

God Is Good

by Chuck Smith

God is good, and we must trust in His goodness, even when we don't understand the circumstances.

Duration: 36:13

Scripture: Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 145:1-3, Psalm 145:5-9, Proverbs 3:6, Nahum 1:7, Hebrews 11:35-38

Topics: "Character Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Joseph from the Bible. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and ended up in Egypt, where he was falsely accused and thrown into jail. The speaker emphasizes that even in difficult times, we may question if God is good. However, the speaker reminds us of the faithfulness of God and encourages us to trust in His plan, even when we don't understand it. The sermon concludes with a prayer for a deeper understanding of God's will and a greater trust in Him.

Transcript

Let's turn now to Psalm 145 for our scripture reading. Psalm 145. I'll read the first, the odd-numbered verses, and Pastor Brian will lead the congregation as you read the even-numbered verses.

Shall we stand as we read God's Word? I will extol you, my God, O King, and I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts, and I will declare thy greatness.

And they shall utter the memory of your great goodness, and shall sing of your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and talk of your power. To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all look expectantly to you,

and you give them their food in due season.

Thou openest thine hand, and satisfyest the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, gracious in all his works. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him. He also will hear their cry and save them. The Lord preserveth all them that love him, but all the wicked will he destroy.

My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh shall bless his holy name forever and ever. Let's pray. Father, we are so gracious that you have brought us to the knowledge of your love for us, and of your goodness.

Truly, Lord, you are good, and you have shown such mercy and grace unto us who have called upon you. Help us, Lord, to come to a richer, deeper understanding of your will and purpose and plan for our lives, and bring us, Lord, to a greater trust in you. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. And you may be seated. The book of Nahum.

Tonight we study the book of Nahum, and as you read it over in preparation, as you read chapter two, I want you to think, if you were Nahum, living some 700 years before Christ, and God gave you a vision of modern-day war. You actually saw the tanks in the streets, and the fighting that is in modern-day warfare. Living in 700 BC, how would you describe it? Is Nahum describing modern-day warfare? Is this one of those dual prophecies as far as fulfillment? It had its fulfillment with Assyria, but yet it was a future fulfillment also.

I want you to think about this as you read his description of the battle there in the second chapter, and is there possibly a prophetic fulfillment in our days of this same prophecy? So something to ponder as you read it over. This morning, however, I'd like to draw your attention to the first chapter of Nahum, verse seven, where here Nahum declares, the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust in him. Here at the beginning of the prophecy of Nahum, actually the prophecy is directed against Nineveh, that great Assyrian city.

We're familiar with Nineveh because some hundred plus years prior to Nahum's prophecy, you remember the story of Jonah, who was called of God to go and to prophesy against the city of Nineveh, to prophesy the destruction that would take place in 40 days. Much to the chagrin of Jonah, the people repented of their sin, and so the judgment that God had promised did not come in the 40 days because of their repentance, and thus the judgment was postponed. But as so often is the case, given a period of time, the people forget God.

They forget again the commandments of God. They try to live independent of God, and they revert back to their old practices as did the Ninevites, and once again it is time for God's judgment to come upon them. And so they are ripe for judgment, and Nahum declares to them that God is jealous.

He's ready to take vengeance upon Nineveh. He is furious. He has stored up his wrath for his enemies.

He will not acquit the wicked, but he will bury his enemies. And in the midst of all of these declarations of God's wrath and judgment that is to come upon them, suddenly the prophet Nahum said, God is good. He's a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust in him.

God is good. It's important that you know that, and that you know that for sure. For in life, we will have many experiences, things that we will not understand, and things that will challenge this truth that God is good.

We'll come up against experiences that as we look at them, we will wonder what possible good could come from this horrible tragedy. There are a lot of things in life that we do not know why God has allowed them to happen to us. They are mysteries.

We get confused, and we don't know why God would allow it. But it's important that there are things that you do know, that you do know for sure. And what we do know is that God is good, and that all things work together for good, if you love the Lord, and if he's called you according to his purpose.

