

THE LIVE WIRE

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PLUG INTO THE HIGHEST POWER

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GOD IS GOOD

by Kenny James

In a world of evil, pain and suffering, some question whether God really is all good.

Who defines “good”? Not everyone agrees.

In fact, some claim that the God described in the Bible is cruel and definitely not good. One writer, Christopher Hitchens, has gone so far as to write a book titled *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

According to Christopher Hitchens, God is not great or good.

Some people tend to evaluate life merely in reference to the short term. If you please me now—today—then you are “good.”

This, of course, leaves tomorrow or next year completely out of the picture. It ignores the possibility that something that brings short-term pleasure can produce pain, suffering or loss in the long term. It also fails to see how good in the long term might result from struggles or suffering in the short term.

Others equate “goodness” with “niceness” or good manners—never hurting anyone’s feelings—always saying positive and complimentary things about others. In modern times, the term “politically correct” has come into usage, describing institutionalized “niceness”—though sometimes at the expense of truthfulness or constructive criticism. In its advanced form, it can result in nonjudgmental “tolerance” of behavior, even behavior that results in hurt and damage to others.

The list could go on. Other opinions as to the essence of “goodness” center on attributes such as generosity or humility or loyalty or “spirituality.” There is considerable variation in how people view the concept of “good.”

But how does the Bible define goodness? In what sense of the word “good” is God “good”—according to the testimony of the Bible?

If we are to understand God and the goodness of God, it is important that we study what the Bible teaches about this question. When we do that, we find that the varying human opinions and perspectives about “goodness” mentioned above fall short of a complete understanding.

According to the Scriptures, we understand the “goodness” of God in the working out of His great master plan of salvation. God has a wonderful plan for His human creation—a very good plan! According to God’s purpose, that plan takes time, patience and endurance. For this wonderful plan to be accomplished, there are struggles along the way for us human beings (Matthew 7:13-14).

It isn’t easy, but it is good—all good. God is good, and that goodness is seen as He accomplishes His purpose to expand His family. Let’s understand.

God the Father and Jesus Christ are engaged in “bringing many sons to glory” (Hebrews 2:10). They are expanding the family of God. Their purpose is to bring human beings to eternal life in a loving family relationship with Them—to make many more in their “image” (Genesis 1:26; 1 Corinthians 15:49; Colossians 3:10).

In the working out of that purpose, God reveals His character—His nature—to mankind. He shows us that we are to become like Him. His character is pure, holy and loving. In this *revealing* of His holy nature to His human creation, *God is good*. “Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He teaches sinners in the way” (Psalm 25:8).

God reveals His righteous law to mankind. His law serves as a guide to living in a way that pleases God, and it leads to the accomplishment of His plan. In making this guide and spiritual “light” available to man, *God is good*. “You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes” (Psalm 119:68).

In working out His glorious purpose, God has first made mankind mortal and given him physical life. In that life,

all men and women have sinned—violating God’s righteous laws, falling short of the holiness and spiritual purity of God (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23).

God’s goodness leads men to repentance

When God works directly in the life of a sinning human being, He *convicts him of his sins* and *grants him the gift of repentance*—a willingness and commitment to change, to become like God and to seek His forgiveness. In doing this, *God is good*. “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4).

Christ’s sacrifice shows God’s goodness

When God calls and chooses a person to know Him and brings that person to repentance and forgiveness, that forgiveness is through faith in the death—the sacrifice—of Jesus Christ. Christ, the Son of God, died for sinners, so that they might live. In God the Father’s merciful *acceptance of Christ’s death* in the place of the eternal death of a repentant sinner, *God is good*.

Ultimately, all will understand God’s goodness and His plan!

The Bible reveals that the time is coming when the knowledge of God—of how He is and what He does, of God’s goodness—will be far more widespread than it is today. “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

“Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts, and I will declare Your greatness. They shall utter the memory of *Your great goodness*, and shall sing of Your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The LORD is *good to all*, and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalm 145:6-9).

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