

Introduction

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[0:00] Well, this morning, we're going to start on a bit of a long journey. And the study on the goodness of God really flows out of, Oh, kind of my walk with the Lord as we all go through those times and wrestle with events, circumstances of life, and then you find yourself calling into question something of the nature of God. But by way of introduction, I want to start with Hebrews 11.6.

You don't have to turn there. Most of you probably know that. Without faith, it's impossible to please God. The verse indicates that it's our ambition to do those things that please God.

As Christians, that is our desire. We start the day we want to move through our day doing those things that please the Lord. And there's other verses in the Bible that emphasize that as well.

2 Corinthians 5.9. So we make it our goal, again, our ambition to please God. Ephesians 5.10. Paul is encouraging the saints there to find out what pleases the Lord.

So that helps us understand that there are going to be times when it's going to be a bit of a challenge to pursue that ambition, to do what pleases the Lord.

[1:29] And Hebrews 11.6 helps us understand how we can continue in that direction of pursuing those things that please the Lord. And he says, without faith, it's impossible to please the Lord.

So what's going to be necessary and required is this whole matter of faith. And then he states what that faith is supposed to be in.

Certainly, faith in God. And it states two things that we believe about God by faith. That he exists and that he rewards those that diligently seek him.

And I just want to focus on the first one, that he exists. In order to please God, we must believe that he exists. Now, that includes more than just the fact that he exists as God.

A lot of people in our world believe that, well, a God exists. We believe that God exists. But we believe more about God than just that he exists.

[2:36] It means that I believe he exists as the God whom he reveals himself to be in the scriptures. That comprehensive understanding of who God is is what I believe by faith that will assist me in my pursuit of doing what pleases him.

And if we're going to take some time, and if I was going to ask you, which I'm not going to, we don't have that kind of time for you to share with me, well, what are the different things that you believe about the nature of God?

And so that we could be reminded again of all the different aspects and attributes of God that we need to believe by faith. But as we're challenged to believe these things by faith, it helps me understand that there's going to be times when we're tempted to turn away from doing what's pleasing to God.

And at those times, we're really calling into question or doubting some attribute or aspect of the character of God. We hear that in our verse that we've been memorizing as David was struggling. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? Isn't there something of the nature of God that he's calling into question there? Look on me and answer.

[4:01] You know, does God actually forget and turn his eyes away from us so that we are no longer in his thoughts and have his attention?

No. And there's another verse in Deuteronomy 1, 26 and 27 where we see this. There are many verses in the scriptures where we see this.

But it's at those times that we're battling with our thoughts about God and we might conclude some things about God that really are not true.

And as a result, when we act, proceed with certain actions based on those kind of thoughts, then we're not going to do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

We're no longer believing those things by faith that are true of God, like in Deuteronomy 1, 26 and 27, where we're reminded about what the children of Israel were like after the spies had gone into the land and they didn't pursue going in.

[5:08] And Moses says, But you were unwilling to go up. You rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. You see, they didn't do what was pleasing in his sight. You grumbled in your tents and you said, The Lord hates us.

So he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. So they were in a time of a great challenge. And they were receiving all kinds of information from other people.

And they were trying to process this information. But in their processing of it, they weren't walking by faith in God.

Their focus had begun to be focused, their thinking was focused on something completely different than that. And as a result, they drew some conclusions about God that he hates us.

That wasn't true. Something of the character of God that they concluded. And as a result, they did not go into the land. They didn't do what was pleasing to the Lord and forfeited the joy and blessing that could have been theirs.

[6:19] So it's important for us to have a foundation of truth about God. Not from our experiences or from reasonings of unsaved men or even saved men who might be coming to some wrong conclusions themselves.

But that foundation of truth that comes from God's word we desperately need. And with that foundation of truth and the help of the Holy Spirit, we can determine a response that would be pleasing to God in great times of challenge.

And we can pursue doing what is right and actually please the Lord and have joy in the midst of that. Still, the circumstances have never changed.

But what has changed is my perspective of God and my thoughts of God, my faith instead of on myself but rather on God.

So, what I want to do this morning and the next week is focus on just one aspect of the nature and character of God and that is the goodness of God.

[7:35] And really, this whole aspect of God, this attribute of God can be and is so foundational to everything else that God does.

Even the rest of his attributes that, and how they are expressed, are flowing out of his goodness in what he's seeking to do and accomplish. So, even though it's just one aspect of the character of God, it really relates to everything else about who God is and how he works.

