

The Lord is good

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[0:00] Let us turn now to the book of Nahum, Nahum and chapter 1 and verse 7. Nahum chapter 1 and verse 7, the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knew of them that trust in him. This short book was written by Nahum, the Elkishite, and nobody knows exactly where Elkish was. Jerome was of the belief that it was, he identified rather with Elkishite in northern Galilee. And it would appear that Nahum ministered in between the Assyrian captivity of Sargon and the destruction of Nineveh. Others are unable to preside it on the time of his ministry. So if you read through this short book for yourselves, you will see that the destruction of Nineveh was, of course, his subject. We first of all have an introductory psalm, and then we are reminded of the siege and the destruction of Nineveh, and eventually he deals with, of course, the reasons for its destruction.

Tonight I want to look at this verse, which has been described as an island in the midst of a storm. And as you read through the chapter, you will see yourselves why that is so. The storm being, of course, being, of course, the fury and the anger and vengeance of God. And yet this verse is slotted in as it were in the center of all that. Now if you got caught at sea in a storm, whether you were in a rowing boat or a yacht or a larger craft, your main concern would be your safety. And an island, to come across an island in the midst of the tempest would bring you enormous comfort. It would afford you safety. And you wouldn't be in the least interested in that island, whether it was rocky or whether it had verdant pastures and sandy beaches and mysterious coves and marvering streams. It didn't matter. All you were interested in was the island that you could find shelter there and that your life could be preserved. Because when life is in danger, nothing else matters. You may remind of that in the Book of Acts, when Paul was on his journey there to Rome. And you remember yourselves, have you forewarned the captain that he ought not to set sail for Rome. And because conditions at the time were favourable, the captain of course did not pay any attention to Paul and so they went for Rome. And shortly afterwards of course there was a great storm. And in the end we find that even the cargo, however precious, it was thrown away. And eventually the ship was abandoned. And the only thing that mattered was that everyone was saved. So friends, when our lives are in danger, that is what essentially matters, that we are saved. So here then we have this island, as it were, in the midst of the storm. Now from that, I wouldn't want anything to conclude that we are to use God as a convenience in the day of trouble. That is not what my emphasis is on. If we love the Lord, then we should walk by faith daily and be obedient to him.

[4:01] But the fact is that God employs the day of trouble to draw his people closer to himself. And tonight I would like to look at three brief points and I don't want to keep you too long.

First of all, let us look at what is attributed here to God, goodness. And secondly, let us look at what he is to his people in the day of trouble, a stronghold or a fortress. And thirdly, let us consider the intimacy of his knowledge, that is of his people. First of all then, let us consider the goodness of God. When we refer to a neighbour that he or she is good, what do we mean? Maybe they are morally and spiritually good, but by and large we mean something else. We are referring to their neighbourliness, aren't we? That they are compassionate and helpful and that they are always to hand and maybe on the basis of what we have experienced over the years we refer to them as good neighbours, good people, good neighbours. But when we attribute goodness to God, God, we mean that God is essentially good. Supposing God had never shown his goodness

to anyone, he would still be essentially good. For goodness belongs to the essence of God equally as much as holiness and justice.

That's how the shorter character defines God. God is a spirit in his being, goodness, justice, holiness, goodness, justice and truth. So goodness belongs to the essence of God, the same as holiness, justice and so on. So God is essentially good. And if God had pleased never to have shown his goodness, that would have made no difference to it. Essentially good. And because God is essentially good, he is also independently good. Whatever goodness is to be found in us, it is derived. It's derived from God.

It is either the fruit of God's common grace or the fruit of saving grace. It is not something that has sprung from our nature. Our nature is corrupt and depraved. There is no goodness in it. And hence no flesh, no one can glory in the presence of God.

[6:41] No one can stand before God and say, well, listen, I've been good. I've done this and that other thing. No, if he or she has done any good, it belongs to God. God gave them the power to do good. And all glory belongs to God.

God. So whatever goodness we have is derived. But God's goodness is underrived. And he is the only independent being there is.

