

## The Angry Powerful Good God

### Nahum 1:1-7

#### **Slide 1**

There's much about God that seems like a contradiction or at least is quite complicated. In fact, some of what God does makes no logical sense. That's why we can't understand Him as a human being.

Understand... God doesn't contradict Himself, but there are some things that are true about God and, because we can't see Him or know Him fully, we must keep them in tension with no complete answer.

For example: It doesn't make sense to start a nation with a man who's over 100 years old, and yet God did this with Abraham.

It doesn't seem logical to choose to pass your promises onto someone who's a cheater, a liar and who has terrible character qualities, but God did that with Jacob.

It doesn't make sense to move over a million people through the desert and yet God did this with the Israelites in the Book of Exodus.

It doesn't make sense to incarnate Yourself to an unwed virgin, but that's what happened with Jesus.

It doesn't seem logical to feed 5,000 to 7,000 people knowing that they just want the food; they don't want to listen to You, but Jesus did this.

So, how is it that God is love and wrath at the same time? How is it that God can judge and have grace at the same time?

How is it that the spread of the Gospel is dependent on human beings and yet is completely a work of the Holy Spirit?

How is it that God is both transcendent and personal? How is it that He's all-powerful with a perfect will and yet allows us to choose?

There's so much about God that seems like a contradiction. This is why we're looking at the prophet Nahum this morning.

We learn in chapter 1 that Nahum was an Elkoshite. The name "Elkoshite" is derived from *Elkosh*, which means "*God Snares*." The name itself carries theological significance, suggesting a person under God's guidance.

The exact location of Elkosh is debated with scholars placing Elkosh in Mesopotamia, Galilee, Southern Judah and Capernaum.

"Elkoshite" serves as an ethnic adjective linking Nahum to a specific place, emphasizing his historical and cultural identity.

## **Slide 2**

*Nahum 1:1-7, "A prophecy concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger but great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade. The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it. Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him. The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him..."*

When I read those 7 verses, I see a complicated God. I see the God Who's angry, the God Who's powerful, and also, the God Who's good.

In these first seven verses, did you notice the words: “*avenging*,” “*wrath*,” “*vengeance*,” “*anger*,” “*rebukes*,” and “*indignation*.”

All these words are in the anger category. They’re synonyms of what we define as a negative emotion.

If we had to assign these words a color, they would be an angry, vibrant red. Nahum was presenting a vision of an angry God.

Now, it’s not popular to ascribe anger, vengeance or wrath to God because it flies in the face of the love-only view we have of Him.

It’s not popular because it hurts our self-worth to think that God’s angry at us. We don’t know what to do about God’s anger so we just don’t talk about it, but Nahum talked about it.

Nahum said, specifically in verse 2, that God was angry at His adversaries and in verse 3 he said that God was angry against the guilty.

So how does one become an adversary of God? What makes a person guilty in God’s sight? The answer is the same to both questions.

You see, God doesn’t get angry because He didn’t get what He wanted for Christmas or His latest planet turned out wobbly or Satan threatened the archangel Gabriel a little too much on the playground!

God doesn’t get angry for the reasons that we do. We get angry when we find an empty milk container in the refrigerator or our boss is a jerk or the Cowboys lost, again.

We get angry because of unmet expectations, sinful desires or because we feel attacked. I can’t possibly describe all the reasons why we get angry, but God only gets angry at one thing: sin.

God's anger is perfect anger and it's directed at sin. This is why God's allowed to be angry.

God's anger is a part of Him because of His holiness. God's anger is never misdirected, sinful, out of place, out of proportion or out of control.

God's perfect in His holiness, goodness, provision, salvation plan and mercy, and most of the time we... don't... care. We sin and think: *"It'll all work out in the end."*

But let me tell you, it doesn't work that way. Sin breaks the relationship a person has with God and that makes Him angry. God's angry at sin and He's allowed to be angry.

Everything He created is tainted by sin and seems to feed on itself away from Him. God's angry because He's separated from us by the sin that we love, plan and repeat. We just can't seem to get rid of it.

So, a question occurred to me: *"How do we keep God from being mad at us?"* It makes sense that if God's angry at one thing, and that thing is sin, then don't be a sinner.

Isn't that a simple solution: Don't be a sinner. Don't be an enemy of God. Don't sin and God won't have any anger.

Except, it isn't that simple. All of us are sinners. All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's standard.

We all have a sinful nature that gets the better of us daily. Yes, God's angry, but there's a solution; a solution that He Himself provided. Jesus tells us the answer in John 3:

John 3:35-36, *“The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”*

For those who love God and accept the blood of Jesus Christ as a covering for their sin, God’s wrath is nothing to fear. I know God’s angry at my sin, but I also know His Son, Jesus Christ, has claimed me.

