

Nothing from the Lord is Worthless

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[0 : 0 0] Now just by way of recap as we began last Wednesday evening to look at the prophet Nahum. We said that the name Nahum means comfort or strengthening or it can be taken as meaning repentance.

But also how the name the H ought to be a hard H almost like a sound. So Nahum rather than Nahum as we tend to say it.

And he is from Galilee in El-Keshite, El-Kesih, almost certainly the village from which he would have come. I know he's quite sure of the location of that now. And the theme of this prophecy is the overthrow of the city of Nineveh.

The capital of the Assyrian Empire, a particularly brutal pagan empire. And the first of the great superpowers outside of Egypt in the ancient world.

And Nineveh was the capital city of it. And of course we're all familiar with the book of Jonah, how the Ninevites repented and turned to the Lord. And that was all great and well and good.

[1 : 0 2] But that was about 150 years before this prophecy. Before the prophecy of Nahum and before Nineveh and Assyria has become the mighty and brutal empire that it did become.

And this prophecy of the overthrow of Nineveh is likewise given approximately 100 years before its actual fulfilment. So if something was happening now, this year, and had been prophesied 100 years ago, it would have been prophesied in 1919.

So it's if somebody had the gift of prophecy and in 1919 said such and such is going to happen in 2019 and then it comes to pass this year. That's the time span that we're looking at here.

Now the theme of this prophecy, as we said, the overthrow of Nineveh is couched in terms both of the fearful, frightening, destructive power of God's judgments.

But also of the safety and protection that he is to those who fear him and love him. And it is said of the Duke of Wellington that when he reviewed his own troops, and most of the troops, of course, in those days, the rank and file were made up of those whom the Duke perhaps somewhat patronisingly regarded as the sum of the earth.

[2 : 2 4] The absolute lowest socio-economic order. But once their natural, rough and ready aggression was honed and trained to work together as a military machine in precision and obeying orders, he is reputed to have said that he didn't know what they would do to the enemy, but they certainly terrified the life out of him.

Now we might, with reverence, apply something of that to the Lord. Whatever he will do to the enemy, the fury of his judgments terrifies us who are on his side or seek to be, to be his children, to be his followers, to hide under the shadow of his wings.

But his destructive judgment is nevertheless terrifying, fearful. And there is a fearfulness in this judgment upon Nineveh, which of course, as we said, wouldn't come to be fulfilled for another hundred years from the time of the prophecy.

And of course, ultimately, all these things point us forward to Christ. Because at the end of days, it is Christ who will sit upon the throne. Paul tells us we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

And that will be, for those who are lost, even for those of us who seek to be his children, to follow him, it will be, to an extent, a frightening experience. For those who are lost, it will be a terrifying experience.

[3 : 53] But there is an appropriate fear as we face the prospect of God's judgment. Now, of course, for those who are in Christ, the judgment or the price of that judgment has been borne already by the Lord upon the cross.

Nevertheless, we must each give an account of everything that we have done in this land. If we take up where we left off at the end of last Wednesday, verse 7. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him.

And this is the great encouragement for the Lord's people. In Nahum's day, it was the kingdom of Judah. The Israelites who depended upon the Lord, although they weren't always as faithful as they should be.

He's good, he's a stronghold in the day of trouble, and of course the day of trouble will come. And he knoweth them that trust in him. But with an overrunning flood, he will make an utter end of the place thereof.

And darkness shall pursue his enemies. Now, you could preach a whole sermon just on this single verse. The overrunning flood. Now, sometimes in the recent weeks, we've seen the likes of flash floods and that that have happened, either on the mainland or in England or whatever, and you see on the news or on the TV, you see the torrents of water pouring down the streets and down the steps and so on, and turning them into a waterfall.

[5 : 15] Cars getting sort of floating away and people struggling to get through the water. Now, that doesn't just gradually rise up. That's when it suddenly comes with a deluge of rain.

And there's no escaping from it. You can't outrun a flood that's following you. You can't sort of really escape it if it's deep enough. With an overrunning flood, he will make an utter end of the place thereof.