All creatures are dependent upon him. Because he is the one who gave them that being. And even, friends, when you look at the gregarious instinct in each one of us, is it not proof in itself that we are very dependent upon one another?

Every one of us. And you sometimes hear people say, well, he or she is very independent. There's no such thing as an independent human being.

We cannot be independent. For in God we live more and have our being. But God's goodness is independent. It is underrived.

[7:55] You know that the being of God is a great mystery. A great mystery. His attributes are most fascinating, aren't they? And so it logically follows if goodness belongs to the essence of God and it's independent, it also must be unchangeable.

God is unchangeably good. Because the essence of God are unchangeable. God is unchangeable. This is why he is the same yesterday, today and forever.

And God will remain the same now as he was from all eternity and throughout all eternity. And when God shall cast the wicked into hell, that does not imply for a moment that his goodness has changed.

No, he has suspended his goodness towards them. And it is only in hell that they will realize how wretched they are.

In this world, the goodness of God's common grace is seen at work, even in some measure, in the lives of the most heinous.

[9:12] And that shows how indebted we all are to God. Every one of us. Every one of us. We have nothing left to ourselves.

So not only then is God essentially, independently, unchangeably and eternally good, but so also are the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Why? Because again you come back to the Shorokarism. They are the same in substance or essence. Equal in power and in glory. And then we see the goodness of God in a general sense. Scripture reminds us that he is good unto all men. That he opens his hand wide and he satisfies everything that lives. He is not only good to his animate creatures.

We see even his goodness extending even to the very ground itself. How he waters and breath fresh the earth. And then when everything springs up there, that there is a certain music in the field praising the Almighty.

[10:26] The goodness of God is to be seen on every hand in everything. And then we see the goodness of his grace. That you and I are capable of beholding something of this goodness.

And you know, it's incredible how sin has blinded us. That we, up until that moment when God opened our understanding and brought us to him in all to himself, We lived with our sins and we lived in sin and we never saw ourselves vile and corrupt.

And neither do we see the goodness of God concerning ourselves in many things. And yet when the eyes are opened, we see his handiwork in creation.

We see his goodness and providence. And we rejoice in the knowledge that Christ loved us and gave himself for us. And that our Redeemer we have.

We are not friends thankful enough for what the Lord has done for us. The goodness of God. We'll just leave in that first point there.

[11:40] Let us now look at the second point. What he is to his people according to this verse. That he is a stronghold in the day of trouble.

Now you know yourselves that the day of trouble is not the norm. You consider the amount of planning each one of us does through a lifetime. Every day we plan something.

We have to plan ahead. And then consider how God has allowed many of our plans to materialize. There are times when he intrudes to remind us that he is sovereign. That the whole disposing of anything belongs to him. Yet by and large consider the plans there that have been allowed to materialize.

And then try and compare that with the day of trouble. And yet to conclude that the day of trouble is not the norm. Though man is born into trouble like the sparks which fly upwards.

[12:48] And although we are undeserving of the least of his mercies. And although we are held deserving. You see the goodness of God here as well. Yes there will be the day of trouble.

But may we be thankful it is not the norm. We are living in a day in which we hear so much about rights. Rights. Rights of men.

Rights of women. Rights to this and rights to that other thing. Strictly speaking. We have no rights to anything. If God had dared with us according to our sins.

He would have cast us all into hell. There would be no rights. But since it pleased God to place us on this earth. Then relative to that there are certain rights.

The laborer is worthy of his hire. The man who works has a right to his wage. And we see a first right of that nature. But what I'm getting at is this. That those who never acknowledge the goodness of God.

[13:53] Those who think there are law unto themselves. Those who think there is no God. And yet. How much they are spared.

The day of trouble also. It's amazing. Now the day of trouble is a providence. And because it's a providence.

It eliminates such things as luck and chance and accident. That's how the man of the world speaks. And whether he calls something a stroke of luck.

Or chance. Or accident. Then. Each one is a providence. God is sovereign over everything. He is in control of everything friends.

And although we cannot understand. The purpose. At least in some things. There is a purpose. There are many things in life that we can't understand. We can't deny.

