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Speaker: Pastor Tyler Hanke
Bible passage or verse: Book of Nahum
Title of sermon: **God's Pattern of Justice**

Nahum 1-3 - NIV

1 A prophecy concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

The LORD's Anger Against Nineveh

2 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. **3** 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. **4** 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. **5** The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it. **6** Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him. **7** The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, **8** but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness. **9** Whatever they plot against the LORD he will bring to an end; trouble will not come a second time. **10** They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine; they will be consumed like dry stubble. **11** From you, Nineveh, has one come forth who plots evil against the LORD and devises wicked plans. **12** This is what the LORD says: "Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be destroyed and pass away. Although I have afflicted you, Judah, I will afflict you no more. **13** Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away." **14** The LORD has given a command concerning you, Nineveh: "You will have no descendants to bear your name. I will destroy the images and idols that are in the temple of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are vile." **15** Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.

Nineveh to Fall

2 An attacker advances against you, Nineveh. Guard the fortress, watch the road, brace yourselves, marshal all your strength! **2** The LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines. **3** The shields of the soldiers are red; the warriors are clad in scarlet. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day they are made ready; the spears of juniper are brandished. **4** The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches; they dart about like lightning. **5** Nineveh summons her picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the city wall; the protective shield is put in place. **6** The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses. **7** It is decreed that Nineveh be exiled and carried away. Her female slaves moan like doves and beat on their breasts. **8** Nineveh is like a pool whose water is draining away. "Stop! Stop!" they cry, but no one turns back. **9** Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! The supply is endless, the wealth from all its treasures! **10** She is pillaged, plundered, stripped! Hearts melt, knees give way, bodies tremble, every face grows pale. **11** Where now is the lions' den, the place where they fed their young, where the lion and lioness went, and the cubs, with nothing to fear? **12** The lion killed enough for his cubs and strangled the prey for his mate, filling his lairs with the kill and his dens with the prey. **13** "I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will burn up your chariots in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth. The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard."

Woe to Nineveh

3 Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims! **2** The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots! **3** Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses—all because of the wanton lust of a prostitute, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft. **5** "I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame. **6** I will pelt you with filth, I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. **7** All who see you will flee from you and say, 'Nineveh is in ruins—who will mourn for her?' Where can I find anyone to comfort you?" **8** Are you better than Thebes, situated on the Nile, with water around her? The river was her defense, the waters her wall. **9** Cush and Egypt were her boundless strength; Put and Libya were among her allies. **10** Yet she was taken captive and went into exile. Her infants were dashed to pieces at every street corner. Lots were cast for her nobles, and all her great men were put in chains. **11** You too will become drunk; you will go into hiding and seek refuge from the enemy. **12** All your fortresses are like fig trees with their first ripe fruit; when they are shaken, the figs fall into the mouth of the eater. **13** Look at your troops—they are all weaklings. The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has consumed the bars of your gates. **14** Draw water for the siege, strengthen your defenses! Work the clay, tread the mortar, repair the brickwork! **15** There the fire will consume you; the sword will cut you down—they will devour you like a swarm of locusts. Multiply like grasshoppers, multiply like locusts! **16** You have increased the number of your merchants till they are more numerous than the stars in the sky, but like locusts they strip the land and then fly away. **17** Your guards are like locusts, your officials like swarms of locusts that settle in the walls on a cold day—but when the sun appears they fly away, and no one knows where. **18** King of Assyria, your shepherds slumber; your nobles lie down to rest. Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them. **19** Nothing can heal you; your wound is fatal. All who hear the news about you clap their hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?

Good evening, everyone. No, this is not Round Two of announcements. This is the sermon. Prep yourself.

