

Session 1

GOD IS GOOD

Genesis 1:26-31; Romans 8:28

Memory Verse


We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

– ROMANS 8:28, CSB



God is Good

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God is spirit. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, justice, holiness, and truth.

 Have you ever been in a situation where something that was supposed to be for your good appeared to be or felt like the opposite?

 How do you typically respond in situations where your hopes or expectations are not met?

Imagine a scenario where a child has a large splinter in his or her foot. The child knows that his parents love him and do not desire to do him any harm. The child also knows very well that there is a large splinter in his foot and it has to be removed. If it stays it will only continue to cause pain and could eventually lead to an infection and a more serious situation. But it's difficult for a child to think rationally about those facts when the kitchen light is glinting off the sharp needle that is descending upon his foot.

Let's think about two ways of seeing this situation. First, we recognize that this scene taken completely out of context is distressing. Here we have a grown adult subduing a smaller, weaker child. The adult is sticking the child with a sharp object while holding him down by force. The child is trying to get free and protesting. He's

crying. There is no doubt that the child is upset, worried, and afraid. One might draw the conclusion that there is some sort of physical abuse going on.

Now, let's consider the fuller context. The adult and child know each other. In fact, the adult is the small boy's mother. She daydreamed of having this son long before she was even married. She rejoiced when she first learned that she was pregnant. She spent nine months preparing for his arrival. She says that the day he was born was the happiest day of her life. Now, she has to get this splinter out so that it doesn't get infected. And, although the child can't understand this, the pain that she is causing him at that moment is an expression of her love and care for him.

The difference between these two perspectives makes all the difference in the world in terms of our understanding of what is happening in that situation. Similarly, the way Christians understand who God is and His relationship with them is critical if they are to walk through the world with the joy and peace that their heavenly Father intends for them.

Session Summary

The world today often portrays God as a stern judge whose only objective is to heap guilt upon people and make their lives difficult. The reality is that God is a stern judge to those who have not trusted in Christ. But for the redeemed of the Lord, God is a tender and gracious Father who works all things to their good. God does good to His children because He Himself is good.

1. The Goodness of God (Gen. 1:26-31)

The Book of Genesis is foundational to our understanding of the rest of the Scriptures. What we believe about these first chapters sets the trajectory for how we will interpret the rest of the Bible and how we will understand the world around us. We must remember that the Scriptures are divinely inspired (in a way no other book is), inerrant (without error), and completely sufficient (containing all we need to know for salvation and walking with God).

Furthermore, until the past few hundred years, the vast majority of Christians have taken the first three chapters of Genesis literally. In other words, Christians (and Jews for that matter) have believed that God created the world in six literal days, that Adam and Eve were literal people, and that they actually gave in to the temptation of Satan in the Garden

of Eden. In fact, Jesus Himself believed the Genesis account and had no notion whatsoever of the idea that God created the world and all living things through any other means. (See Mark 10:6.)

? How does our understanding of the creation account shape our belief about God and everything else?

When we abandon a literal view of Genesis, then we lower our view of the Scriptures to the wisdom of man. When we claim that Genesis 1 refers to millions of years of an evolutionary process, then we are saying Christ Himself got it wrong. Thus, it is better for Christians to firmly but humbly cling to the veracity of the Scriptures, even if human wisdom contradicts this view. Christians affirm with Charles Spurgeon that, “The work of creation is God’s making all things of nothing, by the Word of his power, in six normal consecutive days, and all very good.”¹

? What do we learn about God’s character from this account of creation?

God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His goodness. The creation of the world was all very good because the Creator who brought it about is good. Goodness is a part of God’s very essence and we look to Him as the standard of goodness. The Bible testifies that God is good, and then the Bible illustrates His goodness by relating what God does in this world.

? Application: In what ways have you seen the goodness of God in your life?

2. Working for Our Good (Rom. 8:28)

Now we come to a key distinction in our understanding of God's goodness. The Bible claims that God is good. Therefore, we believe and know that God is good. We accept this description as fact. Where we can err in our conception of God is to adopt the faulty notion that what is good and what is not good is a determination that we make by the light of our own wisdom and understanding of the world. This is a grave mistake. The Book of Proverbs warns us: "There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death" (14:12). Thankfully, we aren't left to our own devices to try to make sense of this world. We have the Scriptures as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path.

 How can we discern what is good or not in the world?

God is good and does good to His children. This is different than the common misconception which claims that if God is good, then He will do what His children want Him to do. Jesus' teaching about prayer is helpful to us in our study of the goodness of God. Jesus said, "Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him" (Matt. 7:9-11).

Notice that Jesus didn't say God would give people whatever they ask for. Rather, He made it clear that God only gives good gifts. This is happy news for Christians because it means God doesn't leave them to their own devices, to be the arbiters of their own needs. This is good news because people are limited in their knowledge and wisdom. They are often deceived by their own sinfulness. Even Christians sometimes petition God in prayer with wrong motives. (See Jas. 4:3.)

