

Theology Proper  
The Study of the Nature and Character of God  
Part 2: God's Goodness

Introduction

1. Last week we began our study on the Nature and Character of God which is generally referred to as Theology Proper
2. Because of the sheer volume of information, I decided to break it down into two weeks:
  - a. Part 1 focused on the greatness of God and we looked at five different attributes:
    - 1) God is spirit
    - 2) God is personal
    - 3) God is alive
    - 4) God is infinite
    - 5) God is constant
  - b. Today in Part 2 we are going to focus on the Goodness of God and we are going to break it down into three categories with each category having it's own attributes (once again, I am relying upon Millard Erickson):
    - 1) God's moral purity
    - 2) God's integrity
    - 3) God's love

A. God's Moral Purity

**\*\* When we speak of God's moral purity, we are referring to His absolute freedom from anything wicked or evil, and we see this reflected in three attributes: His Holiness, His Righteousness, and His Justice.**

1. God's HOLINESS:
  - a. God's holiness is first and foremost defined by separateness (some refer to this as uniqueness):
    - 1) The verb form of the Hebrew word for holy means to cut off or separate
    - 2) So, to be holy means to be separate or set apart from other things
    - 3) In God's case, it means there is nothing like Him; He is unique in His nature, His character, His glory, and His deeds:
      - a) Exodus 15:11: **"Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?"**
      - b) 1 Samuel 2:2: **"There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God."**
      - c) Revelation 15:2-4 (READ)
  - b. God's holiness is also defined by purity and goodness; He is totally and completely free of moral corruption and cannot participate in nor be tempted by evil:
    - 1) Psalm 5:4: **"For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You."**

- 2) Habakkuk 1:13: **"Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor."**
- 3) James 1:13 says that **"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone."**

## 2. God's RIGHTEOUSNESS

- a. Righteousness refers to how God conducts Himself with others; it is an expression of His holiness, or as Erickson puts it, "the holiness of God applied to his relationships with other beings", p. 286
- b. A simple way to think of this is that God always does what is right and in accordance to His nature and His moral laws; notice in these next couple of verses the connection between God's righteousness and His actions:
  - 1) Psalm 145:17: **"The LORD is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds."**
  - 2) Psalm 71:15-24 (READ)
- c. God's righteousness is often coupled with justice (another aspect of His moral purity we'll get to in a minute):
  - 1) In Psalm 7:11 David proclaimed, **"God is a righteous judge..."**
  - 2) He wrote in Psalm 97:2, **"Righteousness and justice are the foundations of Your throne..."**
  - 3) READ Deuteronomy 32:3-4: **"For I proclaim the name of the LORD; Ascribe greatness to our God! 4 "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He."**

## 3. God's JUSTICE

- a. God's justice refers to how He holds others accountable to His moral laws and this is displayed in three different ways:
  - 1) We see the first two in Romans 2:1-11 (READ): He punishes sin and rewards good
  - 2) The third is how God cares for and protects the poor, afflicted and less fortunate:
    - a) Deuteronomy 10:18: **"He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing."**
    - b) Psalm 68:5: **"A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, is God in His holy habitation."**
    - c) In Psalm 9:4, David declared of God, **"For You have maintained my just cause; You have sat on the throne judging righteously"**
- b. Because God is righteous and just, He judges perfectly and fairly, without favoritism or partiality, and does so according to one's own deeds:
  - 1) Psalm 9:8: **"And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity."**
  - 2) Deuteronomy 10:17: **"For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe."**
  - 3) Mathew 16:27: **"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds"** (this is repeated at least 10 other times in the NT regarding the final judgment)

## 4. Why is God's moral purity—His holiness, His righteousness, & His justice—important to us?

- a. It's important because He calls us to be holy just as He is holy; He doesn't hold us to some arbitrary standard, but one which aligns with who He is and How he acts
- b. It's important because it means He always does what is right, even when dealing with those who do wrong
- c. Finally, it's important because it assures us that when it comes time for judgment and we stand before Him, He will judge us fairly and impartially