We may not be able to see the good. That is a position that we take by faith. We know that God is good.

I know God is good. I don't know why I'm going through this terrible tragedy, but I know that God is good. And I don't give up what I know for what I don't know.

That's the sorry experience of many people. When they get to these bitter experiences of life that they can't understand, and they can't rationalize in their minds how this conforms to the fact that God is good, sometimes they give up what they don't know. Or they give up what they know for what they don't know.

I don't know why God is allowing this. And so they give up their belief in the goodness of God. How many times I've fallen back on the truth that God is good.

And in it, I find comfort. I find strength. I'm able to endure because I know that God is good, and he's got a good purpose for this to happen.

If we could see beyond today, as God does see, then all of our tears we would wipe away, and our sorrows would flee. Over these present griefs we would not fret. Each sorrow we would soon forget, because many joys are waiting yet for you and for me.

God is good. This is a truth that Satan loves to challenge. With Adam and Eve there in the Garden of Eden, he was challenging the goodness of God.

As he was attempting to entice them to eat of the fruit of that tree that was forbidden for them to eat, he said, the reason why God said you're not to eat of it, because God knows that if you do, that you'll become wise like God. And he's just trying to protect himself. You see, he's not really fair.

He's not really good. He's trying to protect his territory. He's trying to keep you from being like him.

That's why he said, don't eat it. And he was challenging in their minds the goodness of God. And Adam and Eve, unfortunately, did not see the pain, the sorrow, the suffering that they would bring to this world by eating of that fruit, of indulging in the pleasure for a moment that would bring such great pain and sorrow and suffering into the world.

Like so many people today who are like Adam and Eve. And for a momentary pleasure, they ignore the painful eternal consequences. The psalmist said that when things go wrong and tragedy comes, the heathen like to say to us, well, where is your God now? And it's true that so many times when we go through testings, our faith is often challenged.

And we often wonder if God is good, then why did he allow this to happen to me? We used to sing a hymn. I do not know why oft round me, my hopes all shattered seem to be God's perfect plan. I cannot see, but someday I'll understand.

Someday he'll make it plain to me someday at last his face. I'll see someday from sin. I shall be free and someday I will understand.

Asaph opened the 73rd Psalm with this very statement, truly the Lord is good. But then he talks about how he almost stumbled and fell as he was looking at the tragedies that had come into his life. And from the latter portion of Psalm 73, it would seem that he had had a heart attack and had become disabled.

And in this position of being confined to a bed, weakened physically, looking around, he saw so many people who did not know God, did not love God. In fact, we're blasphemous people and they seem to be healthy. They didn't seem to have any troubles.

And as he tried to rationalize this in my mind, I've sought to please the Lord and live for the Lord and look at my condition. And here they are blaspheming God and they have everything their heart could desire. And he said, when I thought to know this, to understand this, it was just too painful for me.

Sometimes we go through painful experiences and we try to rationalize this painful experience with the knowledge that God is good. And somehow it just doesn't seem to come together. We can't equate our suffering with the goodness of God.

Why does a loving God allow us to experience pain? Well, again, going back to Adam and Eve, it all began there. By their disobedience to God, they brought all of this pain and suffering and sorrow into the world. This is not the world that God intended.

They rebelled against God, even as the world today is in rebellion against God. And as a result of man's rebellion against God and the laws of God, we see the pain and the suffering in our world today. But God is good.

But as a child of God, living in this world, I'm not exempt from the suffering and the pain that we do experience in this world. But God gives to us that hope of a better world, of his kingdom. And thus we pray, Lord, thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

And throughout the Bible, God speaks of the glories of his kingdom. No more pain, no more sorrow. God will wipe away all tears.

No more lame, no more deaf, no more disabled people. But all will be whole and strong when his kingdom comes. The blind will see, the lame will leap for joy.

Even being born again does not give me an exemption from the consequences of the evil that's in the world. If that were so, I would never die because death is the result of sin. And the sin that came in when Adam by one man's sin entered the world and death by sin, so that death passed upon all men.

