

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Who is God/Who God Is Lesson 9

Scripture: Exodus 34:1-9 and 2nd Corinthians 3:12-18

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Date: November 5th, 2017

The Good God

Exodus 34:1-9 (ESV) The Lord said to Moses, “Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain.” So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. And he said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.”

2nd Corinthians 3:12-18 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Introduction There’s a scene in a drama television show back in 2005 where an American soldier, a woman named Brenda, is home from Iraq on leave to visit her son who has become ill, and in the care of Brenda’s mother. While home Brenda goes absent-without-leave but is robbed. She wanders into a bar, orders a burger while sitting at the bar. She has no money and being ravenously hungry wolfs down the burger and a beverage. She then confesses to the owner that she has no money but when she gets back to her unit in Iraq she will send him the money—she has a book of matches with the bar’s address. He looks at her and says, “Or I can call the cops.” She slowly repeats what he said, “Or you can call the cops.” Then he says, “the heck with it, I can buy a soldier a meal. Don’t get

killed now ya hear?” And then he pulls a big ol’ piece of apple pie out from under the counter and offers it to her and says, “Want a piece of pie? It’s pretty good.” A tear rolls down her cheek and she says “thank you.” I’ve watched this scene many times and I put it up on my FB page on Friday. It is a deeply moving example of “goodness.” The bar owner not only has mercy on her, he blesses her. It is mercy and grace. And it is just plain goodness.

- For most of you, I’m sure you’ve had the experience of walking into a kitchen and there’s a ham roasting in the oven you think, “Man, it smell’s good in here.”
- Last year I went to a basketball game and I was late arriving but my team was ahead and the gym smelled of sweat and popcorn with a *lots-of-people* kind of atmosphere and I said to myself, “It smells good in here, it smells like ‘victory.’”
- Or I went for a walk and it was crisp and autumn-smelling with leaves and someone had a fire going somewhere and I thought, “It smells as it should right now, it smells good.”
- The current Starbucks splash screen proclaims GOOD IS IN THE AIR.

There are lots of things that just smell good, look good, feel good and seem good and there are other signals of “good”,

- ✓ a well-timed phone call that could not have come at a better time,
- ✓ a note of encouragement that really blessed you (I got *two* of those last week),
- ✓ a great conversation that was just what was needed (I had two of those this week too),
- ✓ a visit that very much met a need and with any of these you feel, “THAT WAS REALLY GOOD.”

So where does good come from? Is it just accidental? Does good stuff happen once in a while just by luck? Did it just magically happen, like good stuff at Disney?

Today we are saying that this is how our God is ALL THE TIME! And I can think of nothing more wonderful to try to preach on, than the goodness of God. This may be the central attribute of who our God is.¹ I called a pastor friend named Randy this week and I chatted briefly with him about this. Randy said, “You know how so many people feel that the central feature of God is His holiness”? Randy suggested to me, interestingly that PERHAPS THE CENTRAL THING ABOUT GOD IS IN FACT HIS GOODNESS, BECAUSE OUT OF THAT FLOW HIS LOVE, HIS MERCY, HIS GRACE, THE BASIC DESIRE TO REDEEM PEOPLE FROM SIN, HIS PROVISION FOR PEOPLE AND ON AND ON. It is not by accident that after creating light (Genesis 1:3) the text tells us ***the light was good***. No sooner does God create something and that something is good. What He does, automatically “smells” like Him! In vs.10 God created the land and the seas and the text tells us ***God saw that it was good***. That is *an interesting bit of grammar* because the goodness seems to

¹ As suggested by Pastor Randy Pizzino in a phone conversation with me on 10/31/17—which was, coincidentally, Reformation Day!

be obvious, but it is in no way separate from God who created it. This continues with each thing that God creates until we get to [2:18](#) where in looking at Adam whom God had made, that Adam is alone strikes God as **not good** and He, God, says so. And so God makes woman and you know the rest of the story. But we are asking the simple question these days, “who is God”? We have suggested so far that He is solitary and sovereign, triune and holy, He is love and at the same time all-knowing, everywhere present and all-powerful, and He does not change. Today we wonder, “is He good”?

Challies defines the goodness of God this way: “God is the final standard of good and all He is and does is worthy of approval.”² That is a very simple statement. A perhaps more complete definition is given by the Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge:

Goodness, in the Scriptural sense of the term, includes benevolence, love, mercy, and grace. By benevolence is meant the disposition to promote happiness; all sensitive creatures are its objects. Love includes ...desire, and delight, and has rational beings for its objects. Mercy is kindness exercised towards the miserable, and includes pity, compassion, forbearance, and gentleness, which the Scriptures so abundantly ascribe to God. Grace is love exercised towards the unworthy. The love of a holy God to sinners is the most mysterious attribute of the divine nature. The manifestation of this attribute for the admiration and beatification of all intelligent creatures, is declared to be the special design of redemption. God saves sinners, we are told, “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.” (Eph. ii. 7.) This is the burden of that Epistle.³

I selected the Exodus passage ([34:1-9](#)) though it does not contain the word “good”. But hear [vss.5-7](#) again: ***The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”*** Moses, it is safe to say, is pretty well blown away by this encounter. He is glowing. And then he seems to be embarrassed when other people see him glowing and he shades the glow with a veil over his face. But the apostle Paul picks up on that (and you will notice doesn't even think to question its historicity or not) and comments about Christians, ***And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*** ([2nd Cor. 3:18](#)) If you are in Christ, you are—whether you are aware of it or not—are being transformed to become more and more like Christ. This is from a good God. Who would NOT want this if they knew it was being freely offered?

