

## JUSTICE AND DELIVERANCE

DEVOTIONAL READING: [Nahum 1:1–3, 6–8, 12–13, 15](#)

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Nahum 1](#)

### [NAHUM 1:1–3, 6–8, 12–13, 15](#)

- <sup>1</sup> A prophecy concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.
- <sup>2</sup> 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.
- <sup>3</sup> 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.
- <sup>6</sup> Who can withstand his indignation?  
Who can endure his fierce anger?  
His wrath is poured out like fire;  
the rocks are shattered before him.
- <sup>7</sup> The LORD is good,  
a refuge in times of trouble.  
He cares for those who trust in him,  
<sup>8</sup> but with an overwhelming flood  
he will make an end of Nineveh;  
he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness.
- <sup>12</sup> 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.
- <sup>13</sup> Now I will break their yoke from your neck  
and tear your shackles away.”

**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.



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## KEY TEXT

*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.—**Nahum 1:2***

## JUSTICE, LAW, HISTORY

### Unit 1: God Requires Justice

## LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the historical context of Nahum’s prophecy.
2. Explain why God’s justice is necessary to the spread of good news.
3. Explain how to present the gospel both in terms of God’s wrath and salvation available through Christ.

## LESSON OUTLINE

### Introduction

- A. Ready to Receive
- B. Lesson Context
- I. Prophecy (Nahum 1:1)
  - A. Place Indicted (v. 1a)
  - B. Prophet Identified (v. 1b)
- II. Portrayals (Nahum 1:2–3, 6–8, 12a)
  - A. Punishment for Foes (v. 2)  
*Our Zealous, Jealous God*
  - B. Power to Accomplish (vv. 3, 6)  
*Stuck in the Mud*
  - C. Protection for His People (v. 7)
  - D. Pursuit of His Enemies (vv. 8, 12a)
- III. Promises (Nahum 1:12b–13, 15)
  - A. An End of Affliction (v. 12b)
  - B. Peace for His People (vv. 13, 15)

### Conclusion

- A. Good News!
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## HOW TO SAY IT

Ashurbanipal      As-shure-*bah*-nee-pahl.  
Capernaum        Kuh-*per*-nay-um.

cuneiform	<i>koo-nee-eh-form.</i>
Elkoshite	<i>El-kuh-shite.</i>
Manasseh	<i>Muh-nass-uh.</i>
Medes	<i>Meeds.</i>
Nahum	<i>Nay-hum.</i>
Nineveh	<i>Nin-uh-vuh.</i>
Sennacherib	<i>Sen-nack-er-ib.</i>
Thebes	<i>Theebz (th as in thin).</i>
Tigris	<i>Tie-griss.</i>
Zephaniah	<i>Zef-uh-nye-uh.</i>

## Introduction

### A. Ready to Receive

Who was the last person to deliver really good news to you? Maybe a doctor or nurse told you that mother and child are safe following a difficult labor, or the treatments worked and your spouse’s cancer is in remission. Perhaps a teenager you love decided to dedicate his life to following Jesus. A weatherman declared that the hurricane would not land, or a sales associate told you the appliance you needed was available at a deep discount. The car repair you were worried about was simple. All kinds of people deliver good news.

This time of year, we might think of the shepherds in the field ([Luke 2:8–20](#)) or the Magi from the east ([Matthew 2:1–12](#)) who received the good news of Jesus’ birth. All these carried with them the good news that Jesus was born. Long before this, however, the day of peace was anticipated in the days of a ruthless world power, whose end was indeed good news for Judah. And that good news prepared the people to receive the Messiah, who would fulfill these prophecies in ways no one had imagined.