The flood, of course, is not ultimately a flood of water. God has promised that that will never again destroy the whole land. Even where he uses limited floods to achieve his purposes at other times in parts of the world.

Yet, nevertheless, it's really a flood of judgment that is being spoken of here. He will make an utter end of the place thereof. Now, the word thereof in the Hebrew is in a feminine term.

And this is taking the city of Nineveh as being, pictorially we might say, a queen sitting in the midst of all her splendour, all her kingdom, all her power and glory.

[6 : 20] And there she sits, the place thereof, where she has her throne, where she has her power. That is Nineveh. That is the capital of the Assyrian Empire. That darkness shall pursue the Lord's enemies.

Now, we might think, well, darkness isn't so bad. But then that's limited darkness we think of. Darkness where you can have a little bit of light. Darkness where the stars light up the sky.

Darkness where you can sleep. And then the dawn will come and you wake up again. But darkness, as the plague of darkness in Egypt, even such a darkness that may be felt.

Where there is no relief from the blackness. Where there is no spark of light. Where there is no means of your eyes becoming accustomed to it. Just sheer darkness.

The complete absence of the one who is the light of the world. This is one way in which, of course, in the New Testament, it's described as people being passed into outer darkness.

[7 : 17] It means that where the comforting light of the Lord's presence does not choose to come. God can't be kept out of anywhere. But he may choose to withdraw his comfortable presence from some places.

So darkness shall pursue his enemies. It's almost like a picture. Somebody trying to run. Trying to run away from darkness. It's following like a great big black cloud. And then it duns them.

And they simply can't see anything. And, of course, when we have not the light of the Lord, we can't see anything. We are in complete darkness. Some people continue in that darkness.

And they think this is normal. It's not what God intended, of course. He intended souls to be saved and to be brought to the light. Verse 9 is addressing itself to the Assyrian power.

What do ye imagine against the Lord? He will make an utter end. Affliction shall not rise up the second time. Now, what we have in verse 9 is really a parallel to what we have in Isaiah 37.

[8 : 22] And I'll just, you don't have to turn it up just now, but I'll just turn the page myself and read you these few verses. Verse 23 says, Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? And against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high?

Even against the Holy One of Israel. This is addressed to the Assyrian power at the time when they were infesting and surrounding Jerusalem. By thy servants thou hast reproached the Lord and said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon.

And I will cut down the tall cedars thereof and the Troy square trees thereof. And I will enter into the height of his border and the forest of his carmel. I have digged and drunk water.

And with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places. Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it? And of ancient times that I have formed it.

Now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldst be to lay waste to fend cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power. They were dismayed and confounded. They were as grass on the field and as the green herb as the grass on the housetops and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

[9 : 36] But I know thy abode and thy going out and thy coming in and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into my ears.

Therefore I will put my hook in thy nose and my bridle in thy lips. And I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. Now this is Isaiah 37.

He's got a similar message then for the Assyrian power when it comes up against you. And it's no surprise to us that there should be overlap between different ones of the Lord's prophets.

If you were to go and listen to ten different ministers who were of their Reformed faith and Bible believing, preaching and so on, you would find quite a bit of overlap in the message they preached. Because they're all preaching the same gospel from the same Bible in the sense of its essential content.

And they would give a very similar core message as you would expect. So there is likewise overlap between the prophets of God.

[10 : 38] Nahum and Isaiah and various others as well. Now when it says, Affliction shall not rise up the second time. This of course is a reference to Assyria not coming again to attack the Jews, the Israelites in that sense.

They'd already destroyed northern Israel, but their attempt to destroy Jerusalem was overthrown, of course, by the Lord. Now this is not unlike what we have at verse 12.

We just skip ahead to verse 12 for a second. It says, Thus saith the Lord, Though they be quiet, That is the Assyrians, And likewise many, Yet thus shall they be cut down, When he shall pass through.

Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. Now, Most commentators take this to mean, Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. Meaning, That this is addressed to the Jewish people.

That although they have been afflicted by the Assyrian power, Though they have been crushed, They have been chastised, God will bring that chastisement, That punishment, To an end.

[11 : 45] The punishments of the Lord's people, The chastisements and sufferings of the Lord's people, Are temporary, And have a purpose in them. They are corrective, And they are temporary.

The punishments that he meets out, To those who are his enemies, Are permanent, And fearful. So, Most people take the latter part of that verse 12, Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more, As applying to the Jewish nation.

However, It has to be said, That as illustrious a commentator, As John Calvin himself, Takes this verse 12, Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more, To be addressed to the Assyrians, In the sense of, I am going to afflict you in such a way, That I will never need to do it again.

And the sense of that is, If we look at what, What Abishai says to David, He says, God hath delivered thine enemy, Into thine hand this day.

Now therefore, Let me smite him, I pray thee, With the spear, Talking about Saul, Even to the earth at once, And I will not smite him, The second time. The sense there is, Of the destruction, Being so complete, So absolute, That it's not necessary, To inflict it a second time.

[13 : 01] Likewise in chapter 3, And verse 12 of 1 Samuel, When the prophet is speaking, Or rather when the Lord, Is speaking to the child Samuel, About what he's going to do, To Eli's house.

It says, In that day, I will perform against Eli, All things which I have spoken, Concerning his house. When I begin, I will also make an end.

When I begin, I will make an end. I'll smite, And I won't need to smite a second time. And Calvin takes this, As being, Though I have afflicted thee, Assyria, I will afflict thee no more.

In the sense of, I won't need to hit you a second time. Now, Of course, One has to respect, What Calvin said, But personally, I wouldn't be inclined, To say that the context, Lends itself to that.

But we have to, Of course, Not always agree together, As brethren, Agree to disagree, On some things. But going back to verse 10, While they be folded together, As thorns, And while they are drunken, As drunkards, They shall be devoured, As stubble, Free dry.

[14 : 03] Now, The sense of, As somebody trying to clear land, Trying to clear it, Of a whole big, Intertwined, Like, Edge of thorns, And instead of, Sort of trying to, Tease out the individual strands, In order to, To destroy the thorns, And the thorns, Of course, Symbolise the enemies, Of the Lord's people.

It's easier just to drag out, The whole great, Intertwined ball, And massive it, And stick it all, In the fire together. You know, Nowadays, As if somebody is replacing a fence, You'll often see that, Maybe they've, They've bound up, Rolled up all the barbed wire, Whatever, Into a ball, And just dump it, Of course.

But when it's thorns, Organic material, Whether you have to roll it up, And fold it into a ball, Or whether it's all just, Naturally intertwined, And tangled together, You drag it all out, And you just stick it on the fire together.

When it's folded together, Intertwined, As, As little as thorns, Can resist the flame, So likewise, They won't be able to resist the Lord. And while they are drunken, As drunkards, They shall be devoured, As stubbly dry.

Now in one sense, This is easy to understand, A drunkard, Of course, Is loud, And boastful, Usually, He'll be, He'll be full of all the exploits, Of what he can do, And in his cups, He'll be loud, And proud, And ready to say, Oh, I'll do this, And if anybody tries to mess with me, Of course, I'll see them off, I'll make sure I, I show them who's boss, But that's the drink talking, And a drunkard, Of course, May fall down himself, Uh, You know, Without having to be pushed, But it will be so easy, To overpower somebody, Who is weakened in that way, By being drunk, So for all the big, Proud boasts, Yet he's in fact, Completely helpless, And weak, And this is like, The Assyrian boast, Against the Lord, You know, Uh, Who has lifted himself up, In this way, And sought to boast, Against the Lord, Say all the great things, He was going to do, Uh, Against the Lord, Of course, But also,

