**The Goodness of God**

**Introduction**

1. ***“Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.” (Psalm 73:1)*** – The Psalmist says this as an indisputable fact, yet in a personal struggle to reconcile such to other factors he has observed.
2. God’s goodness is undisputed among His people, but the challenge we face at times is recognizing it in its purpose and responding to it appropriately.
3. **Isaiah 1:2-3** – This text encapsulates what has been too common among God’s people throughout the ages – the faithfulness of God in His goodness and kindness to His people, and the failure of His people to be moved by such to unwavering trust and fidelity.
   1. **(v. 2)** – there is great witness to the fact of God’s goodness to His children, yet they have responded in an unfittingly miserable way.
   2. **(v. 3)** – simple animals are used to show the folly of the actions of God’s people.
   3. Though God had been nothing but good to His people, they had acted against reason and kicked against His goodness to their own detriment.
4. God’s goodness is to be meditated upon in such a way involving introspection that elicits in us appropriate response. His goodness is not simple favor for the sake of favor, but favor with deeper purpose for our lives as His children.
5. The Witness of God’s Goodness
6. The Goodness of God Witnesses to His Nature
   1. Paul’s first missionary journey – **Acts 14:8-18** – healing and response in Lystra
      1. **(vv. 8-13)** – God healed a cripple through the apostle Paul, and the people suggested that Paul and Barnabas were Greek gods that had visited them.
      2. **(vv. 14-15)** – Paul and Barnabas were distraught that the people viewed them as such and directed their attention to God.
         1. The feat was not the two men over the idols, or much less in representation of the idols.
         2. The feat was God over the idols – this should have hinted the people toward the God of Paul and Barnabas, not the men themselves.
      3. **(vv. 16-17)** – Paul explains that God gave the Gentiles over to their folly but was not removed from their lives.
         1. He was present providentially through the provisions of creation.
         2. These pointed to God, and gave witness of His existence, BUT ALSO HIS BENEFICENCE – HIS GOODNESS. (GOD IS FUNDAMENTALLY GOOD)
   2. Paul’s second missionary journey – **Acts 17:22-25, 28-29** – sermon in Athens in the Areopagus.
      1. **(vv. 22-23)** – the altar to the “unknown God” in the midst of all the idols at least indicated that there were good things they understood could not be attributed to any of these “known gods.”
      2. **(vv. 24-25, 28-29)** – unlike the idols, the true God transcends nature, does not need anything, but supplies everything, including life!
      3. **Cf. James 1:17** – everything good and perfect comes from Him.
   3. **Romans 1:20-25** – Creation and all its goodness boasts of God’s immeasurable and infinite power, and corresponding deity so that man who basks in the goodness of His creation will turn to worship and serve Him in acknowledgment that He is God.
7. The Goodness of God Witnesses to His Relation to Man
   1. ***“the love of God our Savior toward man” (Titus 3:4)*** – “love toward man” – *philanthrōpia* – “affectionate concern for and interest in humanity, (loving) kindness” (BDAG)
      1. The Psalmist reflected on this point in amazement – **Psalm 8:3-9**
   2. Paul’s central point to the Athenians – **Acts 17:25-28** – the created order is such that would elicit the seeking of man and following relationship with their Creator.
   3. He is the God of all men – **Psalm 117; Matthew 5:43-48** – His goodness reaches to all men.
8. The Goodness of God Witnesses to His Faithfulness
   1. Experiencing and witnessing God’s goodness should convince us to trust in God to the extent of committing ourselves to Him – **1 Timothy 6:17-19**
      1. There is a danger in trusting in the physical blessings themselves **(v. 17)** – this is like the Gentiles – **Romans 1:25**
      2. **(v. 6)** – godliness with contentment is not the mindset that I don’t need these things, but that it is God who supplies me with what I need, thus, what I have is all I need, and that by Him. My focus is not on the things, but on the God who gives them.
   2. Israel should have observed her history with God, and trusted Him with her life – **Isaiah 1:2-3**
      1. She turned to sin instead – **(v. 4)**
      2. When threatened by enemies, she didn’t trust God despite His faithfulness and goodness, and turned to weak nations – **Isaiah 30:1-3; 31:1**
9. The Purpose of God’s Goodness
10. The Goodness of God Leads Us Away from Sin to Him
    1. Paul’s concluding point to the Athenians – **Acts 17:30-31** – based on the evidence of creation that points to God, and the purpose for which He structured creation in relation to man is meant to lead man away from sin to Him.
    2. God’s goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering with the Jews was meant to draw them near to Him, not settle them in complacency – **Romans 2:1-4**
       1. **(v. 1)** – hypocritical judgment of the Gentiles.
       2. **(vv. 2-3)** – the judgment of God on such practitioners of sin is fitting, but this is true for the Jew as well as the Gentile.
       3. **(v. 4)** – all the privileges and blessings afforded the Jews by God, especially His slowness to execute judgment on them, was not intended for their comfort, but for their change!
    3. ***“the goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4)***.
       1. This must not be understood – Paul is not suggesting that repentance is an inevitable result of God’s goodness, but the function of God’s goodness.
          1. ***“is meant to lead you to repentance” (ESV)***
       2. ***“leads you to (eis) repentance”*** = “leads you INTO repentance”
          1. Repentance – a change of will leading to a change of action.
       3. **This is important because it stresses that the onus is on us to respond to God’s goodness – cf. Ezekiel 18:31**
    4. His goodness leads into a changed of will that results in the change of action from doing evil, to doing good – **Romans 1:7-10**
       1. His goodness leads us away from sin to Him – for we know, based on the witness of His goodness, that turning to Him will result in good.
       2. He has promised good to those who pursue good according to His will and has the track record to support the promise.
11. The Goodness of God Leads Us to Faithfulness
    1. Warning the Gentiles of haughtiness in context of God rejecting the unbelieving Jew and accepting the believing Gentile – **Romans 11:19-23**
       1. **(v. 22)** – God’s goodness will continue toward those who continue in it.
       2. **(v. 23)** – shows that the concept of continuing in His goodness is continuing in faithfulness to Him.
       3. It is not a burden to be faithful to God, but a continued reception of His goodness – **cf. 1 John 5:3**
    2. The grace of God teaches us to remain faithful to Him with anticipation of further goodness from Him – **Titus 2:11-14**
       1. **(v. 11)** – goodness; **(v. 12, 14)** – faithfulness; **(v. 13)** – goodness of realized hope in His coming.
       2. **3:4-8** – God’s kindness (goodness) in His salvation of man leading to maintaining good works – faithfulness.
    3. God nourishes His people because He loves them and wants them to trust in Him for all they need by remaining faithful to His will – **Isaiah 1:2-3, 16-20** – His goodness was intended to keep them faithful, but to lead them to repentance when they sinned, and bless them with more goodness in returning to Him.

**Conclusion**

1. God’s goodness is abundant, and those who are a part of His family know it very well.
2. We must not make the mistake of viewing God’s goodness in any way which would minimize our responsibilities toward Him or minimize His holy nature in tolerance of sin.
3. His goodness is with purpose – it shows us of His worthiness of our full service to Him, of His faithfulness, and therefore of our need to turn away from sin to faithful service in His name.