

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

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“THE GOODNESS OF GOD ENDURETH CONTINUALLY”—Psalm 52:1

The goodness of God refers to the perfection of His nature: “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). There is such an absolute perfection in God's nature and being that nothing is wanting to it or defective in it, and nothing can be added to it to make it better.

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 (Thomas Manton).

God is *summum bonum*, the highest good.

The original Saxon meaning of our English word *God* is “The Good.” God is not only the greatest of all beings, but the best. All the goodness there is in any creature has been imparted from the Creator, but God's goodness is underived, for it is the essence of His eternal nature. As God is infinite in power from all eternity, before there was any display thereof, or any act of omnipotency put forth, so He was eternally good before there was any communication of His bounty, or any creature to whom it might be imparted. Thus, the first manifestation of this Divine perfection was in giving being to all things. “Thou art good, and doest good” (Psa 119:68). God has in Himself an infinite and inexhaustible treasure of all blessedness, enough to fill all things.

All that emanates from God—His decrees, His creation, His laws, His providences—cannot be otherwise than good: as it is written, “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Thus, the goodness of God is seen, first, in creation. The more closely the creature is studied, the more the beneficence of its Creator becomes apparent. Take the highest of God's earthly creatures—man. Abundant reason has he to say with the Psalmist, “I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (139:14). Everything about the structure of our bodies attest to the goodness of their Maker. How suited the hands to perform their allotted work! How good of the Lord to appoint sleep to refresh the wearied body! How benevolent His provision to give to the eyes lids and brows for their protection! And so we might continue indefinitely.

Nor is the goodness of the Creator confined to man; it is exercised toward all His creatures. “The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing” (Psa 145:15,16). Whole volumes might be written, yea have been, to amplify this fact. Whether it be the birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, or the fish in the sea, abundant provision has been made to supply their every need. God “giveth food to all flesh, for His mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 136:25). Truly, “The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD” (Psa 33:5).

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. The earth might have been as fertile as it is without its surface being so delightfully variegated. Our physical lives could have been sustained without beautiful flowers to regale our eyes with their colors, and our nostrils with their sweet perfumes. We might have walked the fields without our ears being saluted by the music of the birds. Whence, then, this loveliness, this charm, so freely diffused over the face of nature? Verily, the tender mercies of the Lord “are over all His works” (Psa 145:9).

The goodness of God is seen in that when man transgressed the law of His Creator a dispensation of unmixed wrath did not at once commence. Well might God have deprived His fallen creatures of every blessing, every comfort, every pleasure. Instead, He ushered in a regime of a mixed nature, of mercy and

judgment. This is very wonderful if it be duly considered, and the more thoroughly that regime be examined the more will it appear that “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:13). Notwithstanding all the evils which attend our fallen state, the balance of good greatly preponderates. With comparatively rare exceptions, men and women experience a far greater number of days of health than they do of sickness and pain. There is much more creature-happiness than creature-misery in the world. Even our sorrows admit of considerable alleviation, and God has given to the human mind a pliability which adapts itself to circumstances and makes the most of them.

Nor can the benevolence of God be justly called into question because there is suffering and sorrow in the world. If man sins against the goodness of God, if he despises “the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering,” and after the hardness and impenitency of his heart treasureth up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath (Rom 2:4,5), who is to blame but himself? Would God be “good” if He punished not those who ill-use His blessings, abuse His benevolence, and trample His mercies beneath their feet? It will be no reflection upon God's goodness, but rather the brightest exemplification of it, when He shall rid the earth of those who have broken His laws, defied His authority, mocked His messengers, scorned His Son, and persecuted those for whom He died.

The goodness of God appeared most illustriously when He sent forth His Son “made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal 4:4,5). Then it was that a multitude of the heavenly host praised their Maker and said, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). Yes, in the Gospel the “grace (which word in Greek conveys the idea of benevolence or goodness) of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). Nor can God's benignity be called into question because He has not made every sinful creature to be a subject of His redemptive grace. He did not bestow it upon the fallen angels. Had God left all to perish it would have been no reflection on His goodness. To any who would challenge this statement we will remind him of our Lord's sovereign prerogative: “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” (Matt 20:15).

“Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” (Psa 107:8). Gratitude is the return justly required from the objects of His beneficence; yet is it often withheld from our great Benefactor simply because His goodness is so constant and so abundant. It is lightly esteemed because it is exercised toward us in the common course of events. It is not felt because we daily experience it. “Despisest *thou* the riches of His goodness?” (Rom 2:4). His goodness is “despised” when it is not improved as a means to lead men to repentance, but, on the contrary, serves to harden them from the supposition that God entirely overlooks their sin.

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 for ever, we ought never to be discouraged: “The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (Nahum 1:7).

When others behave badly to us, it should only stir us up the more heartily to give thanks unto the Lord, because He is good; and when we ourselves are conscious that we are far from being good, we should only the more reverently bless Him that He is good. We must never tolerate an instant's unbelief as to the goodness of the Lord; whatever else may be questioned, this is absolutely certain, that Jehovah is good; His dispensations may vary, but His nature is always the same (C.H. Spurgeon).