

Who Is God?

Nahum 1:2-7

Code: 1213

Well, let's bow together in prayer as we come to our Scripture study for tonight. Father, we just ask that Your Spirit will speak tonight – not a human voice, but Your voice – that our hearts might be enriched and blessed and thrilled as we study from Thy Word concerning Thee. Bless our time, we pray, in Christ's name, amen.

The subject tonight, as I mentioned this morning, is one which I feel very keenly about and which I feel is very urgent. Tonight I want to speak to you on the subject the character of God.

If you have your Bible, I'd like you to turn to Nahum chapter 1. In case you don't know where Nahum is, it's just before Habakkuk. What was it somebody said, "Happiness is sitting next to somebody who knows where Nahum is"?

Nahum chapter 1, and in this particular section we're going to look at, verses 2 to 7, we find some tremendous truths regarding the character and the person of God. And I believe, by way of introduction, just a few remarks, that the major area or one major area that is neglected in teaching and preaching so often is a proper emphasis on the nature and character of God.

We have today an abundance of sermons and articles and books that are on man – how to be a happy Christian, how to be a Spirit-filled Christian, how to be happily married, how to get along with your kids, how to discipline your children, how to have a happy home, how to build the church, how to know your own mind, self kind of examination, Christ and personal psychoanalysis type things. And there's a constant concentration on men. And you can see reams and reams and reams of books being produced on that subject. And you can probably find, in the last couple of years, five books written on God, and you can burn four of them.

Somehow we've gotten ourselves a little out of perspective. Somewhere along the line we need to get the emphasis in the right place. And the emphasis today is man centered. Even though it's a kind of a Christian

man centered, it's nevertheless man centered.

Once in a while we see a book on the Holy Spirit. Less frequently do we ever see a book on the person of Christ. And almost never do we see a book on God. You may look in your bookstore high and low, and rarely will you find one of any current vintage. And that's not right because we must fail to declare – we must not fail to declare the whole counsel of God.

So much preaching and so much writing is sentimental and pseudo-spiritual psychoanalysis and so forth that we've lost the real preaching and the real instruction on the character of God, which is the basis of everything.

Even when preaching on Jesus Christ, we must constantly emphasize not so much what He did, but who He was. In other words, the motive for everything is the identity of God. And we've talked a lot about the glory of God – haven't we? – and we know that's the real motive of everything.

One time somebody said to Dick Hillis, "You know, to go to China like you did and to preach the gospel all over there, you must really love the Chinese."

And he said, "No, I don't love the Chinese particularly." He said, "I love God; that's the real motive."

The same thing is true in terms of all of our teaching and preaching; it must be God-centered. When we preach on the Holy Spirit, it must be in terms of His attributes as God, not some floating fog that gives people mystical experiences.

And sadly, we have these kind of movements. We have a Jesus movement, and much of it is unbiblical. The whole concept of a Jesus movement bothers me, because since when is Jesus isolated from the Father and the Holy Spirit? And we have a Holy Spirit movement. Since when does He have the right to be isolated from the other two personas of the Trinity? Any movement that is isolated to one member of the Trinity is dangerous. And the Holy Spirit movement, inevitably, without a basis of theology, winds up in emotionalism. And a Jesus movement, without a basis of solid theology, winds up in humanism. What we really need to understand is a Triune God movement. And if you want to be a freak, be a God freak in the total sense of the identity of who God is, for only will you understand Jesus Christ and only will you understand the Holy Spirit and their ministries in terms of an identity of God.

And you realize as well as I do that the ministry of the Holy Spirit was to point to whom? Jesus Christ. And that the ministry of Jesus Christ was to point to whom? God. And therefore, the ultimate design of both was to drive us to an understanding of the identity, the character, and the personality of God. God is the ultimate vision. We are to concentrate on the person of God.

