

God is Good
September 21, 2014

I want to start this morning with some good news. There was the video online this week from the children of the man who was accidentally killed as he was teaching a child how to shoot an automatic weapon. Can you imagine how traumatized the nine year old girl would be who was involved in that? The children of the dead man are worried about this little girl. So they made a video telling her so and telling her that they don't blame her. They want her to heal from this and be well.

That was good news this week. But most of the week was bad news. The Ebola outbreak in Africa is bad news. The ISIS crisis is bad news. The Ukraine situation is bad news. The child and spouse abusers in the NFL are bad news. The unemployment situation is still bad news. The slow housing recovery is bad news. Our dysfunctional national government is bad news.

There may also be bad news in your life. Maybe you are in a troubled relationship. Maybe you are having financial difficulties. Maybe your health is not what you would like. Maybe you are worried about a layoff in your job. Maybe you are having parenting.

This morning I want to teach you something that will help you to deal better with the thing or things you are dealing with in your life. I want to explore the goodness of God with you this morning.

There is an old prayer, often taught to young children, that begins with the lines, "God is great, God is good..." Perhaps you have used it with your children. I remember praying a form of this prayer as a small child. But no one taught me what the goodness of God meant.

A.W. Tozer defines well for us the goodness of God.

***"The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward mankind. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people."* - A.W. Tozer**

(A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, Gift Edition, 1992, HarperCollins, p. 127)

When you were young, you may have believed God is good. But now maybe you have doubts because of what you are dealing with. Let me give you four reasons to believe in the goodness of God.

1. Believe God is good because of creation.

We see the goodness of God everyday. It is first revealed to us in nature, in all that God has created. We see the beauty of creation. We see the order of creation. We see the variety of creation. We see the consistency of creation. All of this points to the goodness of God. God himself looked at all He had created and declared it to be very good.

2. Believe God is good because Jesus says so.

It a conversation with a man Jesus says...

Mark 10:17-18 (NIV) As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone.

Jesus did not mean that no human is good enough to be called a good person in comparison to other people. You are likely a good person. Or you know someone who you and others characterize as a good person. Jesus is referring to perfect goodness. He affirms that only God is perfectly good, completely good. The man had labeled Jesus with the title of good. Jesus says that only God is deserving of good as a title.

3. Believe God is good because He did not end our lives when we first sinned.
The goodness of God is seen by Him patiently delaying His judgment of us and His wrath towards us. This is affirmed for us in Romans 2.

Romans 2:4 (NIV) ... do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

God is patient towards us in putting off the punishment we deserve for sin, so that we can realize our sin, admit our sin, repent of our sin, and find forgiveness from God in Christ Jesus.

4. Believe God is good because He sent us a savior.

Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's goodness. We needed a savior. God sent us a savior because He loves us. He loves us because He is good. His goodness disposes Him to love and mercy towards us.

So there are four reasons to believe that God is good. However, if you are still doubting the goodness of God, it may be because you do not yet understand what this goodness entails. Let us dig deeper into the goodness of God. The writer of Psalm 119 also affirms the goodness of God and points us to an extended truth of that goodness.

Psalm 119:68 (NIV) You are good, and what you do is good...

Because God is completely good, everything God does is good.

This hit home with me a few months ago. My father passed away this past June. In my grief I read a comment about something George Mueller had said about the goodness of God. George Mueller was a great man of faith. So was his devoted wife. He had been very happily married to his wife, Mary for 40 years. When she died, it grieved him deeply.

He preached at her funeral the following three points:

- **The Lord was good, and did good in giving her to me.**
- **The Lord was good, and did good in so long leaving her to me.**
- **The Lord was good, and did good in taking her from me.**

If God is perfectly good, and I believe He is, then everything He does is good. If he does something, it is a good thing and is done for good reasons. If He does not do

something, His abstaining is good and is for good reasons. Because God is perfectly good, it follows that everything God does is good.

My family has much to be thankful for in my dad's passing. He did not have dementia. My mom did not have to put him in a nursing home. He wasn't in much pain the last year of his life. He did not spend a long time in the hospital at the end, just over a week. He had a good spirit, his sense of humor, and a strong faith in God all the way to the end. He was able to make medical decisions for himself about the end of his life.

Not all of these things were true of your parents who died. But your parent's last years and passing could have been worse than it was.

Two years ago we lost Bob Bergen. Bob lost a leg several years before he died. He was in his 80's. He was stuck in a wheelchair for a long year before his leg healed enough to take a prosthesis. He had continuing problems with it too. And though he could walk again, he still could not drive. He had to depend on others to go anywhere, and that hurt. But in his better moments he realized things could be a lot worse than they were. He would speak to himself, and to me, that there were others a lot worse off than he was.

The same was true of your loved one. As bad as it was, it could have been worse. The same is true of you right now. As bad as it is, it could be worse. Your situation is not as bad as it could be. Give thanks to God for that. Praise God for His goodness to you.