Oh, man. Okay, here we go. Welcome again to everybody. For those of you watching online, thank you for tuning in. Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the Book of Nahum; that's where we're going to be tonight. The minor prophet in the Old Testament -- the Book of Nahum. And while you are turning there, I want to draw your attention to how we came to this book for this week. About a month ago, our church leadership decided that we wanted to do another church-wide Bible study. We had done Romans 12 through the summer, and we want to kick off fall in a really neat way. So, this week, we are launching our fall Bible study series on the Book of Jonah. So again, that was about a month ago, and since we've opened up our website to signups, right now at this moment we have over 300 people signed for all of these Bible studies. And we want you to know -- those of you online and those of you in the room -- it is not too late to sign up. You go to fbcsalem.org and click on the group that works for you and for your time frame, and you can join us for the next few weeks as we study Jonah together. About two weeks ago, though, I was in my own personal devotions in the morning, and I came to Nahum. And as you can see, if you're already turned to the book, it's three chapters, very short -- you can blink and miss this thing. But the first verse says: "This is a prophecy concerning Nineveh." And Nineveh jumped off the page to me, because -- for those of you that don't know -- Jonah is the story of God working on Jonah to get him to love Nineveh as much as God does. So, we're all going to study this for the next few weeks, but as I was looking at it, I thought -- "Hmm. Is Nahum a contemporary of Jonah? Or does he have a different message?"

He has a very different message, and he's not a contemporary. Nahum comes about a hundred years after Jonah, so -- SPOILER ALERT TO EVERYONE! -- it doesn't end well for Nineveh. This prophecy is very dark, it's very violent, and as you read it, you get the sense that God is very upset. So, this whole message is about God's justice, because He eventually destroys this city. And for the believer, this presents an interesting, and -- kind of a bit of a problem -- because, if all you did was read Nahum, you'd wonder, why is God so angry? And is He justified to destroy an entire city? See, it's interesting, because of all the things that can threaten your faith, one of the bigger ones is actually God's pattern of justice. If you and me don't understand it, our faith is actually at risk. Let me put it to you this way in this question. How many of you have looked at the world, and you've just been overwhelmed at the seeming lack of justice in the world? Few examples: How many of you -- and don't raise your hands on this one -- how many of you have looked at the current racial tension, the current racial disparity, and you've seen people getting hurt, you've seen people dying, and you are unbelievably upset? And you wonder why God doesn't jump out of Heaven and talk to us about human life and about value and about equality. And you're upset because people in the church don't seem to take it as seriously as you, and you wonder why we're not all on the same page. Or maybe it's abortion. And you look at last year's numbers, which are 73 million abortions -- 73 million. We can't even wrap our heads around a number that big! And you again wonder why God doesn't rip the clouds apart and jump down, put a pause on humanity, and explain our wrongs. Or maybe for you, you look at other countries, you look at other groups of people, and you wonder how in the world God allows North Korea to exist the way that it does. Why in the world would He let Kim Jong-un murder family members, abduct individuals, torture them, and release them back to their home countries, only to die days later?

When you look at God, is it ever frustrating to you that He's not moving in certain places that you think He should? Again, if you don't understand God's pattern of justice that is currently being worked out in your and my life and around the world, and has been forever, for our entire history -- if you don't understand that, your faith is at risk. And so, this is the story that Nahum brings us. This is the

story of the end of Nineveh. And Nineveh at this point is in the completion of a divine pattern that God's been working out for about 2000 years on this city alone. And so, when you look at the destruction of a city, the first logical question in your mind would be, "Why did God do it?" That's a good question, and we're going to answer that, but not yet. Nahum doesn't start there, and me and you can't start there. If you're going to ask the question, "Why did God do something?" you first have to ask, "Who are You?" If you're going to understand why God does things, you have to understand who He is. Here's an example. If you go up to my little sister Annie and you say "Hi," she will undoubtedly not say "Hi" back -- unless you're Steve Galyen, he has a way of sucking it out of her. But with Annie, if you ask her, "How are you?" or if you say "Hi" she won't respond. Now, if you don't know anything about my sister, or anything about Down syndrome, you run the risk of being offended. Because generally in society, when we say "Hi" people say "Hi" back. But she won't do it. But if you understand who she is and you understand Down syndrome, and the difficulty she has communicating, you're not offended. Because you understand who she is. It's the same with God. When you understand who He is, it is infinitely easier to understand why He does things.