[14:56] That it doesn't function. And we can't deny. That the thing is necessary. And helpful. There are thousands of motorists on the road. And they don't know. Even the basic principles.

Of the internal combustion engine. Under the bonnet of their car. Yet they know it works. It takes them from me to be. There are thousands. And hundreds. And thousands. Of people who fly. From one continent to another.

They don't understand. How these big turbines work. And there are hundreds. And thousands. Of office workers. Who work with computers every day. They know the computer works. It produces results.

But they don't understand. How it works. If you were to open it up. And ask them. Go on now. Dismantle it. And re-assemble it. It's not good. I don't know what it's all about.

But it works. And you know. Providence is like that. It can be. Inexplicable. It can be. Mysterious. Friends. And. In many ways.

[15:51] We see. Things that. We just cannot. Explain. It's beyond our human comprehension. And after all. If we could understand everything. We would be.

Co-equal with God. Wouldn't we? He alone understands everything. But the fact is. That the day of trouble. Is a providence. And there is a purpose. The purpose.

Might be. To humble us. To rebuke us. Or to refine us. And maybe. I could go a step further. It could be a combination. Of all. And when God sends.

The day of trouble. No one can suspend. That day. Until it has run its course. And God's purpose. Has been fulfilled. So you can appreciate.

The grace. We need. To be patient. And wait upon the Lord. Until the day of trouble. Is brought to its close. Isn't it true now.

[16:51] When trouble comes to you. And to me. We instinctively. Turn to God. And pray to God. To remove the trouble.

Isn't that what we do immediately. We seldom stop. And think. We seldom stop.

And consider. That it is there. For a purpose. We seldom pray to God. Lord. I know it's for a purpose. Give me grace. To acquiesce.

In your will. Give me grace. To be patient. Give me grace. To learn what I can. No no. We want. To be delivered. Immediately from it. And it is there.

For a purpose. For a purpose. Patreon. First downside. that God is the one who superintends the furnace.

[17:47] He hasn't entrusted anyone else with that. Belongs exclusively to himself. And he'll put the silver and the gold into that furnace.

And if you know yourselves, there is nothing combustible but silver and gold. You can heat it and heat it and heat it. And the more you heat it, the more it is refined.

You can't destroy it. But then, of course, the fire destroys everything that is combustible. And I hope I'm not putting the figure too strongly.

I can assure you there's a lot of combustible material in what we call, in our own lives, in what we regard maybe as things that are spiritual.

And so it is necessary to separate both and the best way to separate them is to put them into the furnace. And what's of the flesh is destroyed. What's of the spirit remains is come south eventually, we find.

[18:50] And so we see the need to stay close to the Lord. We should always be close to him. But we have to be honest. Trouble draws us closer to the Lord.

Have you ever watched chickens there in a farm yard? Whenever they sense danger, they run to their mother. Not as like ourselves. Maybe we're never too far from the Lord.

But when danger comes, we flee to our Heavenly Father. We want to find shelter under the shadow of his almighty wings. And what a cover that is from the storm.

And so we find, friends, that in the day of trouble, he's like an island in the storm. Or like a fortress from the enemy.

Or like a cover from the tempest. You know, if the dove flies close to the face of the rock, there is safety from the predator.

[19:53] It is a known fact that the rock face has often destroyed the predator. The predator flies with such speed after the dove that it cannot stop and goes straight into the rock face and destroys itself.

And furthermore, if she stays close to the rock face, there are the crevices small enough to allow her to enter and shelter. And yet too small to allow the predator there.

And so, friends, we are to stay close to the Lord. And especially in the day of trouble. But the day of trouble also helps to mature us.

It does. I met a man I hadn't seen for maybe eight or nine years. And during those eight or nine years, he had a lot of trouble.

He was put through the fire in fullness. And I was immensely impressed by the spiritual progress that man had made in that time. Immensely impressed.

[21:00] And he had progressed more spiritually during those seven years than maybe he had done during a much longer period prior to his sufferings.

And it doesn't matter who he or she is. It doesn't matter how faithful we are. We will all meet the day of trouble sooner or later. Every single one of us.

