

The Providence of God (8) Doubting God's Goodness

Last Lord's Day we emphasized how knowledge of the providence of God enables us to interpret the world about us. We know and believe that God is in absolute control of all that transpires in our lives and in the world about us; therefore, we are able to draw conclusions about what God is doing. Because there are spiritual laws operative in God's creation, such as the law of cause and effect and of reaping and sowing, we can make sense out of what we see transpire in our world about us.

But we have sought to underscore the truth that we cannot infallibly understand the ways of God's providence. There is a mystery in much of God's dealings that render us incapable of knowing precisely and accurately what God may be doing to us and through us. Nevertheless, we may have confidence respecting the ways of God that if we live according to His Word, the result will be a life blessed of God. But the predictable outcome of God's blessing *in this life* is not always true to our experience, even when we attempt to live godly lives, when we try to do all "the right things." Ultimately God is sovereign and His ways they are surpass our ability to assess. And so, although there are general principles that we may glean from the Scripture (Proverbs are true expressions of reality), nevertheless God ultimately will do according to His will, all to the end that He will be glorified through all that transpires.

But since this is the case, and we do not always see the "blessing of God" when we expect to see it. When we see ourselves languishing in our difficulty although we give great effort to walk with our God, even while it appears that others get along quite well, who care nothing for God, discouragement may captivate our hearts and even anger might rise up within us. From our limited perspective, when we are labouring under difficulties of different sorts, we may not see the hand of a good God operative in His world. Frequently we see much evil, and it would seem we see too little good, and it would seem that these things are granted to the wrong people. We see evil and difficulty fall out to the godly. We see "good" and "blessing" experienced by people who seem far from God. It may cause us to think ill of God's ways, doubt the wisdom, maybe even the reality of God's providence. We may find ourselves as the "Preacher" of Ecclesiastes, who seemed to see no rhyme or reason to why things happened. It appeared to him that the same kinds of things happened whether he were good or evil in his behavior. He wrote in **Ecclesiastes 9:1-4**:

But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. ²It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. ³This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

Our responses to the providence of God are very important. It is how we act and react to what unfolds in our lives that our faith as Christians is best proved and visibly displayed before the world and before our Lord. We are to be always humble, trusting, submitting, and obeying our Lord in whatever unfolds in our lives. We are to be slow to take offense. When we become angry with what occurs, we do not reflect faith in God or trust in His management of our lives. We are to be quick to acquiesce to the events that God brings to us, even those that come upon us through unjust men and means. We are to commit ourselves and every matter to the Lord, attempting to react and respond in a manner that glorifies God and adorns our profession of the gospel.

But sometimes we do not respond appropriately to what plays out in our experience. We may forget that God has ordered what is happening to us for His glory and our good. We act and react in unbiblical,

ungodly ways. When we are hurting or we witness others hurting we may tend toward these inappropriate reactions and responses to God's providential dealings with us. Or when we see people who are quite ungodly and living in ways that are clearly contrary to the law of God and yet they seem to prosper with no direct consequences, we may grow weary in doing good. We may even gravitate toward a practical agnosticism. Although we believe God exists, it would seem that we see very little of the manifestation of His righteousness through providence. We need to be reminded to think rightly and react rightly when we witness what appears to be an absence of God working.

This was played out in the life of Asaph, one of the ancient psalm writers of ancient Israel. Psalm 73 records the struggle of Asaph when he saw the wicked prosper. It is only when he was reminded of God's justice and the final end of the wicked, that his right senses returned to him. Let us turn to Psalm 73 and consider its message respecting the providence of God. The psalmist wrote:

Truly God is good to Israel,
To such as are pure in heart.
2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled;
My steps had nearly slipped.
3 For I was envious of the boastful,
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
4 For there are no pangs in their death,
But their strength is firm.
5 They are not in trouble as other men,
Nor are they plagued like other men.
6 Therefore pride serves as their necklace;
Violence covers them like a garment.
7 Their eyes bulge with abundance;
They have more than heart could wish.
8 They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression;
They speak loftily.
9 They set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue walks through the earth.
10 Therefore his people return here,
And waters of a full cup are drained by them.
11 And they say, "How does God know?
And is there knowledge in the Most High?"
12 Behold, these are the ungodly,
Who are always at ease;
They increase in riches.
13 Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain,
And washed my hands in innocence.
14 For all day long I have been plagued,
And chastened every morning.
15 If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.
16 When I thought how to understand this,
It was too painful for me—
17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
Then I understood their end.
18 Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to destruction.
19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment!
They are utterly consumed with terrors.
20 As a dream when one awakes,

