

GOD IS GOOD

The Attributes of God

Banska Bystrica, 22nd May 2016

Mk 10:18 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός	Mk 10:18 "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.
Rom 12:2 τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον.	Rom 12:2 the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
James 1:17 πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθῆ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστιν καταβαίνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα.	James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.
טוב וישר יהוה	Ps 25:8 Good and upright (χρηστὸς καὶ εὐθῆς) is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way
טעמו וראו כי טוב יהוה	Ps 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
כי אַתָּה אֲדַנִּי טוֹב וְסֻלָּח	Ps 86:5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.
כי טוב יהוה לעולם ועד ודור אמונתו	Ps 100:5 or the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.
הודו ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו	Ps 107:1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!
הודו ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו	Ps 136:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.
הללויה כי טוב יהוה	Ps 135:3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing to his name, for it is pleasant!
Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν.	Rom 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ כַּדְבָר אַחַת הַנִּבְלֹת תְּדַבְּרִי גַם אַתְּ טוֹב נִקְבֵּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים וְאַתְּ תִרְעֵ לֹא נִקְבֵּל	Job 2:10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"

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0. INTRODUCTION

[CHARNOCK] God is only originally good, good of himself. All created goodness is a rivulet from this fountain, but Divine goodness hath no spring; God depends upon no other for his goodness; he hath it in, and of, himself: man hath no goodness from himself, God hath no goodness from without himself: his goodness is no more derived from another than his being: if he were good by any external thing, that thing must be in being before him, or after him; if before him, he was not then himself from eternity; if after him, he was not good in himself from eternity. The end of his creating things, then, was not to confer a goodness upon his creatures, but to partake of a goodness from his creatures. God is good by and in himself, since all things are only good by him; and all that goodness which is in creatures, is but the breathing of his own goodness upon them: they have all their loveliness from the same hand they have their being from. All the names of God are comprehended in this one of good. ...All gifts, all variety of goodness, are contained in him as one common good. He is the efficient cause of all good, by an overflowing goodness of his nature; he refers all things to himself, as the end, for the representation of his own goodness¹

0.1. UNDER ATTACK!

- **Rom 2:4** Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness² and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? (ἢ τοῦ πλούτου τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀνοχῆς καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας καταφρονεῖς, ἀγνοῶν ὅτι τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς μετάνοιάν σε ἄγει;)
- **Ps 31:20** Oh, how abundant is your goodness (ὡς πολὺ τὸ πλῆθος τῆς χρηστότητός σου)
- **Luke 18:1-8** And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man."³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, "Though I neither fear God nor respect man,⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming."⁶ And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says.⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (ἀρα εὐρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;)
- anthropocentrism; secularism; hedonism;
- → theodicy, the central problem of apologetics

0.2. WHAT IS GOOD?

[CHAMBERS] we have to trust God, who is infinitely more than goodness.³ ...We come to God not with faith in His goodness but with a conception of our own, and we look for God to come to us in that way. God cannot come to me in my way. He can only come in His own way...⁴

- **Ps 4:6** There are many **who** say, "**Who** will **show** us some **good**? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!
- hedonism (Epicureism); utilitarianism...
- life-supporting...

(1) goodness in ethics → **Mk 10:18** "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.
 (2) goodness in ontology (metaphysics) **Gn 1:31** And **God** saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very **good**. (7x)
 (3) goodness in epistemology → **Psalms 73:28** ...for me **it is good** to be near God

¹ CHARNOCK, S. *The Existence and Attributes of God*, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849, p. 535, 538.

² [PASSOW] useful, good of its kind, serviceable, ... goodness, excellence, honesty, uprightness...

³ CHAMBERS, O. *Notes on Isaiah*. Complete Works, p. 1381.

⁴ CHAMBERS, O. *Not knowing where*. Complete Works, p. 894.

- [Wiki] "Is what is morally good commanded by God because it is morally good, or is it morally good because it is commanded by God?" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euthyphro_dilemma)
- goodness vs. justice???

0.3. A CONFLUENCE OF ATTRIBUTES

- (1) benevolence, (2) wisdom, (3) justice ⇒ realization of goodness
- freedom of other moral agents: **Acts 4:24** "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth... **26** The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed' ... **28** to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.
- god of this world (2Cor 4:4)

1. GOD IS BENEVOLENT (WILLING GOOD)

- **Eze 33:11** As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked
- **1Tim 2:3-4** ...God our Savior, desires all people to be saved (θέλει σωθῆναι)...
- **Ex 34:6** The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, (יהוה יהוה אל רחום ורחמן ארך אפים ורבחסד ואמת)

1.1. FEELING AND SHOWING COMPASSION

- mercy → **Ex 34:6** "The LORD, the LORD, a **God merciful** and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness
- forgiving → **Eph 4:32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, **forgiving** one another, as **God** in Christ forgave you.

1.2. RELATING ALL BEINGS TO HIMSELF

- helper → **Ps 146:7-9** ...who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
- **Ps 145:14** The LORD upholds (סומך) all who are falling and raises up (זקק) all who are bowed down (הכפופים)

2. GOD IS WISE

- **Rom 11:32-36** For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. ³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God (καὶ σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως θεοῦ)! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

2.1. HE KNOWS WHAT IS GOOD

- Ps 4:6/7 Many are asking, "Who can show us any good?" Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD. ⁷ You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.

2.2. HE KNOWS HOW TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PLAN

- **Gn 50:20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but **God meant** it for good
- **Rom 9:17** For the **Scripture** says to **Pharaoh**, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

3. GOD IS JUST

- **Gn 18:25** [Abraham to the LORD] Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

- **Ps 119:137** Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules (צְדִיק אַתָּה יְהוָה וְיָשָׁר מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ)

3.1. UPRIGHT, TRUTHFUL

- strictly right; no bending of justice: [David] **2Sa 12:10** Now therefore the **sword** shall never depart **from** your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.
- **Ps 92:15** ...the LORD is upright my rock (יָשָׁר יְהוָה צִרְיִי), and there is no unrighteousness (עוֹלָתָהּ) in him.
- **Hab 1:13** You who are of purer eyes than to see evil (טָהוֹר עֵינַיִם מִרְאוֹת רָע) and cannot look at wrong (וְהַבֵּיט אֶל-עָמָל לֹא תוּכַל)

3.2. THE AVENGER, GIVING RETRIBUTION

- **2 Kings 23:25-26** Before him [**Josiah**] there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him. ²⁶ Still the LORD did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him.
- **Rom 12:19** ..."Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (**Dt 32:35** Vengeance is mine, and recompense...)
- **Heb 10:30** "The Lord will judge his people."
- **Ps 94:1** O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth! ² Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve! ³ O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?

4. TO REMEMBER

- To understand the goodness of God we need a better definition of goodness than hedonism or utilitarianism has.
- The goodness of God is often realized as a final outcome of long processes through complicated channels of various moral agents.
- To understand the goodness of God we have to submit to his power and trust him that everything works for good when we love him.