So, let's work through this, these notes and this is one of those classes where there's no way you can turn all the scripture verses. There's so many and so there are times you think, well, we're just sitting here, we're not even opening our Bible.

Well, you're just going to have to sit there and listen this morning and I've included the verses in your notes there. You can go back to that but as I said earlier, if you want the more comprehensive notes that I have, I'll be glad to send those to you by email.

But, whether it's from these notes or other information you've already learned as a believer, other messages, so on and so forth, I really think and believe this is information we need to have.

[8:56] Everything that we face in our lives as believers, we're going to have to face it with a foundation of truth. This is something I've already said and that foundation of truth we call doctrine and what I want to share with you this morning, something of the doctrine of God and more specifically with his goodness.

Well, let's define it at first. defined, it's all the perfections of God's nature and the benevolence of his acts. All the perfections of God's nature and the benevolence of his acts.

It really can be summed up in Psalm 119 and 68 where David says, you are good and what you do is good. You are good, all the perfections of God, part of the definition, and what you do is good and all the benevolence of his acts.

I mean, if there's one verse that you want to memorize, we like the short ones, that's one that will carry you through those great times of difficulty because again, during those times we're calling into question the goodness of God.

God, we may have done that as children when we were under discipline of parents questioning, why are you doing this?

[10:22] You don't like me and my parent is no good to me when in reality he is good and what he does, what they do, is good. And so that's who God is.

God is good by nature and what he does is good. So taking a look at the nature of God's goodness, God is inherently good by nature.

When we think of this term good, it is used in a number of ways in the scriptures. It might be used in a sense of something performing its designed function, performing it well, so used in a utilitarian sense.

It's good because it's useful like as we travel through the first chapter of Genesis and we see all the different things that God has made and after he made something he said it was what?

Yeah, he said it was good. Each thing was performing its function according to design, so in a utilitarian sense those things were good. But God's not good because he fulfills He fulfills a function for which he's designed.

[11:32] He isn't even good because he does good things and gives good things. He does good things and gives good things because he is good.

Psalms 25, 8 Good and upright is the Lord, therefore he instructs sinners in the ways. It's his foundation of his nature. He is this, therefore he does this.

In Psalm 34, 8 we're encouraged to taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Psalm 105, For the Lord is good and his love endures forever.

That's when I said earlier about how so many other attributes of God or aspects of God and his nature are expressed, at times expressed out of his goodness.

They flow out of the fact that he is good as God and his loving kindness endures forever. The Lord is good. In Psalm 106, 1 Praise the Lord.

[12:33] Give thanks to the Lord. For he is good. His love endures forever. Wednesday night, Colin shared with us how in the Old Testament, the nation of Israel at different times were doing things right and getting a clear picture of who God is.

And when they did, they offered this abundance of sacrifices. The sacrifices really couldn't measure up to the goodness of God.

And yet, that's the way they had to express it. And so it is with us as well. In Psalm 106, 1, he's calling on people, Praise the Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. I mean, he's deserving of an expression of worship. In this case, thanksgiving. And next week, we'll take a look at some of those responses to the goodness of God, both good and bad, and maybe think about, you know, why is it at certain times that I call into question the goodness of God?

What has replaced my by-faith belief about him? And what have I replaced that with that causes me to doubt the goodness of God?

[13:50] So God, by nature, is good. He is originally good. His goodness originates from himself and no other source. It's underived.

It's the essence of his eternal nature. It's not like us as his creatures, which derive our goodness from him, from our creator.

Everything else that we see in this world that is good has derived that goodness from him, but not so with him. His goodness originates within himself.

It does not have an origination because he is eternal. Genesis 1.1, In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. He was the creator. Revelation 4.11, You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.

Another one in John 1.3, through him, all things were made. Without him, nothing was made that has been made. And on and on, I could go with other scripture passages. So, all other things that we see in the world that have a goodness, it was derived from God, but God is good.

[15:04] He is originally good in and of himself. In fact, he is perfectly good, unblemished in his goodness. The goodness of God respects the perfect perfection of his nature.

In 1 John 1.5, God is light, and him is no darkness at all. A quote from Arthur Pink, There is such an absolute perfection in God's nature and being that nothing is wanting to it or defective in it.

Nothing can be added to it or make it better. So, when we think of the goodness of God, we can't say that he needs an addition of goodness because I've not seen his goodness in my life.

