

9 Mar 2014

## God is rich in goodness (The Goodness of God Pt 1)

This is a new study on the topic of God's goodness. In this study we will consider three points; (1) God is rich in goodness, and (2) God's goodness leads a man to repent, and (3) the heathen is ignorant of God's goodness.

Let us add a little detail to our points:-

1. God is rich in goodness

Rom 2:4 *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

See also; Ex 34:6 & Ps.145: 7

Before we consider our point let us establish a meaning for our verse within its context. Paul is writing a letter to the Gentile church at Rome, and he has just finished saying that those (brethren) who judge another brother condemn themselves when they do the same things (2: 1), and then just in case the reader did not understand, he says it slightly differently; "And thinkest thou this, O man that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" Then we have our verse (2: 4) that speaks to those believers who do such things, when it says "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" So if the NZ Protestant were to criticise the Anglican's for participating in a RC service where they bow down to the wafer-god and then turned around and joined the RCs in a service themselves, their actions would show that they despise the goodness of God, they would show a deep repugnance for His goodness. Why? Because in criticising a brother then doing the same they show their brother none of God's goodness, His longsuffering, and His forbearance which they richly receive, therefore, they actions show they despise the richness of God's goodness. Within this context God Almighty of the Bible is rich in goodness, He is abundant in goodness (Ex.34: 6), is great in goodness (Ps. 145: 7), and His goodness endures continually (Ps.52: 1). And we establish that the Lord God bestows goodness on His children because of His mercies and His longsuffering (Is.63: 7).

When you read each of the verses we have put forward so far we see that there are similarities with our verse in Rom.2: 4, which includes the words longsuffering and forbearance. From our collection of verses therefore, we can say that God's goodness includes His forbearance, His longsuffering, His mercy, His graciousness, and His truth (see also Ps.86: 15), which is interesting when you consider the various Hebrew and Greek words that are also translated *goodness*. For example:-

- i) In Hebrew there are three words translated goodness;
  - a) *hesed* which is also translated favour, good deed, godliness, kindly, kindness, lovingkindness, merciful, merciful kindness, mercy, pity, reproach, and wicked thing.
  - b) *toob* which is also translated; beautiful, best, better, bountiful, cheerful, at ease, fair, fair word, to favour, fine, glad, good, good deed, graciously, joyful, kindly, liketh, loving, merry, pleasant, pleasure, precious, posterity, ready, sweet, wealth, welfare, well & wellfavoured.
  - c) *tuub* which is also translated; fair, gladness, good, good thing, goods, joy and to go well with.
- ii) In Greek there are three words that are translated goodness:-
  - a) *agathosene* which is only translated goodness, and
  - b) *crestos* which is also translated better, easy, good, gracious and kind, and
  - c) *crestetes* which is also translated; gentleness, good and kindness.

How does man know of God's rich, abundant, and enduring goodness? The Bible says :-

- i) Israel knew that their God was abundant in goodness because of the physical things he provided them (Jer.31: 12), in His mercy and His grace.
- ii) Israel was saved from their oppressors by God Almighty bringing them out from under the hand of the Egyptians by His outstretched hand. They did not deserve to be given the land of Canaan, but He chose them and gave them the good land flowing with milk and honey, because He loved them (Deut.7: 7, 8).
- iii) the earth is full of the goodness of God (see Ps.33: 5).

Therefore, according to the Holy Scriptures the Lord God Almighty provides both the heathen and His saints with rich goodness. Everything that man receives comes through God's hand, like the rain that falls free from heaven. He freely gives the first and latter rain (Deut.11: 14) because of His goodness. Today God offers *all* men everywhere His abundant goodness in His Son. The believer chooses to receive God's goodness in Christ Jesus, whereas the non-believer chooses to reject God's goodness in Christ Jesus. Hence, why you often hear the non-believer say, he is tired of the rain, and hence, they not only reject God's goodness in His Son, but *every* other goodness that He freely gives, like rain. The heathen will attribute the rain as coming from 'mother nature' (whatever that means), but they will *not* attribute water that falls freely from heaven as coming from God Almighty of the Bible! To do so would acknowledge His goodness!

Next time you meet a Muslim ask him whether his god Allah is a god who is rich in goodness?

Next time you meet a Buddhist ask him whether the piece of wood he worships is rich in goodness?

Because if all the other gods of the world are 'no gods' then they are all able to supply as much goodness to their worshippers as Baal did to their prophets in the Old Testament (see 1Kg.18); i.e. NONE!

Do you *know* that your God is rich in goodness? If you do, do you know that because you read it in the Holy Scriptures (which is good that you do), or do you know it because you experience His goodness, His mercy, His longsuffering each year, each month, each week, and each day you walk the earth? And do you attribute such goodness to the Lord, the One true God of the Bible?

Let us remember, let us teach our young, that they would pass it on to their children, that God Almighty of the Bible *is* rich in goodness.