Now, tonight I want us to do that. I want to start a new movement: the God movement. And I want us to be preoccupied with the Triune God. You know, Deuteronomy 6:12 says, "Beware lest thou forget the Lord." And, you know, even in Christianity, it's very often easy for us to get misdirected from the identity and the character of an all-sovereign God.

Who is God? Who is God? That's a good question. You'd be amazed, if you asked people that question, the answers you'd get. Who is God? Madalyn Murray O'Hair says, "Nobody." She will tell the little lives that kneel by their beds in simple faith to pray, she'll tell the sick who call on divine power for healing, the needy who cry out to the One who has promised to supply, the lost soul that cries for God's saving grace, "Forget it; there's nobody home up there." And you will ask her where everything came from, and she will tell you, "The equation on which the universe is built is nobody times nothing equals everything." That doesn't seem to satisfy the longing of man's heart.

The deist comes along and says, "Oh, yes, there is a cosmic force, but He could care less about us. I mean He put the thing together, and He's letting it run, but He's off doing something else. He's indifferent, emotionless, and He's waiting for the whole thing to wind down."

And the fatalist said, "God is a practical joker who played the biggest joke on us: life, existence without meaning. And He gives us the feeling that He ought to be there, but He's not."

And others come along and say, "No, God is a glorified grandfather type, a heavenly Santa: naive, senile, indulgent, syrupy, with no convictions, who pats everybody on the head and says, 'It's all right.'" My little boy came in the other day, and he says, "Does God have a white mustache?"

The pantheist comes along and says, "No, God is the essence of everything," which is the same as saying, "God is nothing."

Some people believe that God is the universal party-pooper, a kind of a cosmic killjoy who reigns on everybody's parade.

Some have even concluded that God died, although that's kind of passed. And many, many people – the majority of people just manufacture a God out of their own minds. Voltaire said, "God made man in His own image, and man has returned the favor."

But who is God? Who is God and what is He really like? To begin with, four truths are abundantly clear in Scripture. This is still introduction. You know that. Four abundantly clear truths about who God is.

Number one, God is one God. Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord!" If you want a theological term, you can call it monotheism: one God. We do not believe in a plurality of God's – one God.

Secondly, God is in three persons. He is one God, yet manifest in three persons.

You say, "I don't understand that."

You're not supposed to. You're only supposed to believe it.

The third fact about God is an indication in Scripture that God is a spirit.

Fourthly, that God is Creator. "In the beginning, God created."

One God in three persons. His essence is spirit, and He is the source of all things. That is the basic identity of God. Now as to specific attributes and specific characteristics, many of them are revealed in Scripture. But rather than extend ourselves endlessly to all these various passages, let's just come to one passage, Nahum chapter 1, verses 2 to 7.

Now, Nahum is an interesting little book. Fascinating book. You ought to read some of these minor prophets if you want to get some fascinating things. In fact, Nahum is the book that first comments on the L.A. freeways. And that's in Nahum chapter 2, verse 3, which says, "The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet" – now, here come the introduction to the freeways – "the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, the fir trees shall be terribly shaken. The chariots shall rage in the streets. They shall jostle one against the other in the broad ways. They shall seem like torches; they shall run like lightnings." There you have it.

But in the first chapter of Nahum, we have the introduction of a specific prophecy against a specific city: Nineveh. And God is bringing to bear vengeance on the Assyrians, particularly on Nineveh, for their treatment of Israel. They had already been responsible in great measure for dragging off the ten tribes into captivity, and now they were coming in military force against Hezekiah. And God was, in effect, saying, "There's no more tolerance for this kind of activity." And so, the book of Nahum is a judgment against Nineveh for persecution of God's people.

Within this very specific prediction, we find the identity of God in the first chapter because it is based on the identity of God that God has the right to judge. Right? He has the right to judge because of who He is.