Something is lacking in him. Now, as a child, when I came into this world and even for quite a while in my life, I was lacking goodness. And the manifestations of goodness from me were really lacking. Not so with God. He's perfect in his goodness. Nothing is lacking. And not only that, he is immutably good. His goodness cannot be diminished or augmented.

[16 : 15] There cannot be any addition made to it or subtraction from it. The displays of his goodness change, but he does not change. When he exacts his justice, let's say, that doesn't mean he is less good than when he bestows his blessing.

In fact, it probably is a, probably, it is a manifestation of his goodness. We see that in a small way in our system of law.

When someone does something that needs to be judged and justice needs to be done, and when a judge executes justice properly, we come to that conclusion that he's a good judge.

Good was done. So just because there's an exercise of justice and judgment doesn't mean that God is no longer good, but really is a further and an additional manifestation of the goodness that exists within him as God.

He is never, or the goodness within God is never less than what it has always been. There's no variableness goodness in him. James 1.17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows.

[17 : 41] So in those times, when we're facing those challenges and questioning the goodness of God that somehow the goodness of God has left him, it's not true.

He is still good in all that he's doing. He has not changed whatsoever. The manifestation of his goodness looks different to us in those times, but his goodness is not left.

He is eternal good. There wasn't a time when he became good. There isn't a time when he will stop being good in his essence. Because he is eternal God, he is eternally good.

Psalms 92 Before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

You are God as you exist and as he is revealed in scriptures to be. He is that God from eternity past on into eternity in the future.

[18 : 47] That's who he is. Now is this a God as we begin, as we move through these truths about God. I'm hoping that you can meditate upon them and think upon them and these are the truths that will carry you through those times of difficulty.

These are the things that are the foundation stones for what we're doing and as we're moving through our week. Without these foundation stones, we will not stand.

We will not be able to pursue doing that which is pleasing in his sight. We will come to other conclusions about God and as a result, do those things again that are not pleasing in sight and forfeit his glory through us and also the joy and rest and peace and the rest of the fruit of the spirit that can be ours.

So he is eternally good. He is also all-wise knowing in goodness. A quote from J.I.F. Packer's book Knowing God.

Wisdom is the power to see and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal. Together with the surest means of attaining it, wisdom is in fact the practical side of moral goodness.

[20 : 09] As such, it's found in its fullness only in God. He alone is naturally and entirely and invariably wise.

And so as such, he knows how to exercise his goodness in the most complete, perfect way in the lives of his people in order to accomplish his good purposes in our lives.

He is a God that can be trusted because he is all-wise in understanding how to exercise his goodness in the lives of those people that he loves.

All-wise. Romans 16, 27, Paul says, To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ. Amen. Romans 11, 33, and 34, O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out. And that's probably some of what we're struggling with during those difficult times. And what he's just said here, O the depth and the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

[21 : 27] How unsearchable are his judgments. I mean, God has come to some conclusions in regard to, say, us as his children that need certain actions or activities, circumstances in our lives, and he acts accordingly.

And we're sitting back here trying to search this out and understand this and what's going on. Of course, we're doing it as human beings, redeemed human beings, certainly, but who still struggle with understanding ourselves and maybe even what God is seeking to accomplish specifically in my life.

And so we're trying to search out the unsearchable, but we can still rejoice that we have these foundation blocks to rest on and believe by faith and even go beyond some of these foundation stones about who God is and explore and understand and take these other truths into these circumstances and by faith believe them as well, knowing that he has his good purposes that he's accomplishing as an all-wise God.

But he's also uniquely good. Only he is good in this manner. And this was declared by Jesus in Mark 10, 17 through 18.

Remember the young man that came to Jesus. Jesus, and as Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. He said, Good teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[23:07] And Jesus said, Why do you call me good? Jesus answered, No one is good except God alone. The man was using the term good in a respectful manner, but not in a manner that acknowledged Jesus as God.

He was using the term good as kind of respect. You know, you might want to approach someone, and to gain their favor, he was coming to ask Jesus a question about inheriting eternal life, and so had come with this level of human respect, good teacher, but he wasn't acknowledging Jesus as good in the sense that we've seen in the scriptures, that only God is good.

And so Jesus wasn't denying the fact that he was God, he was trying to bring this young man to the place of seeing where he's using this term in a respectful way, but not in a way that acknowledges Jesus as God, God in the flesh.

and so he's drawing this man to the place of recognizing this, that Jesus is God, and the way I've kind of formulated Jesus' response is this, since there is none good but God, you're calling me God. Are you ready to acknowledge me as God? Is that what you mean when you call me good? So he's trying to help this man understand I am good, but I am God and good in the sense that God is good, therefore I am God.