So, Lord, when You awake,
 You shall despise their image.
²¹ Thus my heart was grieved,
 And I was vexed in my mind.
²² I was so foolish and ignorant;
 I was like a beast before You.
²³ Nevertheless I am continually with You;
 You hold me by my right hand.
²⁴ You will guide me with Your counsel,
 And afterward receive me to glory.
²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You?
 And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.
²⁶ My flesh and my heart fail;
 But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
²⁷ For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish;
 You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.
²⁸ But it is good for me to draw near to God;
 I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
 That I may declare all Your works.

This psalm affirms the goodness of God to our thinking and to our hearts, even when it appears to the contrary in the world about us.

Asaph, a contemporary of King David, wrote this psalm. He was a man who must have experienced many of the same events that David had experienced. Asaph had seen good times. He had seen bad times. He wrote of them and he sang about them, for he was a noted singer. He was also a seer, that is, he was a prophet. God spoke through him. This psalm and the ten following are all ascribed to Asaph. He also penned Psalm 50, making 12 psalms altogether that are preserved in our sacred canon as having been written by Asaph the seer and singer.

In this psalm we read of *a trial of faith*, of sorts, that Asaph encountered. ***Through his own experience and what he had observed in the world about him, he had come to question the goodness of God.*** He was concerned not only that his own faith in God was upset, but he was also concerned that if he voiced his doubts he would unsettle the faith of the entire covenant community. Thus we see how foundational this matter of God's goodness is for a sound and enduring faith. But he came through his trial, as we will see, and the Holy Spirit has left for us in this psalm a way out of our own doubts about God and perhaps doubts about ourselves in times of trial.

If you are here this morning doubting the providence of God as we have learned over recent weeks, because it just does not seem to be true to your experience as you observe the world about you, I hope that your faith will be restored. If you are here this morning concerned about someone you know who is questioning the sovereignty and providence of God, or the goodness of God, I hope that you will be able to leave this place better equipped to help that troubled soul.

I. The Psalmist Affirms the Goodness of God (Psa. 73:1)

We read that ***the psalmist affirms the goodness of God. "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart"*** (73:1). We may be tempted to read this verse casually and pass over it easily. But this would be a mistake. In verse one Asaph made a very significant and foundational statement that impinges on our very understanding of who God is and how we have come to know Him. Let us consider the importance of this matter. ***First, we see that God is good. Second, we will see that He has manifested His goodness particularly and especially "to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart."***

First, we affirm that “Truly God is good.” What is being stated when we say that God is good? By doing so we are affirming several things about our God. First, **God is essentially good**; that is, the very nature or essence of God is goodness--**God Himself is good**. **Thomas Manton** expressed it well:

“He (God) is originally good, good of Himself, which nothing else is; for all creatures are good only by participation and communication from God. He is essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself: the creature’s good is a superadded quality, in God it is His essence. He is infinitely good; the creature’s good is but a drop, but in God there is an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is; as there can be no addition made to Him, so no subtraction from Him.”

God is goodness itself. Our very English word “God” is derived from a word that originally meant “the Good.”

Secondly, when we say that God is good, we are saying that **God is solely good**; that is, God *alone* is essentially good. The Lord Jesus affirmed that God alone is good. You will recall the occasion that a young Jewish ruler approached him and posed a question: “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” But Jesus responded to him, **“Why do you call me good? None is good, save one, that is, God”** (Luke 18:18f). Jesus was not denying His deity, of course, but He knew that the ruler saw Him and spoke to Him as if He were only a man. The young ruler was ascribing an essential quality to a man that only belongs to God. The Lord Jesus affirmed that God only is essentially good.