² Tim Challies, Visual Theology chart of *The Attributes of God* 2017

³ Charles Hodge *Systematic Theology* Vol. 1, p. 326, 1871-73.

We read from the apostle Peter: ***So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*** (1st Peter 2:1-3). God IS good. And Peter is telling his readers that goodness that is what God is, which is what we long for, “puts away” things that are NOT good: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander.

I would suggest to you this morning that this is what we hunger for. We so terribly WANT God to be good and when something not good happens, we are very quick to think about God and ask, “how can a good God let this happen, or worse, make this to happen?” Because we so very much want God to be good. We are jealous too, when some other “God” is accused of not being good. We quietly take comfort, “well my God, THE God is always good.” AND SO I would suggest to you that

He is good

- **All the time** There isn’t a single moment in all eternity when God stopped or will stop being good. His attributes are “hard wired.” They are always there. And isn’t it great that God’s goodness is not depending on my feeling that He is?!! He is good whether I or anyone else acknowledges it.
- **Goodness flows from Him** It isn’t an incommunicable attribute. It communicates and radiates and moves out from Him to anything that gets in the way! And praise God, we have gotten in the way, by running into His Son who, Himself, was nothing but good.
 - May I suggest that you undertake a little reading of one of the Gospels—pick one, any one—and read through it looking just for one thing... For instance, in Luke (11:11-13) we have Jesus saying this: ***What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!***
- **The host of heaven rejoices in His goodness** I believe the angels and all the myriad of other creatures in heaven are incurably happy with the fact that God is so good. I don’t think they ever worry or HAVE ever worried that maybe one day God will cease to be good? They know nothing of any creature there that is not bathed, ablaze with the goodness of God. Then, when they gaze over the “bannister” of heaven down to the redeemed in Christ, they are fascinated at how such unworthy creatures can also be washed in His goodness.
- **He loves to share His goodness** God delights to share out of the goodness that He is. He loves to, in fact, I would like to say that I believe He gets a kick out of lavishing His goodness to His creatures. He enjoys giving to us. ***Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming***

down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17). I think some of the built-in professions among humankind reflect the goodness of God: teachers, fire-fighters, police officers, medical professionals, farmers and so forth. There are many things to go INTO as a profession which in a basic way, reflect the goodness of God.

- **The Gospel is rooted in His goodness** I am not ashamed of the Gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16). But I am also never ashamed of the Gospel because it was born in the heart of God to do a good thing for people, that is, to buy them back out of slavery to sin and GIVE them so many good things, we can't even count them! When a person becomes a Christian, that change in a person is engineered in a plan *ultimately* to give them many good things, which we can hardly even understand yet! **by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.** (Ephesians 2:5b-7)
- **Even His wrath and judgment display His goodness** But God is not only goodness, He also flashes in judgment at the evil and wickedness that has polluted His creation. We are troubled at this reality. We don't like the evil that is in the world and we are frustrated to know what to do about it, politically, legally, sometimes militarily. But God's attributes all jive together. And His goodness works in perfect synchronization with His justice and holiness. No evil will "get off scott-free." It is precisely BECAUSE God is good that we can know that in His plan and perfect overall timing will correct, vindicate and make right all wrong. No Scripture is more revealing of this fact than Revelation 20:9,10 **And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever** wherein you notice the one striking observation that there is no time BETWEEN "the beloved city" being surrounded by evil and fire coming down from heaven and consuming them. It just happens and BOOM, evil is rotisseried. On the spot! Cut! Done. **The goodness of God 50. Evil 0.** Game over.

DO YOU NOT AGREE that a church should smell good?

- ✓ A church should radiate *goodness*. Whatever else we are, we should just smell good!
- ✓ A church should not only feel safe, but have the goodness of God flowing out of it routinely, not just at certain times o the year. We

should almost expect good to flow from us, if God is in our midst because He is good.

- ✓ A church should be creative in exploring and finding and even inventing new ways to transfer His goodness from our lives to the lives of others.
- ✓ A church should be evaluated by how much the grace of God has taken root in the church life, and generated good things for all kinds of people!
- ✓ A church should not be motivated *first* by “how much will it cost?” but first by “does the goodness of God get experienced by somebody” if we do this?

I just want to sing today, the old Keith Green song that we sang recently I admit, and that we used to sing almost every week it seemed!