[24:51] And did the man recognize it? Well no, he didn't recognize that because when Jesus gave him the answer that he needed to hear, he turned away. There was not true faith in action there toward Jesus Christ and the deity of Jesus Christ, and as a result he turned away.

He didn't do what was say please in his sight and forfeited all that could have been his at that moment in life by an exercise of true faith in Jesus as good God.

But he didn't do that. Well, in preparing this lesson I was looking at different books on the goodness of God and there were hundreds of pages.

And it could have gone on and on and on and on and I was getting frustrated myself thinking, where do I stop this? And that's part of the problem when we consider the goodness of God.

We could go on for many lessons as we consider and think about the goodness of God, but there's other ways in which we want to consider the goodness of God, so my notes are not comprehensive in any sense.

[26:06] When it comes to the goodness of God, something you can explore even further and find richer treasures to build your foundation on that will carry you through the week.

But what I want to go out to next is his goodness displayed, because we see the goodness of God in his actions throughout the world, really.

And it's interesting to see, as you read throughout the Old Testament, and not just the Old Testament, New Testament as well, think of the Psalms, and even times when God was dealing with the children of Israel, the different times that the writers are calling the people back, remember the deeds of the Lord.

How many times does Moses take them back and rehearse their history and what God has brought them through? So there's a place in our successful, effective walk in pleasing the Lord and reflecting upon the deeds of the Lord toward us.

I mean, this is not anything new to you. We go back to this over and over and over again, and it's a necessity for us to do that. So as we consider this aspect of the nature of God and his goodness, well, if this is what is true of God and who he is by nature, then there must be some expressions of it in his word that we can look back to and be reminded of so that, again, I keep saying when we're

going through those difficult times of struggle, that our faith can be strengthened because this isn't just who he is, but he's actually displayed this in many different ways throughout history.

[27 : 53] And that's what we want to take a look at now. So we see the goodness of God, that it is his inclination to deal well, not just well, but bountifully with his creatures.

He delights in his works and is beneficial to them. Remember our verse in Psalm 119, 68, thou art good and doest good, or dost good.

James 1, 17, every good and perfect gift, perfect being that which is fitted to accomplish its purpose, is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

So he has given many good things and has displayed the abundance of his goodness.

And he's done this in creation. First of all, in bringing it into existence, he didn't have to create because there was something lacking in himself.

[28 : 59] Sometimes people like to think that God brought us into existence because we would add so much to his daily life, his daily existence.

He didn't need us to live a complete happy life. If that bursts anybody's balloons on what we can think of yourself, he was getting along just fine without us.

God did this just as an expression. Certainly there were things that he wanted to accomplish, but he brought us into existence out of his goodness.

Revelation 4.11, you are worthy our Lord and God to receive glory and honor and power for you created all things and by your will they were created and have their being.

We're only in this world because God thought it was good to have it so. And bringing it into existence, he brought it into existence in a good state that could be enjoyed.

[30 : 08] We've already seen that in Genesis chapter 1 after he created the different things that he created. He said that these things were good. We think of what he did, all that he made and how it was all in just perfect harmony, all the creatures and the invisible laws of the universe each contributing to the balanced function of the whole.

It was all very good. It interesting this past Thanksgiving! Thursday as we sat down as a family to think about and share the different things that God had done and that we were thankful for.

My grandson, the son of my daughter up in Elkhart, it was his turn, he said, I thank God that everything is just that pure oxygen.

Okay, we weren't anticipating that thing to be thankful for, but that's Joseph. to bring that out, and you think of it, well, of course, that's true, something that he had learned in class and home school about the balance of all the elements that are necessary for existence to be in this world.

I mean, we don't usually think, I mean, it's something I pretty much take for granted every day, and I don't know the last time I thanked God that everything was not just pure oxygen, but he reminded me of that, and that's what is part of what is very good.

[31 : 40] I mean, it is very good that it isn't just all pure oxygen. We enjoy that aspect of God's creation, perfect harmony, all the creatures and the laws of the universe, but not just that, creation was beautiful, and man was made with the senses to enjoy it.

We heard that Wednesday night, Pastor John, one of the things that he gave thanks for was that he was able to see after 40 years of searching, and I can always find it difficult to pronounce this word, the pileated woodpecker, and yeah, everybody correct me on that, but it's a rare bird, evidently, and it was also funny when he asked, how many of you have seen that?

