

This morning we are continuing in our series on the Attributes of God. All summer we have taking an attribute each Sunday and trying to get a better grasp of it in the time we have, and we have attempted to draw out the difference a firm grasp of that attribute can make in our lives.

In the opening message of our series, I used something the Prophet Jeremiah said to remind us why this series is so important for each of us. Jeremiah 9:23-24 which says, *"<sup>23</sup> This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man gloat in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his might, or the rich man in his riches. <sup>24</sup> Let them boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the LORD who is just and righteous, whose love is unending, and that I delight in these things. I, the LORD, have spoken!"* (NLT)

Isn't that an awesome reminder of the importance of growing in our understanding of what God's like. And to know that he delights in being God to us.

**[Transition]** - The attribute before us today is the "Goodness of God."

As we consider the Goodness of God I want to do three things.

1. I want to begin by refreshing our awareness of the Bible's repeated declaration that our God is totally and completely good.
2. Having refreshed ourselves in that, I want to talk briefly about the mistake people often make when they doubt the goodness of God when bad stuff happens in life.
3. And finally, I want to remind you why it is so important for you and I to keep a firm hold on the truth that God is good.

**[Transition]** - So, let's get started. The Bible repeatedly asserts God is good. The number of repetitions of this truth in the Bible probably indicates how easily it leaks out of our hearts.

### **The Bible repeatedly asserts that God is good.**

The Bible is packed with statements that remind us of the goodness of God. God repeatedly declares himself to be good and the writers of both the Old and New Testament affirm by their own testimony the goodness of God. From cover to cover, there is no doubt that...say it with me: God is good!

Psalm 25:8 declares, *"Good and upright is the Lord."* Psalm 31 proclaims, *"How great is your goodness?"* And Psalm 34:8 captures the tone of the Psalms with this challenge, *"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him."*

Genesis 1 assumes the goodness of God and the writer declares at the end of each creative day, everything God created was good.

In Exodus 33:19 Moses is talking with God asking for some proof of his presence...he says, "Hey God, let me see you...show me your glory." God responds by saying, *"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence."* From that response we come to understand the goodness of God, in profound and wonderful ways, permeates everything about who God is in all his glory.

**[Quote]** - John Gill, great preacher, and theologian of the 1700's writes so eloquently about the goodness of God, "Our Jehovah, the true God, is superlatively good; good in the highest degree, good beyond all conception and expression...God's goodness is infinite, he is abundant in it: it is so great, that it cannot be said how great it is; finite minds cannot comprehend it; the height, depth, length, and breadth of it, are immeasurable; it knows no bounds nor limits; it is so perfect that nothing can be added to it..."(Gill, Body of Divinity, p. 92-93).

In other words, goodness oozes from God's pores; every fiber of his being is laced with it, every urge inspired with it. Even his wrath is fueled by goodness in its passion to confront and punish evil that offends his holiness and brings so much pain and suffering to our lives.

The Psalmists often referred to God as good. Psalm 145:8-9, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made."

Psalm 107 is a Psalm of praise dedicated to the goodness of God and all his goodness shown to humankind. Its introduction goes like this, (join me if you know it) *"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."* Repeatedly the Psalm returns to the phrase, *"Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love,"* a phrase that could be understood to refer to his "abundant goodness."

The testimony of the New Testament affirms God's goodness as well. Referring to his heavenly Father, Jesus said, *"There is only One who is good."*

Two different times in Matthew Jesus refers to the goodness of God. In Matthew 7:11, *"If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"*

And in 19:17,

**[Quote]** - Julian (or Juliana of Norwich), was a English nun who lived in the late 1300's. Her writings, now known as *Revelations of Divine Love*, are the earliest surviving English language works by a woman. Juliana clearly saw the goodness of God as the foundation of all of life's blessings. She writes, *"...his goodness is full and complete, and in it there is nothing lacking."* Just as our flesh is covered by clothing, and our blood is covered by our flesh, so are we, soul and body,



*covered and enclosed by the goodness of God. Yet, the clothing and the flesh will pass away, but the goodness of God will always remain and will remain closer to us than our own flesh.” (Devotional Classics, p.71).*

**[Transition]** - Now, despite the overwhelming evidence that God is good, it is not uncommon for some to make the mistake of doubting the goodness of God when bad stuff happens in life. They make the very common mistake of doubting in the darkness what God taught them in the light. So, how can we keep a firm hold on God’s goodness when things go bad?