The Creator alone is good. He can create or confer to a created thing or being the quality of goodness, but it is because that thing or being comes forth from Him who alone is good. We read repeatedly in Genesis 1 that after God had created, it is repeatedly affirmed, “God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). But those things were good because He made them to be good, for He, God, is alone essentially good.

Thirdly, when we say that God is good, we are stating that **God is the chief good**. What we mean by this is that goodness and the sense of happiness and well-being can only come from knowing God and being right with Him. Goodness brings happiness. Without God there can be no goodness, therefore without God, there can be no true lasting happiness. No God means no happiness, but only evil, emptiness and misery. But with God, there can be nothing but happiness. *“Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord”* (Psa. 144:15).

Solomon sought happiness in things that were *not* essentially good and therefore they could not bring him happiness. We read of this in the Book of Ecclesiastes (which we concluded reading this morning if you are following our Bible reading chart). Solomon seemed to seek happiness in three other ways than God alone: through *wisdom*, *riches*, and *pleasure*. He gave himself over to these to see if happiness and fulfilment could be found in these. He concluded all was vanity, or empty meaninglessness. “Vanity and vexation of spirit” is how he described his pursuit. In the end he concluded that seeking, knowing and living for God could only bring forth a good life. This is not to say that wisdom and riches and pleasure are evil in and of themselves. They are not. In fact, they are to be sought and enjoyed, but only when they are seen in relation to God do they have meaning and value. Remove them from the context of God, and they become idols that cannot satisfy. They cannot bring happiness apart from the goodness that God brings to their pursuit and possession.

Fourthly, **the goodness of God is shown and bestowed upon all within His creation**. God is good and does good to all. He gives life to all. He sustains life in all. He gives pleasure in life to all. The world is immersed in the goodness of God. “The whole earth is full of his goodness” (Psa. 119:68; 33:5).

This manifestation of God’s goodness leads and demands a response to God, however, for fifth, the **goodness of God should not be viewed as a cancelling out God’s judgment on sin and sinners**. **The goodness of God demands that sinners be punished**. We read of Paul’s admonition that to sin against God’s goodness aggravates one’s condemnation before a good God. Paul wrote in Romans 2 these words:

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “*will render to each one according to his deeds.*”

But notice, Asaph not only declared that God is good, he declared, “Truly God is good *to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.*” God is particularly and especially good to His *covenant people*, “*to such as are pure in heart.*” He is speaking not of all national Israel, but only of some, “*For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel*” (Rom. 9:6). God is good to His chosen people with whom He has entered into a covenant relationship.

Now, more specifically, in what ways does God manifest His goodness to His people? To answer this question we must see the goodness of God in a more focused way. When the goodness of God is extended to His people, God extends certain blessings to them, blessings that are gifts or manifestations of His goodness. What are some of these?

1. **God’s goodness manifested to the suffering is called *mercy*.**
2. **God’s goodness manifested to the undeserving is called *grace*.**
3. **God’s goodness manifested to the unrepentant is called *God being longsuffering*.**
4. **God’s goodness manifested to the weak and ignorant is seen in His doing *good* for them and in giving *truth* to them.**
5. **God’s goodness is manifested in continuing to bless His people speaks of His *faithfulness*.**

How do we know that these are manifestations of His goodness? God Himself tells us so. **Moses** one day desired to see the essential nature of God. We read of Moses’ desire in Exodus 33:18. He requested of God, “***Please, show me Your glory.***” God responded favorably to his request. Let us look carefully to God’s answer in verse 19:

And He (God) said, “I will make all My *goodness* pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you.

And so, Moses asked to see God’s glory. God responded by saying that He would reveal His “goodness” to Moses.

[By the way, the particular aspect of God’s goodness that He would show to Moses was His intention to show particular favor to Israel. We read in verse 19, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” The goodness of God is seen best in His dealings with His chosen people in whom He has determined to bless with salvation.]

Now let us turn over to chapter 34 where we read of God showing His “goodness” to Moses. We read in verses 34 & 35:

And the Lord passed by before him (Moses), and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, *merciful and gracious, longsuffering*, and abundant in *goodness and truth, keeping* mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

And so, we see, that when Asaph wrote the words, “Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart”, he was speaking of the very nature and the heart of God’s faithful, merciful, gracious, patient, saving dealings with His people.