[16 : 08] In the, In the original, There's a sense here, While they are drunken, The Hebrew word for drunken, Is soaked, Soaked, As in one's own wine, And there's a contrast here, While they are soaked, As drunkards, They shall be devoured, As stubble fully dry, So there's a contrast, Going on there, The stubble that's, Totally dry, Will be burned up, Even as those, Who are soaked, In their own wine, They may be as wet, As anything, But they'll still be devoured, As though they were dry, As sticks, You know, Ready to be, Ready to be burned, There is one come out of thee, That imagine of evil, Against the Lord, A wicked counsellor, And they, Literally, It's a counsellor of Belial, Belial is a, A man of Belial, A counsellor of Belial, A daughter of Belial, That you'll find, Lots of times, In the Old Testament, What it means, Is one, Which is, Without profit, Without, In the sense of,

P-O-F-I-T, That is profitless, That is worthless, That something is of Belial, It is pure vanity, It is worthless, Therefore, It is completely, Not of the Lord, Because nothing of the Lord, Is worthless, Nothing of the Lord, Is vanity, Or empty, Or useless, It all has purpose, It all has meaning, It all has power, It all has reality, But that which is of Belial, It's like, You know, Froth in the air, It's just empty, Valuable, Worthless, And this one, That has come out, From Assyria, Boasting himself, Against the Lord, All the great things, He's going to do, It's just like, The boasts of a drunkard, Which can be easier, Pushed over with one finger, And although he may be, Well soaked, He'll be burned up, Like dry stubble, And thorns, So we're back, To this verse 12, Thus saith the Lord, For though they be quiet, And likewise many, Yet thus shall they be cut down, Now when it says cut down, The sense is, It's literally shorn,

And it's the sense of, Cut really close, With a razor, Now in the past, The Lord had prophesied, Through Isaiah, How he would use the Assyrians, As a razor, To shave down, To cut down, To punish, Those who lifted themselves up, Against the Lord, They thought they were great, And strong, And powerful, And could do false gods, To their hearts content, And God said, Well you want false gods, I'll bring a power, That worships false gods, I'll bring them, And visit them on you, And then see how, How you like that, See how comfortable you are, With those that really, Worship false gods, In Isaiah 7, At verse 20, It says, In the same day, Shall the Lord shave, With a razor that is hired, Namely by them beyond the river, By the king of Assyria, The head, And the hair of the feet, And it shall also consume the beard, The Assyrians were used by the Lord, As a razor, To cut down, To cut really close, To the skin,

To slice away, All the, All the proud, Pagan opposition to him, Within Israel, But now, Those who have been, The razor, In the hand of the Lord, Are themselves, To be, Cut down, In the sense of, Being shaved, Of being shorn, That's the sense of it here, Yet shall they be cut down, That's shaved with a razor, Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee, No more, Now, One reason I would, Respectfully, Disagree, With Calvin here, In verse 12, Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee, No more, For now will I break, His yoke from off thee, The thee, In this context, Theory, Would imply, Those who are going to be, Set free, From the yoke, That would be, The Jewish people, That would be, The king of Judah, Now will I break, His yoke from off thee, Calvin is like, In verse 12, To what we find, In verse 9, In the context, It might be, More appropriate, To apply it, To what we find, In verse 13,

For now will I break, His yoke from off thee, And will burst, Thy bonds, In sunder, And the Lord, Hath given, A commandment, Concerning thee, That's the sense of it here, A commandment, That no more, Of thy name be so, Now we already made reference, Last week, To the end of 2nd Kings, Chapter 19, Where we have, Seen how, Sennacherib, The king of Assyria, Came against Jerusalem, And how then, He was destroyed, He was destroyed, Not by the kings of Judah, Going out and defeating him in battle, But rather, By the Lord, Moving, With his angel, Through the camp of Assyria, And simply causing, Them all to die, Not every last one of them, But four score and five thousand of them, The angel of the Lord, Went out and smoked, In the camp of the Assyrians, And hundreds, Or score and five thousand, And when they arose, Early in the morning, Behold, They were all dead corpses, Now no army can recover, From that kind of loss,

