

# A Stronghold in the Day of Trouble

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[ 0 : 00 ] The prophecy of Nahum, chapter 1, reading at verse 7. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows those who take refuge in him.

Now, as we see at the beginning, this prophet, the prophet Nahum, this is a book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh. Not altogether sure where Elkosh is. Some people think it's more in the south, in Judah.

Others think it's up in Galilee. It's in ruins, wherever it is now. Many think that it is actually near Capernaum, which would be part of the name Nahum.

This word Nahum means comfort. So this prophet, actually, although this prophecy is one of destruction, it is actually bringing comfort to God's people.

It is a prophecy of the destruction of the city of Nineveh and the destruction of the Assyrian nation. The Assyrians were, at that time, they were the great world power.

[ 1 : 24 ] They were soon going to fall, but they were noted for not just their aggression, but for their cruelty. They built their empire on fear, on intimidation, on massacre.

And, in fact, when we read of any of the 20th century, supposing you went to Cambodia and Pol Pot's regime there with the Khmer Rouge, we're talking of this kind of life, this kind of work.

In fact, history will show that, we're not going to go through all that sort of thing, but that they would actually skin alive. We use that expression, to skin someone alive.

Well, they did, and that they once covered the walls of the city with the skins of their enemies. So they were an incredibly cruel nation.

And it was to this city that the prophet Jonah had been sent well over a century before, where God had threatened to visit with judgment, and they repented, remember, in dust and ashes.

[ 2 : 31 ] And their repentance, no doubt, at that particular time was a sincere repentance. And God spared that city. But, of course, they went back to their ways, their cruel ways and idolatrous ways.

This time, this prophecy is the one of coming judgment. And there is no holding back on this occasion. But sprinkled, as it were, throughout, and we're going to see this, that this prophecy is one of the judgment of God against this particular nation and against this particular city.

But sprinkled throughout, there are great promises of God's goodness to his people. Now, it's an awful thing, God's judgment, when it comes. But here we have this particular verse that's highlighting the wonderful thing, that the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble.

He knows those who take refuge in him. Now, this city, Nineveh, was a mighty city. And at vast walls, the walls were over 100 feet high, circling around a huge, huge, massive miles and miles.

And there was a moat around the city, which was something, I think it was over 100 feet wide and something like 60 feet deep. And everybody in Nineveh felt incredibly safe.

[ 3 : 58 ] But apparently, the way into the city came through a flood, through the power of the waters rising. The river Tigris apparently burst its banks.

And the enemy were able to get into the city through part of the wall being destroyed by the power of the rushing water. And we've seen on our television screens the incredible power when flooding takes place, whether it's through a tsunami or through the aftershocks of earthquakes or whatever, just this like tidal waves and nothing will stand in its way.

Well, it was something like that that happened. And it was through that that the enemy were able to get in to Nineveh. So here is this city that everybody would have felt so secure and safe in, but it's going to be ground into the dust.

And the Lord is saying through the prophet, there is only one place where there's a real stronghold. There is only one place that's a real refuge. And that is the Lord himself.

And that's what our text is. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows those who take refuge in him. And so we find this great statement that the Lord is good.

[ 5 : 17 ] Now, of course he is. Everything about him is good. He is good within himself. In fact, God stands apart, really, from everything else that we know, because he is altogether good.

And we'll look at that in a moment. There is an amazing amount of goodness in this world. But God in himself is at a level that is altogether different from anything else that we can actually see or involve ourselves in in this world.

He is apart from all others in his own goodness. He is absolutely and altogether good. And it is impossible for him to ever be anything other than good.

He cannot do anything but that which is good. And we see that goodness, first of all, we see it in the creation of this world. When God created this world, remember that after every day, after every aspect or part of his creation, he made that statement saying, it is good.

It was a divine verdict upon the divine work. It is good. Sometimes we find him saying, and the Lord said, it is very, saw that it was very good.

[ 6 : 45 ] It must have been amazing to have been, if we could have been transported into the world before sin, where God is declaring over everything good.

And that's why the psalm tells us that the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Now, that's a beautiful description. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

And so when God made this world, he made it reflecting his own goodness. When he made man, he was making man reflecting himself.

Man was made in the image of God. And so it's an amazing thing. So that as God made man, made woman, made everything, he says, very good.

Now, of course, we know that often when things go wrong and when there's tragedy, and there's a lot of tragedy in this world, people will say, well, what kind of God?

[ 7 : 52 ] You often hear this kind of question. Where is God in all these things? Well, there are things that are obviously too complex and too difficult for us to understand.

But what we've always got to remember is this, that the world that God created was perfect, and everything in it was perfect, and everything reflected his goodness.

It was through the fall that things changed. And God had said to Adam and to Eve, the day that you disobey me, you will bring in death.

And we know that from that moment on, the world lies under a curse. God said that. It wasn't just that sin was going to affect Adam and Eve and all the human race.

It affects the whole of creation. So that the whole, we're told in the Bible, that the creation is groaning. And we see the outworking of that groaning often in our earthquakes and volcanoes and tsunamis, all these things.