And the most solemn reminder is Job himself. A man who his life was so circumspect. He was a not right man in every way.

And yet the day of trouble came. It wasn't because he was being chastened by the Lord because of some sin he had committed. That is not why he was visited.

And yet we see at the end of it all that Job was even a better man. And when God gets to work on you and me, we are better people when he delivers us from our troubles.

[22:02] The day of trouble. Is there anyone here tonight who is at present facing the day of trouble? And your faith maybe is being severely tried. Severely tried.

Look to the Lord. Seek grace day by day. Because we do need more grace. And we do need more strength. When the trials are many. And when trouble intensifies.

But remember this. That his grace is sufficient for us. And that God will never send trials to us. That we are not able to cope with. He equips us to cope with the trials.

And we will rejoice then in the knowledge that his grace is all sufficient. And then finally and briefly. The intimacy of his knowledge. What does it say here?

And he knew of them that trust in him. Now, when we look at Christ there. We attribute to him a twofold knowledge.

[23:06] As God, he knows everything. He's omniscient. He knows everything. And he knows everything about you and about me. And as man, he has an experiential knowledge of each of his people.

In that he was tempted in all points as we are. Yet without sin. He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He who had created all things by the word of his power.

Yet could see the foxes of holes. The birds of the air have nests. But the son of man hath not where to lay his head. He knew what it was to be tempted by Satan.

He knew what it was to be reproached by men. Reproached, said the psalmist, has broken my heart. I am full of grief. I looked for one to comfort me. But none I found comforters.

Found I none. He knows what reproach is like. He knows what persecution is like. He knows what physical pain is like. He knows what mental language is like.

[24:09] He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. If you have trouble and a speculator comes along and he tries to comfort you. However good his intentions are.

His efforts are at best superficial. But you send someone along who has been in similar circumstances. Maybe he or she won't say much.

But there is quality in the little that they say. It is good for you to know that here is someone. A fellow sufferer. Someone who has gone through this.

Someone who can really sympathize. And so we see how adequate and competent our glorious Redeemer is for that work.

And he is the one who intercedes on our behalf. And who cares for us. And do you think when you are troubled. When you are going to the deep waters of affliction.

[25:17] When you are going through the fiery furnace. Do you think he turns his back and abandons you? Not at all. Not at all. He is with you.

And he will never forsake you. He knows what you are in need of. And he has reserved blessings for you. And no one can get that blessing but yourself.

No one. Joseph was determined. That he would put Manasseh before Ephraim.

But that is not how it was with God. The blessing Joseph wanted for Manasseh. That blessing from all eternity. Had been reserved for Ephraim.

And so friends. The blessing he has reserved for you. Will not accidentally be conferred in someone else. It is yours. The Lord is your portion.

[26:18] And he is my portion. And he has given you your cup to drink. And he has given me my cup to drink. And there is an admixture there. And there is an admixture there.

Maybe sorrow and joy. Blessings and adversities. But it will all work together for our good. Because God has decided so.

Well the time is up. And I just wanted to leave that little word of encouragement with you at the close of the communion.

May we go forward friends. May we not be intimidated by the things of this world which we find disconcerting. We are too often like Peter. We take our eye off the Lord. And we look on the billows. And we are over for him. And we begin to sing. Let us fix our eye upon the Lord. And may we trust him. May we remind our souls.

[27:13] That he withholds no good from them that walk uprightly. And that all things will work together for our good. May God bless these two thoughts to you.

Let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed God.

We praise and we thank thee. For thy goodness. We experience thy goodness. Every day we rise. In our going out.

And coming in. There art a God who has never failed us. But we have failed thee often. Help us to be more obedient.

More diligent. Help us to be more courageous as we face up to the exigencies of each day. And the vicissitudes of life in general.

[28:11] Knowing that there art a God who is mighty to save. Knowing that thy grace is sufficient to uphold and sustain us. And help us especially to trust thee.

In the midst of what we might interpret. As adverse providences. And may we remind our souls. That whoever sore any trial is.

There is an end to it. And that it will in the end produce the desired results. Take us to our respective homes in safety. For Christ's sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.