## B. God's Integrity

**\*\*When we speak of God's integrity, we are referring to how He relates to matters of Truth, and we see this reflected in three attributes: His genuineness, His veracity, and His faithfulness. Milliard Ericson refers to this as God being true, telling the truth, and proving Himself true.**

### 1. God's GENUINENESS:

- a. To be genuine means to be authentic; to be the real deal; and God is certainly the real deal because He is the one and only true God
- b. Listen to what He said to the Israelites through the prophet Jeremiah (READ Jeremiah 10:1-16)
  - 1) The nations surrounding Israel worshipped false gods:
    - a) They crafted them with their own hands out of wood, silver and gold
    - b) They were like **"scarecrows in a cucumber field"**, unable to speak and needing to be carried
    - c) They couldn't do anything, good or bad and would ultimately perish from the earth
  - 2) In contrast, **"Yahweh is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King"**
    - a) He is the "Maker of all"
    - b) He speaks
    - c) He is powerful, wise and understanding
- c. Elijah said something similar when he confronted Israel over their worship of Baal (1 Kings 18:21): **"Elijah came near to all the people and said, 'How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God (e.g. the one true God), follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people did not answer him a word."**
- d. We see this same contrast between the One True God and false Gods in the NT as well:
  - 1) 1 John 5:20-21: **"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us insight to know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This one is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols."**
  - 2) 1 Thessalonians 1:9: **"For people everywhere report how you welcomed us and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."**

### 2. God's VERACITY

- a. Veracity refers to truthfulness, and when referring to God it means that He always speaks the truth; He not only does not lie, but He cannot lie:
  - 1) When writing to Titus, Paul referred to God as One **"who cannot lie"** (Titus 1:2)
  - 2) The author of Hebrews wrote that **"it is impossible for God to lie"** (Hebrews 6:18)
- b. God's veracity is a common theme in the Bible, and it applies whether God speaks directly to individuals, through prophets, through His written Word, and even through Jesus:

- 1) Directly:
    - a) When the Lord promised David He would build him a house, David said, **"Now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant."**
    - b) When the Lord warned Saul that He would remove the kingdom from him for his disobedience, it was true and He did just that (1 Samuel 15:29-29): **"So Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you. 29 Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.'"**
  - 2) Prophets:
    - a) When the LORD sent Balaam to confront Balak, He told him to say, **"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"** (Numbers 23:19)
    - b) When Elijah raised the woman's son from the dead in 1 Kings 17, she proclaimed, **"Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."** (1 Kings 17:24)
  - 3) Scriptures: READ Psalm 119:142, 151, 160-165
  - 4) Jesus:
    - a) John 18:37: **"Therefore Pilate said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'**
    - b) John 14:6: **"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'**
3. God's FAITHFULNESS
- a. Faithfulness refers to God keeping His promises
  - b. Deuteronomy 7:9: **"Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;"**
  - c. Numbers 23:19 (NET): **"God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a human being, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not make it happen?"**
  - d. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: **"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."**
4. Why is God's integrity—His genuineness, His veracity, and His faithfulness—important to us?
- a. Because He is genuine, we know that we worship the One True God; our faith is not based in some false religion crafted by our own hands and imagination
  - b. Because of His veracity, we know that we can trust what He has said; His Word is not only true, but it is the very embodiment of TRUTH; we can rely upon it in all areas of life, not only as it relates to this life, but eternal life

- c. Because He is faithful, we can have hope in all the promises He has made to us; we can be assured that everything He told us He will do, He will do it! God has proven Himself faithful over and over again

### C. God's Love

\*\*When we speak of God's love, we are referring in the simplest sense to the eternal giving and sharing of Himself and we see this reflected in the four attributes of benevolence, grace, mercy and persistence