Now, after having rehearsed this matter of God’s goodness to Israel and all that is implied by that expression, one would think that Asaph would always rejoice and praise God in the assembly for the goodness of God to them. But this is not the case.

II. The Psalmist doubted God's goodness while by observing God's providential dealings with people. (73:2-12)

We see, rather sadly, that as Asaph looked at the world about him, *he was tempted to doubt God's goodness (73:2-12)*. In these verses we see the faith of Asaph in the goodness of God shaken. After he affirmed the goodness of God to Israel, he confessed his doubts and his own consequent failure. Now, perhaps, he was simply confessing his weakness and his proneness to sin generally. If this were the case, it would be like Asaph saying: "Truly God has been good to Israel; but sadly, I have not always been good toward Him." But it would seem that Asaph was not confessing his sin generally, but specifically he was expressing his doubts about God's goodness that resulted in a measure of defection and failure on his own part. It is as if he were writing, "*Truly God is good to Israel, but, sadly, there have been times that I have doubted His goodness to us and because of this I have failed.*" When we think wrong thoughts about God, soon we will be living wrongly before God. "When men doubt the righteousness of God, their own integrity begins to waver" (Spurgeon). Our understanding of who God is and how He relates to us will have direct bearing on how we live in His world.

Asaph's trouble of doubts about God arose from his observation of the world about him. *He saw the wicked prospering (vs. 3-9); he saw the godly suffering at the hands of the wicked (vs. 10-11)*. "How can we say that God is good to His people when we observe how God is governing the world?" Asaph expressed the same kinds of doubts and asking the same kinds of questions that Job posed in the light of his own sufferings.

Let me interject this point: Doubts about the goodness of God are a spiritual problem that is common to us who believe in a sovereign God. We affirm what the Bible declares, that God is in the heavens ruling over all the affairs of the world, even to what we would consider the smallest of details. In this present age He is doing so through the reign of Jesus Christ, Lord of heaven and earth. There are no accidents in God's world. All events are ordained. All happenings are brought to pass for God's glory. To us who believe this, the goodness of God may easily become problematic.

But to those who do not believe that God is sovereign, but that He is merely interjecting His influence in history from time to time for the benefit of His people, they do not struggle with the matter of God's goodness. They would assert that God is good. He has the best of intentions for us, it is just that either the devil or our own free will prevents Him from manifesting His goodness to us. An Arminian, let him who understands hear, will most likely be a stranger to the kind of struggles that Asaph experienced and the rest of God's people who believe in a sovereign God have encountered in their walk with Him. On the one hand Asaph could affirm, "Truly God is good to Israel." On the other hand, upon observing the details of his own existence and of those about him, he was led to doubt the goodness of God.

III. Asaph was tempted to abandon his faith in God (73:13-16)

We read this in Psalm 73:13-16:

- ¹³ Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain,
And washed my hands in innocence.
- ¹⁴ For all day long I have been plagued,
And chastened every morning.
- ¹⁵ If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.
- ¹⁶ When I thought how to understand this,
It was too painful for me—

Asaph was tempted to abandon his faith. Asaph considered his own circumstances that were befalling him, and he despaired of hope. He doubted the goodness of God. He desired to express his doubts (v. 15a). But he knew if he did he might unsettle the faith of some (v. 15b). He was deeply troubled by his questionings. “When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me.”

When Asaph doubted God’s goodness to him, he began to doubt the value of living for God.

Poor Asaph! He questions the value of holiness when its wages are paid in the coin of affliction. With no effect he had been sincere; no advantage has come to him through his purity, for the filthy-hearted are exalted and fed on the fat of the land. Thus foolishly will the wisest of men argue, when faith is napping. Asaph was a seer, but he could not see when reason left him in the dark; even seers must have the sunlight of revealed truth to see by, or they grope like the blind. In the presence of temporal circumstances, the pure in heart may seem to have cleansed themselves altogether in vain, but we must not judge after the sight of our eyes. (Spurgeon, in his commentary on this psalm.)

