

UNIT 1: The Attributes of God

Section 16: God's Goodness

Assigned Reading:
A. W. Pink – The Attributes of God
The Goodness of God

Introduction:

A. W. Pink explains, “God is not only the Greatest of all beings, but the Best.” We’ve spent several weeks focusing on God’s Greatness as many theologians categorize the attributes we’ve looked at so far... we turn our attention in the coming weeks towards God’s Goodness. Under this broad category we will look at God’s Righteousness, Wrath, Love, Mercy, Grace, Patience, and Faithfulness... **Wayne Grudem** describes God’s mercy as “his goodness toward those in distress,” God’s grace as “His goodness toward those who deserve only punishment,” and God’s patience as “His goodness toward those who continue to sin over a period of time.” **Millard Erickson** divides God’s Goodness into attributes related to “purity, integrity, and love.” **Robert Culver** investigates God’s Goodness in reference to “inward/immanent goodness (holiness, truth, love), and manifested/emanative goodness (righteousness, faithfulness, and mercy).” All would admit that in studying God’s goodness there is considerable overlap into these “other attributes.” Having said this, it is helpful to look at the use of “good” in the Scriptures as it applies to God. In brief by God’s Goodness we also speak specifically of His “generosity...”

Q1: *What do we mean by God being Good?*

Q2: *What is the Biblical definition of Good?*

Q3: *What response ought God’s Goodness elicit from us?*

Outline:

I. Defining Terms...

A. What is GOOD?

1. Ethics (a branch in Philosophy) has sought to define this term for some 2500 years.
2. Socrates – the useful; Plato – whatever of earth that conforms to the eternally transcendent form (idea) of what *ought* to be; Aristotle – the *actual*, what *is*, is good; Augustine – regarded good and being are in God (the transcendent) as fundamentally identical.
3. Our times appears to value “the practically useful” as good, or that which brings the most happiness to the most people as the good.
4. The **story of Job** provides some insight into GOOD...
 - a. Job was a good and great man
 - b. Greatness found in large family, immense wealth in livestock, employment of many servants... reputation and name among the people as a man of prominence!
 - c. Goodness found in being “blameless and upright, a man who feared God and turned away from evil” – this is how goodness should be understood – Godliness!
 - d. God is good and all He does is therefore good!
5. Also God’s display of Himself to Moses...
 - a. *Read **Ex 34:6-7**
 - b. **“all of God’s goodness” passed by Moses...**

- c. **Packer**, “All the particular perfections that are mentioned here, and all that go with them—God’s truthfulness and trustworthiness, his unfailing justice and wisdom, his tenderness, forbearance and entire adequacy to all who penitently seek his help, his noble kindness in offering believers the exalted destiny of fellowship with him in holiness and love—these things together make up God’s goodness in the overall sense of the sum total of his revealed excellencies.”

B. God’s Inherent Goodness

1. **A.W. Tozer**, “The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men... Divine goodness, as one of God’s attributes, is self-caused, infinite, perfect, and eternal.”
2. **Thomas Manton**, “[God] 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.”
3. **Wayne Grudem**, “The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval.”
 - a. **Luke 18:19** And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.
 - b. **Psalm 34:8** O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!
4. **God is “summum bonum”** – Highest Good and **“ultro bonus”** – abundant in goodness

C. God’s Actions are Good

1. Not only is God good in essence, but all of His acts are good.
 - a. God’s being and actions are worthy of His own approval... God alone is the final standard of good.
 - b. What is good? That which God approves is good! **Grudem**, “There is no higher standard of goodness than God’s own character and his approval of whatever is consistent with that character.”
2. **Pink**, “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**).”
 - a. **Psalm 119:68** You are good and do good; Teach me Your statutes.
 - b. **Psalm 33:5** He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.
3. **God is the source of all good in the world:**
 - a. **James 1:17** Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.
 - b. **Psalm 145:9** The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.
 - c. **Acts 14:17** 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."
 - d. **Matthew 5:45** so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

- e. **Matthew 7:11** "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"
- f. **Psalm 84:11** For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.
- g. **Romans 8:28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.
- h. **Romans 8:32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

II. Discussing Goodness...

A. *The "Problem" of Evil...*

1. **Due to a misunderstanding of God's "goodness" evil became a problem to be explained...**
 - a. So many have believed and promulgated a faulty description of God...
 - b. Many have a "Santa Clause" picture of God – God's goodness described only in terms of "love, mercy, and grace" without mention of His goodness displayed in His moral purity and judgment and wrath poured out on sinners...
 - c. Many in our day would rather follow religious hunches than the revealed Word of God... they do not want to admit their sinfulness before a Holy God.
 - d. **Romans 11:22** Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off...
 - e. **Without this understanding the Atonement becomes unnecessary!**
 - f. **If goodness is to be understood in a way that excludes suffering in this life, than the existence of evil/problems/pain/etc. presents a problem for our understanding of God...**
 - g. **Packer**, "The only way to save the liberal view of God is to dissociate Him from these things and to deny that he has any direct relation to them or control over them, in other words, to deny his omnipotence and lordship over His world."
2. **Pink**, "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."
3. **Pink**, "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."

B. *God's Work of Redemption*

1. From the Incarnation, God's goodness was displayed in sending His Son... **Luke 2:14** "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."
2. **Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the

- glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds
3. **Pink**, "... God's benignity [cannot] 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 them 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**)
 4. God's common grace (goodness/free favor) is displayed to all in creation, preservation, and blessings of this life, while God's special grace is manifested in salvation.
 5. **Packer**, "God is good to all in some ways, and to some in all ways."

C. Application

1. **Worship & Right Relationship...** **Tozer**, "The greatness of God rouses fear within us, but His goodness encourages us not to be afraid of Him. To fear and not be afraid – that is the paradox of faith."
2. **Gratitude...** We who have been beneficiaries of such benefits ought to praise the Lord!
3. **An imitation of God's goodness seen in our lives...** **Galatians 6:9-10** Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.
4. **Close with Reading Psalm 107 & 116:12-18**