And there's where Nahum starts. In verse number two, he gives you and me two things that he wants us to understand about God. He says, "Our God" -- he's speaking to Judah -- so, the audience in this is the people of God. It's a prophecy about Nineveh, but it's not to Nineveh. It's to the people that God loves and that love God. He says, "Our God is jealous and our God is avenging." Our God is jealous and avenging, two things me and you need to understand if we're gonna get why God does things. Jealousy. You know this -- there's two sides to jealousy, and you know both of them. The first is a covetousness that you and me are commanded against. The second, though, is a moral jealousy. And you have all felt it. You've all lived this jealousy out. If you are married, you understand this kind of jealousy. If you have kids, you understand this jealousy. If you have family in general, or close, intimate friendships with people, you understand this. Jealousy for people that's moral is a zealousness for their protection. And jealousy to be appropriate needs two things: the first is that you need a rightful claim. I am jealous for the heart of my wife. Because I proposed, she said "Yes," we got married, we made a covenant to each other, and then we lived accordingly. I'm not jealous for the heart of any other woman -- only my wife. I am jealous for the hearts of my children. I'm not jealous for your children. I love them, but I'm not jealous for their hearts. Only mine, because they're mine. So, when God through Nahum says He's jealous, He looks at Judah and he says, "You're mine. I have a rightful claim to you. I built you, I declared you my people." He has a rightful claim on you! Not only did He build you, but He bought you -- if you're a Christian tonight -- or this morning, watching it tomorrow -- if you're a Christian, you are doubly owned and claimed by this God. He says there needs to be a rightful claim.

Secondly, there needs to be proximity. I can't claim jealousy for my wife if I marry her and then leave. I can't claim to be jealous for my children if I have those children and then leave. Jealousy -- appropriate moral jealousy -- demands proximity. And so, this is where Judah would pause and say, "Hold on. Okay -- we get that He's jealous, but I'm not getting the whole proximity thing. God hasn't done anything for us in years." And so, God responds to that thought -- He says, in verse 12, "Though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more." How does God know that they're afflicted? Because He's watching it. He's watching it happen. Now, He's not behaving in the way that Judah would want, per se -- but God says, "You can't claim I'm not there. I've been watching the entire time." And He takes this a step further. Nahum says He's jealous, but then he says that He's avenging. This is a God of promises, so "If you hurt my kids, I hurt you," God says. "Judah -- you have been threatened, you've been beat up, you've been afflicted, but we're done with that. I will wipe Nineveh off the map. I will avenge you." And again, they would have a hard time accepting this, because God hasn't

done much for the people of Judah in a long time. They've been under the Assyrian yoke for hundreds of years.

So, how do you get a hurt people -- how do you help yourself understand that God does indeed avenge you with those that hurt you? He draws your mind back to times when He's done it in the past. Through Nahum He draws their attention back to a very specific event. He says, "God is powerful. So powerful that He works through the storm, through the whirlwind" -- meaning nature and natural disasters are not outside of the scope of God's control. He says, "This God that I'm talking about to you is the same God that ripped the sea apart and dried the ground." What's he talking about? The exodus. He's drawing Judah back to when God has done this before. So, sometimes for me and you, before we look at what God is immediately doing and try to understand it, draw your mind back to when He's been victorious with you in the past. So, that's where He takes Judah. He says He's jealous for you and He's avenging, and He moves forward because -- Judah would at this point say, "Okay. Jealous, I get it. Avenging, I get it. But how -- how is He okay destroying an entire city?" That's a great question. If all you did was read Nahum, you would read God destroyed Nineveh, and you might begin to think that maybe this isn't appropriate, He's not justified in this. Does God just get angry and destroy people? No. If you're going to understand the way that God works in this story and in your life, you need a broader picture. You need a broad picture sometimes of God's story to understand His movements.