#### 1. God's BENEVOLENCE

- a. Benevolence refers to God's concern for man's welfare; rather than simply seeking His own good, He seeks what is good for us
- b. Another way to say it: God's benevolence is His unselfish interest in us for our sake
- c. We see this reflected in a general sense in how He cares for His creation, but we see it especially in His relationship with mankind
- d. Look at what He said about choosing Israel to be His people: READ Deuteronomy 7:7-8
- e. Probably the greatest example of God's benevolence is what He did for us in Jesus Christ (John 3:16): **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."**
- f. And He did this out of His benevolence, not because we first loved Him; in fact, He did it while we were yet sinners:
  - 1) READ Romans 5:6-10
  - 2) READ 1 John 4:8-11

#### 2. God's GRACE

- a. God's grace is often defined as unmerited favor or getting something we doesn't deserve
- b. It refers to God dealing with us not on the basis of our own merit or worthiness—what we deserve—but rather according to what we need
- c. And, this is done purely out of His goodness and generosity
- d. Again, we turn to the Gospel for the perfect example of God's grace:
  - 1) READ Ephesians 1:5-8; 2:4-10
  - 2) READ Titus 3:3-7
- e. You might have noticed in these verses that another attribute, mercy, was coupled with God's grace and that leads us to the next attribute which reveals God's love

#### 3. God's MERCY

- a. Mercy refers to God's tenderheartedness or loving compassion for His people
- b. We might say that it's the emotional side of God's love because it's what moves Him to extend grace and forgiveness to us when we don't deserve it
- c. If we go back to the two passages we just read you'll see this:
  - 1) Titus 3:5: **"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy..."**
  - 2) Ephesians 2:4-5: **"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),"**

- 3) Peter also wrote, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”** (1 Peter 1:3)
4. God’s PATIENCE
  - a. Persistence refers to God’s longsuffering, His willingness to postpone judgment and continue to offer salvation and grace over long periods of time
  - b. This is often described in the OT by the phrase **“slow to anger”** and coupled with other words like lovingkindness, grace, mercy, and compassion:
    - 1) When the Lord passed in front of Moses, He declared, **“The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;”** (Exodus 34:6)
    - 2) In David wrote, **“But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.”** (Psalm 86:15)
    - 3) God called on Israel through the prophet Joel to repent and return to Him saying, **“Now return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil”** (Joel 2:13)
    - 4) Jonah even used God’s longsuffering as an excuse to disobey when God sent him to warn Nineveh, **“He prayed to the LORD and said, “Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity”** (Jonah 4:2)
    - 5) There is probably no greater picture of God’s longsuffering than what Nehemiah describes in Nehemiah 9 (READ if time permits)
  - c. We see this same patience/longsuffering in the NT:
    - 1) Peter declared that the **“patience of God kept waiting”** in the days leading up to the Flood (1 Peter 3:20); we know from the OT account that this was 120 years
    - 2) At Mars Hill, Paul declared that God had **“overlooked the times of ignorance”** (Acts 17:30) which was a reference to God patiently enduring the Gentiles’ idol worship, even though He had revealed Himself to them in His Creation
    - 3) Paul even spoke of Jesus’ patience with him (1 Timothy 1:15-16): **“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”**
    - 4) Even today we see how God is patiently enduring the world’s disobedience and rebellion by delaying His wrath and the return of Jesus (2 Peter 3:9): **“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”**
5. Why is God’s love—His benevolence, His grace, His mercy and His patience—important to us?
  - a. Because He is benevolent, we know that God is for us and always seeks what’s good for us (Romans 8:31-32): **“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”**
  - b. Because He is gracious and merciful, we know that even in our weakness (those times when we sin), we can still draw near to Him (Hebrews 4:15-16): **“For we do not have a high priest**

**who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**

- c. Finally, because He is patient with us, we can be strengthened when we endure hostility and persecution (Hebrews 12:3): **“For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”**