[ 9 : 01 ] It is all part of the fall where everything went wrong. And that's where, because unless we understand, and it's by faith we lay hold upon these things, but if we don't go down this route the way the Bible teaches us, then we are left with all kinds of complexities and misunderstandings.

And where is the origin? How is it that at this stage in life that the human race is still as corrupt, still has not learned to live side by side?

Why are there still wars and rumors of wars? Why does peace not reign over this whole world, which we would love? It is because of sin.

Sin has entered in, and sin has caused at a human level, and in the natural world it has caused so much chaos and carnage since.

But despite the fall, this world is still full of goodness. In fact, in many ways it's a marvel how much goodness there is in this world when sin has caused so much devastation and so much that is wrong.

[ 10 : 22 ] But we've got to remember that all goodness comes from God. And God overrules, and God restrains, and God preserves, and God influences, and God supplies, and He provides.

And we've got to remember that all good comes from God. If God were to remove His goodness, from this world, this world would become an unbearable place to live.

Because the goodness that is within the human race, the goodness that prevails everywhere, ultimately comes from God. Every good and perfect gift is from above.

And we've got to remember that God, remember this, that it tells, it speaks in the Psalms about God's abundant goodness.

It speaks to us that He is a great God, and a good God. Now supposing He was only a great God, without goodness, that would be an awful concept, wouldn't it?

[ 11 : 32 ] Because goodness, if you had greatness without being good, that could bring somebody into becoming a tyrant.

But He is great, and He is good. That's a wonderful thing. But God's goodness also governs His providence. That means that God is good to all people.

It tells us that in the Bible, good unto all men is the Lord. Everywhere. God is good today to those who are opposed to Him. He's good to those who are His enemies.

He's good to those who don't believe in Him. He's good to those even who, what we might term militant atheists. People who are campaigning to change or to influence society in such a way that people will not accept or believe God.

People who want the removal of the Word of God, they want the removal of everything that pertains to God. God is good to them. It's quite a remarkable thing.

[ 12 : 44 ] That in every aspect of life, God is good to people. But we're told that to His own people, He works everything for good.

And that again is, to me, it's an amazing mystery. That He works, makes all things work together for the good of His people. And that means that in the things we don't understand and maybe the things that we can't accept, the things that hurt us and pain us, the things that confuse us, that even there, God is working everything for good.

And you might say to yourself, all right, I accept that God can work for good. The things that are out of my control. But what about where I go wrong?

What about when I do things that are wrong? Do you mean to say that God can work that for good?

Yes. Take, for example, David, who entered into an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba.

David knew what he did was wrong. And he killed in order to try and cover up his tracks. He had Bathsheba's husband put to death so that nobody would find out.

[ 14 : 00 ] And you say to yourself, you look at it and you say, David, you were so wrong. And yet God worked, although David suffered in his life because of that, God still worked that for good.

Because Jesus Christ came, if we were to follow the line from the genealogy of Jesus' birth into this world, we find that it's David, Solomon, if you follow right through Solomon, through David, through right back.

So, out of what was an adulterous relationship that involved death, we find that even in here, God is working everything for good.

That's the way he works. And this is part of the amazing, amazing part of God's goodness to us.

And so, even in all these difficult things that we face in life, whether it is unemployment, or whether it is struggles financially, broken relationships, or whether it is losses and crosses, all these things, God is working for good.

But, of course, the greatest place where God works for good is in the demonstration of his love to us and sending his Son. That is the ultimate. Because when the fall took place, God would have been completely in his right to say, that's it.

[ 15 : 28 ] I'm leaving you all to your shells. But he didn't. Because God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

And so, we find that God is good. But the Lord is good as stronghold in the day of trouble. Now, one of the things, obviously, that we have as we read this chapter is the incredible contrast between judgment and between safety.

And that's what we really have, that the Lord here is this stronghold. and that's what the Lord is to and for his people.

He is a stronghold. And, you know, when you look through Scripture and you think of all the people who have been in trouble, all the troubles, and as the Psalm says, the troubles that afflicted just in number, many be, but whether you look at Jacob or you look at Joseph, you look at David, you look at Moses, come to the New Testament and you look at people like Jairus, and you see how over and over and over again the Lord delivers.

He's a stronghold. Now, if trouble were to come, and trouble does come, if trouble comes into your life, if you're looking for help, you want something that's accessible.

[ 17 : 08 ] Taking it into the idea of long ago and looking for a stronghold, and you're looking for some place where you can go to hide somewhere secure, you obviously want somewhere that's accessible.

It's no use having somewhere that's 20 miles away when trouble comes. You want somewhere that is right beside you. And that's what the Lord is. He's a stronghold who's always accessible, day or night, land, sea, or air.

It doesn't matter where we are. It doesn't matter the circumstances that we are in. He is always available for us. So He's a stronghold that is always accessible to us.

He is a stronghold of great power and might. There's no point in having a stronghold that might not save, that might not give refuge, that might not protect.