[21 : 13] Suddenly, To wake up in the morning, And really, Halffully be left, Hundred and eighty-five thousand troops, Are suddenly just dead, In their tents, So, What can you do, You have to retreat, And pretty quick, So the angel of the Lord, Delivered them, So Sennacherib, King of Assyria, Departed, And went and returned, And dwelt at Nineveh, And it came to pass, As he was worshipping, In the house of Mizra, His God, That Adramalek, And Sherezer, His sons, Smoked him with the sword, And they escaped, Into the land of Armenia, And Esarhaddon, His son, Reigned in his stead, So although they were quiet, Although they were, Not doing it, They were just, In camp, The Lord silenced them, He smoked them, Though they be many, And likewise quiet, Yet thus shall they be cut down, Though I afflicted thee, Judah, Will afflict thee no more, The Lord hath given a commandment, Concerning thee, That no more of thy name be sown, Out of the house of thy gods, Will I cut off the graven image, And the molten image,

I will make thy grave, For thou art by. In other words, Your tomb, Your sepulcher, Will be the house of your gods, This is what we just made reference to, How Sennacherib himself, Was murdered, Assassinated, By his own sons, In his own pagan temple, Now, As far as the pagans were concerned, That would have defiled, The temple of Mizra, The fact that somebody had been murdered in it, So they couldn't use it, Until it had been ritually purified again, Or whatever, So it defiled, With his own blood, The temple of his false gods, The house of thy gods, Where I cut off the graven image, And the molten image, I will make thy grave, A sepulcher, Tomb there, For thou art by.

Also, This is a reference to the fact that, When Assyria, Finally was overthrown, When Nineveh was destroyed, It was destroyed by the Medes, Along with others, Who, For whatever reason, Although they were pagans, Although they weren't worshippers of the true God, They apparently had an inbuilt hatred, Of idols, Of statuary, In terms of worship, And so they set about removing, And destroying, And smashing up, All the idols, All the graven images, All the false gods, Of the Assyrians, And this was part of the destruction, Of Assyria, They literally destroyed, The idolatry, And all the statues, And so on, In the house of thy gods, Will I cut off the graven images, Now of course that wouldn't happen, For another hundred years, But here it is prophesied by Nahum, As to what will be done, It wasn't by the Israelites, It was done, It was by another completely,

Alien, Foreign, Pagan power, But the Lord, Uses one power, To overthrow another, Just as he used the Assyrians, To punish those, Who were rebellious in Israel, So in due course, He overthrew the Assyrians, By means of the Medes, And then the Babylonians, Rose up, In their place, God, Well they got rid of the Assyrians, And brought in the Babylonians, He then got rid of the Babylonians, By means of the Persians, And the Medes, And then got rid of the Persians, By means of the Greeks, Got rid of the Greeks, By means of the Romans, And so on, So the Lord, Although he will allow, Pagan powers to ascend, And be great for a while, He will then remove them, When the time comes, Perhaps using another, Equally godless power, Because the earth is the Lord's, And everything in it, Now when we think in terms of, How great Assyria was, How impossible, It would have seemed, For Israel, Ever to be delivered from them, Which of course, They weren't delivered, By any military prowess,

They were delivered by means, Of as we said, The angel of the Lord, Going through the camp, Of the Assyrians, And just quietly killing, 185,000 of them, So they died, As far as we can tell, In their sleep, And then, Sennacherib withdrew, He withdrew, He went back, To his own country, And then, The news would have reached them, That he was dead, That he had been killed, By his own sons, In his, Or the temple, Of his own gods, Now, This is the context, In which you would get, Behold upon the mountains, The feet of him, That bringeth good tidings, That publisheth peace, And I think, Well that's not very nice, Is it?

