

# The Goodness of Our God

Selected Scriptures

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When we think of *the goodness of our God* do we understand that it “prevents us from falling over dead when we commit sin”? (John MacArthur, *Our Awesome God*, 100). Do we understand that it is “only because of His goodness are we able to keep breathing”? (Ibid., 100). God is the source of all good, and He and He alone, defines what is good and holy.

Thomas Manton said, “He is originally good, good of Himself, which nothing else is; for all creatures are good only by participation and communication from God. He is essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself: the creature’s good is a superadded quality, in God it is His essence. He is infinitely good; the creature’s good is but a drop, but in God there is an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is; as there can be no addition made to Him, so no subtraction from Him.”

And because He is good, He is the “*summum bonum*, the chiefest good” (A.W. Pink, *Gleanings in the Godhead*, 55). As we look at this attribute this evening, I want you to see *the goodness of our God*.

Psalm 25:8 says, “Good and upright is the Lord.” Psalm 52:1 says, “The goodness of God endures continually.” When the rich young ruler came to Jesus in Matthew 19, He said to Him, “Good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments’” (vv.16-17). “No one is good but one, that is God,” He said. There is no higher standard of goodness than God’s own character. And how we think of God will determine our greatness. A.W. Tozer says, “Christianity at any given time is strong or weak depending on her concept of God” (*The Attributes of God*, vol.1, 41). If we do not see God as *good* then our concept of goodness is distorted and our view of God is diminished. “A local church will only be as great as its conception of God” (Ibid., Tozer, 41). That is why we have been in a series on *the doctrine of God*—we want to enlarge our understanding of God.

We have already seen that God exists; He is a Spirit; one, yet three. We have seen His faithfulness, His holiness, His omniscience, His omnipotence, His omnipresence, and His wrath. Now let’s look at His goodness.

When you think of the word “good” what comes to your mind? Do you think of it as describing something moral or virtuous or as something that is beneficial or meets approval?

Let’s begin with a *definition of God’s goodness*.

## **I. The Definition of God's Goodness**

When we apply the adjective “good” to God we are defining “the final standard of good” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 197).

Everything about Him is “good.” That is because “the goodness of God respects the perfection of His nature” (A.W. Pink, *Gleanings in the Godhead*, 55).

He cannot be more good because He is the highest “good,” and He defines what goodness is.

You and I can be good and show goodness to others because that is a part of God's image that He has imparted to us. But our good is lacking. It is tainted by sin. Even the best intentions in our goodness is distorted in some way by our selfishness and pride. But that is not so for God.

A.W. Pink says, “There is such an absolute perfection in God's nature and being that nothing is wanting to it or defective in it; nothing can be added to it to make it better” (*Gleanings in the Godhead*, 55).

When we speak of any attribute of God, there are no defects; it is the best; it is the highest that it can be; it is perfect. Therefore, when we speak of the goodness of God it is perfect goodness.

Because the goodness of God is His very nature, He is “kindhearted, [and] gracious” (A.W. Tozer, *The Attributes of God*, vol.1, 42).

### **A. In the Garden of Eden, we See the Goodness of God in Perfect Harmony with His Wrath**

When God told Adam, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen.2:16-17), He gave Him a divine standard to be obeyed.

When that was not obeyed in chapter 3, God didn't kill them on the spot. Out of His goodness, He punished them and forgave them. It was 930 years later when Adam died (Gen.5:5).

B. In Exodus 33:18, Moses Requested to See the Glory of God and Saw His Goodness

God responded by saying, “I will make all My *goodness* pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be *gracious* to whom I will be *gracious*, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’ But He said, ‘You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.’ And the LORD said, ‘Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. ‘So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. ‘Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen’” (vv.19-23).

After he is told to “cut two tablets of stone like the first one” he broke (34:1), he is told to “be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain” (v.2).

Verses 5-7 says, “Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. 6 And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and *gracious*, longsuffering, and *abounding in goodness* and truth, 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.’”

