

842
LaD 389

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

842

73/Y

Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on
Sunday morning 28th. October, 1973

Hymns 920, 384, 247

Reading: Psalm 31 and 32

Text: Nahum 1.7

"The Lord is good; a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him".

" - - - - - "

If the Lord help me I will attempt to speak a few words upon this subject. This is a prophecy or vision of Nahum with relation to the city of Nineveh, and has some connection with the prophet Jonah who was sent by the Lord to prophesy its destruction; but the king and his people repented of their wicked ways, humbled themselves before God, and the city was spared. This city of Nineveh appears to have been the principal city in the Assyrian empire, and virtually ruled the world at the period; but in the course of time the people reverted again to their own wicked ways. Nahum prophesied about the year 613 B.C., over 100 years after Jonah. He prophesied the destruction of this city which in due time came to pass.

"The burden of Nineveh" - Between this introduction and my subject are some striking statements relating to the character and majesty of God, His complete control over the earth, and the people in it, and His power to command its destruction at any moment. It is declared in verse 3 that "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." - striking words indeed that can only be said of Him Who reigns in heaven, and rules over the inhabitants of the earth. He can in a moment stir up a whirlwind, gather the clouds, and sweep them away, for they are as the dust of His feet. "Who can stand before His indignation, who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?" This refers to the almighty God, Who can dash a world to pieces in a moment, and none can stand before Him; yet, strange and beautiful to notice, wedged so to speak in here between these Scriptures declaring His Majesty and solemn judgements, just set in here like a golden gem, is this beautiful word, "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him".

He will have His way in the whirlwind, the clouds are the dust of His feet, He rebukes the sea, the mountains quake, His fury is poured out, the rocks are thrown down, yet, "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him". It is like the Lord breaking in and manifesting His favour and mercy to a few poor people who put their trust in Him; then on it goes again, "But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue His enemies".

"The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble and he knoweth them that trust in him". My first point then is the goodness of the Lord; and what a subject it is! We could not meet together here as we do apart from the goodness of the Lord. We could not enjoy the comforts we do, apart from the goodness of the Lord. This goodness, dear friends, is observable in natural and spiritual matters, and is observable in a particular way by His dear people. It is true, as recorded by the Psalmist, that "The Lord is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works", He provides for His creatures, sustains them in being; and this is His goodness; He opens His hand to all, not His heart. It is only to His dear people that the Lord opens His heart, and this is the secret of real religion; in the sorrows, joys and exercise of it, this is the Lord opening His heart toward His people. "The Lord is good", He is good in the supply of our needs. These times in which we are living may bring some anxieties with the continued inflation and other things of a material nature, but the Lord is good, and we lack nothing. All we need for the comforts of this life we are supplied with, every temporal blessing is richly bestowed upon us, also His goodness is observable in the Gospel liberties we enjoy. We do need to be mindful of this, for this is the Lord's goodness to us. Some of His people in other lands are under much persecution. I have read a little lately of the sufferings of believers in Rumania under the communists, some of their sufferings are terrible, and continue year after year, yet here, in this our own land we are favoured to assemble together for worship; truly we have reason to say the Lord is good. It is sweet to feel this, as many have in a particular sense, that are not as favoured as we are. The Lord's people in olden days, when there was much

poverty, were witnesses of the goodness of the Lord in providing for them, sometimes by very striking means. In these days the Lord is good and we lack nothing, so that in this aspect we have cause to give thanks unto Him.

The Lord is good in another sense, and that is in His blessed Gospel which He has revealed. This is a goodness of which we have read in Psalm 31. The Psalmist says, "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee". This is a goodness that the world knows nothing of, and means something more than our daily bread. It is the Lord's goodness to our never dying souls in providing salvation that shall be an everlasting blessing to those who are partakers of it.

The Lord is good in the gift of His holy Word and its sacred revelation, in the publication and circulation of it too. The Lord is good; and if He should touch your heart and give you a humble sense of His goodness in the Gospel you would feel the same and would be able to say, "The Lord is good". He is good to His people - not to render them immune from any trouble, but He is good to them in their troubles. This is an experience peculiar to vessels of mercy, and many have been thus favoured as our beloved aged friend and member has while she has been in hospital, she has felt a sense of the goodness and favour of the Lord to her in her affliction. It does not matter where we are, it is still the same precious truth, the Lord is good. He is good in supporting His people and favouring them with His presence and help in their times of need, O how good He is! I hope that some of you young people here may be helped to watch the hand of providence in your lives, and in matters that may concern your future, and we hope you may be favoured to see the goodness of the Lord pass before you in the way. It is a beautiful close to Psalm 23, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever". Goodness and mercy in times of trial, affliction, under heavy burdens, passing through sore temptations, hard pressed by different things, it may be, and yet in all this the Lord is good. He is good to help and strengthen; He says He will. "Fear thou not;

for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness".