2. God's goodness leads a man to repent.

*Rom 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

Remember the context of our verse is a letter to Gentile believers, and specifically to those who judge their brother, then do the same sin as their brother has. When they do so, they despise the riches of God's goodness, such goodness they have received yet forgotten about (see the words "not knowing"). If they remembered God's goodness to themselves, that would lead them to repentance, to turn from their sin, turn toward God afresh, and do work meet for repentance (Acts 26: 20). I suggest to you that if a lost man knew of God's goodness it would also lead him to turn from his sin. When a man truly knows of God's goodness in Christ, all of His forbearance, and longsuffering, then the man would desire in his heart to repent, to turn from his sins. We know that all men everywhere come to the knowledge of their sin by the law (see Rom.3: 20), however, the Lord Jesus Christ said that the Holy Spirit was given to convict a man of sin because "they believe not on me" (see Jn.16: 9). So all men, when they reject Christ Jesus as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world and personally for themselves, they have sinned and need to repent. And it is only knowing the richness, the greatness of God's goodness in Christ, that men come to repentance, where they turn from their sin, face God afresh, and do works meet for repentance.

How many preachers on the street do you hear preaching the goodness of God, the richness of his longsuffering and the greatness of His forbearance?

How many preachers on the street do you know that preach it is the goodness of God is that leads a man to repentance?

How many preachers on the street do you hear say that, "when God sent His Son the Lord Jesus to die for man's sin on the cross, He showed forth the richness of

His goodness, and showed the lost that He was longsuffering toward their sin everyday, instead of allowing their feet to slip down into hell” (see Deut.32: 35)?

What do most preachers on the street preach to those who are lost? They preach sin, and consequences of sin which are eternal life in hell-fire and damnation, hoping and trusting in the Lord that the lost would come to the knowledge of their sin.

So, should we send this study out to all the street preachers around the world? No. It is interesting that Hosea mentions that people will fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days (see Hos.3:5), hence there is a link between fearing God and His goodness. And then you have passages that speak about God judging the world in righteousness (Acts 17: 31), and those passages that speak of God “taking vengeance on those who know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction” (1Thes.1: 8, 9). Hence, there is truth in a preacher preaching hell-fire, and damnation, hoping that the fear of the Lord would encourage the lost to come to God and repent. Hence, the preacher that preaches sin, judgment, hell-fire and damnation is as correct as is the preacher who preaches the goodness of God in Christ, hoping that the knowledge of God’s goodness will lead the lost to repent, and believe the gospel of Christ crucified.

Let us pray for the preachers in our land that they would keep a balance in their preaching, as we see in the Scriptures, such that they not only focus on encouraging the lost to fear God, but that they would also preach the goodness of God, that the lost would know of God’s goodness and be led to repentance through the Holy Spirit.

### 3. The heathen is ignorant of God’s goodness

*Rom 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

The goodness which the Lord shows a lost man every day is when He allows things to happen in his life so that he would see God’s goodness, and repent and not end up in hell. Yet, as an unbeliever they are unaware of God’s goodness, which would otherwise lead them to repentance.

But if only the heathen really looked at the earth, not through the eyes of science which claims that the earth came into being billions of years ago and therefore removes God out of creation, but that they would look and see that God’s creation is *full of His* goodness (see Ps.33: 5).

Imagine going through life and being ignorant of God’s abundant, rich, and great goodness.

Imagine going through life and never thanking or praising God for His goodness (Ps.107: 8), because if you do not know of his goodness, how can you praise Him for his longsuffering, his forbearance? How can a lost man who does not know that every day God is preventing him from going to hell, and is putting up with his sin, how can he thank and praise the Lord, or glorify him (Rom.1: 27)? Hence, it is only the saints of God that rejoice in the goodness of God (see 2Chron.6: 41).

What about the Jew today, is he as the Gentile who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ? If the Jew reads and believes His Torah, the Psalms, and books of the prophets, then you may be thinking that he would know of all God's rich goodness. Each Passover he celebrates God Almighty showing His goodness to his fathers, so surely he knows something of the goodness of God?

Given that the love of God is in Christ Jesus (see Rom.8: 39) and love is linked to God's goodness, then it is probable that the fulness of the goodness of God is available today only through God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And when a person who is lost, believes the gospel of Christ crucified in their heart then they come to know in their heart the goodness of God. So whereas, the Jew has knowledge of God's goodness, as he does the same with any other historical event, he does not *really* have a knowledge of God in his heart. By way of illustration, let us consider the New Testament lecturer at Laidlaw College, or the Professor of religious studies at one of the universities in New Zealand, just because they read and teach the Bible does not mean that they are saved, because as we know, salvation takes place when a man believes he deserves to go to hell, and God has paid his debt in full through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. So, according to the Scriptures, the Jew who rejects Christ is no different to the Gentile (see Rom.3: 9). God is rich in goodness to *all* those who call on Him (Rom.10: 12), but for those who do not, whether Jew or Gentile, they may read of God's goodness in the Torah, but in reality they have no knowledge of His goodness, because if they did they would repent, and turn to Christ.

Let us therefore be charitable and pray for the heathen, and especially the Jew who has the law, the prophets, and the Psalms, yet is ignorant of God's goodness in Christ Jesus.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this first topical study on God's goodness, we have covered three points; (1) God is rich in goodness, and (2) God's goodness leads a man to repent, and (3) the heathen is ignorant of God's goodness.