Everything God does is good. But let's go a little deeper.

Because everything God does is good, everything God does is for our good.

Paul affirms this in his letter to the church at Rome.

Romans 8:28 (NIV) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

What are the ramifications of this for us?

> One is to **Trust that what knowledge He reveals to us is for our good.**

Everything in the Bible is for our good. It doesn't all apply to us in the same way, but it is all for our good. God has revealed THESE (holding up Bible) things for our good.

It also follows, secondly, that...

> **What knowledge He withholds from us is also for our good.**

We have significant questions about some of the things in the Bible. Christians have disagreed with each other for 2000 years concerning aspects of baptism, the Lord's Supper, church polity, election and others things. God could have been clearer in the Bible. He knew what confusion and division would occur. God chose not to make these things clearer. He did so for a good reason. He did so for our good.

God did not want us to know what was not good for us to know. It is good for us to trust Him without having all our questions answered. Too much information would work against our faith in God. Let me explain what I mean. If your children only got to eat cookies twice a year, you could offer them any cookie and they would likely accept it.

But give them cookies everyday and offer them a cookie today and they'll likely ask, "What kind is it?" Too much of something can spoil us and we get picky. It may be that too much revelation from God, instead of helping us believe Him more, would actually work against doing so. God only revealed what was good for us to know.

A third aspect of God working all things for our good is that...

> All that God does in our lives is for our good.

All of His commands and prohibitions are for our good. His Spirit in us is for our good. Giving us the Bible is for our good. Bringing us into a church family is for our good. Giving us the health and intelligence we have is for our good. Giving us guidance and wisdom is for our good.

And a fourth ramification of God working all things for our good is that...

> All that God does not do in our lives is for our good.

If God doesn't answer your prayer the way you want, it is for your good. If God doesn't heal you, it is for your good. If God lets you struggle with a problem, a temptation, another person, it is for your good.

I realize that such answers seem less than satisfying. When you are hurting, as I was last week, having to use a cane, such answers seem pitifully inadequate. But when I asked God why I was hurting like I was, what I really wanted was a simple answer. I did not want a long, drawn out explanation. And yet, that is all that will answer the why questions we have of God.

The ultimate good is something hidden in the perfect knowledge and wisdom of God, which we are not yet capable of understanding.

If God gave me a simple, short answer as to why I was suffering such pain, I would end up angry. It would not seem like a good enough reason to me. All I wanted was the pain to end. While I was suffering such pain, no answer would suffice. Any incomplete answer would hurt my faith in God.

The answer as to why I was suffering is too complex for me to understand. I cannot understand how suffering this pain is good because I cannot yet see the big picture. But when that picture is fully revealed, I will agree with God that it fit within God's good purposes for me to experience this physical pain. This is the logical outcome of believing that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good.

Since God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good, He is in control of this planet. Thus, everything that happens, happens because either:

- **God makes it happen.** For example, God formed the one and only God/man, Jesus, the Incarnation (God made flesh). Nothing could stop God from doing this. Sure, Mary could have said no, but God already knew she would say yes. If she refuse, God could find someone else who would say yes. God was going to bring Jesus and no power in the universe would stop Him.

- **God wants it to happen.** For example, it was God's will that Jesus give his life, and He did. It was God's will that Moses, and no one else, was to lead Israel out of Egypt. And though Moses did not want to, and threw up excuse after excuse, God would not take no for an answer.

- **God allows it to happen.** For example, God does not want us to sin, but He does allow us to do so.

God has a GOOD purpose for allowing each to be a part of human history. That means that everything that happens, happens for God's good reason. All that God does is good.

Not everything that happens is good. It wasn't good that David committed adultery. It wasn't good that David had someone murdered. It wasn't good that you sinned this week. But God allowed these things to happen for God's good reasons.

Every bad thing that happens in your life, as a follower of Jesus Christ, happens for God's good reasons. God doesn't make them happen. But He allows them to happen. He has the power and the knowledge to prevent them. Since He did not prevent them He must have a good reason for them. Since things are not as bad for us as they could be, we know God has indeed protected us from a lot of bad. We were not just lucky. It was not coincidence or statistics that saved us. It was God. God has prevented many bad things from happening to us. The bad He has not protected us from is therefore good for us to experience.

Can you accept a flat tire as being part of God's will for you?

Can you accept a troubled relationship as being part of God's will for you?

Can you accept cancer as being part of God's will for you?

God is good. Everything God does is good. Everything we experience is for our good.

Let the goodness of God be a comfort to you. Everything you hold dear in your relationship with God is based on God's goodness. If God were not good, you would not be here today. If God were not good, you would be lost in your sins and have no hope of eternal life.

Today, put your faith in the goodness of God. Receive Jesus as your Savior and turn your life over to Him as your Lord, and you will be saved from the consequences of your sins. You will receive eternal life.