

The Goodness of God 8-6-00

Good – it is a word we so often use without contemplating all that it means. When asked to define God many would quickly respond, “God is love.” But a much more common expression in Scripture is, “God is good.” Just as where there is genuine agape love we know God is involved, so when we find real goodness, God is present. Our problem today is the understanding of what is good. We put our own definition on it as to personal preference or desires. Good is so much more than the subjective and selfish perspective. Genuine goodness is all of the attributes of God. Here again we must change our definitions to conform them to the reality expressed in the word of God. God is good in everything He does. His justice is good – his mercy is good, his love is good, his faithfulness is good. All the attributes of God are good and his goodness is faithful, loving, righteous, holy... He is good. Just as He is love, He is good. In fact, the standard for goodness is God himself.

I found 13 declarations in Scripture that “God is good!” These declarations are found in every section of the word of God, history, poetry, major and minor prophets, Gospels and letters. When Solomon dedicated the Temple the people and priests sang, “God is good and his love endures forever.” They were focussing on two attributes of God, his goodness and his love. I suppose you could add immutability because of the word ‘forever’. When the psalmist wrote of his difficulties he reminded himself that God is good. Even the weeping prophet declared in Jer 33:11 that God is good. Jesus told the rich young ruler, “God alone is good”. And Peter, restored, forgiven, impetuous Peter, 1Pt 2:3 says, “...the Lord is good.”

This would seem to go without saying. It is a popular church chant, “God is good, all the time, and all the time, God is good.” It is very true. Notice in that chant the unchanging goodness of God. WE need that affirmation because we are surrounded in a world where evil is ever present. The destructive forces of sin and rebellion against God are everywhere we look. At times they invade our lives. But the wonderful thing about an all-powerful and all wise God is that He causes them to work for GOOD in our lives. That is because He is good.

We can look at solitary events and painful experiences and ask where the good was in them. It may not be apparent. Sin is certainly not good. Evil and its expressions in this world are not good. They are opposed to the good and at times we feel the bite or sting of sin. Evil desires give birth to sin and sin matures into death. There is no good in that. But our mighty Creator and Shepherd takes that situation, and as Ro 8:28 says, works good into our lives (those who love Him) through the experience. Even though you may not be able to perceive it, or understand it, you can count on it. We could go over all the Scripture of how difficulties are good for us but just recall James 1, “Consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” You can’t consider it all joy unless you believe in the goodness of God to take that trial and through it add blessing to your life.

Let me hit a side note here for just a moment because the Bible seems to emphasize this over and over. Murmuring is sin. There is nothing wrong with pouring out your complaint

to God because you do not understand what is happening or why. That is an honest heart and God isn't blown away by your honesty. But when we begin to speak our doubts and fears, complaints and ingratitude to others, we are a testimony for evil. We are declaring that God is not good, -and that is a lie. We refuse to believe in this awesome attribute of God and instead of declaring in faith, that GOOD will come from the trial, we declare that God is not for us, but against us.

Now understanding that the character of God never changes, and that He is good in spite of what you are saying and your circumstances, you are really declaring yourself evil. God is angry with the wicked every day, and justly so. If He is bringing justice into your life with no favorable outcome, then you must be evil. Do you follow? God will not do that to his children. If you say God is out to do me harm, why did He allow this?!!! (in the sense that He must hate me) you are joining the Children of Israel in the wilderness. "He brought us out here to kill us because there are not enough graves in Egypt." God is good, loving, just, righteous, holy regardless of what we say. So if we say that, with the Children of Israel, we are just declaring ourselves guilty and worthy of the sentence we are receiving.

