

BEING AND FEELING SECURE **(Nahum 1:7)**

Some might question the wisdom of having a public service right now. They might argue that it is too soon and too risky. They might be right. It is possible to feel safe and yet not be safe. But it is also possible to be reliably safe and yet to feel insecure and unsure.

Recently, I was encouraged by a quote I read from Helen Keller. You remember her. She was born in 1880, and at the age of 19 months old, she contracted an illness that left her both blind and deaf. It would be bad enough to be handicapped in one of those two ways, but I can't imagine being a toddler and growing up without the ability to see or hear.

Amazingly, she learned to read and write and speak. She was the first ever blind and deaf person to earn a college degree. She became a published author with many books to her credit. She also became a sought-after speaker and delivered numerous lectures. I don't know if the following words were written or spoken, but Helen Keller claimed:

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.

Most people long for a sense of security. Obtaining real security, however, is elusive.

- Businesses and banks hire **security guards**.
- Home security systems are a multi-billionaire dollar business.
- In the current crisis, job security is vanishing.
- For many, financial security is only a dream.
- Even though we have the world's strongest military, national security is an ever-present concern.

God offers a different kind of security. It is a security that most people lack and all people want; it is a security of the heart; it is a belief that says, "I'm going to be okay. Things may not turn out exactly as I would have planned, but I'll be all right, and I am confident that it will even be for the best."

Do you have that kind of security? It is a security that you cannot purchase. It's not for sale. It's a security that goes well beyond positive thinking and is more than an optimistic outlook. It is a security that gives you peace at the core of your very soul. Where can you and I get that kind of security?

Back in March, I preached a message from Jonah. We saw that it was God's great love for the lost people of Assyria that caused Him to send Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. In the end, the people of Nineveh repented, and God spared them from the judgment about which the prophet warned them.

In time, however, the people of Nineveh repented of their repentance. They went back to their old way of life. They returned to their wickedness, evil, and violent ways. About 100 to 150 years after the time of Jonah the prophet, Nahum foretold the complete

destruction of Nineveh. Shortly after, in 612 BC, Nineveh was utterly destroyed.

The name *Nahum* means *consolation*. Nahum would have brought no comfort to the Assyrian people because in dramatic fashion, Nahum described the judgment that was coming upon the people of Nineveh. Consolation and comfort were exactly what Nahum's message brought to his fellow Jews because they knew the power of Assyria was a threat to their very existence. They were comforted to know that God was removing this threat and protecting them.

The book that bears Nahum's name also gives us a clearer picture of the God we serve. Look with me at Nahum 1:2-3, 6. We rarely hear sermons about the wrath of God anymore, but it is the wrath of God that makes His love so much more wonderful. If God never judged sin and sinners, then it is no big thing that God has chosen to save me and forgive me of my sin. If God was going to forgive me anyway then I could live however I wanted to because it wouldn't really matter.

We often use that word *saved*, but what it is that we are saved from? If you have placed your faith in Jesus, God didn't just save you from Satan, or from sin, or from yourself; He saved you from Himself. He saved you from His righteous wrath. We need to remember that and thank God for that.

Nahum is a rather short book. It is just three chapters long and only has a total of 47 verses. Of those 47 verses, almost all of them deal with the subject of judgment. There is one verse, however, that serves as a ray of sunshine that escapes from the gloom and the dark clouds that make up the rest of that book. That one verse is Nahum 1:7. That's the verse that will serve as the text for today's message.

Listen to how the *New Living Translation* renders it: "The LORD is good. When trouble comes, He is a strong refuge. And He knows everyone who trusts in Him."

I want us to consider the nature of the security we have in God. Our security is both a fact and a feeling. Both are important, but some people have one without the other. It is possible to feel secure but not really be secure. I could be walking down the street feeling safe and without a care in the world while there is a mugger just around the corner waiting to pounce.

