

# Thank God for His Goodness

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[ 0 : 00 ] for a moment. If holidays were people, if holidays were people, Thanksgiving would be mad, wouldn't it? Or just plain depressed because it gets ignored. It gets, this year in particular, skipped over. Think about it. What has happened to Thanksgiving?

It seems, maybe it's because of the pandemic, it seems people, many people are ignoring this Thanksgiving season, this Thanksgiving week, and they've already zeroed in on Christmas.

This past week, I heard Christmas music playing in a store. I mean, over, it wasn't just one song over and over and over again. It just sort of surprised me, shocked me. I've never heard Christmas music this early. I've noticed Christmas decorations are out. Friday night, as I came on 123 at the intersection of 93, the city of Easley has Christmas decorations out, and Santa Claus was lit up in that intersection. Some of you already have your Christmas trees, trees even, out, decorated. Now, I know that some of the experts are saying that it's good for us to go ahead and start celebrating Christmas early this year after all the turmoil that we've gone through with the pandemic, the social unrest, all the election stuff we have to deal with.

Well, that may be true. It may be good for us, but it's also true that we need to make time as Christians for Thanksgiving. We need to take time. It's a national holiday. People get out of school, get out of work for Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving holiday. We need to take some time as Christians to literally count our blessings and acknowledge that they come from God and thank Him. I want to encourage you, set aside some time this week. Maybe after everybody leaves, if you have a family gathering on Thursday or Friday or Saturday, take some time, really, to just think about some of the good things in your life. In fact, take a day where you don't say anything negative, where you don't complain about how you feel, about your aches and pains. You don't complain about who you have to live with, what they do or don't do for you. Take some time when you don't focus on anything that's bad and just think about good, good things that God has put in your life, things that you enjoy.

People, whatever it is, take some time to acknowledge it. Just think about it. And then thank God.

[ 3 : 29 ] Thank God for how He has blessed you personally. Maybe even as a family do it. As the line in the old hymn says, do this this week, count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done. If you take the time to do that, it very well could surprise you.

Think about the good things that you do have in joy that you're experiencing right now. Life is not all bad, negative, hurtful right now. This morning I want us to focus our attention on one of the greatest blessings that we have if we're Christians, and that is the goodness of God.

As I was thinking about today, I wanted to preach some kind of positive message going into Thanksgiving and in light of all that's going on now. And I can't think of a better subject during Thanksgiving for us to think about, look at from what the Bible teaches. Think about it from our own experience. The goodness of God. You know, there are people, there's even Christians, they don't have a positive view of God. Some people think that God's just always ready to see what's wrong and punish. Inflict guilt or something like that. Certainly, God is holy. God has standards.

And God does discipline His children when we disobey Him, when we don't cooperate with Him. There is something called the wrath of God, but that's just part of who God is. God is also a good God. He does good things in this world. He does good things in everybody's life by common grace.

But He does a lot of good things in our lives as His people. And so that's what I want us to look at this morning. And we're going to start off very simply with how the Bible just clearly says, God is good. Look at it with me. The Bible repeatedly says things like this. The Psalms are a great place to find a lot of it. For the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever. And then in Psalm 106 and 107, same statement. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for He is good. For His steadfast love endures forever.

[ 6 : 21 ] As the psalmist writes, He's talking about God's good. We need to thank Him and praise Him. And one of the ways He is bringing out is God's steadfast love. You can always count on God's stability in everything He does. It's not fleeting. It's not based on how He feels one day or the circumstances or how people respond. The Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever. And then 106 and 7, give thanks to the Lord for He is good. For His steadfast love endures forever. Now you think about that.

The God that we serve, the God that we are worshiping here this morning, the God that you talk to in prayer, He is good. It's just a part of His nature. In fact, Jesus goes on to say, no one is good but God alone.

I want you to think about that. A lot of people like to talk about the good of humanity. My favorite president was Ronald Reagan. Love Ronald Reagan. A lot of great things he did. A lot of great quotes we can make today. If we could get another Ronald Reagan, if we could clone Ronald Reagan, he'd be my guy.

But Ronald Reagan said something that was 100% wrong. He said it many times. Reagan used to say that I believe in the goodness of the American people. I believe that the American people, deep down, are good.

But God says we're sinful. We have a sinful nature, which is why we do sinful things.

[ 8 : 26 ] You don't have to teach a child to be selfish, do you? You don't have to teach a child to lie, do you? You don't have to teach a child to kick or bite or hurt someone else. Why? It's just a part of who they are as little sinners. And then we all grow up into just being selfish people who like to live our lives our way instead of God's way. We're not basically good. You cannot believe the Bible and think truly that people are basically good. That is wrong. Only God is good. Now, even sinful people can do some good things. We won't debate that. That's true. We're, and even as Christians, we're supposed to do good works. But only God is good. Now, what does it mean, though? What does it mean to say that God's good?