And so, in introducing this most important book, this most important judgment against Nineveh. The basis for the judgment is the character of God, and thus that appears at the very beginning of the first chapter. And in rather flashing terms, Nahum presents the majestic character of God, and he tells us three things. We're just going to look at three major attributes of God. He is a God of inflexible justice, irresistible power, and infinite mercy. Inflexible justice, irresistible power, infinite mercy.

First of all, God is a God of inflexible justice. Now, when we talk about justice, we're talking about a legal term that has to do with divine – in this case – government. And let me lay a little groundwork by saying a few things. God – and you must understand this – God has the absolute right to rule and authority over His creatures because He is God. He makes the laws; He determines the standard, and He judges in terms of the results. He created everything at His own pleasure; He didn't have to. Therefore, He has the total and a perfect right to set the principles by which His creation must function.

We must understand, to begin with, that God has the right to do what He wants to do. If a creature rebels against God's divine government, if a creature chafes under God's rule and violates it, he then falls immediately under the judgment of God. And thus it is evident that when a man reaches his highest destiny, it is when he stops resisting his Creator and starts conforming to His will. The destiny of man, in its highest point, is conformity to the will of God. If a man does not conform to the will of God, he incurs the inflexible justice of God.

Now, let's notice how this presents itself in verse 2, and we'll read through the first part of verse 3. "God is jealous, and the Lord avengeth – the Lord avengeth and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked." And we'll stop there.

Now, these statements are tremendously powerful statements, and they show a side of God that is vengeance, and fury, and wrath. First of all, notice it says, "God is jealous." God is jealous. God resents the insults and the indignities of men who rebel against Him. He resents them. Why? Because He's God.

You say, "God is self-centered."

You better believe it. Where's the competition? God is God, and God has the right to be self-centered because He's God. He is the essence of being in Himself.

And God resents the indignities of those who rebel against Him, because His is the glory. And therefore, as I've told you so many times, He demands glory from all of His creatures. And any creature in His universe that refuses to give Him glory He places apart from His presence. Those who destroy His laws, those who ridicule His words are dismissed from His presence forever. He's jealous. He's jealous for His own honor, and He's jealous for His own praise. And He demands it from every creature.

Now, let me show you this in just a few brief terms. In Exodus chapter 20 – and we're going to hurry through some of these scriptures, because I want to get as much of this as I can into your brains.

Exodus chapter 20, verse 3, and you know the passage; you don't even need to turn to it if you're not there, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." God does not tolerate that. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any

carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, that is in earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me.” God is a jealous God.

Now, we know that we’re in the age of individual responsibility now, but that does not change the fact of God’s jealousy. God is jealous for His own glory and tolerates glory given to no other.

Exodus chapter 34, verse 14 – listen to this – “For thou shalt worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” He even takes the name jealous to identify Himself intrinsically with jealousy. God does not tolerate rebellion against giving Him glory.

In Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 24, it says, “For the Lord thy God” – listen to this – “is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.” Ezekiel says – in chapter 39 I think it is – that God is jealous for His holy name.

And you see, to violate that, to worship a false God, or to rebel against God – and if you rebel against the true God, you’re worshiping a false God, maybe in the person of yourself, but anything but true worship to the true God incites the jealousy of God.

In Ezekiel – let me read this to you; don’t look it up – Ezekiel 38:18, “And it shall come to pass at the same time, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel,’ sayeth the Lord God, ‘that My fury shall come up in My face.” A picture of God getting red in the face He’s getting so angry. “For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath have I spoken surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel so that the fish of the sea, and the fowls of the heavens, and the beasts of the field, and the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men that are upon the face of the earth shall shake at My presence; and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

“And I will call for a sword against him throughout all My mountains,’ saith the Lord God. ‘Every man’s sword shall be against his brother. And I will enter into judgment against him with pestilence and blood, and I will rain upon him and upon his hordes, and upon as many people that are with him, an overflowing rain of great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am the Lord.” God tolerates no rivals. God tolerates no rebels.