### B. Lesson Context

The historical setting of the book of Nahum is of utmost importance to understanding its message of hope for Judah. Even so, only one historical event is cited in the book’s three chapters—the destruction of Thebes ([Nahum 3:8–10](#); compare [Jeremiah 46:25](#)). Ashurbanipal of Assyria (reigned 669–633 BC) sacked that Egyptian city in 663 BC. This indicates that the book of Nahum was written sometime after the fall of Thebes but before the predicted fall of Nineveh, a major city of the Assyrian Empire. That fall became reality in 612 BC (see below).

Therefore, a date during the reign of righteous King Josiah of Judah (641–609 BC) makes the most sense. This can be further narrowed to between 625 and 612 BC as most likely, since judgment is predicted for Judah’s enemies, not for Judah itself.

The Assyrians certainly played a role in God’s disciplining of Judah. The Lord allowed its evil King Manasseh (reigned 697–643 BC; see [2 Chronicles 33:1–9](#)) to be exiled by the Assyrians. The Assyrians were renowned for their cruelty. They had a practice of torturing the leaders of captive cities or nations as a warning not to rebel. In Manasseh’s case, the Assyrians put a hook in his nose, bound him with chains, and led him away. While in prison Manasseh turned to God ([33:10–13](#)). When he returned to Jerusalem, he led in a spiritual revival ([33:14–16](#)).

Such a revival had not occurred in the northern kingdom of Israel. Neither kings nor people there repented of their evil, so the Lord used the Assyrians’ violence as a tool of punishment. Whereas Judah suffered threats of violence and periodic incursions, Samaria, northern Israel’s capital city, was captured after a three-year siege, in 722 BC ([2 Kings 17:5–6](#); [18:9–12](#)). Sargon II’s boast that he led captive over 27,000 people was preserved in Assyrian cuneiform text. This is when Israel as a nation disappeared from the world stage.

Nineveh hit its peak in power as Ashurbanipal’s capital in the mid-seventh century BC, just before its destruction. Following Ashurbanipal’s death, kingdoms that had come under Assyrian control rebelled. Among these were the Babylonians and the Medes. Their armies came together to sack Nineveh in 612 BC. Following this, Babylon displaced Assyria as the major power in the region.

## I. Prophecy ([NAHUM 1:1](#))

### A. Place Indicted (v. [1a](#))

#### **1a. A prophecy concerning Nineveh.**

Prophets often began their prophecies using a word that can be translated “burden” (examples: [Isaiah 13:1](#) and [Zechariah 9:1](#) in the *KJV*). The same word is also translated “inspired utterance” in [Proverbs 30:1](#); [31:1](#). The *prophecy* that follows is often one of judgment, and that is the case here. This is a weighty call, not a trivial or light matter.

The city of *Nineveh* was located on the Tigris River, site of present-day Mosul, Iraq (see [Lesson Context](#)). Nineveh was first mentioned in the Bible when a descendant of Noah’s son Ham built it ([Genesis 10:11](#)).

## B. Prophet Identified (v. 1b)

### 1b. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

*The vision* is another way to refer to the prophecy being revealed in this *book* (compare [Isaiah 1:1](#)). The same Hebrew word can also be translated “revelation” ([Proverbs 29:18](#); [Habakkuk 2:2–3](#)), which emphasizes that God provided both the experience and the wisdom to understand its significance.

*Nahum* means “repentings” or “compassion” (compare [Hosea 11:8](#)). He is the only person in the Old Testament with that name and is not the Nahum named in Jesus’ genealogy ([Luke 3:25](#)). Nahum did not provide the names of his ancestors, only that he was from a town called Elkosh. At least four places have been suggested for its location: one north of Nineveh, site of modern Alkush, about two miles north of modern Mosul, Iraq (see [Lesson Context](#)); two in Galilee (including Capernaum, which means “town, or village, of Nahum”); and one near Jerusalem in Judah. The latter is preferred by most scholars.