And so, I'm going to give you a bit of a history lesson. Nineveh's story is 2000 years long. I won't do that. That sermon would be three hours long. Presently, here's Nahum -- here's our story. Here's present day. Let's back up 200 years. Because we've got to answer the question, Is God justified in destroying an entire people group? Good question. First king I want to introduce you to of three is Šalmaneser the Second. He was famous for breaking a pattern. The Assyrians had a pattern of capturing people and then disbursing them to other regions to break national identity, because when you break national identity it's far easier to break a people. But Šalmaneser the Second doesn't do this. He says, "I don't want to move you. I want to kill all of you." And so, when you read of what he did, he would cut off the heads of all of his captors -- of all the males, and he would leave them around the city so that people would know what he was capable of. And then he would capture the children and the women and he would set them on fire. This was just one king.

Second king I want to introduce you to is Sennacherib. You'll know this guy. He finds his way in other stories in scripture in the Book of Kings. He surrounds Judah at one point. Before Nahum's time, he surrounds Jerusalem, and he destroys 47 towns surrounding Jerusalem. So, this would be like someone wanting to attack Salem, but before they do that, they destroy everyone in Brooks, Independence, Monmouth, and Dallas -- not because they needed to, but just to make a point. And so, Sennacherib destroys everyone -- men, women, and children. And he surrounds Jerusalem and says -- and he taunts them -- and he says, "I'm gonna destroy you next, but I'm gonna do it slowly." And then God intervenes, and He sends an angel down to destroy every single one of Sennacherib's soldiers. Amazing story. Read Kings, your Bible's awesome. But he goes back to Nineveh, and he's done.

Third and final king I want to introduce you to Aššurbanipal. He's the king during the time of Nahum. He also was famous for the way that he would market his cruelty. When he would capture people, he would flay them and leave their skins on Nineveh's walls. I apologize -- I know that's gross. But he would do this to say, "This is what I'm capable of." And he gains the city the nickname "The City of Blood," which Nahum references in chapter three. He says, "Woe to you city of blood. When you are destroyed, no one will miss you, because your cruelty has touched everyone. When people hear

of your destruction, everyone will celebrate." So, what was our question? Is God justified in destroying this city? If you knew nothing about the rest of this story and you only knew those three kings -- and there's a lot more -- you'd say, "Yup, He's fairly justified. That's horrible." But it's bigger than that. God is not just looking down at evil and looking at bad things that are done, and He just gets upset and then destroys stuff. That's a childish God. God is working through Jonah and then through Nahum to bring about a story, and an end here in our story, that is 2000 years old. And so, when you look at this -- I want to talk about the pattern of God. So, if you forget everything I've said so far, get this. This is the most important part, because this pattern plays out here, and it plays out in your life, and you need to get it. When you look at this, you've got to pull yourself out of the story of Nahum and look at the story of scripture, because Nineveh is everywhere. When you look at this, what is God's pattern? God looks at Nahum, He looks at nations and individuals, and you and me, and He looks at evil patterns, and when He discovers them, He makes His expectations known. Here's what you did wrong, here's how you need to fix it. That's Step One in the pattern. Step Two -- He gives an enormous window to repent. Then -- Step Three -- if you don't repent, there's punishment. That's God's pattern -- all throughout scripture. Expectations being made known. Huge window for repentance. And then, punishment. All to help us understand who He is and what He's doing.