The goodness of God seems to such a source of confusion to the world. They think if God is good then why is there evil, like war? Why is there suffering and hatred? It is a legitimate question. But the Bible declares that it is Satan that has come to kill, steal and destroy, not God. That is Satan's opposition to God. People speak as if God had Satanic desires. That is ridiculous when you consider all the goodness and blessing in creation. It is the goodness of God that it is nice to eat, the goodness of God that the predominant colors in the world are the most pleasing to the eye. It is the goodness of God that we have the variety of Seasons. It is the goodness of God that we enjoy sleep and wake up to glorious sunrises. We are so enveloped in goodness that we end up taking it for granted. We are like spoiled children that expect constant goodness poured out and overflowing, and when it seems to stop for a second – a trial or difficulty – we forget about all the goodness and focus on that one thing that we don't like. It is good for us too, but we don't want it and so we pout and forget all the benefits we richly enjoy daily!

It is also the heart of man lusting for control and power that brings most wars and their consequential suffering. If God brings wrath it is justice and that is good. When man brings wrath it is his lust and indifference for the lives of others. Man is becoming so lawless – another word for anti-Christ – that to slaughter millions of innocent babies is called a good choice for the mothers. And then when the woman suffers anxiety and depression because of it they ask why would God allow that? Most suffering comes from the consequences of rebellion against God. But today the idea of personal rights, the right to ones own happiness and pleasure, have thrown out the rights of the One who made us and lovingly gives us instruction.

The ranting of many against "what God allows" is really a cry against the evil of the human heart. Help them to see that, and that Jesus is the only solution to that evil and suddenly the confusion is over. Man is evil (contrary to modern opinion) and God is good. False teaching today is trying to turn that truth around in the minds of young people. They will blame conditions, circumstances, even God but never the heart of man. To do so would be declaring their need for a Deliverer. But God never changes. He is always good and ever will be.

He has been good to me! ⁶ I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me.

Psalms 13:6 (NIV) ⁷ Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. Psalms 116:7 (NIV) I could tell you how the Lord has been good to me! I could talk about tragedy too, but through it all I can see the goodness of God. He never left me in those wastelands. He even showed me how he turned tragedy into blessing. I can look back over all the pain and all the joy and say, the Lord is always good. People sin, they suffer, sometimes we suffer with them, but God is always good. I struggled over the past year with what I went through with the Wesleyan church, but what helps me the most is to see how through all that, He blessed me in things I would never have seen any other way. This fellowship is a part of the blessing that came out of the evil of that covering up of sin. God used it for good to those of us who love Him.

We can't speak of the goodness of God without looking at its ultimate display on the cross. There, because He set his love on you, Jesus took your sin and all the punishment you deserve because of it. He faced the justice of God on that sin in your place. Divine unspeakable love – could goodness overflow toward you to any greater extent – impossible.

Jesus looked ahead to the redemption of your body, your adoption as a son, and He saw it was good. So He took your place, and paid your debt. That is goodness to the infinite degree. ¹¹ The LORD said, "Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose; Jer 15:11 (NIV) He delivered me for a good purpose. He delivered you for a good purpose. Ps 84:11 says there is no good thing that He would withhold from those whose walk is upright. That can include a good difficulty. Whenever you are tempted to doubt the goodness of God, just see your difficulty with the backdrop of the cross. His goodness will see you through. What looks bad will be turned to bring His goodness into your life.

As I was preparing this message my devotions were in Ps 66. Although the goodness of God is not specifically mentioned I could not help see the goodness of God all through it. It even brings out what we have been looking at here about the goodness in difficulties that God allows. Listen to the goodness of God: ¹ Shout with joy to God, all the earth! ² Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! ³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. ⁴ All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name." Selah ⁵ Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf! ⁶ He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot-- come, let us rejoice in him. ⁷ He rules forever by his power, his eyes watch the nations-- let not the rebellious rise up against him. Selah ⁸ Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; ⁹ he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping. ¹⁰ For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. ¹¹ You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. ¹² You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance. ¹³ I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you-- ¹⁴ vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble. ¹⁵ I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams; I will offer bulls and goats. Selah ¹⁶ Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me. ¹⁷ I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. ¹⁸ If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; ¹⁹ but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. ²⁰ Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me! Psalms 66:1-20 (NIV) God is Good!