We can't always understand our experiences at the moment. So often it takes time for God to work out the full cycle of his plan. And at one point of it, it looks very confusing because I'm only seeing this part of it.

I'm not seeing the total picture. I think of Joseph, how he was treated so cruelly by his brothers. They conspired to put him to death.

They settled to sell him to some traders who were heading toward Egypt. And as he was being taken away by these men, weeping and crying, begging his brothers not to do this. How could you do this? And watching them as they just laughed and divided the money among them that they got for selling him.

And down in Egypt, he was put on the slave market. And his master gave him a good job. He trusted him.

But the master's wife made false accusations against him that had him thrown into an Egyptian jail. And it would be much like you going down to Tijuana and getting thrown in the jail in Tijuana. And there he is in Egypt in this jail, far from home, false charges.

And he could very well wonder, if God is good, why has God allowed this to happen to me? But in time, the butler of the Pharaoh was also put in jail. He had a dream. And Joseph interpreted his dream that in three days, he would be restored and become the butler again to the Pharaoh.

When this happens, Joseph said, would you see if you could convince the Pharaoh to give clemency to me? I'm here under false charges. The butler was restored as Joseph did declare, but he forgot all about Joseph. And Joseph remained two more years in jail there in Egypt.

But then one day the Pharaoh had a dream. His wise men could not tell him the meaning of the dream. And the butler said, oh no, I forgot all about, there's a fellow down in jail.

He's a Hebrew. But he can tell you the meaning of your dream. And so Joseph was brought before the Pharaoh.

The Pharaoh shared his dream. Joseph told him the meaning. And the Pharaoh made him second over all of Egypt.

And now all of the power and the glory of Egypt is his, as he prepares to preserve them through a coming famine. Now you begin to understand, you're seeing the picture as it begins to unfold. And you say, oh my, look at Joseph, look at the position.

Look at all that he has. Truly God is good. But you see, there was a time in his life when you couldn't look at the circumstances and tell that God was good.

But the full story, and we don't see the full story. There came the day when Joseph's brothers thought that Joseph would get even with them for their dastardly deed. And they came to Joseph, seeking mercy.

And Joseph said to them, I know that you intended it for evil, but God meant it for good. God is good. And all things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose.

Look at Job. He lost everything, possessions, family, health, friends. And as you see Job in that miserable, painful condition, you can say, or could ask, how can you say God is good? Where is Job's God now? You see his suffering.

But Job declares, he knows the way that I take. And when I am tried, I will come forth as gold. He was trusting in God, knowing that God is good, and knowing that he'll come through this painful experience.

And when he does, he'll be tried pure as gold. Look at Paul the apostle, beaten, stoned, imprisoned, shipwrecked, finally beheaded. But Paul declares the present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that's going to be revealed.

For this light affliction, which is but for a moment, works in exceeding eternal weight of glory. Book of Hebrews chapter 11 tells us about those men in the Old Testament and their faith and trust in God. Tells us of the trials that they experienced, the cruel mockings, the scourgings, the bonds, the imprisonment.

They were stoned. They were sawn asunder. They were tempted.

They were slain with a sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the writer said the world was not worthy. Yet they wandered in the deserts and in the mountains and in the dens and the caves of the earth.

And looking at them, you'd say, you say that God is good, but we don't know the full story. Truly God is good. And believing that they sustained these trials, knowing that God is good, he'll work out good from this.

The second thing that Nahum tells us about God is that he is a stronghold in the day of trouble. The stronghold was a place of defense, a place of safety, place of strength. We, all of us in life are going to be facing days of trouble.

Whether you're a Christian or not, they're going to come living in this sinful world. It's impossible to escape trouble and sorrow. The question is, where do you turn when the trouble comes? William Cushing wrote, Oh, safe to the rock that is higher than I, my soul in its sorrow and conflict would fly.

So sinful, so weary, thine, thine would I be, thou blessed rock of ages, I'm hiding in thee. In the calm of the noontide, in sorrow's lone hour, in times when temptation cast o'er me its power, in the tempest of life, on its wide heaving sea, thou blessed rock of ages, I'm hiding in thee. How often the conflict when pressed by the foe, I fled to my refuge and breathed out my woe.