Jonah and Nahum are the two Old Testament prophets whose prophecies focused on a coming judgment on Nineveh. Nahum’s prophecy differs from Jonah’s in two key ways: (1) Nahum was told to preach in Judah *about* Nineveh, not *in* Nineveh itself; and (2) Nahum’s prophecy was fulfilled. Jonah’s was unfulfilled because God chose mercy over judgment when the people repented (see [Jonah 3:6–10](#); [Matthew 12:41](#)). Zephaniah, a contemporary of Nahum, also named Nineveh in the context of judgment coming to all of Assyria ([Zephaniah 2:13](#)).

## II. Portrayals

([NAHUM 1:2–3, 6–8, 12a](#))

### A. Punishment for Foes (v. 2)

**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.**

We should take care to understand what it means for *the Lord* to be *jealous*. God’s jealousy is not like that of a boy who has a fit if he sees his girlfriend flirting with someone else. The biblical concept of jealousy when applied to *God* indicates a profound sense of caring and commitment. This is even more apparent where a word in the original language is translated “jealousy” in one passage but “zeal” in another.

For example, the Hebrew noun translated “jealousy” in [Ezekiel 8:3, 5](#) and [Zechariah 8:2](#) is rendered “zeal” in [Isaiah 9:7; 37:32; 59:17; 63:15](#). In the New Testament, the Greek noun translated “jealousy” in [2 Corinthians 11:2](#) is the same one translated “zeal” in [Philippians 3:6](#). Over-

lap in meaning is affirmed in English by a dictionary entry that offers one meaning of jealousy as “zealous vigilance.” The common idea is one of fervency.

In this verse, God’s jealousy is more closely linked to his protecting his people from violence and oppression that often results when hostile nations worship violent and oppressive false gods. Sennacherib (reigned 704–681 BC), an Assyrian king during the time of Hezekiah’s reign (about 716–687 BC), learned this lesson the hard way in 701 BC. Sennacherib had captured many cities in Judah, so the Lord—protecting both his name and his people—struck the Assyrian army, and 185,000 soldiers died in one night (2 Kings 18:13–37; 19:34–36; Isaiah 36–37).

Repetition in Hebrew prophecy, which was often written as poetry, serves to emphasize the point being made. In this verse, God’s *vengeance* and *wrath* become more frightening and immediate through Nahum’s insistence that God will act out of his righteous rage (compare Nahum 2:13; 3:5–7). As Hebrews 10:31 says, “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

### OUR ZEALOUS, JEALOUS GOD

Ever been attacked by a Canada goose? Each spring a pair of long-necked Canada geese build a nest in the tall grass next to a pond near the trail where my wife and I take our daily walks. We have learned to beware of the geese. When the female lays her eggs, the male becomes quite protective. Step anywhere near the nest, and he will sound a warning honk. Get too close and he will run toward you aggressively. Even in a common goose, there’s a God-given instinct to protect.

Have you ever wondered why the Bible describes the Lord as a jealous God? He is protective and passionate. He doesn’t sit passively on his throne. Sin rouses God’s righteous indignation, but not because he hates us. On the contrary: he loves us too much to sit by idly when out-of-control wickedness threatens our relationship with him. Aren’t you glad our heavenly Father isn’t apathetic, indifferent, and unemotional about us? Can the same be said about your attitude toward him?

—D. F.

### B. Power to Accomplish (vv. 3, 6)

**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.**

If the nation of Assyria deserved to be punished, why had God not done something ear-

lier? God waits patiently because he wants everyone to repent; he does not wish for anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9). God does not react in haste (see Jonah 3).

But God's patience does have its limits. And when his patience ends, he still has the *power* to hold *the guilty* accountable. The people of Noah's day had gone too far from God and acted wickedly, so God sent the flood (Genesis 6–8). Having promised never to destroy the whole world with water again (9:8–11), God still reserved the right to act in judgment (examples: chapter 19; 2 Peter 3:10–12; Revelation 6:12–17).

