

***“Faith is holding on to the faithfulness of God... Faith does not look at the difficulties . . . faith does not look at itself or at the person who is exercising it. Faith looks at God . . . The measure of the strength of a woman’s\* faith, always, is ultimately the measure of her knowledge of God. . . . She knows God so well that she can rest on the knowledge. And it is the prayers of such a woman that are answered.”***  
(Martyn Lloyd-Jones) \* (“man” in the original – just wanting it make it more direct!)

In difficult situations we can so often try hard to be positive and strong, feeling that as a believer we should “have faith” and build up hope and confidence by our own efforts. But this quote challenges us about what faith really is and that it’s not looking within ourselves for faith. True faith looks beyond ourselves to God and what we know about him, his character and his ways, and rests in that.

So let’s reflect on one attribute of God’s character now. Let’s buckle on the “belt of truth” about God’s goodness and strengthen our faith as we do so.

### **The Goodness of God\***

In the last few weeks we’ve been thinking a lot about doing good, showing kindness and care to others. But we should remember that God is the source of all goodness and our ultimate example in kindness. We can learn about God’s goodness through his Word and through personal experience in our day to day lives.

We see God’s goodness first revealed in the beauty of creation, described as “very good” by the Creator himself (Genesis 1:31). We then trace it throughout the pages of Scripture..

The psalms speak repeatedly of God’s goodness, for example:

***“For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever; his faithfulness continues through all generations”*** Psalm 100:5.

He is completely and infinitely good in every way – ***“God is light, and in him there is no darkness”*** (1 John 1:5). Every good thing we see, experience and enjoy comes from God - ***“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows”*** (James 1:17) .

There are so many ways in which God shows his undeserved goodness to us in practical ways amidst all happens that is not good in our lives – and we so often focus on the latter! His common grace – his kindness to believers and unbelievers alike – our daily food, friends and family, health and strength, different opportunities for joy and pleasure in the world around us. Take time to stop and think of the thousand and more ways God has shown his goodness to you.

But while there is much in life that brings hardship and sorrow too, even in these times we can hold on to the truth that God is good. The verse above from James speaks of God’s unchanging goodness, how it neither decreases nor need increase – God is perfectly and utterly good, so that he is as good as he ever has been or ever

will be! He is abundantly good and there is no good that he withholds from us – *“You are good and what you do is good”* (Psalm 119:68). It’s impossible for him to act with malice towards us. God’s goodness shines though all that he is and does. That’s why we can believe the truth that *“in all things God works for the good of those who love him”* (Romans 8:28). As Jen Wilkins puts it in her book ‘In His Image’ – “under the sovereign governance of an eternally good God, we can trust that all that is not now good will ultimately be used for our good”. Joseph’s life is a case in point (Genesis 50:20)

We can be sure that God will always work for our good because he has already worked for our greatest good in sending his Son the Lord Jesus Christ – his ultimate good gift – *“when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us”* (Titus 3:4-5).

So we have great reason for praise and grounds for hope at all times!

*“For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.” Psalm 100:5*

*“The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble” Nahum 1:7*

### Thinking it through...

- Look back over the last few months. What aspect of God’s goodness have you personally experienced and can thank him for?
- Can you see even now how God has worked for your good in some situations? Can you think back to other times in your life when that’s been the case?
- Are there situations now in your life or maybe in the lives of others where you need to put your trust in God’s goodness?
- How does the truth of God’s perfect goodness encourage you as you look ahead to the coming weeks and months?

**“How good is the God we adore, our faithful unchangeable Friend! ...we’ll praise Him for all that is past, and trust Him for all that’s to come.” Joseph Hart**

\*This topic is helpfully covered in Jen Wilkin’s book In His Image and includes some of the points and verses referenced here.