

- I. Introduction and review. John 1:18 *No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.***
- II. God is good (and gracious).**
- A. God is good by nature. Ps. 119:68 Mt. 5:48 *You are good and do good... Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.***
1. What is goodness? Ps. 100:4-5 25:8 145:9 21:3-6 103:5 Pr. 2:9 Ro. 12:2 *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good... Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He instructs sinners in the way... The LORD is good to all... For you meet him (the king) with blessings of good things; You set a crown of fine gold on his head. He asked life of You, You gave it to him, Length of days forever and ever...For you make him most blessed forever...The LORD satisfies your years with good things.*
 2. God is unique in His goodness. Mark 10:18b *No one is good except God alone.*
 3. God's grace is His goodness (kindness) to those who deserve to be punished
 4. God is sovereign in bestowal of His goodness and grace. Ex. 33:19 Mt. 20:15 *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious...It is not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own?*
- B. Everything God does is good. Gen. 1:31 Ps. 145:9a Js. 1:17 *The LORD is good to all... Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above...***
- C. God gives innumerable blessings to all (in addition to salvation) -- common grace.**
1. He is good to His creation. Ps. 136:25 145:15-16 Acts 17:25 *He gives food to all flesh...The eyes of all look to You, And You give them their food in due time. You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.*
 2. He is even good to His enemies. Acts 14:16-17 Mt. 5:45 *In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He 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... He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*
 3. He restrains sin in the world through human government. Ro. 13:1ff I Pe. 2:13-14 *For it is a minister of God to you for good.*
- D. God is particularly good to His people. Ps. 84:11 *No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.***
1. He is gracious to His people in salvation.
 - a. We are not good or deserving of His favor. Ro. 3:10-12 7:18 *There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, there is none who seeks God...There is none who does good, There is not even one... For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh...*
 - b. We deserve death. Ro. 6:23 *The wages of sin is death.*
 - c. God showed undeserved goodness to us by giving us His Son. John 3:16 10:11 *I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.*
 - d. Salvation is all of grace. Eph. 2:8-9 II Ti. 1:9 Acts 18:27 Titus 2:11 3:7 Ro. 3:24 5:15,17,21 11:6 *For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God...For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men... Being justified as a gift through His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.*

2. Jesus was full of grace and went about doing good. John 1:14,17 Acts 10:38
3. God works all things together for good for those who love Him. Rom. 8:28
Heb. 12:1ff Ps. 119:167,171

E. Why then does God Who is good allow evil?

1. He allows evil because it serves His good purpose. Acts 2:23 Gen. 50:20 Ro. 8:28
This man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.
2. We should marvel at God's goodness and patience to evil people. Ro. 2:4 *Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience...?*

F. Application.

1. Taste and enjoy God's goodness. Ps. 34:8,10 16:2 42:1-2 Isa. 55:1-2 *O taste and see that the Lord is good...The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing...I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good besides you."*
2. Trust God's goodness. Ro. 8:28 Ps. 73:1,26,28 Heb. 12:1-2,10 I Pe. 2:20 5:10
Surely God is good to Israel...My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever... But as for me, the nearness of God is my good: I have made the Lord God my refuge, That I may tell of all your works.
3. Reflect God's goodness by doing good. Ga. 6:9-10 *Let us not lose heart in doing good... While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are the household of the faith.*
 - a. While we are not saved by good works, good works are important. II Ti. 3:17
Ps. 34:14 Eph. 2:10 4:28-29 I Ti. 2:10 Titus 3:8,14 2:7,14 I Pe. 2:12 *I want you to speak confidently so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds...*
 - b. Do good in the world. Jer. 29:7 *Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD in its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.*
 - c. Do good to your enemies. Mt. 5:46-47 Ro. 12:20f *If your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*
4. Praise God for His goodness and grace. Eph. 1:3ff Na. 1:7 Ps. 107:1ff *The LORD is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble...O give thanks to the LORD for He is good. For His lovingkindness is everlasting. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so.*