But the Lord does. He gives absolute and utter safety and protection. It's a wonderful thing to know that the everlasting wings are around us.

[ 18 : 18 ] But He's also a satisfying stronghold. You know, I'm sure that there's many a person in the history of conflict who has had to hide.

They've got, I'm sure, many an outlaw throughout history has had their place of refuge or their stronghold. And they've hidden there on many occasions.

But these places might be cold and dark and damp and wet. It might be the most uncomfortable place, although it's keeping them safe.

But the Lord is, as we said, not only an accessible stronghold, not only a safe and secure stronghold, but He is also a satisfying stronghold.

Because all the time, irrespective of what you are confronting, what you are going through, He is there for you. This word, where we have it in verse, the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, it doesn't identify what the trouble is, but the trouble can be inward conflicts, it can be depression, it could be emotional distress, it could be the outworking of difficulties within your life.

[ 19 : 34 ] It doesn't specify exactly, but it governs all these things. And the Lord is the one who satisfies us in our trouble.

You might be weak, and He will give you strength. You might be in darkness, and He'll give you light. You might be riddled with guilt, and He'll give you pardon.

You might feel so unclean within yourself, and He'll cleanse you. You might be feeling the darkness of death, and He brings life.

See, this is how He works. This is what He does. He's a stronghold. As we said, an accessible stronghold, a secure stronghold, and a satisfying stronghold.

But then it tells us that He knows those who take refuge in Him. Now, this knowledge is just not a sense of saying, oh, well, I know you're there. This knowledge is an intimate knowledge.

[ 20 : 43 ] It is a knowledge of knowing fully that you belong to Him. It's a knowledge of belonging. My sheep hear my voice.

That's what Jesus says. They hear. My sheep, I know them. And that's what the Lord is saying here. It's not that you're hiding in me and I'm not really away.

It's not that the Lord has provided something. I'm sure you remember times when you were maybe a child or a youngster. I remember times you'd be out and you'd be making your way home.

And then I remember one time there was this terrible thunderstorm and just absolutely torrential rain. And there was nowhere to hide. And I remember we were passing and there was this shed.

And I remember pushing, there was a couple of us, pushing our way and there was a gap in the door and there was a bolt there and pulling it to get in. And saying to ourselves, well I hope nobody comes, I hope nobody knows we're in here.

[ 21 : 45 ] If the owner of this shed comes he won't be very happy. But it was so dangerous that it was that kind of fort lightning and you know we're worried and prepared to do anything to shelter from the storm.

The owner never knew we were in. Maybe we damaged the door a little I don't know. Maybe he came along and says oh somebody forced this open. But that was taking shelter, that was hiding and it was nobody knew you were there.

That's not the way it is with the Lord. It's not that he's left a place there and you can go to now and again and he's not aware of it. No, he's aware all the time. He knows you.

It's intimate. He's asked you to come. It's personal. And he knows, in fact, you're there even more than you know it yourself. And as we were singing there in Psalm 91, these beautiful words about

he that doth in the secret place of the Most High reside under the shadow of his wing.

There's just this beautiful description of the Lord, as it were, putting his arm around you, protecting you, warming you, keeping you safe to himself.

[ 22 : 56 ] love. Well, I hope today that you all know personally this stronghold. I hope you know the keeper of the stronghold. In fact, I hope you know the stronghold because the stronghold is himself.

I hope that we have all taken refuge in him. Let us pray. Amen. O Lord, our God, we give thanks for the word that we have received today and we pray that we may hear it and that our souls will be blessed by it.

We ask, O Lord, to deliver us as we journey through life from all its problems and all its difficulties.

We pray, Lord, for those who are in distress and darkness today.

We pray for those, Lord, who are going through difficult times. We ask, Lord, for the oppressed, the downtrodden in society. we pray for those who are marginalized, those who are victims in all the different ways of life.

We pray for deliverance and help. Be with us then and do us good. Part us with thy blessing. Have mercy upon us and forgive us our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it.

[ 24 : 11 ] Amen. Final singing is Psalm 73 from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 73. June is Weatherby.

Psalm 73, verses 23 to 26. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

Thou with thy counsel while I live, wilt me conduct and guide, and to thy glory afterward receive me to abide. Whom have I in the heavens high but thee, O Lord, alone and in the earth, whom I desire. Besides thee there is none. My flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never. For of my heart God is the strength and portion forever.

23 to 26. The tune is weathered me. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Never the less continually, O Lord, I am with thee.

[ 25 : 31 ] Lord, I am with me. Lord, I am with my right hand and still upholdest me.

For with my counsel while I live, with me my God love, my life of thy Lord, I am with grace and all our glory after word receive me to the light.

I'm flying in the heaven's heart of thee O Lord of all and in the earth whom I reside besides me there is now my flesh and heart of pain and fear of all that fear me ever for all my heart Lord is the strength and portion forever now may the grace and mercy and peace of God the Father and Son and all his forever rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more  
JACK so so all after