We see the same thing portrayed in Jesus Christ in the words of Jude 14 and 15, where it says, “Behold, the Lord cometh with then thousand of His saints” – listen to this – “to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all that are ungodly among them of their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” God tolerates no rivals, no rebels.

And so, God is jealous for His glory. God is also jealous for His love. Jealousy really only belongs to those who love. A husband and a wife, jealousy is possible. A girlfriend and a boyfriend, jealousy is possible. Jealousy fits into a love relationship. And so it does with God. God is jealous because He loves.

In Joel chapter 2, verse 18 says this, "Then the Lord was jealous for His land and pitied His people." Hosea – you remember Hosea, dear old Hosea the prophet? – God told him a wonderful – God gave him really a wonderful illustration to live in his own life. And God told him to marry a woman – Gomer – who turned out to be a prostitute. Of course anybody who would marry a woman named Gomer – but anyway, He told him to marry this woman Gomer, who turned out to be a prostitute, and God then said, "This is a graphic illustration of what Israel has done to Me. Israel has been an unfaithful wife." and God was jealous over Israel, because Israel was His love. And God's heart was grieved; God's heart was indeed broken.

God gets jealous when those He loves are stolen from Him by somebody else. And so, God's jealousy is not only the jealousy of honor, but it's the jealousy of love. Many times – and I won't take the time; I've got some scriptures here, I'm going to pass them by – all through the Old Testament God says, "I'm jealous for My people; I'm jealous for My land; I'm jealous for those things that are Mine." When God sets His affection on something, and something robs Him of that, He's jealous.

In Matthew chapter 25, let me read you a few verses. Matthew 25, beginning in verse 31, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all the nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." And He goes on to talk about judgment here upon the sheep and the goats.

And He says, "The judgment is on the basis of how they treated people." And what He's saying is here the judgment and the tribulation is directly related to how nations treat Jews. Certainly how they treat Israel during the tribulation will be an indication of whether they're godly or not godly. But God actually, at that point, uses His children as a standard for judgment. God is indeed angered and made jealous over the stolen affections and love of His own.

But yet there's one other thing. The supreme jealousy of God is on those men who mistreat His Son. God, above all things, loves His Son, and to mistreat the Son brings down the wrath of God. Galatians chapter 1, verse 8, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which was preached unto you, let him be accursed! And we said before, so say I again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed!"

Second Thessalonians 1:8, "In flaming fire Christ is coming, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." God is jealous over His Son.

And one of the most startling and terrifying verses in all the Bible I read to you right now,

1 Corinthians 16:22. Just you listen to this, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema."

That means accursed.

God is jealous for His own honor. He is jealous for those He loves. He is jealous for the Son. And for a man to reject Jesus Christ is to bring upon himself the anathema of God, for He's a jealous God.

Now, returning to Nahum, let us just read through some of these. "The Lord avengeth. The Lord avengeth and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries. Three times He talks about vengeance. "And He reserveth wrath for His enemies."

Now, what that verse is doing is repeating and repeating, and the repetition is solemn. It is fearful. It is serious. In Deuteronomy 32, God says, "To Me belongeth vengeance." In Romans He says, "I will repay; vengeance is Mine." You do not violate the glory and the honor of God. You do not violate those He loves. You do not violate His Son and get away from His wrath. For in verse 3 He simply says, "He will not at all acquit the wicked." The Lord is "furious." And that word is just loaded. Literally, the Hebrew means He is the Master of His fury. it's a controlled kind of fury.

And in the book of Nahum, He is furious over Nineveh. But in all of God's revelation, He indicates the same fury over all those who reject Him, who rebel against Him, and who refuse to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

I suppose the wrath of God could be really as violently as anywhere portrayed in the 19th chapter of Revelation, where we see the final end to the battle of Armageddon. Or early in Revelation, when it talks about treading the winepress of the wrath of God, how that the unbelievers are crushed in the fury of God. God is furious.