III. God is merciful (and patient).

A. God is merciful by nature. Ps. 136:1ff

1. Mercy compassionately does good to the one in need. Is. 63:9 Lu. 10:30-37 *In all their affliction He was afflicted...In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them... A Samaritan...felt compassion... and bandaged up his wounds... Which of these three...proved to be a neighbor?...the one who showed mercy towards him.*
2. Mercy shows pity towards the undeserving. Hos. 2:23 14:23 Hab. 3:2 Ezek. 29:25
I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion. And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!' ... In wrath remember mercy... I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel...
3. God's mercy is manifested by His patience. Ex. 34:6 Ro. 2:4 9:22 15:5 Na. 1:3
Ps. 103:8 Neh. 9:17 II Pe. 3:9 *The LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness...*

B. God engages in acts of mercy.

1. God withholds wrath from those who deserve judgment. **Rom. 11:30-32**
2. God has compassion upon His suffering people. **Ps. 102:13 103:13-14** *You will arise and have compassion on Zion; For it is time to be gracious to her... Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.*
3. God shows mercy to the wayward. **I Ki. 8:50 Lam. 3:32 Jer. 12:15 31:20 33:26 Deut. 30:3** *Forgive Your people who have sinned against you... and make them objects of compassion... For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion, According to His abundant lovingkindness... It will come about that after I have uprooted, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them back, each one to his inheritance.*
4. God sovereignly shows mercy to whom He will. **Rom. 9:15-16 Ex. 33:19** *For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*
5. To properly understand God's mercy, we have to grasp our position of guilt.

C. God's mercy is displayed in Jesus Christ.

1. God had mercy upon sinners by sending His son to take away our guilt. **He. 2:17 Luke 1:50,54,58,72,78 Eph. 2:1,4-5 Titus 3:5 I Pe. 1:3 2:10**
 - a. Incarnation. *He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people... His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him... To show mercy toward our fathers and to remember His holy covenant... Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high will visit us.*
 - b. Redemption. *You were dead in your trespasses and sins... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ... He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy... Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...*
2. Jesus took pity on those who were suffering the effects of sin and death. **Mt. 9:36 15:22 17:15 Mark 5:19 John 11:35 Lu. 19:41** *Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd... When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it...*
3. Jesus remains a merciful high priest Who compassionately intercedes for us. **Heb. 4:15 7:25** *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

D. Have you sought mercy from God?

1. God shows mercy through His patience, delaying the final judgment. **II Pe. 3:9** *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*
2. God offers mercy to all who will turn to Him in faith. **I Ti. 1:13-16** *Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy... For this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.*
3. Keep seeking God's mercy. **He. 4:16** *Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

4. Praise God for His mercy to us. II Cor. 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort...*

E. We who have received mercy should show mercy. Mt. 5:7 18:21-35 23:23 Ro. 12:8,19 Luke 10:30-37 Js. 1:19 Ga. 5:22 *Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.*

IV. Concluding applications: Celebrate God's goodness and mercy at Christmastime.

Ps. 23:6 *Surely goodness and lovingkindness (mercy) will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

A. Emulate God by giving good gifts to those who cannot pay you back.

1. Luke 14:12-14 *When you give a ... dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you...*

2. Pr. 22:16 *He who gives to the rich will only come to poverty.*

3. Js. 1:27 *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this; to look after orphans and widows in their distress.*

4. I Tim. 6:17-19 *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant, nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they make hold of the life that is truly life.*

B. Seek God's mercy through Christ. Mark 10:46-52 *A blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on Me!" Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me." And Jesus stopped and said, Call him here."... Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to gain my sight!" And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.*

Discussion questions: The Attributes of God - Benevolence

(T/F: please explain your answer with Scripture)

1. This topic has nothing to do with Christmas.
2. We can be as good as God is.
3. We can be good like God is.
4. God is good to everyone.
5. God's grace is His goodness to those who deserve wrath.
6. God bestows His goodness and His grace equally to everyone.
7. God Who is good cannot prevent evil.
8. Good works are unimportant for Christians.
9. People are unfulfilled because they seek ultimate goodness somewhere other than God.
10. It isn't fair that God shows mercy to some, but not others.
11. Even Christians need to continually be seeking God's mercy.
12. A professing Christian who refuses to be merciful may not truly be converted.