

Nahum 3:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

Analysis

Nahum concludes with Nineveh's irreversible doom: "There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" The Hebrew *eyn kehah leshivrekha nachlah makkateykh* *kol shom'ei shim'akha taq'u khaph aleya ki al-mi lo-averah ra'ateykh tamid* אֵין־קַהַה לְשִׁבְרָה נְחַלָּה מַקְתָּבָן כָּל שֻׁמְעֵי pronounces final verdict.

"There is no healing of thy bruise" (*eyn kehah leshivrekha*) uses *shever* (שִׁבְרָה), meaning breaking, fracture, or crushing. The adjective *kehah* (קַהַה) means dulling or lessening—there's no diminishing of the wound. "Thy wound is grievous" (*nachlah makkateykh*) uses *nachlah* (נְחַלָּה), meaning incurable or desperate. This medical imagery declares Nineveh's destruction terminal—no recovery possible, no healing available.

"All that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands" (*kol shom'ei shim'akha taq'u khaph*) describes universal rejoicing at Nineveh's fall. The "bruit" (report or news) of Nineveh's destruction will cause hand-clapping—ancient gesture of joy, triumph, or contempt. This isn't vindictive schadenfreude but righteous rejoicing that oppression has ended. Psalm 47:1 commands: "Clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph." Here, oppressed nations clap because their oppressor is defeated.

The rhetorical question "upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" (al-mi lo-averah ra'ateykha tamid) expects the answer: everyone. Every nation suffered Assyrian cruelty. The adverb tamid (תָּמִיד) means continually, always, perpetually—Assyria's evil was unrelenting. Therefore, no one mourns her fall; all celebrate. This demonstrates a sobering principle: those who show no mercy receive none. As Jesus taught: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Conversely, the merciless face judgment without pity.

Historical Context

Nahum prophesied between 663 BC (after Assyria's conquest of Thebes, mentioned in 3:8) and 612 BC (before Nineveh's fall). For over a century, Assyria had terrorized the ancient Near East with brutal military campaigns. They destroyed Israel's northern kingdom (722 BC) and nearly conquered Judah during Hezekiah's reign (701 BC). Assyrian inscriptions boast of horrific atrocities—impaling victims, burning cities, deporting entire populations. Nahum announces God's judgment against Nineveh for their violence and cruelty. Unlike Jonah's earlier message that brought Nineveh to temporary repentance (c. 760 BC), Nahum declares judgment is now irreversible. The prophecy was precisely fulfilled in 612 BC when Babylon and Media destroyed Nineveh so completely that its location was lost for over 2,000 years.

Nahum demonstrates God's sovereign justice over nations—He judged Israel for covenant unfaithfulness through Assyria, then judged Assyria for exceeding their mandate with excessive cruelty. The book assures God's people that He sees oppression and will vindicate them. While fierce in judgment against the wicked, God remains 'a stronghold in the day of trouble' for those who trust Him (1:7).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Nahum 3:19 deepen your understanding of God's character, particularly His holiness, justice, and mercy?
2. What specific attitudes, thought patterns, or behaviors does this verse call you to examine and change in light of the gospel?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and His redemptive work, and how should that shape your worship and obedience?

Interlinear Text

אֵין	כִּי	לְשָׁבֵךְ	נִחְלָה	מִפְתָּח	כִּי	שְׁמַעַי
H369	There is no healing	of thy bruise	is grievous	thy wound	H3605	all that hear

שְׁמַעְךָ	תִּקְעָה	בְּכָה	בְּכָה	בְּכָה	מִעַל	לֹא
the bruit	of thee shall clap	the hands		H5921	H3588	H5921
H4098	H8628	H2700			H4310	H3808

עָבַר ה	בְּעֵתֶךָ	פְּמִידָה:
passed	over thee for upon whom hath not thy wickedness	continually

Additional Cross-References

Micah 1:9 (Parallel theme): For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.

Lamentations 2:15 (Parallel theme): All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?

Job 27:23 (Parallel theme): Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

Isaiah 37:18 (Parallel theme): Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries,

Jeremiah 46:11 (Parallel theme): Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.

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