Well, some Christian teachers describe all of God's moral qualities under the heading of God's goodness. Miller Derrickson's Baptist theologian. He is a real intellectual. He writes on a level where you can understand him, but he is a sharp, sharp individual written much on theology. You know how in his big, thick theology book, how he basically describes God? God is great and God is good.

The great theologian teaching us about the nature of God. God is great. God is sovereign. God is powerful. God is the creator. God's in control. But God is good. God is loving. God is holy. God is good.

Now, think about that. Some of the qualities about God's goodness are just sort of put together in scripture in a real impressive way to describe God's goodness. Look at this, for example. And he passed, this is from Exodus, and he passed God, and he passed in front of Moses proclaiming, the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Look at the psalmist. The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. How do you picture God?

Well, Moses and the psalmist is telling us, here's a picture of God. Here is a clear, true picture. God is compassionate and gracious. God is slow to anger. A lot of us, we need to learn that. I'll be honest, I'm at the top of the list. There's times that I just fly off a handle. My boys can tell you that.

[ 12 : 02 ] I wish I had learned from my heavenly father a long time ago how to be slow to anger, to be more patient, to be more compassionate. See, that is a part of God's character, of His nature.

I've got a better, I've got the best illustration that you can have that God's this way. Look in the mirror. If God wasn't gracious, slow to anger, and patient, I wouldn't be here right now. You wouldn't either, would you? God is this way. The scripture makes it clear. Think this morning about God's goodness.

Wayne Grudem describes God's goodness in terms of three things, His mercy, His grace, and His patience. Look at this. God's mercy is His goodness toward those in misery and distress.

You ever experience God's mercy in a time like that? God's grace is His goodness toward those who deserve only punishment. That's us because of our sin, our rebellion, our selfishness. God's patience is His goodness in withholding punishment toward those who continue in sin over a period of time.

I want you to think about how God has demonstrated His goodness to you in each of those ways. Just look at it for a moment. Look at it. Think about it. Think of times, examples of how God has shown you His goodness by being merciful, by being just gracious, and by being patient.

[ 14 : 16 ] Pause right now. Thank God for each of those demonstrations of His goodness that He has shown you. God is good. God is good. He is good by nature. He's a good God, and He does good things. So let's look at this.

The way God works in our lives is good. God's plans are good. Why don't you look at this passage in Romans 2. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve of what God's will is. His good, pleasing, and perfect will. God's will for our lives as individuals, as Christians living in this world, it is good, it is pleasing, and it is perfect.

That does not mean that if you seek to do God's will, it will be easy. It doesn't mean you won't suffer at times. It doesn't mean that life won't sometimes be hard.

If you do God's will, that will be the best life for you, and I want you to understand that. If God is who He's revealed Himself in Scripture to be, Almighty God, who is good, then His plan for your life is the best plan, the best way for you to live.

[ 15 : 51 ] And if you will embrace that with His help seek to live life God's way, you will find it is good, it is pleasing, it is perfect.

It may not make you wealthy. It may not mean you're going to have good health, never battle cancer. It may not mean that everybody around you is going to treat you in a good and pleasing way.

But God will be with you as you seek to work out His plan in your life. He'll be within you, He'll be with you from within, His Spirit living within you if you're a Christian.

He will guide you in that process. I want to just say, following God's plan is an everyday thing.

Seeking to live life God's way as He's revealed in His Word. But some of you, you're going to look to God for some major life decisions.

[ 16 : 57 ] Some of you are looking and thinking about who am I going to marry? When should I marry? If I should marry. Some of you are thinking about what should I do vocationally?

What kind of career path should I take? What kind of education do I need? Some of you may be thinking about downsizing your house. It's time to get into something smaller.

Some of you are making major life decisions when you're young, when you're middle age, when you're older. I want to encourage you to seek God's guidance.

Seek His wisdom. Don't look for a feeling. Evaluate who you are, where you are, how things are, how God's made you.

Seek His wisdom and follow the wise path in all of these things and you will find that this is the best way.

[ 17 : 59 ] This is the good and pleasing and perfect will of God, the best way for your, best plan for your life. Now, I want you to think about this because all of us have been there at some point.

Even when we don't follow God's plan as we should, He doesn't give up on us. God doesn't wash His hands, throw us away, forget about us when we rebel against Him, sin against Him, or even ignore Him.

God still, at every point in life, wants to work out His good plan in our lives. And we see that throughout the Bible. A good example is the people of Israel.

The people of Israel, God's chosen people, they, they just lived in a, over a period of time, they lived in a continuous cycle of being faithful to God, then rebelling against God, sinning against Him, God disciplining them, punishing them, them repenting, and then coming back.

Just a vicious cycle. Vicious cycle. Well, as a result, of their sin and rebellion, there were times, that God punished them, by allowing foreign powers, to defeat them.