So, where do you see this in scripture? You see this with Elijah and Ahab. Ahab, if you don't know, is declared in scripture as the most evil king Israel had ever had. And when Elijah comes, God says, "Tell him what he did wrong. And tell him that if he repents, then I'll relent." And Elijah works on Ahab for decades. Now, don't miss that. Elijah works on Ahab for decades. See, we as Christians -- we love the expectations being made known! Now, those of you that are first-born Type A, you love justice -- expectations are great. Step Three is also great -- punishment is awesome. If it's not us. We hate Step Two. He lets Ahab get away with horrific things for decades. Where else do you see this pattern? Well, Nahum already drew your attention to another one. It's Moses and Pharaoh. Moses goes to Pharaoh after generations of enslaved Hebrews. Generations. And he says, "You need to stop. You need to let my people go immediately. And if you do, God will relent." And you know the story. He doesn't stop. And eventually, God comes in and He punishes. See, what you're beginning to discover hopefully when you look at this pattern is one crucial fact, and we hate it. It's that God is slow. God is unbelievably slow in our eyes to act out His justice. Not only in these stories, but you can read in Exodus 34, Numbers 14, Nehemiah 9, Psalm 86, Psalm 103, Joel 2, and a host of others. You read the same words -- "God is slow to act." That's not an opinion, that's scripture. God is slow. And that's why we're mad. That's why you're upset! Because you look at the world, and rightfully so -- you see all kinds of evil! You see people that are hurting! You see racial disparity and racial inequity, and people dying, and you're wondering why more people aren't getting on board! And you look at 73 million dead babies and wonder, "God, what are you doing? We need you immediately! Not more millions of babies later, we need you right now! What possible explanation could you have to let evil people rule? Not just exist, but rule!" And we scream, and our prayers get ugly, and we shake our fist at God, and what do you recognize as happening? Are you growing in intimacy with God? Not at all. You're running further away from Him, because we don't sometimes have the ability to see what He's doing. But when you calm down long enough, you read words like this. "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises, and some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance." That's 2 Peter 3:9. Turn there and underline that whole thing. "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises, as some understand it. He is patient, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance."

Don't miss how hard this is for God. God has a deep, deep affection for those who hate Him. When you look at Nineveh, this isn't God just saying, "Okay, you did something bad, and I'm going to wipe

the floor clean of you." This isn't like washing dirt off a plate. This is the death of human beings that God made. God built all of these humans. I know it sounds almost awkward to say, but God built Kim Jong-un. He built him. He designed him in his mother's womb, so to call for the death of that individual, or even the dethroning, or looking at Nineveh going, "Yes! God, destroy it!" -- God's going, "Hold on! There is a reason that I am slow. I am slow, friends, because you need me to be." God is slow because we need Him to be. When you look at this destruction, and yet God's affection towards these people, this is an unbelievable affection to try to understand, but let's attempt it. I was watching an interview the other day with a mom, talking about her son. The mom was Sue Klebold, the son was Dylan. You might recognize that name as the Columbine shooter -- one of them. And Sue was describing her son, and before she got to the meat of her message, she just took a time out for a second. She said, "Hold on. Before I continue, I need to apologize." She said, "I am so sorry to anyone that might be in this room that my son hurt. Directly or indirectly. I am so sorry. What he did was monstrous. And I still don't understand it," she said. "But here's the thing. He's my son. And I don't have the luxury to hate him like you do."

See, what's crazy is -- those of you who are parents, specifically if you're a parent of a child who's hurt someone, you understand the heart of God better than many people. God does not have the luxury to simply hate human beings that He's created. He doesn't have that luxury. He made them. And He is grieved deeply when they perform evil acts. We know He is. Which is why He takes so long. It's why He sends person after person after person to help them repent. While we might not see it in the immediacy, God sees the broader story and we need to look at the broader story if we're gonna understand the movements of God. He's not slow because He's blind. He's not slow because He's not powerful. He's slow because we need Him to be.