And we get this idea that God is a namby-pamby kind of tolerance, sort of senile individual. That is not so. God does not tolerate one rebel to exist in His presence. The Bible simply tells us, in Romans chapter 1, that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. All of it. He reckons with men who rebel. "He will take vengeance on His adversaries," Nahum says. "And He reserves His wrath" - or His fury or His anger - "for His enemies." Because He is just. He must do so.

The beginning of verse 3, listen to this, "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked."

You know, people often say, "Well, the Lord has never done anything. I mean I haven't seen any big judgments going on. All this hell fire and damnation preaching that's been going on, I don't see any hell fire and damnation going on. God's up there and He's so powerful, why doesn't He do something?"

Well, that's the old line – the same old line that Peter talked about. Remember in 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 9? He says this, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of Judgment to be punished." God knows what He's doing.

Listen to this, chapter 3, verse 3, here come the scoffers, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" All of you people are talking about Jesus is coming, God's going to invade the world in vengeance – where is He?

Now, here's their argument, "For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" – nothing's ever changed.

And then the next verse says, "Well, they're willingly ignorant; they just don't remember the flood." And then he says this in verse 9, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are in it shall be burned up."

Let me say something to you. Don't ever confuse patience with impotence. Did you get that? What God does not do is not because He cannot; it is because He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. God stays His anger in mercy. And don't you ever confuse mercy with impotence. God is not impotent.

Look at that verse 3, "The Lord is slow to anger, but great" – what? – "in power." Don't you ever mistake that. "And He will not at all acquit the wicked." Nobody gets off the hook who's violated God's laws and remains in that situation. Justice is inflexible, inevitable for those who violate.

Proverbs tells us – Nehemiah chapter 9 is a good chapter to study sometimes on the patience of God – but Proverbs 29:1 is a very interesting verse. Listen to this, "He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." Nehemiah 8 talks about how God is gracious and merciful against the stiff necked, but finally he that oft being reproveth hardens his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Don't you ever, ever believe for a moment that God can't act because He doesn't act. That's mercy.

You say, "Well, boy, God is really – he is really hardnosed. Is that just?"

Don't you ever question God's justice. To question God's justice is an affront to His glory. Did you hear that? To question His justice is an affront to His glory. He says He's just that settles it. So, for the rebel, God is a God of inflexible justice.

You says, "Well, how do you avoid that?"

Listen to this, "If any man" – well – "There is therefore now no condemnation" – what does that word "condemnation" mean? Judgment – "to them who are" – what? – "in Christ." So simple. If you've taken refuge in Jesus Christ, will you ever know the judgment of God? Never, because Jesus Christ is God's standard. If you've been obedient to that standard, you'll never know judgment.

Secondly, God is not only a God of inflexible justice, but a God of irresistible power. And these are fantastic statements. This is a verbal display of majesty. Look at verse 3 in the middle, "The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." Is that majestic? Whenever there's a whirlwind, whenever there's a storm, God controls it. God makes His way through that storm. He goes His way in it; He accomplishes His purpose by it.

You remember in Exodus chapter 19 that God appeared in the mountain in fire and smoke. And in the Old Testament, God has appeared in the wind and the whirlwind. God moves through the atmospheric heavens. He is a God of irresistible power, and the first witness to testify to that is the atmospheric heavens. Verse 3, the heavens declare the glory of God.

The clouds, the whirlwinds, the storms are God's to control. And clouds are always in the Scripture – not always, but clouds are often, in the Scripture, connected with judgment. When Jesus comes in judgment, we see Him coming in clouds – don't we? – in great glory.

Yes, God is a God of irresistible power, and it's inevitable by the heavens. You know something? Men should be able to look at the heavens and know God, shouldn't they? God is such – has such power over the heavens, that because men have refused to recognize Him in the heavens. The heavens are going to collapse. God's going to judge men for their failure to see Him in the heavens, and they're going to fall apart.