How often when trials like sea bellows roll, have I hidden in thee, O thou rock of my soul. Do you seek that stronghold when the pressure's on? When you're going through difficult times, where do you turn? Where is your place of strength? When you're overwhelmed by your circumstances, do you turn to that inner self? Do you look within for that extra power that I need to stand strong through this experience? Many people turn to mottos. What you can't cure, you must endure.

Button your lip, or just grin and bear it. Or like the little red engine, well, I think I can. I think I can.

Or like the moral rearmament, every day and in every way, the world is getting better and better and better. Or inch by inch, everything's a cinch. In real trouble, mottos really are not much help.

So many times we turn to a friend only to discover that they have worse problems than we do. It's good to be able to turn to the Lord and find that he is a stronghold, a place of refuge and safety. Trust is a word of faith.

When I don't know the whys, I must trust. When Brian felt the call of God to go to England, to leave his prosperous church down in Vista, to go over and start a work in London, honestly, we thought he was a little crazy. How could God call him to London when he's got a successful church down there in Vista and take our grandchildren away from us? And we were having great difficulty.

And when we were at the airport and they were getting ready to board the plane to go to England, Kay and I were crying. And our precious little Kelsey, beautiful little Kelsey, about six years old at that time, tried to

comfort us. She said, Grandma, Grandpa, we have to go to England because it's God's will that we go to England.

She broke out in tears and said, Why is it God's will that we go to England? And we were wondering the same thing. But when we see the many churches, the Calvary chapels that are now in England, we know now why it was God's will. And we rejoice in the great number of churches that are now there in England, teaching the word of God and the work of God that is going on as a result of their going over there and starting that work in London and from it reaching out throughout the kingdom there.

In Proverbs 3 verse 5, we are told that to just trust in the Lord with all of your heart. Don't lean to your own understanding. In all of your ways, acknowledge him and he will direct your path.

We read, the Lord knows those who trust in him. The latter part of this seventh verse of NAM chapter one. If you're putting your trust in the Lord, he knows he knows you.

Many people are trusting in their own righteousness or in their own goodness to gain them an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. But we're told in Psalm 14 that the fool has said in his heart, there is no God, but they are corrupt. They've done abominable works.

There's none that does good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. And they're all gone aside.

They're all filthy. There is none that does good. No, not one.

You dare not trust in your own goodness to gain you entrance into the kingdom of heaven. We've got to trust in the Lord and in the goodness of God, providing for us the means whereby our sins can be forgiven and whereby we can be assured of our entry in to the kingdom of God. When I stand before God, I do not want to stand in my own righteousness, but in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which he has imputed to me because I've put my trust in him.

The big question, have you put your trust in the Lord today? Maybe some of you are going through some difficult times. You can't understand. You don't know.

You can't rationalize the goodness of God with the experience you're presently having, but that's where you have to get in the stronghold and just trust the Lord and find that those that put their trust in him will never be put to shame. Father, we thank you for the fact that we know that you are good. And we know that all things, though we don't understand them and we don't know how, they are working together for good because we love you and you've called us according to your purpose.

And so Lord, help us now to put our trust fully in you, knowing that you will see us through these difficult times and that you will be our strength. You'll be our help. You'll be our stronghold.

And so Lord, may we get a stronghold upon you this day in Jesus name. Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today who perhaps are going through a difficult time in your life.

Situations that you can't understand and you'd like to just find God's help and God's strength. You'd like to just get in that stronghold of the Lord. They're here to help you and to pray for you that you might experience this day, that work of God's spirit and the assurance and the knowledge.

God is good. And you'll go away from here saying, well, I don't know what's going to happen, but I know that God is good. Like the one song they used to sing.

Many things about tomorrow I do not understand, but I know who holds tomorrow and I know who holds my hand. And you can go from here today, holding the hand of God with the assurance that God is going to work good out of this present difficult situation that you're in. If you'll just put your trust in him.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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