Those who are in Christ trust God to do good in their lives, even if it is through something they don't want.



How are we able to reconcile God's goodness to His people with the difficulties we face in life?

We must be careful not to go beyond what has been given to us by God. We can't know the mind of God fully. There is much about this world and what happens in it that is a mystery to us. Of course, God sees all things from beginning to end, but we—His finite creatures—see dimly. The Scriptures do make some things plain to us. We do know it is God's purpose that His children be conformed to the image of Christ. Look at what Paul said in Romans 8:29: "For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."

This means God intends for Christians to become more like Christ in every way throughout their lives. Therefore, if God afflicts His children with something painful or difficult but that affliction results in their being conformed to the image of Christ, then they may rightly call it good. It's not that the thing itself is good, but that it has been wielded in the hand of God for their good.



Application: How have you seen God working in your life in unexpected ways for good?

3. Our Good Works (Rom. 8:28)

It is critical that we have a proper understanding of the goodness of God. God is powerful, holy, and sovereign. All the universe is under His authority. There isn't a single molecule outside of His view and control. Not a single note is heard without His oversight. No photon of light misses God's intended mark.

Undergirding and permeating that incomprehensible power and sovereignty is goodness. Those who are in Christ serve a God whose goodness is deeper than they can fathom.


God's incomprehensible goodness is seen most clearly in His mercy and grace toward sinners in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul went on to say in Romans 8:32: "He did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything?"

Those who have understood the gospel and responded with faith and repentance are now children of God. They have been adopted into the family of God. Christ is their Savior, and they know Christ Himself continues to intercede for them and their sin debt has been canceled.

 **How are Christian's lives changed by the goodness of God revealed in Jesus?**

The goodness of God in Christ toward sinners transforms them. They become new creations (see 2 Cor. 5:17); their heart of stone is removed, and they are given a heart of flesh (see Ezek. 36:26); they were made alive with Christ where before they were dead in their sins and trespasses (see Eph. 2:1-10). The Scriptures are clear that the result of Christ's good work on behalf of sinners should be forgiven sinners doing good works for the glory of God.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-10: "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do." The good works Christians do are done in faith and thanksgiving. Christians produce these good works because they are compelled by the joy in them as a result of God's goodness toward them. Christians do not do good works to somehow attain salvation. They do good works because of the work of salvation God has done in them and because they know He will be faithful to complete it at the day of Christ Jesus. (See Phil. 1:6.)

 **God is good and has saved us for good works in Christ. How can we know the good works God has called us to do?**

The good works that Christians do are those that are prescribed for them in the Scriptures. Works that are not rooted in the direction and principles of the Scriptures are inventions of man and may have a pretense of good, but are not truly good. When Christians carry out good works in obedience to God's commandments, then they show the fruit and evidence of a true and living faith.

When Christians faithfully carry out good works, the Lord blesses them and makes them a blessing to others. Through good works Christians:

- express their gratitude to God. (See 1 Thess. 5:18.)
- strengthen their assurance. (See Matt. 7:21.)
- build up other Christians. (See 1 Thess. 5:11.)
- adorn their profession of the gospel. (See Titus 2:10.)
- glorify God. (See 1 Cor. 10:31.)


Finally, Christians must remember that their ability to do good works does not arise at all from within themselves but entirely from Christ who dwells in them.




Application: How do your good works evidence your true and living faith?

Conclusion

God is good and does good to His people. His goodness is truly good and is not subject to the definitions and perceptions of man. The ultimate expression of God's goodness toward His people is in the fact that God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son as an atoning sacrifice for sin. God's goodness pervades even those circumstances that are painful or difficult in Christians lives, as God uses them for their further growth in faith and holiness. Finally, those who have experienced the goodness of God in Christ produce good work out of a thankful and joyful heart.

 How has God revealed more of His goodness to you through today's study?

 How have you experienced God's goodness in the midst of a particularly difficult season?

 How might you share about the goodness of God by pointing to His nearness to you in the midst of life's difficulties? Who is He calling you to share this with?

CHRIST CONNECTION: The goodness of God is fully displayed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is true not only because Jesus is God, but because Jesus' mission on earth was the climax of God the Father's good intentions toward wretched sinners.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Christians live to fulfill the mission of their Creator and Redeemer. This mission is intimately tied to both His character and His work in this world.



FOR NEXT WEEK

God is Love

Main Passages

- Ephesians 2:1-8

Session Outline

1. Sin and Death (Eph. 2:1-3)
2. Mercy and Love (Eph. 2:4-7)
3. Grace and Faith (Eph. 2:8)

Memorize

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

- Romans 8:28, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - Genesis 1:26-31
- Tuesday - Psalm 34:8
- Wednesday - Psalm 145:9
- Thursday - 1 Timothy 4:4
- Friday - James 1:17
- Saturday - Romans 8:28

References

¹Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Catechism: With Scriptural Proofs* (n.p.: Merchant Books, 2018).