During the tribulation, Revelation chapter 6, verse 12, "And behold, when He had opened the sixth seal, lo, there was a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth of hair; the moon became like blood; the stars of heaven fell onto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it's rolled together, and every mountain and island moved out of their places." That's the collapse of the sky, friends. And God controls the whole thing.

Over in chapter 8, it says, in verse 12, "The fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and a third part of the moon and a third part of the stars so that the third part of them was darkness and the day shone not for a third part of it; and the night likewise."

Over in chapter 16, verse 8, "He poured out his bowl upon the sun; His power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat and blasphemed the name of God who hath power

over these plagues.” God controls the heavens, and someday you’re going to see the collapse of the heavens. We see it as we look at the prophetic word.

But not only the testimony of the heavens speaks of His irresistible power, but the testimony of the waters. Look at verse 4, “He rebuketh the sea.” And that is graphically illustrated in Mark chapter 4 – you remember – when Jesus stood up and told the sea to calm down, and it did. And they said, “Even the winds and the waves obey His voice.” “He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers.”

What’s he saying this for? He’s saying that God has such control that He can rebuke the sea, that He can dry up the rivers. And the book of Revelation says He’s going to do it. In Revelation chapter 8, verse 8, we talked about, “The great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood; the third part of the creatures which were in the sea and had life died; the third part of the ships were destroyed.”

Verse 10 says, “A star from heaven fell, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, upon the fountains of waters. Many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.” God’s going to wipe out the water.

And Revelation chapter 16, verse 20, “Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent” – about a hundred pounds, evidently. “Men blasphemed God because of the plague.” The mountains and the islands are going to fly apart. The sea is going to be moved out of its places when God comes in judgment. And so, the testimony of the heavens, the testimony of the waters.

Thirdly, the testimony of the land or the earth. “Bashan languisheth and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.” There you have the northern, western, and eastern boundaries – or the eastern, western, and northern boundaries – get them in the right order – of Israel. And they are the most fertile areas. But if God wants to, He can destroy the fertility of the most luxuriant area. He has total control over the earth.

Remember in Genesis 1 how the earth was designed for God – for man by God. And then when Adam sinned, what happened? The earth was – what? – was cursed. And we know that it’s going to be that way when God judges.

In Revelation 16, verse 20, talking, as we just read, about the tremendous judgment that’s going to come upon the land, and in Revelation chapter 8 – I think it’s verse 7 – it gives us the same kind of an indication. It says, “There was hail and fire, mixed with blood, cast upon the earth. A third part of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.” The demise and the destruction of the earth. He can cause the flower to fade; He can cause the grass to wither; He can change the shape of the earth at will. At will.

In fact, in verse 5, it says, “The mountains quake before Him, and the hills melt. And the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world and all that dwell in it. The earth” – it should be, “The earth is upheaved” – upheaved – “in His presence.”

So, His power is seen in the earth, as the earth moves. You know, earthquakes are controlled by God. Did you know that? We know about that, don't we? Have you ever stopped to realize what a fantastic thrill it is to be living on a fault and actually see God move? I mean to have God's power exhibited in our presence, praise the Lord.

You think of Paul in Acts chapter 16, and he saw the same thing and the tremendous results of it. Chapter 16. You remember what happened. The Philippian jailer and the jail started to shake, and the results were a salvation of a whole family. Praise God for earthquakes. We've seen salvation through them. And we remember that Jesus died on the cross, and the earth shook, didn't it? And He rose from the dead, and the earth shook. Listen, God runs this earth, and He'll shake it any time He wants. The Bible tells us that someday – Revelation 6, Revelation 11, Revelation 16 – God's going to shake the earth with a shaking from which the earth will never recover. When God gets ready to shake this earth, He shakes it. He controls the earth. And the hills melt if He wants them to melt. And believe me, they will. It says in 2 Peter – we read it – the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the atomic disintegration of the globe. His power is irresistible.