Although God acts as a judge, this verse describes him as more of a righteous warrior (compare Revelation 19:11–16). Unlike human fighters, he has all of nature at his command as his weapons. *The whirlwind* forms in the sky and reaches to earth; *the storm* can yield thunder and lightning, hail, destructive rains, and more (compare Job 38:22–23). *Clouds* parallel these terms and encompass weather more generally. Not only does God command these (examples: 2 Kings 2:1; Mark 4:39–41), but they are as distressing to him as *the dust* that kicks up as he walks in his heavens—that is to say, not at all.

Yet even dust can serve his purposes, as seen in the plague of boils that resulted from Moses' obeying God's command (Exodus 9:8–9). Nahum 1:4–5 (not in our printed text) continues to describe God's power in terms of his authority over the forces and features of our world.

#### *What Do You Think?*

What are some indications that your expressions of anger are not modeled after God's?

#### *Digging Deeper*

What plan can you enact to be more accountable in improving in this area?

### **STUCK IN THE MUD**

Not heeding the counsel of one's spouse can be dangerous—but so can heeding it! We were driving to our friends' new home for dinner when I accidentally made a wrong turn into someone else's narrow driveway. My wife advised, "Just pull into the grass and turn around."

Despite my voiced reservations about getting stuck, I did as she said. As soon as the car was off the paved driveway, the front tires sank into the soft soil. Tempers flared as tires spun. We ended up paying a tow-truck driver \$50, arriving 90 minutes late, and exchanging glares the rest of the evening.

That night we both flared uncharacteristically into frustrated anger. But unlike the two of us in a marital spat, God's wrath is righteous indignation, not impulsive temper tantrums. He doesn't explode with unrestrained rage, nor does he hold grudges (Psalm 103:8–9). What needs to happen for your anger to be more like his?



**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.**

The recognition of the Lord's power caused Nahum to ask two rhetorical questions. These ask the same thing and in doing so emphasize the impossibility of the answer. No one can withstand God's *indignation* and *his fierce anger*—no person, no nation, no power. Not even the strongest or the strongest-willed has the ability to resist God.

God's *wrath* is like a volcano; lava *like fire* is *poured out*. The eruption sends *rocks* into the air. Nothing in the path of a volcano—or the Lord in his righteous anger—can survive. Any resistance is futile.

#### *What Do You Think?*

What problems can we avoid by making sure we acknowledge the wrath of God as the Bible intends?

#### *Digging Deeper*

What Scripture passages do you find most helpful in framing your response?

### C. Protection for His People (v. 7)

**7. The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him,**  
All of God's many attributes are tempered by the fact that he *is good* ([Matthew 19:16–17](#)). He creates good things (examples: [Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31](#)). He gives good gifts ([Exodus 3:8; James 1:17](#)). Those who *trust in him* experience his goodness in protection from harm. The phrase *he cares for those* anticipates Jesus' self-disclosure that he is the good shepherd who knows his sheep and cares for them ([John 10:14–15](#)). On the Lord as *a refuge*, compare [Psalm 31:2](#); contrast [52:7](#).

### D. Pursuit of His Enemies (vv. 8, 12a)

**8. but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness.**

Nahum often used poetic imagery to describe Nineveh's destruction, but two factors here were literally fulfilled. The Tigris River ran along the western side of Nineveh, and a tributary from the east joined it there. A severe flooding in both rivers at once would be too much for the foundations of the mighty city. During the Babylonian siege on Nineveh, *an overwhelming flood* occurred that damaged the walls of the city and that helped to bring about the *end* of that great city (compare [Nahum 2:6, 8](#)). After that, the figurative flood of Babylonians and

Medes took the city (see [Lesson Context](#)).

Many ancient cities suffered capture and destruction, and new cities were built on top of the ruins. But Nineveh was never rebuilt. Figuratively, *darkness* also overwhelmed Nineveh. There is no indication that God used the same darkness in Nineveh as he chose in Egypt ([Exodus 10:21–23](#)). Rather, the fate of the city was similar to what was believed of a dead person—existing in some dark place, never to be offered opportunity to enter God’s presence (contrast [Jonah 2](#)). Still, darkness playing a part in releasing God’s people from oppression is poignant.

