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The Goodness of God

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon for those who face pain and hardship in this life to doubt the goodness of God. But the clear message of Scripture is that God is uniquely good, and that He is the measure for everything we call good. Considered together with His wisdom and power, Christians can be assured that God not only desires to reveal His goodness, but is able to accomplish His good plan in the best possible way. In this lesson, Dr. Lawson explores what it means to say that God is good, and how His goodness is operative in the world.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 145:8–17; James 1:16–18

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the nature and extent of God's goodness
2. To encourage those who struggle with God's goodness in the face of adversity
3. To elicit praise for the God who alone is good

QUOTATIONS

God the Father has not only given us all that we have and see before our eyes, but daily preserves and defends us against all evil and misfortune, averts all sorts of danger and calamity; and that He does all this out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a benevolent Father, who cares for us that no evil befall us.

—Martin Luther

The goodness of God . . . is the loveliness, benign character, sweetness, friendliness, kindness, and generosity of God. Goodness is the very essence of God's Being, even if there were no creature to whom this could be manifested.

—Wilhelmus à Brakel

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. God Is Good to All Creatures

- A. God's abundant goodness permeates the entire created order (Pss. 136:25; 145:9, 15–16).
- B. God's goodness extends even to the animal kingdom (Matt. 6:26; Job 38:41).

II. God Is Good to Unbelievers

- A. God extends to all people what is called “common grace”—His general goodness which is not redemptive (Matt. 5:45).
- B. Unbelievers are allowed to marry, have children, work, advance in their careers, etc.
- C. Unbelievers are able to enjoy the beauty of God's creation (Acts 14:17).
- D. Unbelievers can experience so much of God's goodness that it can sometimes appear like He's being better to them than to His own children (Ps. 73).

III. God Is Good to His Children

- A. There are general aspects of God's goodness to His children.
 - i. The goodness God lavishes on His children is not always in the form of material abundance, but any abundance does come from Him.
 - ii. God delights in meeting the needs of His children (Matt. 7:7).
 - iii. Everything good ultimately comes from God (James 1:17).
- B. There are specific aspects of God's goodness towards His children.
 - i. God is good in His plans for believers (Rom. 12:2; Jer. 29:11; Eph. 2:10).
Even trials are used to conform believers to the image of Christ.
 - ii. God is good toward believers with respect to His providence (Rom. 8:28).
 - iii. God is good in His protection of believers (Nah. 1:7).
 - iv. God is good in His patience toward believers.
 - v. God is good in His forgiveness toward believers.
- C. Believers should never doubt God's goodness. Getting believers to doubt God's goodness is one of Satan's greatest ploys.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Since God is good, everyone can expect that their life will ultimately turn out for their own good.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. Because God is good, which of the following statements is incorrect?
 - a. He uses difficult circumstances in our lives to conform us to the image of Christ.
 - b. Even the wicked benefit from His goodness.
 - c. He cares for even the smallest details of the natural world.
 - d. He will always protect His people from physical harm.

3. In Psalm 73, Asaph gained a new perspective on the wealth and ease of the wicked by _____.
 - a. Visiting the poor
 - b. Talking with fellow believers
 - c. Reading the Bible
 - d. Going to the house of the Lord

4. Since God wills to send unbelievers to hell, it cannot be said that He is good to them.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If circumstances in your life cause you to doubt God's goodness, where in Scripture can you turn for reassurance and confidence?
2. Which of God's other attributes can assure you that God is *able* to exercise His goodness? Can you think of more than one?
3. Romans 8:28 states, "For those who love God all things work together for good." Can you think of difficult experiences in your past when you doubted the wisdom and goodness of His plan, but which turned out for good?
4. How can you help unbelievers to see that their lives have been affected by the goodness of God? How would you conduct such a conversation?