

**Reading:** Nahum 1:1-8

**Theme:** Three Things God Wants Us to Know.

The books of Jonah and Nahum both centre upon the city of Nineveh, but they were written 150 years apart. In Jonah the city is seen as being spared destruction from God as the book is about God's mercy and forgiveness. In Nahum, we see Nineveh's doom, judgement and destruction being foretold as the book is about God's wrath and judgement. It is solemn to realise that the God who graciously spared the city and Assyrian Empire before, was later moved to anger at their sin and ignoring Him - 1:6 is a solemn verse. During the time between Jonah and Nahum, the Assyrian strength had grown dramatically; they had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and carried it away. The Assyrians turned their attention on little Judah – the nation was assimilated into the Assyrian Empire and paid their taxes to the Assyrians and it was just a matter of time before they too were destroyed. As its capital, Nineveh represented the oppression and affliction of God's own people.

How would we feel facing an uncertain and harsh time? Yet through it all, God would deliver His people from this seemingly all-powerful oppressor and in the midst of all the judgements pronounced on Nineveh, there is a message of comfort and consolation to God's own people. Note that the name Nahum means "Consolation, Comforter" - not for God's enemies, but for God's people. Let's note 3 things from v7 which God wants us to know:

### **1. The Lord is Good.**

God wants us to know this attribute or aspect of His character He is emphasising, showing this to the first hearers and readers and to all since - He the Lord is good. He draws our attention to this glorious truth set against the awesome and terrifying portrayal of the Lord as Judge in this book. We learn of Him as He is seen against His enemies, those who would oppose Him and His people. To be honest, it is a terrifying picture of the Almighty, the awesome God coming in judgement against His enemies and showing their doom and destruction. Previously the Assyrians had known God's mercy and because of that

they assumed they were fine and did not realise v2 & 3, v6 - which should cause the bravest to fear if they had any sense. The picture in those verses is one of judgement, destruction and the rest of the book describes in pictorially graphic detail, the destruction of Nineveh by the Lord.

As we move from one year to a New Year and things seem chaotic, confusing, and uncertain in society, even in our own personal circumstances and lives, our comfort and consolation is to be “*The Lord is good*”. This is the attribute of God highlighted, emphasised for us to know and note. God’s goodness is one of His moral attributes alongside His holiness and His righteousness. These are considered to be the most glorious of His divine perfections. Not that they are more perfect or glorious compared to the other attributes of God, but related to mankind - these moral attributes shine with a splendour of their own. One of the most splendid and glorious attributes is the goodness of God.

“*The Lord is good*” - this speaks of God being good in and of Himself. He is good in all His perfections - perfect, no fault or blemish or weakness. Good in all His actions and the motives of those actions. God is good for all His creation and is the Fountain of all good that exists. All that creation knows and enjoys as true good, flows from this inexhaustible Fountain of God’s goodness. God is good to all His creation, He sends the sun and the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous; sends health and strength, gives minds, provisions etc. to people irrespective of their righteousness or unrighteousness before God. His goodness works out in His benevolence, His kindness. It is because of His goodness that those who do great sins, or who deny God and mock Him are not struck down, but they can live and even prosper. Perhaps that is true of someone here, you’ve heard of God and yet you live careless of Him with no thought of doing anything please Him, or honour Him and certainly do not believe on Him and live in His ways.

If we could explore God in minute detail, then we would never find one hidden part in Him that was not good. Astronomers study the sun and find there are spots and blemishes on it, but look as you would, you

would never find anything wrong with or a fault in and with God. An out working of His goodness is His love. This is the source of His dealing with as human beings. His goodness as expressed to these ones is viewed as this high characteristic of love. We are to realise God does have a love for all mankind as the highest point of His creation - His benevolent love, goodness, yet the love I'm speaking of here is that special redemptive love He has only for His people - especially shown us in NT, where we see this revealed to those who have received, trusted the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. It is to these and these alone that He has this love in its richest and fullest sense. These and these alone can most truly say "*The Lord is good*".

