

## A God of Mercy

*“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. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are 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 presents, 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 a 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, but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of [Nineveh]; he will pursue his foes into darkness” (Nahum 1:2-8).*

In this passage, Nahum prophesies the destruction of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Nahum begins his prophecy with a description of God’s wrath and how he punishes the wicked. The extreme power and the sovereignty of God are exposed in these verses. However, while Nahum pictures the great wrath of God, he also says *“the LORD is slow to anger.”* It seems as if Nahum is stumbling over his thoughts and contradicting himself. However, Nahum actually depicts the true character of God.

God is a God of mercy. He is patient with His people, and indeed, slow to anger. He grants mercy and grace to His undeserving people daily. However, when humans deny God and ignore His unfathomable grace, then God must act justly with them and punish them for their sin. God had every right to totally destroy the people of Nineveh. There was great wickedness in that city and finally, in His justness, God had no choice but to devastate Nineveh.

We see in this passage that God is the supreme ruler of all things. He is almighty, all-powerful, and sovereign. He can strike down man and kingdom in seconds He continually showers His mercy to mankind even in the midst of their sins (cf. Matthew 5:45). It is only when man totally disregards God’s grace and His pleas for repentance that God has to smite His people.

We serve a very loving and gracious God. Nevertheless, He disciplines His children when they need it (cf. Hebrews 12). We must realize the power of God and the wrath that He can show to wicked and sinful people. But despite this, we must learn to appreciate the vastness of God’s wonderful mercy.

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