Ignore all the examples I've given you so far and just look at your life. Just look at your life. Have you always loved your spouse with perfect respect and honor? I would argue probably not. Have you always respected your children and never lost your cool? Definitely not! Have you loved people perfectly? Not at all. To those of you who became Christians later in life, look at your pre-Christian life. And all the mistakes you made, and all the people that you hurt. How thankful are you that God is slow? Very thankful. He's not slow because He's not powerful, He's slow because we need Him to be. See, learning to trust God's faithful pattern, learning to wait, learning to trust this pattern enables a faithful response from me and you. Learning to trust God's faithful pattern enables a faithful response out of me and you. A number of things happen when you look at this pattern, when you look at expectations, huge window to repent and then punishment. When you pull that in here, multiple things start to happen in you, the first of which is that you grow in endurance. This goes without saying, but I gotta say it -- when you love people, you get hurt. Those of you that are married understand this beautifully. It is fascinating to me that the woman that I committed to, that I made a covenant with, how often I get lazy and selfish and hurt her. It's fascinating. I mean, you're more righteous than I am, so this probably doesn't happen to you! But when you look at your marriage, and you look at the times where you have wounded each other -- this is your spouse! Think about other people, the ones you're not married to!

Loving people hurts. If you've ever been a foster parent, if you've ever taken a non-family member into your home to care for them, and you commit -- no matter what this person does, I'm gonna love 'em -- that will wreck anyone. When Audrey and I became foster parents a number of years ago, it is laughable how naïve I was to how to love people. And part of it is that my family's amazing. My parents are amazing, my brothers are amazing -- most of the time -- and my sister is always amazing. Loving them is easy. Being loved by them is easy. And so, I was untrained in unconditional love. And when I moved into this home, these girls wrecked my heart. I thought -- "I love you. I show you

care and affection. You show me care and affection back and we're gonna get along just great." That didn't happen. Ever. I loved them, and that love felt uncomfortable to them. I cared for them, and I got rejection back. Pain back. And after about a year into this home, I was all but destroyed and just wanted to quit. And one night, after one horrible interaction with one of our girls, I couldn't sleep. She went to bed unbelievably mad. I went to bed mad. But it was 3:00 a.m. and I still couldn't close my eyes. So I go into the kitchen, and I'm just pacing back and forth, praying a prayer that you might have prayed before, that you recognize later is fairly immature, but you just go -- "God, why would you do this to me?" As if you're the most important person in the world. And you're going, "Why would you give this girl to us? Why are we called to love her? Would you change her heart!" You kind of get where I'm going with this -- it was a fairly selfish prayer. "God, do everything to change the world, and help me be comfortable." But who knows what time it was, maybe an hour later, when I finally calmed down. God said this -- "Tyler, before I change her -- if I change her at all, I have to change you. Because if you're gonna make it for years, then you need to build up an endurance. This is not a sprint, it's a marathon." What I didn't know is that after I started to process that moment, that prayer, that time with God, God was gonna take Audrey and I for another four plus years in that home. Thirty-four foster daughters later, and 48 little kids later, I can tell you that if I had not submitted to what God was going to do in His perfect plan of justice, I wouldn't have made it another week. And maybe you're here tonight, or maybe you're watching online tomorrow morning, and you are hurting. And you can't imagine another conversation with that family member or with that person that's in your home, or with your boss, or with someone else that's perfectly okay with abortion. You can't imagine another conversation about race! You can't imagine another conversation about evil rulers! And yet -- and yet, God is calling you to one more conversation, to one more relationship, to one more step forward, because He says, "I'm still going, and I want you in this story. I am still going, and if you're gonna make it, I need to build endurance in you." And that happens when we begin to humbly submit to this pattern.

The second thing that I see happening is that we lose our thirst for revenge. See, if you see a story where God always sees, He always gives times to repent, and He always gives perfect justice and punishment. If we believe that, then we don't demand to get our way. We don't demand that people would get hurt because they hurt us. See, there's a reason that God multiple times in scripture commands you and commands me never to take revenge. Have you ever wondered why? I mean, revenge is kind of like justice, and we're called to be men and women of justice, so why can't we take it? Because it does something to your heart that is absolutely wicked. If you're the type of person who gets hurt and you want to hurt back, that says multiple things about who you are. And I don't mean to shame you -- I've been there. It's all about trying to get better. So, let me help you out if you're in this place, and you want people hurt that hurt you. Number one -- here's what it's showing you. You don't value people. You don't. And here's an example. If I would've tried to verbally or physically hurt all of my foster girls that shamed me, rejected me, physically hurt my children -- if I tried to hurt them back, what it says is, "I don't care about who you are, I just wanna hurt you and feel better." That's sick. Here's the other thing that it says. "God, I don't actually trust you." Romans 12 says this: "Do not take revenge, but leave room for God to do so." Don't do it. Because, if you take revenge, what you're doing is, you're interrupting the pattern. You are interrupting what God is doing in you and in other people's lives, simply because you want to feel better.

