

# The Goodness of God Should Lead Us to Repentance

*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering;  
not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

Romans 2:4

## REVIEW

The flow of thought in Romans 2:1-4:

- :1 spreads guilt to everyone who judges there is good and evil.
- :2 anticipates and answers the argument that this broad charge of guilt is wrong.
- :3 anticipates the argument that God's judgment for this alleged guilt appears to be escaped.
- :4 answers that argument by explaining the purpose of God's delay in judgment.

Do you see how important it was for Paul to come to Rome? So much ignorance to dispel! So many times in this epistle he writes “not knowing” or “know ye not” and “I would not have you ignorant.” Just in one chapter already he speaks of truth being suppressed, of becoming vain in one's imagination, of foolish hearts being darkened, of becoming fools, of changing the truth of God into a lie, of being given over to a reprobate mind, and of being without understanding! Sinful man is shown to be immensely ignorant. As Paul writes elsewhere, “If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” (I Cor. 8:2)

What ignorance is Paul dispelling in Romans 2:4? Ignorance about the goodness of God. Ignorance concerning its occurrence and certainly its purpose. The topic today is sinful man's tragic misread of favorable circumstances.

### I. The Error of Despising

**A. *Kataphroneo* – to think down on.** To have the lowest opinion of. To shrink the importance of. To disregard as unworthy of one's notice or consideration. To see as negligible. To treat like a bread crumb. Jesus did this to shame (Heb. 12:2 – “Looking unto Jesus, the author and ...”). So should we. But there are also things we should *not* despise or cause others to despise:

Do not “despise wisdom and instruction.” (Prov. 1:7)

Do not “despise one of these little ones.” (Matt. 18:10)

Do not despise “the church of God.” (I Cor. 11:22)

“Despise not the chastening of the LORD.” (Prov. 3:11)

“Despise not thy mother when she is old.” (Prov. 23:22)

“Let no man despise thy youth.” (I Tim. 4:12)

**B. And surely, surely, do not despise God's goodness!** What a train wreck of a misread! What an abuse of the bounteous blessings of God to an undeserving people! What travesty! No, rather:

“O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.” (Ps. 34:3)

## II. What Can Erroneously Be Despised

### A. The “riches” – a favorite word of Paul to describe the super-abundances of God.

See: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (II Cor. 8:9)

See also: “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8), “the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7), “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18), God is “rich in mercy” (Eph. 2:4), and “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19)

### B. “of His Goodness”

1. A general word that includes all moral excellence:

- a. Love. God is love, and He has love for all the people of the world/
- b. Benevolence. God deals bountifully and kindly with all His creatures, the just and unjust. “The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.” (Ps. 145:9)
- c. Mercy. God shows compassion, pity, and lovingkindness to those in misery or distress.
- d. Grace. This is God's goodness manifested toward the guilty and undeserving, as He distributes gifts and showers people with blessings instead of immediate judgment.

### C. “and Forbearance”

1. His holding in, His restraining, of His indignation and wrath for a season.

### D. “and Longsuffering”

1. Slowness to anger; suffering people to commit sins for a long time without punishing, sparing people from day to day, and year to year, to give them opportunity to repent and be saved.

## III. How Might God's Goodness Be Despised? We might . . .

**A. Miss it.** Have you ever done a kindness toward someone, and it was totally missed? We're talking plain old wooden insensibility to the kindnesses of God. Picture ...

1. A cat goes to a bowl and begins to eat with no gratitude to the owner.
2. So God can be *totally* out of a person's thoughts. See Ps. 10:4ff.

**B. Minimize it.** This is a step above atheism, but only a step.

1. Life going well is seen as a reasonable expectation.
2. If trials come, God (who during the “bad” times is remembered) is analyzed to see whether His treatment is acceptable or whether one is justified for murmuring.
3. So there's a desperate unawareness of the personal stink of sin – Ps. 103:10-11.

### C. Misinterpret it.

1. People are used to God's apparent non-judgment against sin as being the norm. People ask, "Where is the promise of his coming? All things continue as from the beginning." (II Pet. 3:4) Indeed, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ecc. 8:11)
2. The thought may be that the warnings of God are just so much religious talk, that they don't really have teeth, that "the bitterness of death is past." (See I Sam. 15:32-33.)
3. People may read God's reticence to punish as ambivalence. Like the President's view of border crossing.
4. We may also not interpret the events of God as good. We may minimize the value of petty in-laws, broken lawnmowers, drought, bad-hair days, noisy children, arthritis, bad food, people conflict, athletic defeat, political confusion, hail damage, grating voices, or forgetful spouses. Some people never grasp Romans 8:28 and minimize the offense of murmuring.

### IV. How Should We Respond to God's Goodness?

**A. Certainly don't abuse it,** as a dog who bites the hand that feeds it.

**B. Know this first of all: no gift of God is without meaning.** So the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of God are designed to change men's lives.

**C. Get with the system here.** The purpose of God's goodness is to lead us to repentance.

1. God's interest in holding off is that we repent.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."  
(II Pet. 3:9)

2. While God holds off ("forbears"), He is drawing us by love.

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." (Hos. 11:4)

"Draw me, we will run after thee." (Song of Solomon 1:4)

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44)

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)

3. The idea shouldn't be foreign to us. It's how we are to win people too.

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."  
(Rom. 12:20-21)

**D. So our observance of the goodness of God should lead us to repent for all our sins.** See the love of God drawing us, as with a magnet, in all aspects of our lives. Thank Him that He has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. And love Him in return.

## DISCUSSION

1. Are our culture and churches rightly understanding and responding to the goodness of God today?  
Discuss.
2. Are you perceiving and responding rightly to the goodness of God in your own life? Discuss.
3. Review the list of things a Christian is or is not to “despise.” Insights? Illustrations?
4. God is so good. How has He been good to you?
5. Please comment on this verse: “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.” (Ps. 10:4)
6. In what way has God not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities?  
(Ps. 103:10)
7. God says, “I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.” (Hos. 11:4) Can you say amen to this verse? That is, would you give testimony of how God has drawn/is drawing *you* with the cords of love?