

# The Goodness of God and Our Response

## Introduction:

In my twenties, as I first took serious steps in my spiritual journey, it seemed to me and others that God favored those actively serving. Consequently, I immersed myself in various church responsibilities. Most Sundays saw me too occupied with duties during the services to truly participate in or enjoy them. A transition in church leadership led to a discussion with our new pastor about feeling overwhelmed. He advised prioritizing what I found fulfilling while stepping down from the rest. I opted to withdraw entirely and after some time off, I reflected on why I had undertaken so many tasks—recognizing they were often unwanted by others—and on whether my actions sought approval or genuine devotion. Initially, doing good felt genuinely worth it, until exhaustion set in.

## Scripture Reading:

### ***Matthew 19:16-22 (NIV)***

16 Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” 17 “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.” 18 “Which ones?” he inquired. Jesus replied, “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, 19 honor your father and mother, and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’” 20 “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” 21 Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

## Point 1: God’s Inherent Goodness

### **Explanation:**

Only God is eternally and essentially good by nature. This goodness isn't derived from deeds or actions; it's built-in to who He is. It's not about a choice to be good but His fundamental state of being. There are no external influences or concepts involved. To put it simply, "God is good, period." Like the unchanging characteristics of a rock, which remains the same over millennia if undisturbed, God's goodness is constant.

### **Supporting Scriptures:**

***Psalms 100:5:*** “For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever.”

***James 1:17:*** “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.”

## Point 2: The Rich Young Ruler's Question

### **Context:**

The question posed by the rich young ruler about acquiring eternal life through his actions might seem unusual to those who understand that salvation is a gift from God made available through Jesus. However, reflect on your own reasons for performing good deeds for God or other people.

### **Application:**

Consider whether your actions like appearing to be praying when others are watching or helping someone in need, are motivated by a genuine heart or a desire for recognition. Often our motives for doing good can be self-centered, while the goodness that comes from God is a built-in part of His nature. If we could attain salvation through our own merits, it would pose the question of why it was necessary for Jesus to come and sacrifice himself for our sins.

## Point 3: The Commandments

### **Explanation:**

Jesus replied, “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, 19 honor your father and mother, and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”

### **Application:**

To adore God is to acknowledge His goodness and submit to His divine plan. We understand that doing good aligns with His intentions, but more importantly, He aims for us to act as vessels through which His good works flow, thus recognizing that He alone deserves all praise for these actions. When we aim to glorify Jesus through our deeds, He will instill in us the yearning to carry them out.

We should perform acts of kindness out of love rather than obligation. Acknowledging that human nature does not have built-in desire to do good deeds, but rather this is a characteristic of God, helps us see our hidden agendas. By realizing God's goodness in us, we can align with it and let that goodness flow through us.

## Point 4: The Rich Young Man's Struggle

### **Analysis:**

What was the difficulty that the rich young ruler faced? He possessed material riches but did not fully grasp the goodness of God. The reason why Jesus told him to give away his possessions may have been puzzling to him, yet through this act, he might come to comprehend what Jesus was offering. The idea of relinquishing all we own is a daunting prospect for many, but Jesus' intention was to clarify what holds our loyalty.

While being rich was not criticized, the love for wealth was considered problematic. The state of our hearts is key to whether we are devoted or indifferent to Jesus and His teachings.

**Challenge:**

When contemplating self-reflection, what do we value more than the goodness of God? Do we resemble the rich young ruler who fears that without personal riches there will be a need to depend on God or others for provision? Do we take pride in acknowledging that while our wealth and belongings are gifts from God, we also have a stake in them personally? Can you recall an instance where you experienced a need and it was met through God's intervention and/or through the generosity of others?

## Point 5: The Invitation

**Jesus' Response:**

"If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Jesus calls us to follow Him with full devotion. While we may commit many parts of our lives to Jesus, some of us, like the rich young ruler, hesitate to surrender certain aspects because of fear, especially when it comes to wealth. We prefer to feel in control and struggle to trust that God, who is always good, will provide for us as promised, even though we may seem to grasp the grand scheme of God's provision and sovereignty.

**Challenge:**

Do we pursue the goodness of God or depend on our own abilities? Are we attempting to balance both approaches? Are we prepared to put our necessities in God's hands and realize that He should be our main concern, rather than our material possessions? Do we truly understand that God is the only one who is good and the One from whom all good and perfect gifts come?

**Conclusion:**

Concluding the earlier narrative about my church participation in many tasks, I found out that my greatest passion was something I rarely pursued. Realizing that I had a gift for singing, which I believe was a special blessing from God, allowed me to embrace this path fully. For many years, I had the honor to sing in various churches and convey messages that I feel were inspired by God, with the intent of glorifying Jesus and welcoming His divine presence. If I hadn't paused to reflect on my reasons for fulfilling various roles within the church, I might not have discerned, through divine guidance, that ultimately only one thing is of importance. That is to cherish God, love others, and to serve in the place God has called you too.

**Call to Action and Prayer:**

We must acknowledge our need for God's grace. We must learn to trust in God's goodness and accept His invitation to participate in His good works. Let us make practical acts of love a response to God's goodness working through us. Remember, our good deeds don't earn salvation; they flow from a heart transformed by God's goodness. Let's seek Him, love others, and live out His goodness in our lives.