

Lesson 18

GOD'S GOODNESS

Compiled by Darrell Crow based upon personal studies, notes and prayer.

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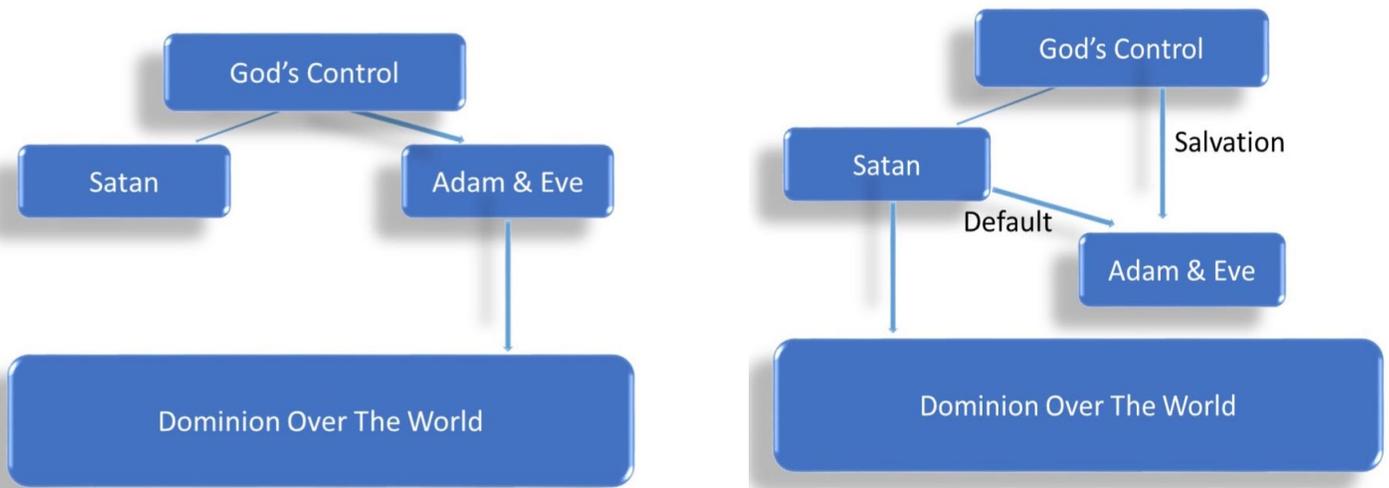
Another characteristic of God is the goodness of God. What does the goodness of God mean? Tony Evans Th.D, a Christian pastor, speaker, author, and a widely-syndicated radio and television broadcaster, said this:

“God’s goodness can be defined as the collective perfections of His nature and the benevolence of His acts...God is good by nature and good in what He does.”

Wayne Grudem (Wayne A. Grudem is a prominent evangelical theologian, seminary professor, and author. He co-founded the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and served as the general editor of the ESV Study Bible) defines it this way:

“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.”

Since, God is the source for good, He is the standard of goodness. So it is fitting He has all power and authority. Essentially, this means that God is good in His nature and everything that He does is good. We see this in how Christ responds to the rich man in Luke 18. The rich man approaches Jesus about how to inherit eternal life and calls Jesus good. Jesus responds with, *And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. (Luke 18:19)*



In the two diagrams above the left represents the order God established at creation. The right diagram represents the order after sin. The evils of the world are the results of sin and the evil Satan who has wrestled dominion over the world from Adam and Eve.

James, the brother of Christ says in *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.*)

James says every good and perfect gift comes from above. When we look at family, friends, job, rain, sunshine, etc., they must all be attributed to God. He is the source of everything good. In fact, God gives these perfect gifts even to those who do not love Him. As Christ said in 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.*

God in His goodness gives rain and sunshine to the evil and good alike. Theologians have called this **common grace**. This is grace that God gives to all people, regardless of whether they accept Him or not. Consider *Acts 17:24–25*:

- *Acts 17:24–25 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;*

Paul said to the Athenians, God gives “*all men life and breath and everything else.*” He is constantly giving grace to people. He is constantly pouring out His goodness on the righteous and evil alike. Sometimes, people think of God as being stingy, as though we have to plead with Him to give us good things. However, this is far from true. Look at how Christ described God’s desire to give good things to His children:

- *Luke 11:11–13 Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? ¹² Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? ¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”*

Christ, while instructing His disciples on how to pray (Luke 11:1), encourages them to pray by teaching them about God’s desire to give good gifts.

He compares God’s desire to give good gifts to a parent trying to feed his son. Typically, when you see parents trying to feed, especially, little children, there is no reluctance from the parent trying to feed them. The parent is running around, trying to get the child to take one more bite. They are trying to corral the child to open his mouth to eat what is good for him.

I, the LORD, am your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.” Psalm 81:10. It is the child who is reluctant in receiving the food, not the parent’s reluctance in giving it. Jesus says if parents, who are evil, feed their children and give them good gifts, how much more will the heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask Him? God is not only the source of good things, but He desires to give His children good things, just like a parent does.