On the other hand, it is possible to be safe and not feel so. Personally, I feel that is where many of us are right now. When you leave the house, you do so with fear and dread, but I think you are safer than you realize.

I. WE CAN FEEL SECURE BECAUSE OF WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT GOD.

The first thing we can know about God is that **God is good**. Have you learned that God is good? I'm not asking if you know that mentally. What I am asking is, "Have you learned from experience that God is good?" The knowledge of God's goodness is most often learned in the difficult times of life.

The worst summer of my life was the summer of 1985. It was the summer between my junior and senior year of college. That was the only year I took summer school. I had biology in June and chemistry in July. Biology was fine; chemistry was horrible. I didn't like it; I didn't understand it; it was a miserable experience. What made it worse was that

my roommate moved, and I had to move out of our apartment back into the dorm. While I was taking a course I didn't like, living in a place I didn't like, I got the stomach flu. I didn't like that either. Oddly, the summer of 1985 was also the summer I learned, through experience, that God is good.

We don't learn about God's goodness when all is well, when everything is going our way, when things couldn't be better. We learn about God's goodness when we honestly doubt that things could get any worse. That is when God makes His presence known and assures us of His love.

Some years ago, as I was preparing for a funeral, I heard a song on the radio that I had not before heard. The lyrics were unfamiliar. I called the radio station and asked them to repeat back to me the lyrics of the song. The chorus of the song is:

*Life is hard. The world is cold.
We are barely young, and then we are old.
But every falling tear is understood.
Yes, life is hard, but God is good.*

It is in the midst of the hardness of life that we come to know the goodness of our God, and it is because we know His goodness that we can experience real security in an insecure world.

There is a second thing we can know about God. We can know that **He is trustworthy**. He is one in whom we can place our trust. We know we can run to Him as refuge when the storms begin to howl. We know He will shelter us.

When he was a seminary professor in Colorado, Haddon Robinson preached a message in which he talked about a small animal that is native to Colorado. He said:

The Coney is a rock badger, a bit larger than the prairie dogs that infect our state of Colorado. Conies are gray, the color of the rocks. As long as the Coney . . . is on the rock sunning itself, it's almost impossible to see. When a predator comes to attack, the Coney will run into a hole, the crag in the rock. If a vulture or an eagle wants to sweep down on the Coney, it has to knock down a mountain to get at it.

One thing about Conies, they know where their security lies. If a Coney decides to go off on the prairie, venturing away from the rock, then it's vulnerable. It doesn't matter how courageous the Coney is. It doesn't matter whether or not it's been taking body building lessons at the local gym. The most courageous Coney falls victim to the smallest wolf or lion. When it wanders away from the rock, a Coney is dead meat.

Robinson went on to apply his story. He said, "Biblical writers would have taken that truth, and . . . said, 'If you have the wisdom of a badger, you'll know where your security is. And the security you must have is the security of God Himself.'"

Don't run from God; He is your security; run to Him.

Warren Wiersbe wrote, "There is no security in things. In fact, things are deceptive;

they appear to be satisfying and lasting when they are actually temporary and unable to satisfy the deepest needs of life. Certainly, God wants us to enjoy the blessings of life . . . God wants us to enjoy His good gifts, just as we want our children to enjoy what we give them. But He does not want us to depend on things—He wants us to depend on Him.”

Depend on God; He is trustworthy. It is because of what we know about God that can feel truly secure. There is a second truth about our security. Not only can security be a feeling, it can also be a fact.

II. WE CAN BE SECURE BECAUSE OF WHAT GOD KNOWS ABOUT US.

Look at the latter part of v.7. The NIV translates that sentence, “He cares for those who trust in Him.”

The ESV and the NASB renders it, “He knows those who take refuge in Him.”

I read earlier the *New Living Translation*: “He knows everyone who trusts in Him.”

The *Good News Bible* words it: “He takes care of those who turn to Him.”