[25 : 37] Celebrating the fact, That somebody's dead, But the person, Who is dead, Is the one, Who had already, Destroyed northern Israel, And now, Had sought, To destroy Jerusalem, And Judah, And the Lord's temple, And the Lord's people, And the only reason, He hadn't, Was because the Lord, Intervened directly, And then, They would hear, Not immediately, But they would hear, Once the news, Travelled back from Nineveh, Travelled back from Assyria, That their great oppressor, Was no more, And they would be relieved, In the sense, That they would be able, To know that there was peace, This is the one, Who brings peace, Again, Very similar, To what we read, In Isaiah 52, At verse 7, How beautiful upon the mountains, Are the feet of him, That bringeth good tidings, That publisheth peace, That bringeth good tidings, Of good, That publisheth salvation, That saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth, It is the Lord, Who delivered Jerusalem, It is the Lord, Who saves his people,

So the response, Then to Judah, That the reason, There is peace, Is because the enemy, Has been overthrown, And the only person, Who has overthrown the enemy, Is the Lord, Same with our salvation, Just as the Jews, Could not go out, Against the Assyrians, Could not use, Any military strength, Or they didn't have any, To defeat this vast army, 185,000 plus, They could do nothing, Themselves, When they were delivered, It was exclusively, By the hand of the Lord, And then that was, Topped off, By Sinaphrod, Eventually being killed, As well, So likewise, With our salvation, We don't have any strength, Of our own, The enemy comes in, Like a flood, We are holed up, As it were, Cowering, Under the shadow, Of the wings, Of the Lord, Who nevertheless, Simply utters his voice, And not only the earth, Melts, But all the enemies, Melt away as well, It is by the Lord's, Mercies, That we are not consumed, Greatness and faithfulness, It is by the Lord's,

Own sacrifice, That we are delivered, It is the Lord alone, Who saves, That publisheth, Peace, Peace between God, And man, Because of what Christ, Has done, O Judah, Keep thy solemn feasts, Perform thy vows, For the wicked, Shall no more pass through thee, He is utterly cut off, And the exhortation here, Is that no doubt, In the time of that extremity, A great many of the Jews, Would have said, Oh Lord, If you just deliver us, If you just take away, This great threat, That's around us, We'll be faithful, We'll sacrifice, Peace offerings, We'll worship in your house, We'll come back to you Lord, We promise, We promise, And the Lord, Does deliver them, So this is the, This is the exhortation, From the prophet, So come back then, O Judah, Keep thy solemn feasts, Perform thy vows, For the wicked, Shall no more, Pass through thee, He is utterly cut off, We could also take it, Of course, Bearing in mind, That the fulfilment,

Of this prophecy, Is a century away, That it could be taken, By the prophet, Nahum, As, Because this is going to happen, You stay close, To the Lord now, Fulfill your vows, Keep your solemn feasts, Keep close with the Lord, Because you are so, Going to need him, When the time comes, The time to make your peace, With God, Is now, Not in a hundred years time, You may or may not live, To see this great deliverance, He's going to do, But whether you do or not, Make your peace for them now, As Paul writes to the Corinthians, Now is the accepted time, Now is the day of salvation, O Judah, Keep thy solemn feasts, Perform thy vows, For the wicked, Shall no more, Pass through thee, He, Is utterly cut off, And here's again, Part of the warning, Of this prophecy, All who are at enmity, With the Lord, Will ultimately, Be cut off, That is the choice, The stark choice, That is before us, All who are at enmity, With the Lord,

Will perish, But those who are, Safe in him, Will be preserved, The Lord is good, A stronghold, In the day of trouble, And he knoweth them, That trust in him, He knows, Do we know ourselves, What is for our good, Did those in Nahum's day, Know, Well, Some of them would, And some of them wouldn't, Which is why they have to be told, And told, And told again, How good, God, Is, Thanks for that, Whoa, VAILABLE tak■■■■, Wait'll we know us from, Wen, That was nice, Meghune, We're looking at, In our hearts, We're looking at some pressure, On our side, You're looking at some pressure, In our hands, Well, You're looking at your best.

[30 : 31] And I'm going to put it here, You're looking at me, You're looking at some pressure, My dari Acct, Which we're looking at how they have to move on to the side of the side of your■■,