

Series: God Is Good #1800

Title: Various Scriptures

Is God Good When I Suffer?

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. As we come to the end of our series on the goodness of God I would like to speak specifically to believers, to Christian people, who are struggling with this question: is God still good to me when I am suffering? As we all know, trials and tragedies are not unique to *unbelievers*. Both non-Christians and Christians encounter great difficulty in this life. As the sun shines on the good and the bad so the dark clouds and tumultuous weather reign down on the lives of the good and the bad. Perhaps you or someone you care about, as we speak, is dealing with pain and suffering. Is God still being good to you?

The answer is...*yes*. God is *still* good. And He is *still* good to you. Later I want to back up my answer with the Bible, but first I think it's really important to emphasize that the happiness of God's people is *not* the highest good to be achieved in this life. What is the highest good? It is the glory of God. Listen to 19th century theologian Charles Hodge writing in volume one of his excellent *Systematic Theology*. Quote, "God does promote the highest good of His creatures, consistent with the promotion of His own glory...But to reverse this order, to make the good of the creature the highest end, is to pervert and subvert the whole scheme; it is to put the means for the end, to subordinate God to the universe, the Infinite to the finite. This putting the creature in the place of the Creator, disturbs our moral and religious sentiments and convictions, as well as our intellectual apprehensions of God, and of His relation to the universe (436)." Close quote.

Dr. Hodge is right. And so often we get this wrong. We think *our* good is the highest end. We subordinate God to us. By our attitude we make God who is Infinite submissive to we who are finite. We put ourselves in God's place. And I submit to you that because we do this, when trouble comes into our lives (however it does, in whatever form it takes), we are shocked and then we grow to become resentful towards God because this whole time we have been thinking that He only does us good. If God is good and God does good, then God must not allow anything that is bad to happen to me. Have you ever felt this way? I will be honest, *I have*.

I have, personally, had to learn the hard way that the glory of God is the ultimate good! I exist, you and I exist, to glorify Him. And the suffering we sometimes endure is a most cherished time to deliver to our Good God glory, honor, and praise. In fact, *how* we suffer says a lot about what we believe about God's glory over our good. No doubt there are many of you within the sound of my voice that know by experience what we mean by this. It turns out that while God is always good to us, He does not exist only to make me happy; to make me feel that I am only receiving what I deem to be "good." Dr. Hodge again, "A universe constructed for the purpose of making God known is a far better universe than one designed for the purpose of [our] happiness (436)." I'll say that again, "A universe constructed for the purpose of making God known is a far better universe than one designed for the purpose of [our] happiness."

Having said this, and keeping this in mind, let's open our Bibles to a popular verse. Romans chapter 8, verse 28. Previously on this broadcast and podcast we have studied Romans 8 in-depth. And we invested significant time on this verse, so I am not going to re-tell what we said. If you want to hear it, just visit the God Is website and click the series link marked *God Saves*. Visit godisministry.org, that's godisministry.org and on the homepage click *All Series* and then *God Saves*. You will have immediate access to the teaching on Romans 8, including verse 28, which says, "**And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**"

This quite the promise, the guarantee from God to "those who love God." This is not a promise to those who *do not* love God. Remember that! The ones who *know* that God causes *all things* to work together for *good* are those who love God; those who are called according to His purpose.

This is true of you, dear saint. Notice here first, the confidence. In the midst of trials we can say that we *know* God is being good to us. Second, notice it is *all things* that God causes to work together for our good. "All things." What does that mean? Just what it says: literally everything!

Let's be careful. This does *not* mean that everything that happens to us is good. Cancer itself is not good. The death of a young child is not good. Mental illness is not good. A hurricane or tornado that ravages your home and rips it apart is not good. Violent crime is not good. Follow the text closely. It is what God does with these and other things that makes them useful for our good. Highlight this: "God causes all things to *work together* for good..." In God's hands the bad becomes the good. It's what God does with these things that really matters.

Cancer? Yes. The death of a child? Yes. Mental illness? Yes. A storm that ravaged your home? Yes. Being the victim of a senseless crime? Oh yes. *All things*. And third, I trust you have already noticed "for good." There is our word. And this is the same Greek word used in Mark 10.17 and 18 to describe Jesus as the "Good Teacher." What God does for those who love Him is consistently *good* and that is no less true when we are tried and when we are troubled.

If you miss everything else today, catch this: God is consistently good because it is His nature to be good. His goodness is one of His many and simultaneous attributes, perfections, and excellencies. Whenever and wherever God is, which is always and everywhere, He is good. God can never not be good. He never changes. Since God is with you in your suffering then He is good to you in your suffering and in mine. It is the nature and character of holy God to be good, as we have proven from the Bible. God is good all the time, and that time includes times of pain and suffering and sorrow and sadness. The good times as well as the bad times. All this time God is good.

Here are a couple of many Scriptures I could have chosen to further encourage you. In John's Gospel chapter 10 and verse 14 listen to the Lord Jesus, "**I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me...**" Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Again, our word Good used to describe our Lord. In the Hebrew Bible, Psalm chapter 23 is often a Psalm we go to when we are hurting, worried, and afraid. Listen to what the Psalmist says, "**The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. ³ He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**"

You heard this: *surely goodness* will follow me all the days of my life! There it is. So is God still good to you when you suffer? Yes. Yes He is. He is good to you dear Christian now and always. I hope this encourages you. God is good, friends. What an honor, joy, and assurance it is to know we are the sheep of our Good Shepherd. How grateful we are that He has saved us from all our sins. And we can trust Him to always be our good. This reminds me of Psalm 73, verses 27 and 28 and this sharp contrast.

"For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. ²⁸ But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works."

Ah, the nearness of God is our *good*. The Lord is our refuge. Let us run into Him and hide there. And yes, let us tell of all His works. Go from here to share with others this day this truth: God is good. To quote a worship song, we have a good, good Father. That's who He is. Please join us again next time as we continue to discover who God is.

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