

# Character of God

## Lesson 1: God is Good and Nothing but Good

**Introduction:** Many are confused as to why there is evil in this world. If God is a good God then how could He ordain or allow evil. Due to the prevalence of evil many question the goodness of God. Others, in an attempt to defend God, attempt to redefine what is meant by “good” from God’s perspective. In this lesson, using the Bible as our primary source of information, we will see that God is nothing but good and good in every sense that the average man understands what is meant by good. We will also see that He could not be the author of evil.

I. The Bible teaches in numerous passages of Scripture that the Triune God is good.

1. When Moses asked to see God’s glory (Ex. 33:17-23), God gave him a revelation of His character:
  - a. *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; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*** (Ex. 34:6-7)
  - b. On the basis of this revelation, Moses was able to successfully intercede for Israel when they sinned and opened themselves up for destruction (Num. 14:17-20).
  - c. *For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee* (Psalm 86:5)
2. We are encouraged to “taste and see” or get a personal revelation of God’s goodness:
  - a. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. **O taste and see that the Lord is good:** blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: **but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing*** (Psalm 34:6-10).
  - b. We “taste and see” that God is good by the wonderful things that He does for us.

- c. *O give thanks unto the Lord, **for he is good**: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy (Psalm 107:1-2)*
- d. ***Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness**, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. **Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness**, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! (Ps. 107:15-21)*
- e. God's goodness is seen in how He forgives, heals, and delivers.

## II. What Does it mean for God to be Good?

1. Love and mercy are ingredients of goodness:
  - a. God's Word equates "evil and hatred" and "love and good": "*And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love*" (Psalm 109:5).
  - b. *So let me remind you of the Eternal's enduring love, and why we should praise Him. Let me tell you again how the Eternal gives and gives and gives. All God's wonders and goodness are done for Israel's benefit according to His great mercy and compassion (Isa. 63:7; Voice).*
  - c. *Hear me, O Lord; for **thy lovingkindness is good**: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies (Psalm 69:16)*
2. Since God is love then He is unable to do anything that could hurt or harm others, which is basically what evil is.
  - a. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; **for God is love**. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him (1 John 4:7-8)*
  - b. ***Love worketh no ill to his neighbour**: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10)*

- c. *And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord (Zech. 8:17)*
  - d. God hates it when we do things that hurt others because this is not a part of His nature. When we possess God's nature we will be like Him in showing unconditional kindness and patience to others in spite of how they treat us.
  - e. *But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6:35-36)*
  - f. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5:44, 45, 48)*
  - g. Love does not look to hurt others but to help them. Love avoids evil. God is love and does nothing to hurt others.
  - h. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, **seeketh not her own**, is not easily provoked, **thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity**, but rejoiceth in the truth (1 Cor. 13:4-6)*
  - i. ***Ye that love the Lord, hate evil:** he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. (Ps. 97:10)*
  - j. What a wonderful world this would be if everyone followed God's principles of love. The reason that our world is so full of evil is because God's free-will creatures have chosen not to walk in the God-kind of love.
3. If God is good then He is unable to do anything that constitutes as evil:
- a. *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit (Matt. 7:17-18).*

- b. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Gal. 5:22-23).*
- c. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: **for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:** But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,** with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:13-17)*
- d. *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? **Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?** If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall **your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?** (Matt. 7:9-11)*
- e. Notice that God can only dispense good gifts. He does not give or tempt people with evil. Evil is not in Him, therefore He cannot give it or create it. When God created (or restored) the earth, everything was good (Gen. 1:3-31).

#### 4. Light and Darkness—Good and Evil:

- a. The Scriptures teach that “light” and “good” are synonymous terms and “darkness” and “evil” are synonymous.
- b. *When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness. (Job 30:26)*
- c. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isa. 5:20).*
- d. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd (John 3:19-20).*
- e. Unsaved men and women will spend eternity in hell but not because God wants them there or that He is sending them there. He did not even create this place for

them (Matt. 25:41). It is because they would rather serve evil than good. This is also why the doctrine of universalism or even ultimate reconciliation can be true.

