

The Goodness of God

Goodness: Defining the Term

Goodness is a term that relates to the qualitative nature of a thing/person being described.

- ◆ goodness in character: honorable; morally excellent; righteous; kind.
- ◆ goodness in motivation: caring; conscientious; generous; friendly.
- ◆ goodness in action: beneficent; appropriate; skilled, effectual.

Fact: God is Good

- ◆ God is inherently (intrinsically) good – in character, purposes & ways.
 - He is His own source of goodness – the Fountain of goodness.
 - He is His own standard for goodness – the Definer of good.
 - He is good in the essence of His Being – this is central to His perfection.
 - He is good in the direction of His will – this is central to His righteousness.
 - He is good in the works of His hand – this is central to His lovingkindness.
- ◆ God is entirely (thoroughly) good – in character, purposes & ways.
 - His goodness is without defect – it is perfect in quality, beyond enhancement.
 - His goodness is without limit – it is abundant in measure, beyond enlargement.
 - All His works are infused with goodness – goodness permeates all His works.
 - All His works are crowned with goodness – goodness beautifies all His works.
- ◆ God is eternally and immutably good – in character, purposes & ways.
 - He is changelessly good, and His goodness is an essential part of His eternal glory.

“Then Moses said, ‘I pray Thee, show me *Thy glory!*’ And He said, ‘I Myself will make *all My goodness* pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.’ ”
Ex. 33:18-19

“Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and *abundant in goodness* and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generations.’ ”
Ex. 34:6-7 (KJV)

“*Good and upright is the LORD*; therefore He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the afflicted in justice, and He teaches the humble His way.”
Ps. 25:8-9

O give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good*; for His mercy endureth forever.”
I Chron. 16:34 (KJV)
(Also, *Ps. 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1*)

“They shall utter the memory of *Your great (abundant) goodness*, and shall sing of (*lit.*, bubble forth) Your righteousness.
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. The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His ways”
Ps. 145:7-9, 16 (NKJV)

“Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for *the LORD is good*, for His mercy (lovingkindness) is everlasting.”
Jer. 33:11

“*Thou art good and doest good*; teach me Thy statutes.”
Ps. 119:68

Defining the Goodness of God

- ◆ God's goodness is the expression of all of His attributes in the exercise of His will.
- ◆ God's goodness is the perfect balance of all His attributes manifested in all His works.
- ◆ God's goodness is the inherent righteousness of all His purposes seen in all His works.
- ◆ God's goodness is the inclination of His will to deal kindly and bountifully with all creatures, but especially those in His own image.
- ◆ God's goodness is His eternal and immutable commitment to His glory.
- ◆ God's glory is His delight in magnifying His goodness in all His works.
 - He delights in being righteous in all His ways and just in all His judgments.
 - He delights in being persistently faithful to His purposes and His promises.
 - He delights in being gracious, expressing mercy & magnifying compassion.
 - He delights in upholding His revelation as eternally fixed & enduringly true.
- ◆ God's goodness is His redeeming love sovereignly directed toward His elect.
- ◆ God's goodness is an integral aspect of His justice as well as His mercy & love.

"Let the LORD be glad in His works."
Ps. 104:31

No one can conceive of a Being better than God, or superior to God. To conceive of someone better necessitates a perception of a defect in the original concept of God, or in the Being of God. Hence, God is necessarily infinitely and perfectly good – a conclusion based on the simple fact that we can conceive of Him as a Being without defect and without limitation.

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

I John 1:5

"who alone ... dwells in unapproachable light"

I Tim. 6:16

"Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow."

James 1:17

"And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.'"

Mk. 10:18

The Scriptures are emphatic regarding God's perfectly unique goodness and His uniquely perfect goodness.

The Nature and Manifestation of God's Goodness

- ◆ His goodness is manifest particularly in and through His works.
 - His goodness was first manifest in the perfection of His creative working – and in its wise design and its amazing diversity.
 - He created to exhibit His goodness – especially to intelligent creatures who can discern and appreciate His goodness.
 - He redeems sinners to manifest and magnify His goodness.
 - He glorifies sinners so they might be brought to delight in His unsearchable goodness forever.
 - He judges unrepentant sinners to manifest & magnify His goodness in upholding justice & honoring righteousness.
- ◆ His goodness is defined and displayed in His self-revelation.
 - He is good to reveal His character & His ways to His creatures.
 - He is good to provide a basis for our understanding of His will, His values, and His purposes.
- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His commandments, magnifying the goodness of His rule.
 - He defines what is good and what He requires in clear & understandable terms.
 - He governs on the basis of declared, immutable standards of absolute righteousness.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ... And God saw that the light was good; ... And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good."

Gen. 1:1-31

"As for God, His way is blameless (perfect)."

II Sam. 22:31;

(also, Ps. 18:30)

- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His truthfulness.
 - He is good in that He only communicates truth – fixed, timeless & irrefutable truth.
 - He is good in that He does not deceive and that He will never (He cannot!) lie.