[Nahum 1:9–11](#) (not in our printed text) again taunts Nineveh with the futility of opposing the Lord.

**12a. This is what the LORD says: “Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be destroyed and pass away.**

*This is what the Lord says* is a phrase used hundreds of times in the Old Testament (with some variation) to introduce a prophecy given by God (compare [Isaiah 1:2](#); [Hosea 1:1](#); etc.). What he revealed about Nineveh would happen as surely as if it had already happened; the prophecy was entirely trustworthy.

The people of Nineveh would foolishly behave as though they were secure as a result of their political alliances and national strength. In this case the Ninevites’ might combined with their numerical superiority to create a false sense of security.

# God's anger: Slow but powerful.



Visual for [Lesson 4](#). Discuss with the class how God's anger being like lava (instead of the more typical fire) changes the metaphor.

## III. Promises ([NAHUM 1:12b–13, 15](#))

### A. An End of Affliction (v. [12b](#))

**12b.** “Although I have afflicted you, Judah, I will afflict you no more.

The subject of God's address changes here from Assyria (represented by Nineveh) to *Judah*. Assyria, the instrument of God's anger, had gone too far and would be stopped ([Isaiah 10:5–7](#)). The Assyrians' violence and oppression would not *afflict* God's people forever.

### B. Peace for His People (vv. [13, 15](#))

**13.** “Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away.”

A wooden yoke was placed on the necks of animals for pulling heavy loads or plowing. While it was a mere tool on a beast of burden, people were never meant to bear the kind of *yoke* in view here. The yoke therefore became a symbol of oppression (contrast [Matthew 11:29–30](#)). Assyrian bondage of Judah would end.

The Lord spoke once again to Nineveh in [Nahum 1:14](#) (not in our printed text). His declaration left no doubt as to the fate of the city and its false gods.

*What Do You Think?*

What line of reasoning would you use to convince a new believer that attempting to live a yoke-free life will result in the heaviest yoke of all?

*Digging Deeper*

Considering the importance of good timing, when should you point out [Galatians 5:1](#)?

**15a. Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news,**

The opening words of this verse are similar to those of [Isaiah 52:7](#), which itself is quoted in [Romans 10:15](#). In Isaiah's context, the *good news* was that Babylonian exile would end and the people of Judah would be restored to their land. For the apostle Paul, the words in Romans find their ultimate meaning in the march of the news regarding Jesus Christ. For Nahum and pre-Babylonian Judah, the good news was that Assyria would fall.

**15b. who proclaims peace!**

*Peace* had been a blessing available to the people in the promised land if they remained faithful to the Lord ([Leviticus 26:1–6](#)). This peace was to include cooperation from the land in agriculture, victory over foes, and most importantly, God's presence; in short, reversals of the curses found in [Genesis 3](#). This too is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus (see [John 14:27](#); [16:33](#); [Acts 10:36](#)).

*What Do You Think?*

In working to promote a just peace, what are some ways to stay on guard against unbiblical concepts of "peace"?

*Digging Deeper*

In addition to [Jeremiah 6:14](#) and [Ezekiel 13:10](#), what texts help most in framing your answer?

**15c. Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.**

As a result, Nahum challenged *Judah* to *celebrate* the various *festivals* prescribed in the Law of Moses. The implication is that some type of restriction had hindered the free exercise of worship for the people of God. Or, more troublingly, the people hadn't been very dedicated

to their celebrations to begin with and had used foreign interference as an excuse not to *fulfill* their *vows* (compare [Psalm 61:8](#); contrast [Jeremiah 44:25](#)). With the destruction of *the wicked*, however, the people would be free once again to choose devotion to God and enjoy the blessings that came with it.