God knows those who trust Him and those who only pretend to do so. It is only those who truly trust Him who become recipients of His special care. Just as God is certain to punish the guilty, He is certain to reward and watch over those who turn to Him in faith. God has always and will only bless faith:

- not performance, faith;
- not ability, faith;
- not talent, faith;
- not hard work, faith.

Look at the letter that follows Nahum. Notice Habakkuk 2:4. Look at the letter that follows Habakkuk. Notice what we read in Zephaniah 3:12. The prophet promised that judgment was going to come upon Israel, but he exempted those *who seek refuge in name of the LORD*. Instead of judgment, those who trust in God will receive security. Look at vv. 15-17.

Those are the things God wants to do and will do for those who trust in Him.

Have you learned to trust God? We must consciously choose to place our trust in God over and over until it becomes natural to do so, until we do so automatically.

In her classic book, *The Christian’s Secret to a Happy Life*, Hannah Whitall Smith wrote:

*Trust in the dark,
Trust in the light,
Trust at night
And trust in the morning,
And you will find that the faith
Which may begin by mighty effort,
Will end sooner or later
By becoming the easy*

And natural habit of the soul.

God can tell the difference between those who trust Him and those who are merely playing a religious game? Whether or not you can, God knows the difference and that is what gives us security if we have placed our faith and trust in Him.

I close with what Walter Wangerin wrote in his book *Mourning into Dancing*:

When I was a boy . . . I told people that my father was stronger than anyone else in the world . . . So, I would go out on the front porch and roar to the neighborhood: “My daddy’s arm is as strong as a truck! The strongest man in the world . . .”

In those days a cherry tree grew in our backyard. This was my hiding place. Ten feet above the ground a stout limb made a horizontal fork, a cradle on which I could lie face down, reading, thinking, being alone. Nobody bothered me there. Even my parents didn’t know where I went to hide. Sometimes Daddy would come out and call, “Wally? Wally?” but he didn’t see me in the leaves.

I felt very tricky.

Then came the thunderstorm . . .

One day, suddenly, a wind tore through the backyard and struck my cherry tree with such force that it ripped the limb from my hands and nearly threw me from the limb. I locked my arms around the forking branches and hung on. My head hung down between them. I tried to wind my legs around the limb, but the whole tree was wallowing in the wind . . .

“Daddeeeeeeee!”

There he was. The branches swept up and down, like huge waves on an ocean—and Daddy saw me, and right away he came out into the wind and the weather, and I felt so relieved because I just took for granted that he would climb right up the tree to get me.

But that wasn’t his plan at all.

He came to a spot right below me and lifted his arms and shouted, “Jump.”

“What?”

“Jump. I’ll catch you.”

Jump? I had a crazy man for a father. He was standing six or seven miles beneath me, holding up two skinny arms and calling me to jump. If I jumped, he’d miss. I’d hit the ground and die . . .

But the wind and the rain slapped that cherry tree, bent it back, and cracked my limb at the trunk. I dropped a foot. My eyes flew open. Then the wood whined and splintered and sank, and so did I, in bloody terror.

No. I did not jump. I let go. I surrendered. I fell.

In a fast, eternal moment I despaired and plummeted. *This*, I thought, *is what it’s like to die*—

But my father caught me . . .

Now, in such a storm, the tree which was our stable world is shaken, and instinct makes us grab it tighter; by our own strength we grip the habits that have helped us in the past, repeating them, believing them. We'd rather trust what *is* than what *might be*: that is, our power, our reason and feeling and endurance . . . We spend a long time screaming *No!* . . .

But always, God is present. God has always been present. And it is God who says, "*Jump.*"

Will you jump? Will you leave whatever or whomever it is that you have been trusting in and rely solely upon the Lord? It is in Him that your security lies. He is calling. Will you jump? Will you at least let go? By doing so, you will fall into His waiting, strong, and loving arms.

The message of Nahum is simple: Trust self and receive God's judgment or trust God and become an object of His care. What will your choice be?