James 1:5 says: But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. In describing God’s desire to give wisdom to His children, especially when going through trials, James says God gives generously to those who ask Him. In fact, James later says that many people have not received His gifts simply because they haven’t asked (*James 4:2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.*). They are not willing to come to the source of all good things, and therefore, they receive nothing.

God is not only the standard of good things, but He is also the source of all good things, and therefore, we should seek His face for His blessing. Christ taught us in the Lord’s Prayer to ask for our “daily bread” (*Give us this day our daily bread. Matthew 6:11*).

Now, Scripture never teaches us that God wants to make us wealthy and healthy, but God is all about blessing us in order to better build His kingdom and bring glory to His name

- *Genesis 12:2-3 I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”*

Those are the types of good things He wants to give. Jesus declared “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* (Matthew 5:6). God promises to fill our desire for truly good things—for things that are righteous.

What should the believer's response to God's goodness be? Paul said in *1 Timothy 4:4-5*, *For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; ⁵ for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*

Everything God created is good and is to be received with thanksgiving. Paul writes this in the context of teaching about false teachers that would forbid marriage and also certain foods (*men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth*). Many Christians believe that if you are a Christian, you should not have any fun. Much of Christianity is full of all kinds of legalism keeping Christians from things that God nowhere forbids in Scripture.

Let us remember that one of Satan's first temptations was to hinder the enjoyments of God's creation. He tried to implant the lie into the woman's head that "all the trees" of the garden were forbidden. In the same way, many Christians get snared by man-made laws that forbid them of the enjoyment of God's creation. Listen to what Paul told the rich people in Timothy's congregation:

- *1 Timothy 6:17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.*

Paul told the rich people that God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. There is a sense in which Christians should have the most fun and pleasure in life. This is true because we see all these things as gifts from God. God wants us to enjoy food, He wants us to enjoy leisure, He wants us to enjoy the season of our youth, He wants us to enjoy work, etc. These are His gifts to us, created for our pleasure and enjoyment. Listen to what Solomon said, who was the wisest man on the earth.

- *Ecclesiastes 5:18–20 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. ¹⁹ Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. ²⁰ For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.*

Solomon said he realized (meaning this was something he did not previously understand) that it was good for man to eat, drink, and find satisfaction in his labor and that this was a gift from God (v. 18). He understood that wealth and possessions were given by God to be enjoyed (v. 19).

These truths do not change the fact that Christians are called to be disciplined with their earthly treasures and that in whatever we enjoy, we must not cause offense to other brothers

- *Matthew 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal,*
- *Romans 14:21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.*

But in the confines of what is moral and loving, there is freedom and encouragement to enjoy. Christians are called to enjoy God's gifts and always focus on the Giver of all good gifts.

How else should God's goodness affect us?

God's goodness should always provoke worship and thanksgiving. Because we realize where every good and perfect gift comes from, it should always prompt us to give glory to God. Look at what the Psalmist said:

- *Psalm 107:1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*
- *Psalm 107:8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men!*

The believer should always respond with worship and thanksgiving to God since He is the giver of all good things. It should be noted, as we talk about God's goodness, that Scripture declares that God uses everything—all events—for the believer's good. *Romans 8:28 says 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.*

Even though there is a common grace, a common goodness that God gives to all, there is a special grace that God gives only to believers. For the believer, every event is working out to his good in order to make him into the image of Christ. And for this reason, a believer should give thanks in every situation (*1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*). Not for every situation, but in every situation.

Like Job, the believer can give thanks even in difficulties because he knows God's hand and goodness are on it. Job declared in *Job 1:21, He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."* Believers should respond to God's goodness by worshiping and saying, "Thank you".

How else should God's goodness make the believer respond?

Not only should God's goodness provoke us to thanksgiving, and worship, it should provoke us to the practice of good works. Listen to Christ's reasoning behind loving and blessing our enemy:

- *Matthew 5:44-45 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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.*

Christ essentially says, "Love your enemies and pray for them because your father also blesses both the good and evil. Do it because your father does it." God's goodness should draw His children to practice good works.

- *Galatians 6:10 says this, 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.*

As the opportunities arise, let us do good to all people, but especially to those who are saved. Let us be zealous in our giving, let us be zealous in our praying, let us be zealous in acts of mercy because we have a Father who is always doing good. Let us, therefore, always do good as well.

God's goodness means that He is the standard of all that is good and that everything He does is ultimately good. Understanding this reality should make us seek to enjoy God's gifts. It should constantly draw us to worship, thanksgiving, and ultimately to practice good works, as children representing their good Father.



- Thanksgiving
- Worship & Praise
- Standard For Good
- Goodness Summarizes God
- Good & Perfect Gifts
- Enjoy Provisions
- Good Works



- Love Your Enemies
- Pray For Those Who Persecute You
- Zealous In Our Giving
- Zealous In Our Mercy
- Zealous In Our Prayers
- Zealous In The Use Of Our Gifts

Holy

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