### **How to keep a firm grip on God’s goodness when things go bad?**

1. Often people have concluded that God is not good because of the “bad” stuff that happens.

>Remember evil occurs as a result of rebellion from God’s goodness. For God to create humankind with the capability to choose to love him freely and not under compulsion, he gave to each of us a free will. Sin and evil and wickedness and the pain and suffering that come with it became realities in the experience of humankind when they used their free choice to rebel against God’s goodness. The suffering and tragedy that plagues our lives is sin’s doing...not God’s doing.

**[Quote]** - Listen again to John Gill, *“There is nothing but goodness in God, and nothing but goodness comes from him; there is no iniquity in him, nothing evil in his nature, no unrighteousness in any of his ways or works; he is light itself; all purity, holiness, truth, and goodness...”* (Gill, Body of Divinity, p. 93).

2. Some wonder of God is good because life is so hard.

>Our definition of good is often too one-dimensional. In other words, we may see things as bad or negative or painful or whatever...but, usually it is because we are not fully understanding what good is for us.

**[Illustration]** - Hard or uncomfortable doesn’t mean it’s bad for us.

- Exercising and staying fit is hard...but it's good.
- Eating healthy is often more difficult...and sometimes not as fun... but it's good.
- Working through conflict is hard...but it's good.
- Parents...disciplining your kids and teaching them important lessons in life is hard for you and for your kids...but it's good.
- Experiencing discipline at any age is not fun, nice, or comfortable... but it's good!!

Good is not always what is easy, comfortable, hassle free or whatever... sometimes the goodness of God is displayed through very tough times... in those times we come to know the goodness of God in ways we never would have before.

3. Remember the purposes of God in your life.

>The primary purpose of God in our lives is not necessarily all the creaturely comforts we strive so tenaciously for. The primary purpose of God in our lives is to foster and nurture intimacy with Him. And while we don't like to hear it or admit it, too often, the most effective process to foster that intimacy with God are the struggles we go through in our lives. Let me ask you...are you more driven to your knees in prayer when you are on vacation relaxing in some lounge chair or when you are facing a difficult challenge in your life?

**[Illustration]** - There was a man named David. He was homeless and in his 40s, but his face displayed even more years of struggle. His demeanor suggested he no longer trusted anyone.

He had called a church looking for bus fare. The church didn't give bus fare, but the pastor agreed to meet him anyway. He poured out to the Pastor an abbreviated life story riddled with accounts of abuse and broken relationships. It was a story line not untypical for people who call the street home. Except for the clincher. He had come to a fascinating conclusion regarding life.

"I look at it this way," he said. "If I have a good day, I win. If I have a bad day, God wins."<sup>1</sup>

I wish it weren't true, but sometimes...keep in mind not all struggle comes from this, but sometimes...God allows the natural consequences of my poor choices and rebellion to come to me because he knows that the pain in my life is one of the best ways to get my attention so that he can lovingly restore me. I mean think about it...I'd hate to get to the end of the day of life and hear God say, "Well, I never really knew you, but I didn't want to cause you discomfort, so I let you keep going...sorry!"

I'm not suggesting that God causes those tough times, but he definitely uses them for our good. He redeems them for our good. I am also not suggesting that all the bad stuff we experience in life is the result of our sin. Some, obviously, is the result of the sin of others.

Remember Joseph's experience? Joseph's brothers became jealous of him, and they abandon him in a deep pit, have second thoughts, pull him out of the pit and sell him as a slave to a caravan of Ishmaelites that were passing by.

In the end Joseph ends up second in command in Egypt and the brothers are forced to come to him for provisions in the middle of a famine. In the end Joseph forgives his brothers and says, "*As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil*" (Gen. 50:20, NLT). The goodness of God means that God doesn't send tragedy, he uses it, he redeems it. What man meant for evil, God meant for good!

**[Illustration]** - A student of Dr. Dwight Pentecost at Dallas Seminary tells the story of being in class one day and Dr. P asked the class to pray for his wife. She was going to see the doctor because of some symptoms which



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<sup>1</sup> J. Douglas Burford, Mission, Kansas.

might indicate cancer. Later, Pentecost reported to the class that the tests were negative, and his wife's malady was not a malignancy. The entire class breathed a sigh of relief, and rightly so.

But Dr. P was not through with his report to the class. He went on to challenge them concerning their definition of "good." He indicated that several people had responded something like "God is good" to the report that his wife did not have cancer. "Yes," Pentecost said, "God is good. But, men, I have to say to you that if the doctor's report had been that my wife did have cancer, God is still good."