Verse 6, the question then comes, “Who can stand before His indignation?” And what's the answer? Nobody. “And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?” And what's the answer? Nobody. “His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are split apart by Him.” When God begins to move, nobody can resist Him. This is judgment. His power is absolutely irresistible. Don't let any man ever be a fool and think that He can resist the power of God. It can't be done. No one can stand against this kind of inflexible justice and this kind of irresistible power. Our God is a consuming fire.

No wonder – no wonder the writer of Hebrews warned us as he warned us with these words, beginning in chapter 12, verse 25, “See that you refuse not Him that speaketh, for if they escape not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth, but now He hath promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I shake not the earth also – earth only – but also heaven.’

“And this word, ‘Yet once more,’ signifying the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, but those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear for our God is a consuming fire.” God's going to shake everything. And if those people didn't escape who heard those prophets on earth and who heard Jesus Christ on earth, do you think you're going to escape who hear not the voice of God from heaven? No way, for our God is a consuming fire. No wonder he said, “It is a fearful thing to

fall into the hands of the living God.” God is a God of irresistible power, and there is no hope for escape from that power apart from Christ.

Thirdly, and we close with this – and aren’t you glad that in wrath God always remembers – thirdly, He is a God of infinite mercy. Verse 7, “The Lord is good” – isn’t that refreshing? – “a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth those who trust in Him.”

And I always think of those people in the prophecy of Malachi. As the prophecy was being given, they were shaking and rattling in their shoes, to put it mildly. God was bringing this judgment down, and they were going, “Oh.” And it says they – it says in verse 16 of Malachi 3, “Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another” – they were buzzing around, “Oh, I wonder if we’re all going to get it?” – “and the Lord harkened and heard them” – the Lord overheard their conversation; listen to this – “and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name. ‘And they shall be Mine,’ sayeth the Lord of Hosts, ‘in that day when I make up My jewels.’” Isn’t that good? He says, “I’ve got a book, and I know who it is that belongs to Me.” And over in chapter 4, verse 1, “For behold, the day cometh that shall burn like an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up,’ sayeth the Lord of Hosts.” Verse 2, “‘But unto you that fear My name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.’” See, God always remembers the remnant, the faithful.

And so, for those of us who are faithful to Jesus Christ, who are not rebels from God, but by faith in Christ have come into a living relationship with God, we read these words, “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth those that trust in Him.” I don’t fear God. Do you fear God? I love Him; I don’t fear Him because I’m not in rebellion against Him. He is good.

And you know something? To say the Lord is good is hard to swallow for a lot of people. A lot of people think the Lord must be, as I said earlier, a real demagogue. A cruel individual.

You say – you look around the world, and you say, “Look at the disease; look at the death; look at the poverty; look at the mental disease and disorder; look at the vengeance and look at all the horror in the world. If God is good, what’s – how do you relate this?”

And so, we’ve got to go to the Word of God, and we’ve got to see that God is good. And we see that God is good, and we see it in many places. It’s, number one, revealed in His Word. The psalmist said, “The goodness of God exists continually. The psalmist said, “The Lord is good. His mercy endures forever.”

In Lamentations, Jeremiah said, “The Lord is good to them that wait for Him and seek Him.” And His goodness is not only revealed in His Word, it’s revealed in Jesus Christ who said, “I am the Good Shepherd.” It was sarcastically said to those who would accuse Him, “Why callest thou Me good? There is only one good; that is God. Are you acknowledging that I am God?”

Not only revealed in His Word and by Christ but goodness of God is revealed by His works. The Bible says, "He makes the rain to fall on" – what? – "the just and the unjust." Psalm 33 says, "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

Do you ever think that the Lord could have made everything brown? Brown grass, brown flowers, brown sky. But He didn't. Why color? Because there's joy in the variety of color. Color, rain, beauty of the earth. He's good to all, and especially to those who love Him, "For all things work together for good to them that" – what? – "love God and are called according to His purpose."