These ones know Lord is good - for they have tasted that the Lord is good. An out working of His goodness also is His grace and His mercy and these have been made known and shown to people who do not deserve it as they have come to trust Him as their Saviour. God's goodness is the basis of His long-suffering and patience toward those who are His enemies and also to those who are His people. We read, because He is good, He is slow to anger and because of this He is to be feared - that we could ignore His goodness, patience and we end up suffering His punishment.

This attribute of the Lord's goodness is an active attribute and affects all He is and does. His works, His providences are good, holy and right. This is not always easy to recognise and own when we are on the receiving end of God's mysterious working out things in our lives. Personally, we would always want to have sunny days, a trouble-free journey through life, but we can find troubles, trials, afflictions, illnesses, bereavements, pain, sorrow, confusion and the like coming our way. Yet it still stands "*The Lord is good*". He knows the way He is **deliberately** taking and leading us as His children and what He will achieve in us and through us in such situations. Our gains and losses, our triumphs and crosses are all of His goodness and so we read Romans 8:28 "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*" It does not say it is for our good in that situation, but it works

to the good end and purpose God has – we may never understand that good or purpose this side of heaven, but in heaven will praise Him for what He did in and through our lives.

God is good to His people and always acts consistently with who He is and what He is like. His love, wisdom and all-knowing never allows Him to make a mistake. Our present and our future, as has been our past, is safely in His hands. Nahum could comfort and console God's people in difficult, hard times and would direct people to note "*The Lord is good*". I would also do the same for us this morning at the start of this New Year. We will do well to think much on this glorious truth, treat it as a lovely sweet and suck on it often to regularly savour that the Lord is good. Also, God wants us to know:

## **2. The Lord is a Stronghold or Refuge.**

Great and awesome things would happen as the Assyrian empire fell. Little Judah may have feared for her safety and existence as they were weak, helpless, ineffective and in a little backwater part of the world's empires. They had no strength or defence in and of themselves and yet the Lord encourages His people where to look for their protection - to Him as a refuge, a stronghold, a fortress in the day of trouble. The first 7 years of my life were spent in Caerphilly and less than a mile away was Caerphilly Castle – I went to it many times. It was one of the last and finest castles of its day. The Romans built a fort here in Doncaster (Danum = place by the river Don) - Danum's 2nd fort was built from timber in about 70AD, for 500 soldiers. It was demolished in the 2nd century AD. Later on, Doncaster Castle was built on the same site and when troubles arose, people headed into such places for their safety. It was the centre of life and attention, a symbol of hope, but its true value and worth was known and seen in times of trouble.

Things will not always be easy in our lives and we can have troubled days. The devil will stir things up as we live in a fallen world. The world will hate us because it hates our Saviour - yet we are to still live for Him, to tell of Him to those who need to believe or be lost. Even though we try to do them the ultimate good, they will hate us for it. Into our

lives can come “*the day of trouble*” - a specific and intense time of trouble. Yet the Lord assures us of His ability to protect us, guide us, keep us if we flee to Him as our refuge, our stronghold in the day of trouble. The sons of Korah direct us to this glorious truth in Psalm 46:1-3; as does Solomon in Proverbs 18:10 “*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.*”

The Lord pictures Himself as a stronghold, a refuge in the day of trouble and so shows His people they would not always have things easy. The Lord wants us to know that also! What a place of safety and protection we have to flee to, to enter into. I need to ask you, where will **you** go for your protection and safety in the day, the times of trouble? The ultimate day of trouble will be the day of our death. We may not be aware of when it will come upon us and may have no time to get right with God or seek His help and safety. That is why the Bible, I and other preachers will urge you to go to that place of safety now, while it is called today. Then we can know His protection as He welcomes us as His child and we are protected safe and secure within the love and salvation of the God of heaven by trusting the Lord Jesus as our Saviour.

Even as Christians we may still have many trials and days of troubles; we may not understand why these things have come upon us. Just as the power and the love of God will keep us, we can also go to the wisdom of God and rest there because He knows why such things occur in our lives, but we ultimately go to the goodness of God “*The Lord is good*” and in His good power, wisdom, love, grace and mercy this has been allowed to come upon us. Yes, we may be confused, weak, helpless, even question “*Why?*” yet we will take our refuge in the Lord, who is working all things together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose.