When you look at Nahum and you look at this prophecy, God says, "I am going to burn Nineveh, I'm gonna flood Nineveh, and I'm gonna attack it." All three of those things happened. Approximately 50 years after Nahum prophesized this, everything He says comes to pass. There are people that sneak into the city of Nineveh and they set the temple on fire. They burn it to the ground, and it sets

a fire that starts going to other major parts of the city. Then, God brings about a storm. Historians write of this huge rainstorm that raises the river so high it floods massive portions of the city, destroying huge sections of it. Then, three peoples that all claim to be allies of Nineveh all attack at the same time. The Medes, the Scythians, and the Babylonians, all of them throughout a period of months attack the city and raze it to the ground, and Nineveh never comes back. Who's better at revenge -- you or God? You know the answer to this. Always God. Always. When you submit yourself to the pattern, you lose your thirst for revenge.

And finally, my favorite thing that happens is that we grow in affection for the people that God loves. See, you've got a brother, and he makes fun of you. And he makes fun of your family and your decisions and your faith, and again, you can't imagine another meeting with him. You can't imagine another family reunion. But God needs you. He needs you to be patient with him. If you hate him, who else is going to go get him? Your parents might not have acted like parents. Your parents might have been monsters, and everything in you wants to hate them. But you can't. God says, "This is your family. I know they hurt you. I know that injustice was done to you, but if all you do for the rest of your life is hate them, you're going to miss something. You're going to miss me transforming their heart through you, and that's an amazing gift!" When you let God -- and this might be one of the hardest things you have to hear, but just hear it, go home with it, and wrestle with it -- if you let God -- if you submit to this pattern, you will be able to endure seasons of distress.

If you don't know the story of the Saints -- Nate Saint and Steve Saint -- I'm going to tell you, it's incredible. Nate Saint is called to the Huaorani people of Ecuador, and he flies his plane in with five other missionaries, lands on a riverbank, and goes to reach these people. They run out of the bush with spears and they stab all of them to death. They all die. A few years later, Rachel, Nate's sister, believes that God spiritually connected her and this people group. She doesn't want to let them go. She doesn't want to live the rest of her life hating them. So she travels to Ecuador and she asks permission to live in one of the outlying villages, and because she's a woman, and poses no physical threat, they let her. And she lives there and serves them for 36 years. In that time, she invites her nephew, Steve, to come and stay there for a time. And he meets the very men that stabbed his dad to death. Now, Rachel, with a number of other people, bring the Huaorani people to Christ, and they bring a certain man to Christ -- Mincaye. The man that stabbed Nate Saint to death. And Steve grows up with him. Imagine growing up in the same village knowing your father's murderer. You go to breakfast with this man. You work with this man. You sleep in the same area as this man. When you fast-forward, Steve says, after living with him and almost being treated like a son -- because Mincaye became like his dad -- they baptized each other. And then they flew back to the United States, and they just shared Christ with everyone. The man who murdered this boy's dad traveled across the US describing forgiveness and describing Christ. You have a choice in the face of all of this evil. You can shake your fist and get mad at God, or you can slow down, get a bigger picture, understand who God is, and let Him take you through this pattern. We love Step One. We love Step Three. Learn to love Step Two. Because, if you submit to this pattern, you will endure intense seasons, but you will endure them. And God will do amazing things in you and through you.

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