



CHRIST'S COMMISSION FELLOWSHIP

Los Angeles

Group Discussion Guide
December 7, 2014

The Goodness of God

Word:

Exodus 33 – 34

What is Goodness?

Two of the most common statements uttered about the goodness of God: God is good all the time and If God is good, then why . . . ? In order to fully understand God's goodness, let us first define what goodness is.

Goodness is defined as the state or quality of being good; of high quality, excellent or it can also mean a kindly feeling, kindness and generosity. In Hebrew the word is *chesed*, which means lovingkindness. A good example for definition A is Michael Jordan in his excellence in his sport whereas a good example for B is having a doting grandfather who spoils you.

So which of these two definitions pertain to God. Both.

What is God's Goodness?

And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."19 And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."21 Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Exodus 33:17-22

Moses spent a lot of time with the Lord and it came to a point that Moses asked God if he could see Him. In verse 20 God tells Moses that he cannot see God's face since no one can see Him and live. So the Lord tells Moses that He will show Himself to Moses but He puts Moses in a cleft in the rock until He has completely passed by. Then as He is passing the Lord says ***"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."***8 Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped." Exodus 34:6-8

This excerpt from passage is a riddle in itself and can be best understood if we keep in mind this principle: **ALL THINGS POINT TO JESUS.**

Jesus Himself showed this in Luke 24:25-27 ***He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*** All Scriptures is a revelation about Jesus.

Using this principle that Jesus Himself taught us – let us understand God's goodness and the paradox in Exodus 34:6-8. In verse 6 and 7 we see God's grace and love while in the second half of verse 7 and 8 we see God's justice and law. And this is perfectly seen in the CROSS.

John Piper said in his sermon "Why did God create the World?" *The apex of the glory of God is grace of God. So if the glory of God is mount Everest, grace is the peak. It all goes there, this is the most magnificent aspect of God's glory... That's the end point. Everything else about God serves that, supports that including His wrath." " In the eternal fellowship of the Trinity, the Father and the Son planned that God's grace would be supremely revealed through the saving work of the Son".*

This simply means that whole Old Testament, all the events, all the people were about Jesus until finally Jesus Himself comes down to fulfill the work. Jesus on the cross is God's mark or testament of His glory, of His excellence, of His grace. This is the perfect display of God's goodness. Everything else that happened happened only as supporting evidence of God's goodness.

When we look at the cross – we have to constantly remind ourselves that it is not only a symbol of God's redemptive power and victory of sin and death – more importantly it is the symbol of God's love and grace as well His wrath and justice. This is the ultimate symbol of His goodness and the crowning piece of His glory.

Humans have to conquer or destroy other humans in order to show their power or their magnificence. . . but God did it differently. . . Jesus did it differently. All His power, all His might He put it in human form and went to the cross to die for His enemies. That was how He conquered His enemies, He made us His friends. That's the big difference between us and God.

What does that mean for us?

A. Experiencing the goodness of God removes the concept of conditionality in our relationship with Him. (Exodus 34:6-8)

We are all sinners and for us to redeem ourselves from sin we have to completely mimic Jesus, which is impossible. We can never hope to match the perfection of Jesus on the cross. We can never hope to satiate God's law and merit grace by our own performance. It is only through Jesus that we can claim relationship with God and it is only because of Jesus that He remains with us. After we receive the Gospel, we can not remain in God through our own merit. It is only through Jesus that we can continue to claim a relationship with God. If it is not because of Jesus God's wrath is scary but because of Jesus we are loved by God.

B. Experiencing the goodness of God changes how we understand God's love and how we love Him. (Exodus 33:1-4; 12-15)

All the time Israelites were in the desert all they did was complain until this point in their journey. In the early part of the passage God reminds them of His promise to them – to bring them to a land of milk and honey, to send an angel before them to clear the land of their enemies but God says that He is going to keep His promises but He will not go with them. When the Israelites heard this they mourned. It was at this point that they began to understand the goodness of God. They realized that they were in it for the blessings that God could give them – but it was at this point that Moses realizes that all that would not mean anything if God did not go with them. So that Moses said in verse 15 that it is because God is with them that they are made distinct from everyone else and it is only if God continues to be with them that they will continue to be distinct.

Similarly when we first come to a relationship with God, we too seek out the blessings that He can give us but as we grow deeper in our relationship with Him and in our faith then we realize that more than the gifts, more than the blessings – God Himself, His presence in our lives is of utmost significance. It is then that we can say that we truly love Him.

How do we translate this into our life?

As a followers of Christ

1. We have to constantly remind each other of God's goodness in Jesus Christ.
2. We have to continually evangelize the unbelieving parts of our hearts.

Moses was transformed during the time he spent with God. He did not come out of it just with a glowing face, but with a change of heart. When we continue to spend time with God, then we too can be transformed more and more into the image of Jesus. Christlike-ness is a fruit, the result of spending time with Jesus. . . because the more time we spend with Jesus, the more He will flow out of our lives.

Works: Journaling task

The Cross: God's goodness and glory is Jesus on the cross.

Before I heard this message, what did the cross mean to me?

The Cross: The assurance of His goodness, of His lovingkindness in our daily lives.

How do I respond to God's goodness in my every day life. Be specific.

Are there any areas of my life that reflect a disbelief in the goodness of God?

Do I still look at the blessings or am I now focused on the Giver?