

The Goodness of the LORD

Psalm 27

A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?

When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear; though war arise against me, in *spite of* this I shall be confident.

One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple.

For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;

in the secret place of His tent He will hide me;

He will lift me up on a rock, and now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;

I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice, and be gracious to me and answer me. *When You said*, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."

Do not hide Your face from me, do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help; do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation! For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me up.

Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a level path because of my foes.

Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence.

I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD.

Do you believe that you will see the goodness of the LORD? David says here in verse 13 that he would have despaired unless he had believed that he would see the goodness of the LORD- the goodness of Yahweh - in the land of the living.

What is the goodness of Yahweh our God? We often hear people speak about the love of God. How is his goodness different from his love? We know that God is “good”. Jesus once said to a rich young ruler that **“there is only one who is good, that is, God.”** Goodness is his nature - that is, His moral perfection. And yet his goodness is more than His moral perfection and is more than His love. Because he is good - his lovingkindness expresses itself toward his whole creation. Christ is God’s goodness manifest in the flesh. And as his redeemed people, his goodness to us is the outworking of all of his beneficial love toward us.

So this is a definition of the goodness of God:

His goodness to us is the outworking of all of his beneficial love toward us (or for us).

Why do we need to see the goodness of Yahweh? Do we not need God to lift up the eyes of our hearts to have a clearer sight of the salvation of the LORD? John Newton once said, “Wonderful are the effects when a crucified Saviour is presented to the eye of faith. This sight always destroys the love of sin.” Do we not need to have a more settled hope in the promise of his word not returning empty? That the good seed we sow in faith will fall on good soil prepared by him? Do we not need to trust more completely that he will complete the good work that he began in us? Do we not need him to increase our faith in the power of the Gospel to transform lives and even to turn the world upside down? Do we believe that we will see his goodness? Or are we saying, as it says in Psalm 77: **“Has God forgotten to be gracious?”**

David says in this psalm that **“Yahweh is my light and my salvation, the strength of my life”**. Persecuted and afflicted as David was, he says that **“Yahweh shall hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. Yahweh has been my help”**. But my question to you tonight is: *Do you see the goodness of the LORD?*

When can we expect to see the goodness of the LORD? David believed that he would even see it in this life - in this world. We as Christians have much future hope to look forward to - so much so that if we are ever stripped of every earthly comfort and certainty, we surely may have abounding consolations in proportion to the need of every moment in Christ. Even so, here David's confidence is that God is a present help in his time of trouble.

Think about this: if you do not believe that you will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living then this means that you are caught up in the same crisis of faith as Adam and Eve in the moment that the Tempter came and insinuated the first great doubt into their minds about the goodness of God when he said, **“Indeed, has God said, “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?”** How subtle. The question presupposed that God is not really good at all. That God's love is actually a stinginess. God's love is really not love at all. God's goodness isn't for you - now. He's holding back on being good to you since you evidently can't handle it.

This was the temptation and this was the first sin of our first parents: *doubting God's goodness*. This was the actual sin of the heart that was expressed in the outward rebellion of taking and eating the one fruit that God had forbidden. Eve desired knowledge. She wanted to see the way God saw. It was through this misappropriation of knowledge in this way that Eve and all of mankind after her would have their eyes opened - not to the knowledge of the glory of God - but to sin and shame.

Listen to this statement from Stephen Charnock, *“God's goodness was revealed in his works of creation. Adam was given immortality conditioned upon obedience. This was*

more than he could merit!” But now he says that we see “*God’s goodness is revealed in his work of redemption: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* Charnock again says that the fact of God’s goodness revealed in John 3.16 is “*a greater goodness to us, than was for a time manifested to Christ himself!*” You see, Christ perished that those who believe in Him should not perish.

Praise God for his abounding mercy to undeserving sinners like us! - that by faith in the One who was the Seed of the woman - Jesus Christ - who was promised to come to fallen man - we who are redeemed by his perfect life and sacrificial death on the cross - have been made a new creation, a new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of - *not the first Adam* - but the One who created us.

When can we expect to see the goodness of the LORD? As we are trusting in Christ alone to redeem us and to keep us and to purify us for himself and to finish the good work that he began in us. We who are in Christ are the special objects of the love of our good God. Even more than David, we may see with the eyes of our hearts - our greatest enemies defeated, and that forever.

Just listen to *some* of the *goodness* that the LORD has accomplished for those who are in Christ from Ephesians Chapter Two: “**God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them....now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our**

peace...you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

Psalm 34:8: "O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!"

Finally, how may we see the goodness of Yahweh? David confidently believed that he would see his goodness. Do you know how David saw it? Listen: you will not see the goodness of the LORD if you do not believe that it can be seen. We will not see if we do not believe that we will see. We must walk by faith and not by physical sight in this. This is true of the whole Christian life. You may ask, you may seek, you may knock. Our God delights to give good gifts to his children. The LORD grants spiritual sight that we may see his goodness toward us. You may ask. "Why do I need to *believe* in order to see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living?" Look at this text. It was not only the sight of the goodness of the LORD that sustained David and kept him from despair. *Unless he had believed*, he would have despaired. Unless he had believed, unless his faith produced genuine hope in the goodness of the LORD, he would have every reason to despair even of life.

It's good to remember the words of our Lord when he spoke to Martha after the death of her brother, Lazarus, when he said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?...Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Jesus here reveals the principle that faith must come before sight. But when we are granted the blessing of seeing with the eyes of our hearts, then we will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Paul writes in Ephesians 1.18 his prayer that **“the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe.”** This is a kind of “seeing” which involves trusting, doesn’t it? Remember that what we want to see may not be the kind of “goodness” that the LORD has in mind for us at all. He is not a cosmic genie in a bottle. He’s not a vending machine dispensing his goodness when we push all of the correct buttons. God does work in mysterious and often indirect ways. One picture of this is like if you open the back of an old wind-up grandfather clock. You see one wheel going left, and another wheel going the opposite way and you think that this looks like confusion and you can’t make any sense of how this machine actually keeps track of time. The providences of the living God are like this: He overrules sin and evil and is at work softening some hearts and hardening the hearts of others. He delays some judgments and reveals his wrath at other times, even by withdrawing his restraining hand that holds back the flood of man’s total depravity. You need to know that we must not trust in our own senses. William Cowper’s hymn explains this so beautifully:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sov’ reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

Do you believe that you will see the goodness of the LORD? May God grant that each of us may trust more and more in his goodness for the sake of Christ. Amen.