It may not appear to be good, a temporary good or fleeting good, but it is working eternal good in us, even through us; a good we may never see or recognise in this life, yet be a good we will own in heaven and will praise God for such. At this moment we are short-sighted, have

such poor expectations and desires, but our God sees the end from the beginning and He wants us to be safe in Him and His guardian care. We are to consciously put our own lives, families, church and futures in God's care in keeping. In theory this is no hard thing, but in practice it is not so easy! We all have our dreams, plans and aspirations. We would all want many good things to occur to us, yet may feel that by putting our whole life and being into God's care and keeping, it means He can do with us as He wants and we may fear that could be contrary to our natural tendencies. Yet He is good and His goodness is our only true place of safety and protection in all the way He will lead us.

He will never lead us where His grace, strength and love cannot keep us. Ultimately the only wise thing we can do is to consciously commit our all to Him; to have Him lead us, guide us, protect us no matter where He knows it is best for us to be and go. In this way we are to glorify and enjoy our God most fully. His leading, guiding and protection of us is not as some General sat in office miles away and remote from his troops on a battlefield, as we see God not only wants us to know His Character and Protection, but also:

### **3. The Lord Lovingly Knows Us.**

The Lord knows, cares for those who trust in Him. The word knows, cares is a powerful word, a dynamic word and it is more than have a knowledge of, know about or be acquainted with. It is knowledge that is a great and intimate knowledge. It is used in OT KJV translation for the completing of knowledge and intimacy in marriage - *so and so knew his wife*. It speaks of a tender, intimate knowledge. The NIV "cares" tries to get at that idea. The Lord has this intimate personal knowledge of each of those who have trusted in Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows all about us, our situations, our worries, fears, aches, pains, ups and downs. He not only knows about us, but He knows us and He cares for us, He loves us as we are, with all our weaknesses, blemishes, faults and failings. Perhaps we fear that people would not bother with us if they knew what we were really like. Well, God does and He loves us still. He knows everything about us - every good or wrong secret

desire, thought, word, action, fear and yet if we have trusted Him, He loves us, knows us - even knows how many hairs we have on our head!

This God knows us, loves us and cares for us in such an extravagant way. He is the One who will guard, protect us and keep us as He is good to His people. He knows about us and cares for us in the worst experience of life. Even as we go into our own dying experience, He cares for us and knows us and He will protect us and give us His personal care and attention even in our own valley of the shadow of death - for He will be there with us and give us dying grace. We may fear He will not be, but He's promised He will be there and He will bring us safely through Jordan's waters no matter our fears and experiences in that dark valley. He is always this good God to His people.

He is so good to His creation, but the amazing thing is that some people ignore, neglect and even reject this God. They do not see His goodness and say words like *"If God allowed this to happen, then I have no time for Him, I will not believe on Him!"* Yet if you asked them, they never acknowledged God existed because of the good they'd known before that time! Some of you here have had God's goodness and mercy follow you all the days of your lives, yet you do not have this God as your God; you have never trusted Him as your Saviour in the Lord Jesus. In Jonah's time the Assyrians faced an angry God and were warned of His judgement and they repented and trusted God and were safe. I urge you to do the same. If you do not, you will face an angry God and who can endure His fierce anger especially on the day of judgement when we have to face Him on our own?

At that time God's holiness and righteousness will be set against all sin and wrong. Then His goodness will be a burning, wholly righteous goodness expressed in His perfect good judgement of all those who have never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ. On that day God's goodness will be a terror to you and not a comfort. Then will be the day of most awful trouble and there will be no refuge or stronghold for you to hide

in and sadly you will hear He never knew you and you will have to depart from Him to everlasting punishment.

On that day, all those who have trusted in Him will say “*The Lord is good*” and will be safe and secure for ever in the stronghold and refuge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such ones would have known and tasted that the Lord is good in life, in death and in the day of judgement they will most clearly see His knowledge and care of them throughout all their lives and they will bless the hand that guided them all the way. For those here who don't have this God as their God through the Lord Jesus Christ, I urge you at the start of this New Year to make it your resolution that you will seek Him, find Him and have Him as your own Saviour and that together we will go into the year ahead personally, conscious, rejoicing and aware of the 3 things that God wants us to know from this verse.