers! Paul’s attention was fixed on the jailer, the man he really wanted to win to Christ. “What must I do to be saved?” is the cry of lost people worldwide, and we had better be able to give them the right answer. The legalists in the church would have replied, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). But Paul knew the right answer—faith in Jesus Christ. In the Book of Acts, the emphasis is on faith in Jesus Christ alone—faith alone in Christ alone.

By proper knowledge and proper love. Why didn't Paul and Silas plead their Roman citizenship to avoid incarceration? Perhaps they knew that God wanted them to be in prison. Note how Paul and Silas were stripped and beaten (see 2 Cor. 11:23, 25) and put in the city prison. It looked like the end of their witness in Philippi, but God had other plans. Instead of complaining or calling on God to judge their enemies, the two men prayed and praised God. This is nothing less than a vivid illustration of their love for the Lord—*proper knowledge and love*. Proper knowledge and love of God always bring great appreciation regardless of the circumstances of life. It is easy to sing when all is going well in the life, it is another thing when one is incarcerated and facing the strong possibility of death like Paul and Silas. There really is nothing like living in the transcendent presence of the Lord. When God is our greatest treasure, there is nothing that can get us down. It is when our hearts are disappointed because they are not getting other things that is often the real problem and the source of depression. It is an undeniable fact that human beings are happy, at least on some level, when they get what they desire/love. The only question is the nature of the happiness and what is desired.

Job 24:12–25. In this reading, Job points out injustices in the city. He begins with murders (12–14). Job says, 'But God charges no one with wrongdoing' (12). Job had never murdered anybody, yet his friends said he was under the judgment of God. In **verse 15**, Job mentions sexual sins, which are certainly rampant in some parts of our cities. The adulterer and the rapist wait for the darkness before they sneak out to satisfy their desires. Also waiting for the darkness is the thief, who breaks into houses (16–17). 'There is crime in the city,' said Job, 'and God seems to be doing nothing about it.' Job's malediction can be summarized like this: "May the wicked vanish like foam on the water or snow that melts in the heat of the sun (18–19). May they be forgotten by everyone, even their own mothers, as they rot in the grave (20). May their wives be barren and give them no heirs (21). May their sense of security and success vanish quickly as they are brought low, mowed down like wheat in the harvest" (22–24). 'Now,' says Job to his three critics, "if what I've said is not true, prove me wrong!" (25) But they never did.

By proper knowledge and proper love. Life in this broken, fallen world is often unfair and will never be totally just until the Lord returns and sets up His righteous kingdom. There are men and women of God, both ministers as well as congregants, who are faithful to the Lord and the Word of God, who struggle to make ends meet and are reviled by society (called "homophobes"), all the while many criminals get away with crime (like deleting tens of thousands of e-mails and lying repeatedly about it) and prosperity preachers live in great luxury as they sell a god who will work for the people of God to solve temporal problems and obtain more Mammon. As we walk with the Lord by knowledge and by love, let us never depend upon vindication by the world. God will settle all accounts in His time and in His way. Let us renew our dedication to the Lord and get our strength, protection, vindication and satisfaction in God. Psalm 56:4 *In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?* Galatians 1:10 *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.* The injustices of being a slave in the ancient world was horrendous, yet note what the Lord says in Ephesians 6:5-7, *Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-*

pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. Two things are certain: life will not always be fair and we were made to love the Lord, not the world. If you are suffering for the Lord, you stand in good company and value: Hebrews 11:38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

Life in the Lord by proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don