C. God is Good and Full of Lovingkindness

1. The psalmist proclaims exactly what Moses saw in Ps.86:5 when he said, “For You, Lord, are *good*, and *ready to forgive*, And *abundant in mercy* to all those who call upon You.”

2. In Ps.103:4 he listed it as one of the benefits that he did not want to forget

He said that God “crowns you with *lovingkindness* and *tender mercies*.”

3. The Lord said through Jeremiah, “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising *lovingkindness*, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord” (Jer.9:23-24).

A.W. Tozer said, “The goodness of God is the only valid reason for existence, the only reason underlying all things. Do you imagine that you deserve to be born, that you deserve to be alive?”

Why were we created? Was it that we deserved to be created? How can nothing deserve something? There was a time when there was no human race. How therefore could a human race that hadn’t existed deserve something? How could a man that wasn’t yet created earn anything or pile up any merit? It couldn’t be so. God out of His goodness created us. Why were we not destroyed when we sinned? The only answer is that God out of His goodness spared us. The cordial, kind-intentioned God spared us.

Why would God the Eternal Son bleed for us? The answer is, out of His goodness and lovingkindness. ‘Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings’ (Psalm 36:7). Why would God forgive me when I’ve sinned and then forgive me again and again? Because God out of His goodness acts according to that goodness and does what His loving heart dictates that He do.

Why does He answer prayer? Let’s not imagine that it’s because somebody was good. We Protestants think we don’t believe in saints, but we do. We canonize them: we have Saint George Mueller, Saint C.H. Spurgeon, Saint D.L. Moody and Saint A.B. Simpson. We get the idea that God answered prayer for them because they were really good. They would deny that fervently if there were here.

Nobody ever got anything from God on the grounds that he deserved it. Having fallen, man deserves only punishment and death. So if God answers prayer it’s because God is good. From His goodness, His lovingkindness, His good-natured benevolence, God does it!” (The Attributes of God, vol.1, 45-47).

## **II. The Expression of God’s Goodness**

God’s goodness is expressed in many ways.

### **A. In His Creation**

1. Everything that God made was said to be “good” (Gen.1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)
2. David attested to God’s goodness in His creating Him

He says in Ps.139:14, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.”

A.W. Pink says, “Everything about the structure of our bodies attests the goodness of their Maker. How suited the bands to perform their allotted work! How good of the Lord to appoint sleep to refresh the wearied body! How benevolent His provision to give unto the eyes lids and brows for their protection! And so we might continue indefinitely” (Gleanings in the Godhead, 56).

## B. In His Provision

### 1. Physical

Ps.145:8-9 says, “The Lord is *gracious* and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is *good* to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works.”

#### a) He provides food

- (1) In Genesis 1:29-30, God said to the man, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food”; and it was so.”
- (2) Gen.2:8-9 says, “The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

God not only provided food for Adam and Eve but He also made it “pleasant to the sight.”

A.W. Pink says, “The goodness of God is seen in the variety of natural pleasures which He has provided for His creatures. God might have been pleased to satisfy our hunger without the food being pleasing to our palates—how His benevolence appears in the

varied flavors which He has given to meats, vegetables, and fruits! God has not only given us senses, but also that which gratifies them; and this too reveals His goodness” (Gleanings in the Godhead, 56).

- (3) In Genesis 9, after Noah and his family left the ark, God “blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’” In verse 3 He said, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. 4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood” (vv.1, 3-4).
- (4) In Ex.23:10-11 Israel was told “Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, 11 but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, *that the poor of your people may eat*; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove.”
- (5) When the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, Numbers 11:31-32 says, “Now a wind went out from the Lord, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground. 32 And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.”

Ps.105:40-41 says, “The people asked, and He brought quail, And satisfied them with the bread of heaven. 41 He opened the rock, and water gushed out; It ran in the dry places like a river.”

- (6) In Acts 10 when Peter was praying, “10 he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance 11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." 15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you

must not call common.””