## Conclusion

### A. Good News!

The destruction of Nineveh fulfilled Nahum's prophecy. The city's destruction was complete, and so too was the end of Assyria's dominance. The pending doom of Nineveh was the greatest part of Nahum's prophecy, but closely related was the word of deliverance for Judah. This comforted a people who had been oppressed by Assyria for decades.

Injustice still exists, and God still intends to act to bring justice and deliver his people. But he sees the global picture, so his timetable differs from what we might desire. In his treatment of Assyria, he did not act in haste. At the right time in God's plan, the nation of Assyria came to an end. It had fulfilled its purpose. God's justice prevailed. God's timing is always perfect (example: [Galatians 4:4-5](#)).

For this reason, we share the love of Jesus, not only at Christmastime but also year-round. The gospel truth about Jesus is the reason we have hope of eternal life. And what better news could there be than a future with the Lord in his Heaven?

#### *What Do You Think?*

Which concept or description in today's text most conflicts with your ideas regarding how God "should" be or act?

#### *Digging Deeper*

What action will you take to resolve this?

### B. Prayer

God in Heaven, help us to shape our lives to show that we truly believe that you are holy, just, and loving. Today we especially thank you for giving us your Son. In his name we pray. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

Use your feet to spread the gospel!

## INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

*Enhance your lesson with NIV® Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the NIV® Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).*

### Into the Lesson

Divide your class in half and ask those in each half to form triads. Triads in the first half are to think of at least one example for this prompt: “He got what he deserved when ...” Triads of the other half are to discuss examples for “She didn’t get the punishment she had coming to her when ...” (Caution not to use names of politicians or people personally known in your church.)

After five minutes, ask how people react when someone’s punishment is evidently just. After a few minutes, ask about the opposite.

Lead to Bible study by saying, “Today’s text will lead to fresh thoughts about how and why God ensures justice.”

### Into the Word

Discuss the historical background for today’s prophecy based on material from the Lesson Context. After having the text read aloud, distribute handouts (you create) with the following tasks and questions. (*Option.* You can put only one of the six per handout or all six on every handout, depending on time available and the nature of your class.)

- 1–List all the words in today’s text that describe God. Which is the newest picture to you? Which makes you most uncomfortable? Which is most encouraging?
- 2–How should those who actively opposed God have been warned, based on the prophecies in this passage? List specific examples.
- 3–What images in these verses indicate how God will overwhelm all those who oppose him?
- 4–Name a key factor or two that will ensure God’s favor.
- 5–How were the citizens of Judah to respond to this prophecy from Nahum?
- 6–List appropriate responses of Christians today to this ancient prophecy.

Have students work in their same groups formed for Into the Lesson. After no more than 10 minutes, reconvene for whole-class discussion of results. Use task number 6 as a transition to the Into Life segment.

*Alternative.* For a more general, open-ended approach, distribute instead copies of the “Our Just God” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have students com-

plete the exercise in their groups. Discuss results. The “Good News” exercise from the activity page can be used after either alternative for expanded consideration.

### Into Life

Continue the discussion by asking how our understanding of God-as-just would be changed if He had not carried through with his judgment on Assyria as prophesied by Nahum. Challenge learners, again in their groups, to prepare an “elevator speech”—an explanation that can be offered in the time it takes an elevator to close its doors and open them again—explaining the gospel both in terms of God’s wrath to be avoided and salvation through Christ to be embraced. After no more than 10 minutes, reconvene for whole-class discussion.

*Option.* Ask students to use the blank side of one of the handouts to write a commitment prayer about living for God in the new year. Direct them to consider words, phrases, and ideas from today’s text. State that you will offer opportunities for sharing results with the class as a whole, but you will not put any on the spot to do so. Offer that opportunity after no more than one minute to jot down thoughts for their individual prayers.

Close the class with sentence prayers, led by volunteers (possibly recruited in advance) to voice specific individuals (named or unnamed) who need to hear the message of justice (wrath to come) alongside the message of restoration offered through Christ (forgiveness). You as teacher can offer the last of the prayers to wrap up.