

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Psalms 31:19

"There is none good but one, that is, God" (Matthew 19:17). Ultimately, only God is good in the purest sense of the meaning of goodness. All of His wondrous works may be said to spring from His goodness. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfieth the longing soul with goodness" (Psalms 107:8, 9).

God's love, His mercy and His grace are all the products of His goodness. "For the word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Psalms 33:4, 5). God, however, reserves the bestowal of His goodness for appropriate and warranted conditions. When Moses received the tablets of stone from the hand of God, "The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty..." (Exodus 34:5-7).

By the grace of God we of this dispensation of His grace are spiritually blessed through the fall of His chosen people Israel. "Well; because of unbelief they [the nation Israel] were broken off, and thou [the Gentile world] standeth by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness..." (Romans 11:20-22a).

REH

Notes:

THE KINDNESS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Psalms 117:1, 2

But for the kindness of God we would be forever lost and without hope. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3). How important it is, that we fully understand our condition without Christ! Even as one redeemed and heaven-bound the apostle declared, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing..." (Romans 7:18a). "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"(Romans 8:7, 8).

Our Apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, makes clear the essence of his gospel, the gospel of the grace of God. In time past, the Gentile had but one way of salvation—through God's chosen people Israel, the Circumcision. "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: BUT NOW in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12, 13).

How can this be! Only because [God] hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, [Him] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21). "...Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree..." (I Peter 2:24). Born under sin, we were without hope: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5a).

REH

Notes:

THE GOD OF LOVE

Scripture Reading: I John 4:7-10

The Apostle Paul offered fervent prayer for the saints, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19). God's love embraces the entire scope of His personality, intents and purposes. Were it not for His love, we never could have known Him. But for His love, there would never have been an escape from our imprisonment in the bondage of sin and hopelessness.

"O the love that drew salvation's plan! O the grace that brought it down to man!" These words from the beloved old hymn declare the essence of the work of God's love. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).

The magnitude of the love of God is beyond our comprehension. The result of His having exercised His love toward us is best defined by our apostle: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). God is love!

REH

Notes:

THE GOD OF MERCY

Scripture Reading: Psalms 103:8

Possibly the most comforting passage of God's Word to the believer in this dispensation of His grace assures us that "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us [made us alive] together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) and hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6a). What confidence, what assurance and anticipation is ours! Our position is already in heaven, "...from whence we look [expectantly!] for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..." (Titus 3:5a). But for the mercy of God, there would be no salvation for sinful man. Neither good deeds nor moral conduct can attain unto redemption. Keeping of the law cannot effect acceptability to God. Tribal heritage is of no consequence in attempting to gain entrance into the family of God. God is not willing that any should perish... but will have [desires] all men to be saved (ref. II Peter 3:9, I Timothy 2:4). But salvation is not to be achieved; rather, it must be received!

The God of mercy has made man savable. Our apostle explains. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures... was buried... and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3b, 4). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them... Be ye reconciled to God" (II Corinthians 5:19a, 20b). God in Christ did the work; all that remains is for man to believe. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15). "The Lord is merciful and gracious!"

REH

Notes:

THE GOD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Scripture Reading: Psalms 111:3

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one... But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:10, 21-24). "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The Apostle Paul, being himself a Jew by origin, grieved for Israel, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:3, 4).

Human self-righteousness is graphically defined in the sixth verse of the Book of Isaiah: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags..." One may well ponder Job's searching question, "...How should man be just with God" (Job 9:2b)?

Our own apostle gives the joyful answer: "...Be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, [He] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:20b, 21). The resultant condition is that of being "...found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9). God alone is righteous!

REH

Notes:

THE GOD OF ALL GRACE

Scripture Reading: Titus 2:11

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." O, the power of God's all-sufficient grace! Grace—unmerited favor. Grace—freely given. Grace and mercy and peace, swathed in love and beneficently bestowed upon a depraved race of lost sinners! God's righteousness is imparted to us, "...if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences and was raised for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 4:24-5:2). How sweetly does that old favorite song of praise define it: "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!"

How sad it is that so many in their spiritual blindness are today attempting, as did the Galatians of Paul's day, to live under the law, having received the gift of salvation by God's grace. Paul's words for such as these are strong indeed, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherein Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

"The law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh... For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth... I do not frustrate the grace of God for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain" (Romans 8:3; 10:4; Galatians 2:21).

REH

Notes:

THE GOD OF PEACE

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:6

Perhaps the most significant prophetic announcement in all of Scripture is that contained in our textual passage. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a child is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is GOD WITH US" (Matthew 1:23).

The Prince of Peace, then, is the God of peace. "...God is not the author of confusion, but of peace..." (I Corinthians 14:33). As he closes his letter to the saints at Thessalonica, Paul includes in his benediction these words: "Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means..." (II Thessalonians 3:16). "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..." (Galatians 5:22a). Thus we find that all three persons of the triune God form the matrix and the fountainhead of peace.

True peace is unattainable by man's own effort. Sadly, the carnal mind defies this truth and persists in seeking peace in the strength of the flesh. Until these futile endeavors cease, the peace of God remains unclaimed. To the saved, however, the Apostle writes these glad words, "...Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Having thus become a recipient of His peace and a citizen of His heaven, we are entreated to be "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

As we prayerfully rely on Him, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

REH

Notes:

GOD'S ALL IN ALL

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:22, 23

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:4, 5). "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:13).

What an exalted position is ours as children of God! Fully undeserving, altogether unrighteous, lost in sin though we were, God in His mercy bestowed His own righteousness through the offering of His beloved Son. Our resultant membership in the Church which is His Body makes us members and partakers of all spiritual blessings in the heavens. We are "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all!"

The significance of this standing defies our capacity to contain. But the fact of it is undeniable because it has been declared by the very Word of God. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). The staggering realization that we can never fulfil the "reasonable service" required in response to the gift of God's unspeakable gift should certainly humble us and provoke us to strive to the uttermost in our ministry of His glorious gospel.

Well might we heed the admonition of the Apostle Paul: "that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering bearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1b-3).

REH

es:

THE FULNESS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3:16-19

The prayers of Paul display the depth of his burden and dedication to his ordained office as minister and revelator of the Gospel of the grace of God. He prayed selflessly and passionately for the saints as has no other man of God. Among the greatest of his petitions before the throne is that which is recorded in the passage of our text. His plea expressed the desire "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

God's Holy Spirit dwells within us. Christ lives in us. It remains only for us to yield ourselves and our lives to the uttermost. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:17, 18). Our focus must ever remain on Christ, "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:9, 10). "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). Complete in Him! "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

"...We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

REH