The Lord is good. He has been good to us here in this little sanctuary over the years, He is good to us still, although we are not so many people as in former years. But if we have not a large congregation, I believe we can say we are not without God, and that is a greater blessing than a large congregation without God in it. The Lord is good. Cannot some of you look back over things a little, remember the former days, and put your finger on a spot here and a spot there where the Lord appeared to you in some providential need, or some affliction or under some heavy temptation; when He brought a word into your heart, supported you, and enabled you to cast your care upon Him, and to say, as we have read this morning, "My times are in Thy hand" - for indeed they are. I would mention what is laid up for the Lord's people. "Neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him". Are you really waiting for the Lord? If you are, then you have a love to Him, for so it is rendered, "them that love Him". Eye hath not seen, but we shall, for one day if we are His, if we prove to be among them that have put their trust in Him, we shall have a feeling sense of His goodness and mercy to a degree that we cannot even anticipate here, for there in that heavenly city are mansions prepared for the redeemed of the Lord, as I mentioned on Wednesday evening, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also". Truly the Lord is good. As we look back we are witnesses to His goodness; as we look forward we believe that He will still continue it.

In the text there is a particular condition in which the Lord is good to His people, He is spoken of as a stronghold in the day of trouble, it does not say 'if there should happen to be a day of trouble', but "in the day of trouble". I believe all the Lord's people will know what it is to have a day of trouble. Some of you here have known this day of trouble, and you have known something

of the goodness of the Lord in it. This day does not mean just twenty four hours, but a certain time when one may be walking in and through some particular trouble or trial; this can be mainly three fold with the Lord's people. There is firstly a day with the Lord's people of soul trouble. It will be a day of trouble when the conscience is awakened to its condition, sin, danger, and guilt before a just and holy God. This is a wonderful mercy, and the Lord's goodness is in it. It is a mercy to be brought into soul trouble, to have a day of trouble concerning our never dying souls, where we shall spend a never ending eternity, and to have gloomy forebodings of being eternally lost and sinking into hell, under solemn apprehensions of the holiness of God in His law which condemns us. This will be a day of trouble. Then the Lord's people have a day of trouble physically; they are described as an afflicted and poor people and the Lord sees fit to lay afflictions upon them. Some of them can, and have been, very distressing. How can the Lord be good under such conditions as this? I would say that these afflictions have often been the very times when the Lord has made Himself precious. He has made Himself precious to many of His dear people on a hospital bed, and even when in a theatre for an operation, I am sure He has. What rest of mind He has given His people sometimes under these extreme conditions. But there is thirdly a day of trouble in His providence in our lives, providential trials in different ways that need not be entered into now; but I am sure some of you know something about this. The Psalmist did. It was not just simply those people he did not know much about, but it was "mine acquaintance", David experienced this when one rose up against him with whom he had gone to the house of God in company. It is indeed a day of trouble when such heavy things come upon us.

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble". What are we to understand by this strong hold? I believe the margin renders it strength, I like this better, He is a strong hold. What is a strong hold? It is a place of protection, of safety, of deliverance, a place to shelter ourselves in, a hiding place. There are many ancient buildings and houses in our land that are being demolished, and all will crumble to pieces one day; but here is a strong hold.

Who is this strong hold? I would like just to refer you to the Hymn 1090.

"Prisoners of hope, to Jesus turn;
He's a Strong-hold, ordained for you;
Gird up your loins, and cease to mourn,
And to the Lamb your way pursue."

Whoever shall enter into this strong hold will never fall a prey to the enemy. Good Toplady knew this strong hold when he said,

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me;
Let me hide myself in thee
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

This is a strong hold that we have not to wait until we get to heaven to enter into, He is our hiding place now; and that is why I read that beautiful Psalm "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble, thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." Thou art my strong hold. Has there ever been a spot or occasion in your life when you have entered into this strong hold? Perhaps you say, there has been a time when I have been in a lot of trouble. That does not necessarily mark you as one of the Lord's people, the world have their troubles. But has there been a time of trouble with you when you have entered into this strong hold? I have known a day of trouble, and I proved the Lord to be a strong hold to me. Bless His holy name, His Name is a strong hold. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, a refuge; and these poor people in their day of trouble run into it. "The righteous shall run into it". His name then is a strong hold, His precious sin atoning blood is also a strong hold, as I have mentioned, for there is no condemnation to those who cling by faith to the cross of Calvary, no condemnation or curse will fall upon any in this blessed strong hold for the devils in hell will never break down this strong hold. How sweet then it is to enter into it.

It is said here "He knoweth them that trust in Him". I cannot enter upon this now but it is a very sweet word. You cannot put your trust in your Lord without His knowledge. This is trusting in the sweet confidence of faith in all that He is to you, and will be to you in your trials, afflictions, hard and heavy things. He comes into them; He bore a heavier burden than ever we can bear. If the Lord Jesus really bore the burden of our sins and delivered us from the curse of them, we shall never fall under that curse, and this hope makes everything else of a providential nature secondary, though not unimportant. Some unexpected circumstances have arisen and affected your lives and we have had to see the hand of the Lord in them. Some of your prayers have been answered too, have they not, and in this the Lord has gone before you when you feared He was going against you, yet He was going before you to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain. When the Lord appears to His poor dear people and does something for them He does it thoroughly, and this is our mercy. There are a number of ways in which we have reason to acknowledge the goodness of the Lord. "The Lord is good a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."