Comment: The goodness of God is particularly evident in the expression of His communicable attributes of faithfulness, love, justice, mercy, and patient forbearance. His goodness is seen more in these attributes than in His non-communicable attributes such as holiness, omnipotence, omniscience, etc., although never separate from them.

Also, God has chosen to accentuate His goodness through the revelation of His nature as it is communicated in the names He ascribes to Himself (*e.g.*, *El Roi*; *El Shaddai*; *Yahweh Rophe*; *Yahweh Rohi*).

- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His faithfulness (*Ps. 89:1-2*; *Lam. 3:22-23*)

- He is good in that He keeps every promise.
- He is good in that He is absolutely trustworthy.
- He is good in that He is unchanging in His purposes.

“The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him.” *Nah. 1:7*

- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His general benevolence.
 - Consider the continual & abundant provision for all needs of all creatures.
 - Consider the manifold means He has created for indulging man’s pleasure.
- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His special love.
 - His covenant loyalty to those He has redeemed magnifies His goodness.
 - His jealous concern for those He has redeemed exalts the truth that He is good.
- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His justice.
 - His goodness is seen in that He loves what is good and hates what is evil.
 - His goodness is seen in that He loves justice and hates injustice.
 - His goodness is seen in the just penalty He requires for transgression of His holiness.
 - His goodness is seen in that He will not allow a single injustice to persist indefinitely.
- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His mercy.

“For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all who call upon Thee.”
Ps. 86:5
 “As for God, His way is blameless (perfect).”
II Sam. 22:31
(also, Ps. 18:30)
 “Behold then the goodness and the severity of God.”
Rom. 11:22 (KJV)

Comment: God’s goodness extends to all – He proves that He is generous and impartial in His works of general benevolence. However, He freely chooses to enlarge His benevolence in the sovereign dispensing of His grace toward some and not toward others. But beyond all expressions of His general benevolence, and in the greatness of His goodness, He also freely chooses to be merciful to select individuals and to withhold mercy from others. This is the exercise of absolute sovereignty, and in particular the prerogative of One who holds a holy and righteous sovereignty.

Related Note: Mercy is not a necessary part of His goodness. God’s authentic and infinite goodness stands independent of whether He chooses to extend mercy. Nevertheless, all expressions of His mercy powerfully enrich and gloriously magnify His goodness.

- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His patient forbearance. (*Ex. 34:6*; *Ps. 78:37-39*; *Rom. 9:22*)
- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His provision of a way of salvation – a way that is entirely separate from works ... a way based on grace alone and received by faith alone.
- ◆ His goodness is revealed in His commitment to hear and to answer prayer.

End Note: Since God is infinitely good, He is the most qualified and best suited Being to sovereignly govern the world – including my life.
Since God is infinitely good, there can be no just or logical grounds for complaint against Him for any of His works, whether of benevolence, justice, mercy, etc.

“For the LORD is good: His lovingkindness (mercy) is everlasting, and His faithfulness (truth) to all generations.”
Ps. 100:5 (KJV)

“The LORD is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works.”
Ps. 145:9

“Willingly I will sacrifice to Thee; I will give thanks to Thy name, O LORD, for it is good.”
Ps. 54:6

Summary Comment:

The Scriptures are replete and resplendent with the goodness of God. It is that innate attribute of God that most appeals to our nature, and that most stimulates us to respond in gratitude & praise to Him and in trust of Him. His goodness is an aspect of His special revelation that He does not want us to miss ... one He purposes to accent. It is also an aspect of general revelation that He does not allow anyone to miss ... even one He magnifies for all to see experientially.

Questions:

- ◆ Can God be good and yet hold an emotion of hatred?
- ◆ Can God be good and yet express retributive justice and wrath?
- ◆ Can God be good and choose not to be merciful?
- ◆ Is God good when, in His providence, He afflicts with suffering?
- ◆ Is God good when, in His providence, He allows natural disasters to occur?
- ◆ By what standard do we, or should we, measure goodness in our experience?
- ◆ By what standard do we speak of the goodness of God in our life situations?

An Observation ... and Related Implications

To say that God is good is to imply that there is something He is not → He is *NOT evil*. Further, He is *never unjust* in any administration of any attributes toward any creature.

- ◆ Good and evil are completely antithetical. They are exact opposites – like infinitely separated poles when used in reference to God because God is infinitely good and unimpeachable in righteous and judgment.
- ◆ God’s goodness is as distinctly different from evil, and as widely separated from evil, as total darkness is distinct from and wholly separated from the brightest and purest light – God’s goodness is unsearchable in its greatness.
- ◆ God in His infinite goodness hates anything and everything that is antithetical to His nature. Hence, He necessarily hates all that is evil; He must do so by the very nature of His Being, and He necessarily hates evil with a holy and righteous indignation – this is inherent to His goodness.