

Let's try something out of our comfort zone. In the spiritual traditions they'll do this call and response and it goes like this. I'll say God is good, you'll say all the time. I'll say all the time, you'll say God is good. God is good, all the time, all the time God is good.

This is a true saying. God is good and holy and righteous. We know this. We know that God is unchanging. But do we really believe that God is good? Do we believe it all the time? And do we believe that God is not just good, but outrageously good?

Have you ever been going through something hard and needed to pray about it, but felt like God wasn't going to give you what you wanted or maybe didn't? I have. I could give you plenty of examples of this. I prayed for a relationship that failed. I prayed for jobs I didn't get. I've prayed for children that were born still or never came or all. I've prayed for justice I doubt I'll see in my life.

In the midst of the storm, we don't usually doubt God's power. We believe that God can cure the disease or get us the job or whatever it might be, but we do tend to doubt God's goodness. We doubt God will send us the miracle, and when or if it doesn't arrive, our view is only confirmed.

What we often forget is that God is so outrageously good, God won't settle for anything other than the very best for us. That failed relationship? Thanks and praise to God it did, because it was abusive and I might not have survived it. Those jobs I didn't get? I wouldn't have been fulfilling my calling. Though some things I can't understand, I can see enough to know that God is so outrageously good God would never give me anything less than the very best, even if it hurts. God loves us too much to give us the things we think we want, the things which would not be good for us, the things which aren't meant to be.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is in Job, where everyone wants Job to just curse God and die, to admit that what is happening to him is unfair, and to deny God's goodness. Job says, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Though Job may not have always known it perfectly, Job knew that God was good when times were good, and Job knew that God was good when times were bad.

Sometimes we talk about feelings abandoned by God, feeling like God isn't listening, wondering why God is slow to act or why God is allowing bad things to happen. In fact, one of the most common and difficult question to answer is why bad things happen to good people, and really, vice versa, why do good things happen to bad people. Why do the honorable people seem to fall behind and dishonorable people get ahead?

There's all kinds of answers to this. Entire books, in fact. Many a Christian apologists have answered this question with their precisely worded theories and essays, usually discussing free will and so on. When I first started in ministry I actually wanted to go into apologetics, particularly into the Ravi Zacharias Ministry. I'll tell you more about that later. But as to the question itself, there aren't answers that make us feel better. Sure, we can intellectually accept things like free will and sin and God's providence, but that doesn't help us feel better when the sheriff shows up at your door and says he has some bad news. As a chaplain, people ask me that all the time. If God is good then why does my wife, husband, mother, father, sister, brother have terminal cancer? Why is this person suffering? And all I can do is agree that this sucks, and this doesn't make any sense to my weak human eyes that can't see much more than a moment into the future, but I do trust the Word of God as revealed to us in Scripture and God says that God is good, so even though it doesn't feel it, doesn't look like it, smell like it, taste like it, God is good, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.

Oh and remember how I wanted to work for the Ravi Zacharis ministry? Well I never got near that far because of life circumstances and I was peeved at the time. Well, the Ravi Zaccharis ministry was closed due to scandal a few years back. We never get to see the other path, but who knows how that would've ended for me. Would I have been suddenly jobless? Would the scandal have so challenged my calling and faith that I walked away from ministry? Would I have been the target of the abusive behaviors that were happening? We don't know, but we do know that God is good all the time, and all the time, God is good.

I hope I've affirmed your faith that God is good, but I don't want this one point to be lost on us. God is not just good, God is outrageously good. Consider how the people of Israel have turned from God again and again and yet been richly blessed. Consider how we have done the same. We have erred, done the wrong thing, and yet we are outrageously blessed. Don't let us forget that we deserved eternal damnation for our sins. Our sin-stained soul could not be with God's holiness - it isn't possible. God's holiness and justice would not have allowed it just as fire will turn water into steam or the light chases away the dark. But God is so outrageously good that God found a way, took away our sins, just so we could enjoy God forever. That alone would be enough, wouldn't it? To save the sinner from their fate. But God didn't stop there. Every blessing you have ever had flows from God's goodness. This beautiful and bountiful earth - God's goodness. Food in your belly this morning - God's goodness. Shelter from the elements - God's goodness. Freedom to come in here and worship, to complain about someone in your pew or that you didn't like the hymns - God's goodness. Please never forget there are many brothers and sisters that still worship in secret or in fear of their lives. Woke up and saw another day - God's goodness.

My friends, sometimes the answer to prayer is no. But only because what we want is not what's best for us. We see, but only dimly, so we must trust the Word of God that promises God's outrageous goodness, the God who promises to repay what the locust have eaten, who blesses even us sinners. Even when we don't feel it, we can trust that God is good. So ask boldly for God's goodness, pray for those miracles and have faith that whatever the answer, God is good and the outcome will be God's best. Do not be afraid, be glad and rejoice, and remember God's outrageous goodness.

God is good all the time. All the time, God is good.

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