5. God is Light and there is no darkness in Him at all – not even a smidge of evil.
  - a. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and **in him is no darkness at all.*** (1 John 1:5)
  - b. The picture of God that is sometimes given to us by theologians, especially Calvinists, is one of a very dark being. It is this being that is opposed by atheists and drives them away from God. A true understanding of God will demonstrate that there is nothing that the average person understands as darkness in God.
  - c. *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.* (Acts 26:18)
  - d. Jesus, the 2<sup>nd</sup> member of the Triune Godhead, is the light of the world (John 8:12). The light dispels darkness, including the darkness of sickness and disease:
  - e. *Walking down the street, Jesus saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?” Jesus said, “You’re asking the wrong question. You’re looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines. When night falls, the workday is over. For as long as I am in the world, there is plenty of light. I am the world’s Light.”* (John 9:1-5; The Message)
6. God is exactly like Jesus
  - a. *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, **who is the image of God,** should shine unto them* (2 Cor. 4:4)
  - b. Other translations: *“Christ is the one who is **exactly like God**”* (Easy to Read Version); *“They cannot see the light, which is the good news about our glorious Christ, **who shows what God is like**”* (Contemporary English Version); *“They cannot see how bright and wonderful Christ is. **He is just like God himself**”* (World English New Testament).

- c. *In the past God spoke to our people through the prophets. He spoke to them many times and in many different ways. And now in these last days, God has spoken to us again through his Son. He made the whole world through his Son. And he has chosen his Son to have all things. The Son shows the glory of God. **He is a perfect copy of God's nature**, and he holds everything together by his powerful command. The Son made people clean from their sins. Then he sat down at the right side[a] of God, the Great One in heaven (Heb. 1:1-3; Easy to Read Version)*
- d. *Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake (John 14:8-11)*
- e. Not once in the Scriptures do we find Jesus giving sickness, tempting anyone to sin, calling down famine, bringing about natural disasters to punish His enemies or condemning anyone in wrath and judgment. On the contrary throughout the gospels we find Jesus healing the sick, feeding the hungry, delivering people from sin, averting natural disasters, and rebuking His disciples when they sought for violent methods in dealing with their opposition. Jesus exhibited total love—the kind that wants to help and not hurt. Jesus remains today our “harmless” High Priest (Heb. 7:26). The Father and Holy Spirit are exactly like Jesus.

### III. The Bible is clear as to what God considers to be good and what He considers to be evil.

- 1. Men in their distorted picture of God have attempted to redefine *good* in order to maintain the Biblical truth about God's goodness while at the same time teaching doctrines in which God does, what appears to the average human, to be evil acts. Below are some of the passages used to promote this idea:
  - a. *And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. (Gen. 45:7-8)*
  - b. Stephen, speaking by the Spirit of God, gives another interpretation:

- c. *And the patriarchs, **moved with envy**, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house (Acts 7:9-10).*
- d. God is love (1 John 4:8) love “*envieth not*” (1 Cor. 13:4). “Envyings” are the works of the flesh and not the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-16). God does not make people become envious (Matt. 7:17-18). The Holy Spirit speaking through Stephen never says that God made Joseph’s brothers sin. Stephen states that God was with Joseph and overruled their sinful acts. Is this a Bible contradiction? No.
- e. Richard Twopeny explains: “The great point of religion impressed upon the mind of the Israelites was the absolute supremacy of Jehovah in every thing, and his providential interference in every circumstance, which could affect the welfare of their family or people. From whence the transition to that expression was very easy, ***which describes those actions of men, as his doing, of which he only overruled the event.*** Thus Joseph says to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 8. “So now it was not you, but God, that sent me here:” by which he does not mean to deny that his brothers had sent him thither, for he expressly says so, ver. 5; but to ascribe the whole to his providence, who had so wonderfully made use of their sin to the preservation of their whole family.”<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis are mine)
- f. TwoPeny concludes: “This simple and strongly marked outline of religion, did not require them to make any distinction, between the things permitted by the Almighty to happen in his dominion and. under his controul, which were the consequence of the misbehaviour of his creatures, and those things of which he was the immediate agent. Neither were they in the habit of expressing this distinction by their language; for they used their transitive conjugations or voices indifferently, either for simple permission or actual causation.”<sup>2</sup>
- g. *But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive (Gen. 50:20).*
- h. The Living Bible gives what I believe is the real thought behind this passage: “*As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil, for he brought me to this high position I have today so that I could save the lives of many people.*”

---

<sup>1</sup> TwoPeny, Richard **Dissertations on Some parts of the Old and New Testaments, Which have been Supposed Unsuited to the Divine Attributes** (London: C and J Rivington, 1824), pp. 16, 17