[ 19 : 28 ] And, a few times, take the people of Israel, from their land, as captives, and live in a foreign land, and exile. But, even then, God did not, give up on His people.

He still had a plan for them, if they would repent, and turn to Him. I want to show you something here, from Jeremiah chapter 29. We've looked at this chapter, on other occasions, but this is what the Lord says, to His people, who had rebelled.

They were being punished. They were living in exile. But, God had not forgotten them, or given up on them. Look at this. This is what the Lord says. When 70 years are completed, for Babylon, I will come to you, and fulfill, my gracious promise, to bring you back, to this place.

Bring them back, to their homeland. For I know the plans, I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you, and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope, and a future.

Then you will call upon me, and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me, and find me, when you seek me, with all your heart.

[ 20 : 46 ] I will be found by you, declares the Lord. I want you to look here. This is not some kind of blanket, open, good news to everybody, no matter what you do, promise.

He doesn't say, for I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you, and not harm you, plans to give you hope. He doesn't say that alone. He says that to people, who have been broken, humbled, who are ready, and when they are ready to repent, and truly seek his will, his way, and truly seek him, that's when all this will happen.

Look at there again, in that middle, what we just read. You will seek me, and find me, when you seek me, with all your heart.

All your heart. Not half-hearted. If you're not close to God today, it's because of something half-hearted in your life.

It's because you're not seeking to love him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. You're not seeking his will first and foremost. That means that there's sin in your life, rebellion, indifference maybe.

[ 22 : 12 ] We need to learn from the people of Israel that God disciplines his unfaithful children. God disciplines his unfaithful children.

He did it to them. He talks about it in the New Testament, in Hebrews chapter 12. But God, when he disciplines us, he doesn't give up on us. God disciplines us to get our attention, to humble us, to turn us away from our sin, and bring us back to himself.

God wants us in this room right now to seek him with all of our heart. He does want, according to his plan, to prosper us and not harm us.

He wants to give us hope and a future. We don't know what the future holds until we get there, but God will have what we need, what he wants us to have.

I want to say to you, if you're far from God right now, or you might just say you're not close to him like you once were, you can come back.

[ 23 : 29 ] You can confess your sin, repent, turn from whatever it is, and come back to him, knowing that God will forgive you.

He has this plan for your life. But you're only going to discover it and experience it and enjoy it if you live life your way. I mean, if you live life God's way, not your way.

God's plan is good. Look at this. God's providence is good. That word providence is an old word. It's not used much. We've looked at it before, but I'm sure there's one or two in here that you've forgotten the meaning of it, so let's look at it again today.

The word providence refers to the way God works in this world to bring about his purpose. Think about it this way. Creation refers to the way God created everything. Providence refers to the way God continually works, guides, directs everything according to his plan.

God is always working out his good plan in this world and in our lives, but a lot of times we can't see it.

[ 24 : 49 ] A lot of times we cannot understand it. A well-known verse of scripture teaches us about God's providence and the fact that everything's not good. You know it, Romans 8, 28.

And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who've been called according to his purpose. This verse helps us understand that nothing just happens.

Whatever's going on in your life, never think, well, you know, this just happened. It was just by circumstances, by luck of the draw or something like that.

God is sovereign. God is working actively in this world. Nothing just happens. God works in all things.

God micromanages all that occurs in our lives and in this world. God micromanages everything to bring about ultimate good.

[ 25 : 52 ] And God shows us in the next verse what that ultimate good is. You know, God's doing a lot of good things in this world and in our lives, but his ultimate good for you and for me is right here in the next verse, 29.

For God, for those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son. That's what God's doing in your life and mine through the good times and the bad, through the hard times, through the coronavirus, through all that's going on around about us.

God is at work shaping and molding us if we're his children more and more into the image of Jesus, his son.

In heaven, when it's all over, we will be like Jesus completely, but right now we're all in process and that is God's main work in you and me, developing our character, making us more like Jesus and he works in everything.

The best illustration of this is found in the story of Joseph in Genesis chapter 37 through 50. If you've never read the story of Joseph, I want to encourage you during this holiday, if you've got some time off, sit down with your Bible, open to Genesis 37 and just read through the end of the book and you'll be reading about the life of Joseph.

[ 27 : 14 ] In a nutshell here, Joseph was a young man, 17 years old, the pride of his father, a true man of God, but because of the favoritism his father had shown him, his brothers were jealous, they hated him, they thought about killing him on one occasion, but instead they sold him into slavery.

They sold him to a caravan of what we might call slave traders who took him from their homeland down into Egypt. In Egypt as a slave, Joseph was still faithful to God and he made the best of the situation and the man who bought him recognized Joseph's skills and abilities and elevated him, put him in charge of his household.

But that man's wife falsely accused Joseph of some things and Joseph wound up in prison. In prison, he still trusted God.