Dr. P. had a firm grasp of the goodness of God. The circumstances he experienced in life did nothing to change that conviction. He knew what we also must come to grips with if we are to think biblically about the goodness of God—God is always good, whether He sends prosperity or allows pain, whether he preserves health or allows sickness."

**[Illustration]** - On February 6, 1870, George Mueller's wife, Mary, died of rheumatic fever. They had been married 39 years and four months. He was 64 years old.



Shortly after the funeral he was strong enough to preach a "funeral sermon" as he called it. He chose Psalm 119:68 as his text, "You are good, and do good." His three points were:

1. The Lord was good, and did good, in giving her to me.
2. The Lord was good, and did good, in so long leaving her to me.
3. The Lord was good, and did good, in taking her from me.

Under this third point, he recounts how he prayed for her during her illness:

Yes, my father, the times of my darling wife are in your hands. You will do the very best thing for her and for me, whether life or death. If it may be, raise up yet again my precious wife. You are able to do it, though she is so

ill; but whatever you choose to do, only help me to continue to be perfectly satisfied with your holy will.”<sup>2</sup>

**[Transition]** - The goodness of God is a core truth that we must not let slip from our hands.

**A firm grip on the goodness of God empowers our ability to trust and obey his direction in our lives.**

Adam and Eve found this out the very first time Satan came to them to tempt them to rebel against God’s goodness. Turn in your Bibles to Genesis 3. God had created the world and everything in it and he had created humankind, Adam and Eve, and he had placed them in the Garden of Eden. Chapter 3 beginning in verse 1 describes for us Satan’s approach to tempting them. **Read verses 1-5.**

*“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”*

***2** The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, **3** but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”*

***4** “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. **5** ‘For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”*

Do you see what Satan does here? He questions God’s goodness and his boundaries to protect that goodness. And he offers a lie in its place. And she and Adam fall for it. And you and I fall for it all too often.

**Here’s a principle to make note of:**

If we doubt God is good...then we will doubt that:

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<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *The Pleasures of God* (Multnomah, 1991); submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky.



- God's "no" keeps us from evil...  
...and we'll doubt
- God's "go" leads us to joy and fulfillment.

The moment we begin to let ourselves entertain the idea that maybe God isn't 100% good and that his will on the matter we face doesn't have our best good in mind is the moment our trust in God is undermined and we are immediately weakened in our ability to obey Him.

The second you doubt God's goodness is the second you doubt his word on:

- your finances and how you ought to manage them.
- your relationships and how you conduct yourself in them.
- how you manage your life.

The second you doubt God's goodness is the second you think that you are a better god of your life than God is.

And it is the second that you begin to rebel against his goodness.

Think about your life right now. In what areas are you struggling to obey God? In what areas are you struggling to do things God's way? Is it in your finances? Is it in how you're spending your time? Is it what you're doing with your life? Where are you feeling resistance to living as God is calling you to live?

At the back of that resistance...the force that's driving that resistance is your doubt that God is good...and his ways are good...at the back of that resistance is your doubt that he has your best good in mind for you.

If you and I are going to grow in our ability to trust God and obey his will and way in our lives, then we must keep a firm hold on the unchanging fact that God is good. **The second you balk at that is the second you doubt that his "no" will protect you and his "go" will lead you.**

**[Transition]** - The goodness of God is an immutable fact, friends. He's literally good in every circumstance of your life. The goodness of God is

reassuring and comforting as we realize that the all-powerful God of the universe is altogether good and that he has your best good at heart...  
LITERALLY ALL THE TIME.

### **Conclusion:**

I want us to spend a few moments personally responding to the truth you have heard this morning.

If you're comfortable doing it, close your eyes...or you can bow your head and focus on the floor...but find a way to focus and think about your life right now.

Is there an area where you are struggling to navigate it God's way? Situation at work...in your family...in your marriage...with a neighbor...in your giving or generosity...in your personal obedience? Is there an area where you are just struggling to do the right thing?

What would it look like to completely trust God's goodness in that situation?

Trusting God's goodness can free you to do the right thing...say the right thing...it can free you from doing or saying the wrong thing.

In the privacy of your own heart and in your own words finish this sentence: *If I trusted God's complete goodness to me, I would feel empowered to\_\_\_\_\_.*

Now...remember Ps. 34, "*Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.*"

Lord Jesus...commune with my friends in these moments...help them see how questioning your goodness has been holding them back from doing the right thing and experiencing your best in their lives. Move in them. Strengthen their confidence in your goodness to them. Hear their hearts as they pray to you...fill them....and empower their faith.