O Lord, You're beautiful
Your grace is all I seek
And when Your eyes are on this child,
Your grace abounds to me.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

COMMUNICABLE

- BEING
- PURPOSE
- MENTAL
- MORAL
- SUMMARY

INCOMMUNICABLE

To study God's attributes is to study His character, to answer questions like, Who is God? and What is God like? A typical classification of God's attributes divides them into those that are incommunicable (those that He does not share or "communicate" to anyone or anything else) and communicable (those that He shares with other beings). Like most theological classifications, this one is imperfect but still helpful as we seek to understand what is so far beyond ourselves.

God's communicable attributes can be further categorized into: attributes of God's being, mental attributes, moral attributes, attributes of purpose and "summary" attributes, attributes that, in a more particular way, modify each of the others.

It is important to consider that God is not simply the sum of His attributes. His attributes are not separate from one another, but each one modifies or qualifies each of the others.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:
 Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem
 The Attributes of God by A.W. Pink

- TRANSCENDENCE** → GOD TRANSCENDS ALL CREATION AND IS UNKNOWABLY APART FROM OUR SELF-INITIATED REVELATION.
- IMMANENCE** → GOD IS ACTIVE IN THE WORLD AND IN OUR DAILY LIVES. GOD CARES ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF OUR EXISTENCE AND WANTS US TO WELCOME HIS GUIDANCE, GRACE, AND LOVE.
- ASEITY** → GOD IS SELF-SUFFICIENT AND DOES NOT REQUIRE OR NEED OF HUMAN BEINGS OR THE REST OF CREATION.
- OMNIPRESENCE** → GOD HAS NO GOD OR SHAPE AND IS PRESENT IN ALL PLACES WITH HIS ENTIRE BEING.
- UNITY** → GOD'S WHOLE BEING INCLUDES ALL OF HIS ATTRIBUTES AT ALL TIMES. THESE ATTRIBUTES ARE NEVER IN CONFLICT.
- ETERNALITY** → GOD HAS ALWAYS EXISTED, NEVER HAD BEGINNING AND NO END, AND EXPERIENCES NO SUCCESSION OF MOMENTS.
- IMMUTABILITY** → GOD CANNOT CHANGE IN REGARD TO HIS CHARACTER, PURPOSES, AND PROMISES.
- GLORY** → THE GREAT BRIGHTNESS THAT SURROUNDING GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF.
- BEAUTY** → GOD IS THE POSSESSOR AND THE GIVER OF ALL DESIRABLE QUALITIES.
- BLESSEDNESS** → GOD ENJOYS FULLY HIMSELF AND IN ALL THAT REFLECTS HIS CHARACTER.
- PERFECTION** → GOD FULLY POSSESSES ALL EXCELLENT QUALITIES AND LACKS NO QUALITIES THAT WOULD BE DESIRABLE FOR HIM.
- JEALOUSY** → GOD ALWAYS SEEMS TO PROTECT HIS OWN HONOR.
- GOODNESS** → GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF ALL GOODS, AND ALL HE IS AND DOES IS WORTHY OF APPRAISAL.
- PEACE** → GOD, IN HIS BEING AND ACTIONS, IS SEPARATE FROM ALL CONFLICT AND DISCORD.
- HOLINESS** → GOD IS SEPARATED FROM SIN AND HE IS COMMITTED TO SEEKING HIS OWN HONOR.
- LOVE** → GOD ETERNALLY SEES OF HIMSELF TO OTHERS.
- MERCY** → GOD IS GOOD TO THOSE IN TRIBULATION AND DISTRESS AND HE IS GOOD TO THOSE WHO DESERVE PUNISHMENT.
- RIGHTEOUSNESS** → GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF WHAT IS RIGHT AND HE ALWAYS ACTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT IS RIGHT. (THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S JUSTICE)
- WRATH** → GOD ETERNALLY HATES ALL SIN.
- TRUTHFULNESS** → GOD IS THE TRUE GOD WHOSE WORDS AND WORKS ARE BOTH TRUE AND THE FINAL STANDARD OF TRUTH.
- KNOWLEDGE** → GOD FULLY KNOWS HIMSELF AND ALL ACTUAL AND POSSIBLE THINGS (THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S OMNISCIENCE).
- WISDOM** → GOD ALWAYS CHOOSES THE BEST IDEAS AND THE BEST MEANS TO THOSE GOALS.
- WILL** → GOD APPROVES AND DETERMINES TO BRING ABOUT EVERY ACTION NECESSARY FOR THE EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITY OF ALL THAT EXISTS.
- FREEDOM** → GOD DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES.
- OMNIPOTENCE** → GOD IS ABLE TO DO ALL THINGS HE WILL. GOD EXERCISES COMPLETE POWER OVER HIS CREATION AND RULES AS SOVEREIGN.
- INVISIBILITY** → GOD'S TOTAL BEING, ALL OF HIS BEING, WILL NEVER BE VISIBLE TO US.
- SPIRITUALITY** → GOD IS A BEING WHO'S NOT MADE UP OF MATTER AND WHO CANNOT BE PERCEIVED BY OUR SENSES.