(7) 1 Tim.4:1-5 says, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

b) He provides a home

Ps.113:9 says, “He grants the barren woman a home, Like a joyful mother of children. Praise the Lord!”

b) He provides all our basic necessities (Mat.6:25-34)

c) He provides companionship

(1) Gen.2:21-22 says, “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and *He brought her to the man.*”

(2) Prov.18:22 says, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord.”

(3) Prov.19:14 says, “Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord.”

(4) Prov.31:10 asks, “Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.”

d) He provides children

(1) Gen.30:1-2 says, “Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!" 2 And Jacob's anger was aroused against

Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

- (2) Isa.44:24 says that the Lord "formed you from the womb."
  - (3) Ps.127:3 says, "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD; The fruit of the womb is a reward" (NASB).
  - (4) Ps.145:9 says God "formed you from the womb" (NASB).
- e) He provides for His children as well as those who aren't His children
- (1) Jesus said in Matthew 5:45 that "He makes the Sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust."
  - (2) Paul said to those at Iconium after they sought to worship them as gods, that God "did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17).

## 2. Spiritual

- a) Christ's death on the cross demonstrates the goodness of God like no other event in history
- (1) It is seen as He endures mockery

John 19:1 says that Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, "took Jesus and scourged Him" (NASB).

Instead of releasing Christ, whom he repeatedly pronounced innocent, Pilate tried to satisfy the mob's thirst for blood by having Him scourged.

In his book, *Our Awesome God*, John MacArthur writes, "A Roman scourge had a short wooden handle that held a series of leather thongs threaded with bits of lead, brass, and bones sharpened to a razor's edge. Scourging often brought about death, and it was usually done before crucifixion to speed up the victim's death on the cross. It was torture beyond description.

The Jews gave forty lashes, save one. We don't know how many the Romans administered. We do know that Christ had been so badly beaten, He couldn't carry His own cross all the way to the place of execution.

Following the scourging but before the Crucifixion, "the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' " (Matt. 27:27-29) Historians tell us that Roman soldiers commonly did this as a cruel game to make sport of those they considered to be mentally deranged.

Then the soldiers "spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him" (vv. 30-31). In taking off the robe they were opening fresh wounds. In putting back on His garments they brought about excruciating pain, for the common man's clothing then was made of coarse fibers" (102-103).

Next we see the expression of God's goodness as *He endures crucifixion*.

(2) It is seen as He endures crucifixion

Again MacArthur writes:

"The procession would have gone like this: Four Roman soldiers surrounded the prisoner, one at each corner, moving Him through the city, with other soldiers before and behind. The soldiers would parade the prisoner down the main streets. On the day of Christ's crucifixion, the streets would have been swelled with pilgrims coming to worship and celebrate the Passover. Either hanging from the prisoner's neck, or held by someone walking in front, was a placard explaining why the prisoner was to be executed. That way the people would know the price of that particular crime.

As the procession came out of the city, it was apparent that the

strength of Christ was giving out. Therefore, the soldiers conscripted a man in the crowd, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross of Christ to the place of execution. Simon was a direct beneficiary of God's greatest display of goodness, for he eventually became a believer. In Mark 15:14, the Gospel writer made that obvious since he listed the names of Simon's children, who were mentioned because the church at large knew them.

When the procession arrived at Golgotha, the soldiers gave Christ "wine to drink mingled with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink" (Matt. 27:34). The Greek word for "gall" is a general term that refers to something bitter. The Gospel of Mark specifies that myrrh was mixed with the wine. Myrrh is a bitter gum resin that was put into wine as a way of calming a person. In the first century it was thought to have narcotic properties.

The soldiers didn't seek to drug the victim as an act of mercy; they didn't care whether the victim suffered or not. The drug simply made their task easier because it would be difficult to hammer nails through someone's limbs if that person weren't drugged to some degree. But Christ refused to drink the drugged mixture. Not wanting any of His senses to be dulled, He was committed to enduring the full pain of the cross.