It wasn't where he wanted to be, but it was where he was and being the man of God that he was, he trusted God. And so in prison, he made the best of the situation and he became, you know, a trusted prisoner, put in charge of some things.

Well, there in prison, there was a guy from the king's court. It was a short time he was going to be there and he was impressed with Joseph, some of the things Joseph had said and done. And he told Joseph, when I get out and I'm back before Pharaoh, I'm going to tell him about you.

[ 28 : 46 ] But he forgot him. He forgot him for two years. Finally, as God worked in all these circumstances, Joseph came out of the prison, was elevated to be second in command over all of Egypt.

And after he became this powerful figure in Egypt, his brothers came from the homeland to try to buy grain. And to make a long story short, they finally figured out who Joseph was.

He revealed himself to them. And as they stood before him, afraid he was going to kill them in revenge. Joseph said this to his brothers, you intended to harm me, but God intended for good, intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

God works in all kinds of situations. It may be that you have, or are going through a time of disappointment, mistreatment, or some kind of suffering.

Maybe this has been a terrible year, not just because of the coronavirus. I want you to understand, your troubles do not mean that God has not been with you.

[ 30 : 13 ] Your troubles do not mean that God has not been working out his good plan. Your troubles certainly do not mean that God is not good. If you are a Christian, a child of God, God is using those whatever circumstances to make you the person he wants you to be and to put you where he wants you to be, to serve the purpose he has for you.

That's why we've got to learn, no matter what, to trust God, to love him, to obey him. Jerry Bridges puts this in a good way.

This was in the newsletter a few weeks ago when I had a column about the sovereignty of God. Look at what he says. God in his love always wills what is best for us. In his wisdom, he always knows what is best for us.

In his sovereignty, he has the power to bring it about. Trust God. One more thing. God's patience is good.

God reveals himself by his patience toward us even when we sin, even when we rebel or just ignore him.

[ 31 : 33 ] As much as we may deserve his hot, quick wrath, he doesn't unleash it. That's not how he works. God, as we saw a while ago, identifies himself as the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

Peter picks up on this and explains it. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise. As some understand slowness, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God's goodness is seen in our lives every day by his patience. But don't presume upon it. Don't take it for granted.

God's patience does have a limit. God does unleash his wrath at times.

God does discipline his children at times. Paul warns us about presuming upon God's goodness.

[ 32 : 42 ] Look at this in Romans 2. He says, do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you to repentance?

I want you to think. If you are right now living in rebellion against God, or you're just refusing to do something that you know he's called you to do, or you won't quit doing something that you know displeases him.

But everything's really going okay in your life. You're disobeying him. You're ignoring him. You're rebelling. But life's going on pretty good.

I want you to think. Look at that verse on the screen. God's kindness and tolerance and patience, that's just one way he's trying to get your attention.

He wants you to think about how good he is being in that patience and kindness and wake up. Turn from your sin.

[ 33 : 57 ] Don't make him discipline you. Don't force him to cause you to experience punishment. Will you do that right now if that's what you need to do?

If you're away from the Lord in any way, I want to encourage you to confess it, change your mind about how you're living, turn from it, and make a new commitment to Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life.

Thank God for his patience. Draw close to him now. If you're not a Christian, you're here.

Good enough health to be here. Probably some good things going on in your life. That's a sign of God's being good and patient and kind and slow to do anything of a punishment nature in your life.

Let God's kindness get your attention and wake you up. Turn from your sin, your rebellion against God. Put your trust in Jesus as your Savior and your Lord.

[ 35 : 14 ] Call upon him to save you now. I want to ask you, God has been good in your life. How have you responded?

How are you responding? How will you respond now to the goodness that God is showing you?

Would you pray with me? Father, thank you for your goodness, your mercy, your patience, your love.

Father, help each one of us right now to thank you for showing us such goodness.

help us to praise you. Help us, dear God, to be motivated by your goodness to honor you every day by the way that we live, to do your will.

[ 36 : 34 ] If there are people in this room, dear God, who are away from you, draw them close now. Motivate them by your goodness.

But Lord, help us all to understand that your discipline is real. Help us all to understand that you do humble us when we refuse to humble ourselves.

Help us not to put things off and have to experience that discipline. Lord, if there are people in this room who are not Christians, help them to understand that your wrath against sin is real.

And unless they turn to Jesus in faith, they will experience your wrath for all eternity in hell. But help them to see that by turning from their sin, truly repenting and trusting Jesus, they're forgiven.

The penalty for sin is paid by Jesus. Dear God, show us all right now how we should respond as your thankful, grateful people overwhelm us with with an awareness of, a heartfelt appreciation of your goodness.

[ 38 : 17 ] Let's just in an attitude of prayer listen to the Lord and respond to Him personally in these next few minutes. Let's go.