This is something that’s complicated and simple, with a side of mystery. Only Jesus can save us from the wrath of God because we’re sinners. If you don’t want God’s anger turned in your direction, believe in the Name of Jesus.

Those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus died on the cross for their sin and place faith in Him have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and have absolutely no fear of God’s wrath.

In his book, *“The Gospel for Real Life,”* Christian author Jerry Bridges says: *“God, by the very perfection of His moral nature, cannot but be angry at sin – not only because of its destructiveness to humans, but, more important, because of its assault on His divine majesty. This is not the mere petulance of an offended deity because His commands are not obeyed. It is rather the necessary response of God to uphold His moral authority in His universe. And though God’s wrath does not contain the sinful emotions associated with human wrath, it does contain a fierce intensity arising from His settled opposition to sin and His determination to punish it to the utmost.”*

### **Slide 3**

Even though Nahum paints a vivid picture of an angry God, he doesn’t leave us this that. In verses 4-7, Nahum presents a vision of God where He is powerful.

Nahum 1:4-7, *“He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade. The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it. Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him. The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him...”*

In these verses, I notice words and phrases like: *“makes all the rivers run dry,” “rebukes the sea and dries it up,” “mountains quake,” “hills melt,”* and *“earth trembles.”* All of those are words that are descriptive of God’s mighty power.

An often-used descriptor of God in the Bible is the word “Almighty.” It’s used 58 times in the Old and New Testament and is only used of God. Only God is Almighty.

God’s in a category unto Himself in every aspect of His being and even more so when we think of His power.

God is the only Being Who’s omnipotent which means He has unlimited power and ability. God’s the only Being Who is omnific which means He’s the creator of everything. God created everything that exists with a Word.

God’s the only Being Who’s omniscient which means He has boundless knowledge. God’s the only Being Who is omnipresent which means He is everywhere always.

Amazingly, God’s all-powerful and yet there are times when God limits His power for our benefit. For example, God doesn’t force us to worship Him or force us to love Him but invites us into a relationship with Him.

Because of this, a question occurred to me: *“Why does it matter that God is all-powerful?”* It matters to us that God’s all-powerful because if any force or being could outdo God in something, our worship would go to that being.

God’s power secures our salvation and if there is some power greater than God then our salvation’s in trouble.

A greater being would take us from God’s hand. A more powerful being would change God’s will for us. Yet, God is the Being Who occupies a category unto Himself that we can scarcely understand.

Peter reflected on this in 1 Peter 1:3-5, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

His power is infinite. His power is boundless. His power means so much for us who believe in Him.

#### **Slide 4**

Then, as you read over the beginning of Nahum’s oracle, notice the phrase in verse 7: *“The Lord is good.”* Just like the other verses, Nahum’s not unclear.

Nahum knows and believes that God is good. Nahum knows and believes that God is righteous. Nahum knows and believes that God is sinless. Nahum knows and believes that God is perfect in His goodness. God is only good and holy.

I find it interesting that Nahum communicated to his readers and to us that God's good immediately after explaining how wrathful and powerful He is.

The wrath of God may tempt us to think that He's not good because our wrath never comes from a righteous place or results in anything good.

The absolute power of God tempts us to think that He's not good because for human beings absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Yet, I pray you know and believe that the wrathful almighty God, Who is good is in a category all by Himself. He's only good.

In His will and what He chooses to do and not do... He is good. In His judgment and what He upholds and condemns... He is good.

In His preventing of disaster and allowing of disaster... He is good. In blessings and curses... He is good. In the management of Creation... He is good. He is only good.

But why does it matter that God is good? It matters that God is good because we want to be able to trust the will of God, His Word and His way of living.

God is our stronghold in days of trouble. Our coming to Him for protection and our trust in Him are based on the foundation of His goodness.

We want God to protect us and be our stronghold because He's only good. We can fully trust Him because He's only good. God's always in the right. There are no mistakes with Him.

## **Slide 5**

### **Conclusion**

There's much about God that seems quite complicated. This is why we, as human beings, can make no sense of what He does.

Our God is angry at sin, but this contradicts nothing in His holy righteous and good character filled with boundless love for us.

Our God is all-powerful and this contradicts nothing in His dealing with us by giving us free will. Our God is only good, and this contradicts nothing in His anger, power or knowledge.

We must trust in this Angry, Powerful, Good God Who set in motion a plan for salvation for everyone who's a sinner in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The anger of God at sin brought Jesus to us. The power of God brought Jesus to us. The goodness of God brought Jesus to us. Trust God for He is worthy of our faith.