The point is this, we do not have the capability, the capacity or the ability, to understand the workings of God in the details of history. When we try and draw conclusions and make assertions about God’s nature or about His dealings with us based on what happens to us and what we see with our eyes, we will draw wrong conclusions and most certainly be drawn away from God. We are to trust in God’s goodness in spite of, even in the face of, what we see and what we experience. God has amply demonstrated His love for us and we should not look at what is happening to us today or what might be happening to us tomorrow to confirm or counter what we know through faith. “Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart”, regardless of what may come.

I am of the opinion that God intends to bring each of His children to learn to manifest this kind of faith. To trust Him for what He has declared He will do for the good of His people. But then He forestalls the realization of His promises so that we might simply trust Him for who He is and what He has said He would do for us.

If you believe in God’s goodness to His people, then nothing should ultimately shake your confidence of His goodness, in spite of what you see or what you experience. You will trust Him and obey Him for you know that if He has given something to you, it is good. If He has withheld something from you, you know it is not good. However, if you doubt the goodness of God to you, you will question all of His commandments, and all of His provisions, the greatest of them and even the least of them.

But if you doubt the goodness of God, then you will question His prohibition of even the smallest of things. You will be as Adam and Eve, who doubted God’s goodness when He set a prohibition to them of a piece of fruit hanging from a tree. God had placed it there and then told them, “leave it alone.” But they doubted God’s goodness in His prohibition, so they would do what they thought best for themselves, disavowing the Word of God to direct them.

IV. Asaph affirmed again the goodness of God (73:15-20)

God did not leave His seer in his blind condition. Asaph said that his doubts about God’s goodness continued “until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their (the wicked) end.” God had been good to the wicked, but only for a time. How did the wicked respond to God’s goodness? They ***despised the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God was leading them to repent.***

Asaph went to the temple, and there he was affirmed in the truth that the prosperity of the wicked was but temporary, and he was convinced that the misery of God’s people was also temporary. He knew there would be a great reversal of fortune one day. The first would be last and the last would be first. To the wicked it would one day be said to them, “Remember that you in your lifetime received your good things,

and likewise they evil things: but now they are comforted, and you are tormented” (Cf. Luke 16:25). He saw, therefore, that God had planned for them a great upset. He wrote in **verses 18-19**:

Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to destruction
Oh! How they are brought to destruction in a moment!
They are utterly consumed with terrors.

Their prosperity is only an illusion. It is like a dream. And one day, the wicked will awaken to the reality of things. Then they will discover that they are despised of the Lord (73:20). A most fearful prospect is presented for those who no longer experience the goodness of the Lord.

John Calvin wrote of the precarious condition of the wicked.

Asaph, therefore, shows how much advantage is to be derived from approaching God. I now see, says he, how thou proceedest in thy providence; for, although the ungodly continue to stand for a brief season, yet they are, as it were, perched on slippery places, that they may fall before long into destruction. Both the verbs of this verse are in the past tense; but the first, *to set them in slippery places*, is to be understood of the present time, as if it had been said, — God for a short period thus lifts them up on high, that when they fall their fall may be the heavier. This, it is true, seems to be the lot of the righteous as well as of the wicked; for everything in this world is slippery, uncertain, and changeable. But as true believers depend upon heaven, or rather, as the power of God is the foundation on which they rest, it is not said of them that they are set in slippery places, notwithstanding the frailty and uncertainty which characterizes their condition in this world. What although they stumble or even fall, the Lord has His hand under them to sustain and strengthen them when they stumble, and to raise them up when they are fallen. The uncertainty of the condition of the ungodly, or, as it is here expressed, their slippery condition, proceeds from this, that they take pleasure in contemplating their own power and greatness, and admire themselves on that account, just like a person who would walk at leisure upon ice; and thus by their infatuated presumption, they prepare themselves for falling down headlong.¹

There in the temple Asaph heard the Word of God proclaimed. There in the temple Asaph witnessed the worship of God being conducted. Asaph must have seen in those sacrifices the penalty imposed upon the wicked, the price that God would one day exact from them. The wrath of God poured upon them. He saw the sacrifices offered, the penalty for sin that God demanded for sin, even death of the sinner, or the death of an animal for a temporary substitute.