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18

- i. “Are we then to understand that God was a party to the murderous hostility of Joseph's brethren? To the heartless sale of their brother? To the sale of him in Egypt by the selfish Ishmaelites? To the vile accusation of his mistress? Or that God approved of all these acts, which were connected with Joseph's advancement? The answer is, Not at all. They were transgressions of His holy law, and among the “abominable things that” He “hateth;” and He held the guilty parties answerable for these their misdoings. Nor were any of these sinful actions necessary in order to the accomplishment of God's purposes of mercy in connexion with the famine which then prevailed. He does not need even the wisdom of men in order to the fulfilment of His plans; and much less does He need their sins; for the resources of His wisdom are endless, and His power is infinite. He overruled for good the envy and malice of Jacob's sons; and He overruled for good the infamous falsehood of Joseph's mistress; but He approved of neither, and He needed neither.”<sup>3</sup>
  - j. *And we know that **all things work together for good** to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose* (Rom. 8:28).
  - k. According to **The New Testament Greek Lexicon**, *Sunergeo* means “to work together, help in work, be partner in labour; to put forth power together with and thereby to assist” (Greek lexicon based on Thayer's and Smith's Bible Dictionary).
  - l. This is the same word used in these passages: “*And they went forth, and preached every where, **the Lord working with them**, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen*” (Mark 16:20) and “*We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain*” (1 Cor. 6:1).
  - m. In his commentary on Romans, Herschel H. Hobbs writes, “The evil of men and nations cannot defeat [God's] purpose. God works together with and through his people to overrule evil as he guides history to his benevolent goal. While God is sovereign in history, this in no way violates the free will of either good or evil men. God works with the *good* and against the *evil*.”<sup>4</sup>
2. The Bible teaches that Good is anything that blesses and evil is anything that brings hurt and cursing:

---

<sup>3</sup> Jackson, Thomas **The Providence of God Viewed in the Light of Holy Scripture** (London: John Mason, 1862), pp. 324, 325.

<sup>4</sup> Hobbs, Herschel H. **Romans: A Verse by Verse Study** (Waco, TX: Word Book Publishers, 1977), p. 112

- a. After listing all of the blessings of obedience in Deut. 28 (prosperity, health, long life, fruitfulness, protection, etc.) and the curses of disobedience (sickness, disease, defeat at the hands of their enemies, etc.) then Moses states the following:
  - b. *See, I have set before thee this day **life and good, and death and evil**; In that I command thee this day to **love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply**: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it (Deut. 30:15-16)*
  - c. God's desire is to give His people "good things": "*Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: **Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's***" (Psalm 103:1-5)
  - d. God has stated that He would never give anyone anything that harms the person: "*Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall **your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?***" (Matt. 7:9-11)
3. Contrast the above with the following:
- a. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham states that in his life time the rich man had "good things" (wealth, health, prosperity) and Lazarus suffered evil things (sickness, poverty, rejection, loneliness, etc.):
  - b. *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. (Luke 16:25)*
  - c. *And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; **so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land** which the Lord your God hath given you (Josh. 23:14-15).*

- d. God reveals unto us the principle by which He brings upon the Israelites the threatened destruction from their disobedience:
- e. *Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, **Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?** And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods (Deut. 31:17-18)*
- f. *And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. **Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies**, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies (Neh. 9:25-27).*
- g. God “brings” evil by withdrawing His protection and allowing the sinner to receive the consequences of their rebellion. Basically, by forsaking God, people withhold God’s goodness from themselves: *“Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer. 5:25)*

**Conclusion:** If God is love then that means love is eternal and all of the attributes of love: righteousness, goodness, life, unselfishness, etc. are eternal. Basically evil is anything that is unlike God. God is against evil because He is eternally good and evil is unlike Himself. God did not create goodness. Goodness has always been because it is an intrinsic part of His nature and character. Evil, on the other hand, came into being when free-will beings rebelled against God—going in opposition to that which is good. When we understand God’s character then we will understand evil. When we understand this then we will understand why God could never do evil or be the source of anything that is evil. We will then reject all theologies that make God the source of evil and find an alternative interpretation to any passage of Scripture that appears to make God the source of evil.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, we would look at 2 Sam. 24:1 and then read it in light of 1 Chron. 21:1 and James 1:13-14 and realize that God was never the source of David’s temptation. We will study these principles more thoroughly in further lessons.