The soldiers then crucified Christ. According to William Barclay, crucifixion "originated in Persia. . . . The earth was considered to be sacred to Ormuzd the god, and the criminal was lifted up from it that he might not defile the earth, which was the god's property. From Persia crucifixion passed to Carthage in North Africa; and it was from Carthage that Rome learned it" (The Gospel of Matthew, vol. 2 [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958], p. 402).

The Gospel writers didn't give the details of what happened, but it's helpful to have some understanding of what Christ endured on the cross. The soldiers first laid the cross on the ground and then placed Him on it. They extended His feet, pulling His toes down. They drove a large nail through the arch of one foot and then through the other.

After they extended His hands, allowing His knees to flex a little,

they drove two great nails through His wrists-not His palms-just below the heel of each hand. Once the soldiers had nailed Christ to the cross, they lifted the cross and dropped it into a hole. When it hit bottom, the shock would have caused Him great pain. He was now crucified.

In his book *The Life of Christ*, scholar Frederic Farrar wrote: A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of horrible and ghastly-dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds-all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries-especially of the head and stomach-became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst; and all these physical complications caused an internal excitement and anxiety, which made the prospect of death itself-of death, the awful unknown enemy, at whose approach man usually shudders most-bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release ([Portland: Fountain, 1976], p. 641).

The authorities did not seek a quick, painless death to preserve a small measure of dignity for the criminal. On the contrary, they sought an agonizing torture to humiliate him completely. Such was the suffering that our Lord Jesus Christ, out of His goodness, experienced.

Even Christ's suffering on the cross was not enough to satiate the evil desire of His enemies-they had to torment Him as well. Matthew described it this way:

Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down

from the cross."

In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him, and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe in Him. He trusts in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He takes pleasure in Him." . . . And the robbers also who had been crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him (27:39-44).

About midafternoon Christ cried out with a loud voice, saying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (v. 46) Here is something completely beyond human understanding: God became separated from God. God the Father turned His back on God the Son.

Exactly what kind of separation was that? The Son wasn't separated from His own divine nature-He didn't cease to be God. Neither was He separated from the Trinity in essence or substance. Rather, He was separated in terms of intimate fellowship and communion with the Father.

Finally, Christ declared, "It is finished!" and "bowed His head, and gave up His spirit" (John 19:30). The suffering He so willingly endured for the sake of mankind was over" (103-106).

Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

This was the greatest expression of God's goodness to man.

- b) As a child of God, God's goodness is seen in His continual presence in the believer
  - (1) God has "sealed" us with the Holy Spirit (Eph.1:13).
  - (2) He fills us with the Holy Spirit as we yield to Him (see Eph.5:18).
  - (3) He "comforts us in all our tribulation" (2 Cor.1:4; see James 1:5, 17).

- (4) He doesn't allow us to be "tempted beyond what you are able" to bear (1 Cor.10:13).
- (5) He gives us the Word of God that we "may grow thereby," as Peter says "if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is *gracious*" (1 Pet.2:2-3).

A.W. Pink says, "The goodness of God is the life of the believer's trust. It is this excellency in God which most appeals to our hearts. Because His goodness endureth forever, we ought never to be discouraged: 'The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in Him' (Nah.1:7) (Gleanings in the Godhead, 57).

### 3. Worship

Our response to the goodness of God should be worship.

- a) Ps.107:8-9 says, "Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! 9 For He satisfies the longing soul, And fills the hungry soul with goodness."
- b) Ps.54:6 says, "I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good."
- c) Ps.106:1 says, "Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."
- d) Ps.107:1 says, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."

## CONCLUSION

As we have looked at *the goodness of God* as it is expressed in His provision, keep in mind that it is *the goodness of God* that "leads you to repentance" (Rom.2:4). Because God is good and shows His lovingkindness to you through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, that should lead you to turn from your sin and turn to Him for forgiveness. When a parent disciplines his child, he uses the rod but not the rod alone, he also uses lovingkindness to speak to a darkened heart. Will you praise God tonight for His goodness and will you from this day forward meditate on that goodness and never lose sight of the truth that you deserve *nothing*? Praise Him for His goodness as we pray.