He was brought to behold the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell, severity; but toward His people, goodness (cf. Rom. 11:22). All he saw and heard there, of course, pointed to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Who would manifest the goodness of God to Israel through Whom He would take away their guilt, their sin, and bring in for them everlasting righteousness and happiness.

Christians, of course, do not go into a temple to be affirmed in the goodness of God; rather, we come to the Lord Jesus in whom we see the goodness of God displayed and the promise God’s eternal goodness to us secured. **John Gill** wrote of God’s goodness to His people in Christ:

Jehovah the Father, has displayed His goodness to His special people, in His good designs towards them, and thoughts of them; in setting them apart for Himself, His own glory, and their good; in laying up all good things for them in Christ, and in the covenant of His grace; in making promises of good things to them, both for this life, and that which is to come; and in bestowing good gifts on them, the gift of Himself, the gift of His Son, and the gift of His Spirit; and all the blessings of goodness, as of adoption, justification, pardon of sin, etc. and all the graces of the Spirit, as the gift of faith, of repentance, of a good hope of eternal life, and also the gift of eternal life itself. Jehovah the Son, has

¹ This is from Calvin’s commentary on Psalms.

manifested His goodness to the same persons; in becoming a Surety, and undertaking for their good; in partaking of their nature, in which good will to men was expressed; and in working out the great and good work of their redemption and salvation; He is the good Shepherd, and has shown Himself to be so, by laying down His life for the sheep, and by providing a good fold, and good pasture for them: He is, and has been, in all ages, the Fountain of goodness and grace to all His people, for the supply of all their wants; and He ever lives to speak a good word, and intercede for good things for them. Jehovah the Spirit, is good unto them, as a Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter of them, as a Spirit of adoption, grace, and supplication; as the author of the good work of grace in them; as the guide of them through this world; and as the earnest and pledge of their future glory, and a sealer of them up unto the day of redemption.

V. The psalmist repents of his sinful doubts and reasserts his confidence in God (Psa. 73:21-28)

The Psalmist was filled with remorse for his doubts and reaffirms his confidence in God and God's goodness toward him.

²¹ Thus my heart was grieved,
And I was vexed in my mind.

²² I was so foolish and ignorant;
I was like a beast before You.

A Christian is miserable when he doubts God's goodness. He is most miserable, however, when he contemplates the fact that he has doubted God's goodness toward him in spite of all that God has said and done. "How dare I doubt God!" "How could I have doubted God's goodness that He has promised me in Christ?" "God alone is good and I will be satisfied in Him."

²³ Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You hold me by my right hand.

²⁴ You will guide me with Your counsel,
And afterward receive me to glory.

Asaph wrote the heart felt desire of all true believers who are believing and thinking rightly,

Whom have I in heaven but You?
And there is none on upon the earth that I desire besides You.
My flesh and heart fail;
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

One once wrote:

"The goodness of God is the life of the believer's trust. It is this excellency in God which most appeals to our hearts. Because His goodness endureth forever, we ought never to be discouraged: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nahum 1:7). "When others behave badly to us, it should only stir us up the more heartily to give thanks unto the Lord, because *He* is good; and when we ourselves are conscious that we are far from being good, we should only the more reverently bless Him that *He* is good. We must never tolerate an instant's unbelief as to the goodness of the Lord; whatever else may be questioned, this is absolutely certain, that Jehovah is good; His dispensations may vary, but His nature is always the same" (C. H. Spurgeon).

Let us consider several lessons for us in the light of what we have considered today.

1. To question God's goodness to us based on what we observe transpiring in people's lives is great error.

2. To become angry with the manner in which God orders our lives in providence reveals sinful pride and a failure to realize one's own undeserving life. God's kindness is manifest to us through His mercy and grace. Although we may order our lives in a measure to His Word, it does not warrant our claims that He must bless us. And we should not murmur against that which God has brought us to experience.

3. If we have failed to retain the goodness of God in our thoughts regarding Him, let us repent and acknowledge to God our error and confess our intention to repent of our sin.

4. Let us affirm that God will render justice for every transgression of His law. For the Christian justice was satisfied through Jesus Christ dying on the cross on behalf of His people. For the unconverted justice will be rendered to them fully on judgment day and into eternity.

Benediction:

“O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men” (Psa. 107:8).