A number of people raised their hands, and even Cade raised his hand. So Pastor John was kind of joking about that. He's only been alive for so many years, whether he actually saw it or not, maybe he did, I don't know, but part of God's good creation, he made it beautiful, he decided there would be a variety of flowers with different colors, and even scents, although I, you know, talk about, that was another thing my grandkids have informed me of, you know, well it's not the thing itself that has the color, it's the way the light comes on your eyes and reacts, and I'm still going to just say the colors of the flowers, and you think whatever you think about how it actually is, but even that is God's great design, I'm just not aware of how it works very well, but this is how he's made it, the various plants to provide us with different flavors that we enjoyed Thursday, he decided that birds would have different colors, and sing different songs, but then he gave man the ability with the eyes to see and ears to hear, noses to smell, tongues to taste, all the senses necessary to enjoy all these things, is this good?

I mean, this is good, this is wonderful, and when I go out for my morning walks and throw out the day and stop the smell of the roses, whatever, we have to do and reflect on these are all here, and that's not by accident, but by the goodness of God, an expression of the goodness that exists within his nature as God.

You have to think the psalmist realized this when he wrote, I will praise you because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. your works are wonderful. I know that full well.

[34 : 25] We come to that conclusion upon the contemplation of what we're seeing out there and what sorrows me at times is when people can be out there, an unsaved person, interacting with the different things of God's creation and not being able to come to this kind of conclusion that really provides the fuller enjoyment of the thing created, the realization that it comes from the hand of a good God.

And they have to settle with it just evolved, or even just a present beauty of it without again experiencing the greater fullness and pleasure that it came from God himself and a good God. And so that's what's behind this verse in Psalm 139. God's God's God's Your works are wonderful. His goodness goes beyond certainly giving man senses to enjoy creation, but God's goodness was abundant toward man because we're made in the image of God.

Man is one different than the rest of creation. He's a living soul, a moral, rational, loving, emotional being. Genesis 2, 7, the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

He had already made all kinds of creatures out there, creatures that were good, but did not enjoy the level of the goodness of God that we as man enjoy, being made in the image of God, being made as living souls.

[36 : 09] And again, that I can carry that through my day, that again, I'm not one that has evolved into who I am, but I am one who has been made in the image of God for relationship with this creature on a level that the chickens in my chicken coop can't enjoy.

I'm going to be glad I'm not just a chicken and living life as that chicken, unaware of the good God that made me.

made as one who is able to commune with my maker, with understanding. Genesis 1, 28 and 29, God blessed them and said to them, God was speaking and interacting with them, carrying on a relationship with them.

That was just the beginning of that and would continue on. God gave man a special place to rule over and manage creation.

We know those verses in Genesis 1, 26 and 27, he was going to rule over the fish. Psalm 8, 5 through 8 brings out the same idea, God did this for man apart from any merit in man.

[37 : 29] Man did not exist to have anything, he didn't even exist to have anything to merit these kind of blessings from God, but God did it out of his goodness.

Psalm 8, 1, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?

The son of man that you care for him. You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Is our God good? Our God is so good, his abundance toward us is so overwhelming that the psalmist says, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

And then lastly, God sustains creation and shows a measure of favor, not just toward us who are his children, but toward all men. Imagine the goodness of God.

[38 : 39] He showed goodness of God toward Adam and Eve when they were in good shape before sin. But for God to show this kind of goodness on an ongoing basis to those who are in rebellion against him, who deny him, acknowledge him, treat him with disregard, how good is that?

God is goodness that I wrestle with even toward those whom I love, my family members.

But God manifests goodness toward all people. He sustains all things. There's verses here. He gives food to every creature.

His love endures forever. Psalm 136, 25. Matthew 5, he causes his son to rise in the evil and the good, sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

And then Psalm 33, 5, the earth is full of his unfailing love. That is the God that we worship, that we're here to worship today.

[39:49] God is that. God is good. Well, next week we'll finish this off and consider what kind of response should we have toward a God who is like this. Let's pray.

Father, this morning we thank you for who you are and that you are who you are and always will be. You're steadfast in that, Father. You don't have to work at that.

That is who you are as God. We thank you that you've revealed yourself to us and that we can enjoy the goodness of the God today. And now may our worship to you, be based certainly fully and completely upon who you are.

And even at that point, Father, it'll be a small measure of what you deserve for who you are as God. But strengthen and help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.