The goodness of God is not only revealed in these areas, but it's experienced by believers. Solomon said this, "There hath not failed one word of His good promise." And Jacob said, "He hath led me; he hath fed me all my lifelong unto this day." God is good. We who know and love Him experience His goodness.

Secondly, God is a stronghold in trouble. He's a refuge. "The Lord is my refuge," Deuteronomy 33: 27, The Lord is our security in the midst of material, physical, mental affliction. And the Bible says, in the New Testament, "My God shall supply" – what? – "all your needs." He's a refuge.

And lastly it says, "And He knoweth those who trust in Him."

You say, "Does that mean that the only people He knows about are the ones who trust Him?"

No. We've told you many times what it means when it says God knoweth someone. It means – what's another word you could use for "know?" "Love." In the Old Testament, it says, "And Cain knew his wife, and she bore a child." It doesn't mean He knew who she was. It talks about the intimacy of love.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them." He didn't mean, "I know who they are." He meant, "I have an intimate relationship with them." Jesus says, "Depart from Me, I never" – what? – "knew you." Does He mean He doesn't know who they are?" No. He means, "I never had the intimacy of a love relationship." The word "know" implies an intimate love relationship. And here it says this, "And He loveth those who trust in Him." Did you know God loves you? Remember the beloved apostle John who entitled himself "the one that Jesus loved?" He loves those who trust in Him. I don't fear God. I don't fear God at all. I never have any fear in my mind or my heart at all about God. I absolutely know that God loves me. Perfect love casts out that fear.

Oh God is a God of mercy. God is a God of love. One of my favorite passages in all of Scriptures, one page back at the end of Micah, verse 18 – listen to this – Micah 7:18, "Who is a God like unto Thee, who pardoneth iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again; He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities. And Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Is that mercy?

You say, "You know, I'd like to experience that mercy. Where is that mercy available? It's available in Jesus Christ, my friend. That's exactly where it's available. Those that love Jesus Christ will never be anathema. For all of God's standards – watch this – all of God's standards are obeyed by one act, faith in the perfect, finished work of Jesus Christ.

Someone said, "Thou art inapproachable, whose great grace enabled Thee to stoop, whose holiness is undefiled, yet handles hearts that droop. How Thou canst have such love for me and be the God Thou art is darkness to my intellect, but sunshine to my heart." Don't try to fit God into your mold; meet His standards. And in your frailty, and in your sin, you only have one way to meet Him: by faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Don't let God say *tereoph beday*, "I am against thee." Don't hear the voice of the Savior say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you," but hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy and rejoice with thy Lord." If any man be in Christ, he's not only a new creation, but he is freed from condemnation. No judgment. Let's bow in prayer.

Lord, tonight we have just – we've just tried to just get a little bit of a look at You. And, God, we've seen You in inflexible justice, irresistible power, and then we've seen You in that sweetness of infinite mercy. And we know that it is according to what Paul said in Ephesian 2:4, that You give us mercy because of the great love wherewith You have loved us. We know that it is love that prompts mercy. And, Father, we know You love us.

And, Father, we know that Your hand of judgment against the world is stayed not because You don't have the power, but because You have the love and that You're longsuffering and not willing that any should perish. And, Father, You've tarried this long; You've tarried into tonight, Father, just because there may be somebody here who needs You.

May there be no rebels in this place. May there be none who would rival You and thus feel Your judgment. But, O loving God, I pray that in mercy You'll reach into the hearts of any who might be here without Jesus Christ, that You'll give them such a desire and such a hunger and such a longing to know Christ that this would be the night of their conversion, this would be the night of their repentance, this would be the night when they come into Thy presence, when they cease to be a rebel and become a son. This we pray in Christ's most precious name, Amen.

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