

Devotion 37:

Our Father Does Not Leave The Guilty Unpunished

Nahum 1—3

There is something sweet and delicious about a wicked villain finally getting his just desserts. American cinema is full of movies that end with the antagonist meeting a horrible yet justified death. And the more cruel the antagonist, the more sweet is his demise.

Such is the story of Nahum. The name means “comfort,” but the book is the prophecy of the fall of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrians. So who is comforted by the fall of a great and mighty kingdom? All those who were vanquished by them, especially the people of Judah:

“Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal. Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?” 3:19

And the Assyrians were the epitome of cruel. They were known far and wide for ruthlessness, brutality, and terrible atrocities. One king erected a pyramid of chopped off heads. Many victims were beheaded, impaled, or burned. Conquered kings were put in dog collars and kept in kennels.

The most frequently used description of our Father in the Old Testament is the one God Himself gave to Moses in Exodus 34:6:

“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet, he does not leave the guilty unpunished.”

It is this last line that Nahum emphasizes, not as a threat but as a comfort, to the people of Judah:

“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 maintains his wrath against his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished.” 1:2-3

And our Father is slow to anger even toward our enemies. As we read earlier in Jonah, the entire city of Nineveh repented and God did not destroy them at that time. Evidently, they reverted back to their wicked ways over time. Our Father used an alliance of Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians to bring down Nineveh in 612 B.C.:

“Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without

victims! I will pelt you with filth, I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle.” 3:1, 6

The destruction, as it has been with most of Israel’s enemies, was total and complete. Archaeologists didn’t uncover the ruins of Nineveh until 1845. Nahum was right: nothing could heal the wounded city; her injury was fatal.

As I finish this book, I am mindful that many historians are calling the past century the bloodiest in the history of the world. I have read (*Understanding the Times*, Noebel) that more people were murdered in that time period in the world than during the rest of history combined! Most readers will recognize the following regimes that brought forth horrific atrocities in the 1900’s: Stalin in Russia; Hitler in Germany; Mao in China; Amin in Uganda; and Pol Pot in Cambodia. Although it has been a relatively brief time since their wickedness, we see already that our Father has not left the guilty unpunished. And He is still punishing the guilty in our world today and He will until the great Day when He punishes all the guilty once and for all.

On last night’s evening news, another report of weak law enforcement was aired. It seems that increasingly our bogged down judicial system and overcrowded jails are allowing more guilty to go unpunished, only to be free to commit more crimes against society. Like Solomon though, we need not fear:

“Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.” Ecc. 8:12-13

Our heavenly home at last will be the city, the state, and the country in which we have all yearned to live. There will be no need for our Father to punish anyone any more:

“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Rev. 21:27

It will be complete peace and safety. *“On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.”* (Rev. 21:25) Praise be to our Father who does not leave the guilty unpunished.