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I have for years spoken about God's goodness. It is most important that we know about God's goodness and know what kind of God He is. What is God like? It is a question that must be answered if we're going to be any kind of Christians at all. Don't take that for granted and say, "I already know."

There are those that say religion is something grafted onto man that is the result of man's weakness or superstition. However, history shows that no tribe or nation has ever risen morally above its religion. If it had a debased religion it had a debased people, and if the people were not debased, the religion, though neither Christianity nor Judaism, nevertheless was relatively high in the scale of nonrevealed religions. And remember that no religion has ever risen above its conception of God. If the heathen believe that God is tricky, sulky, nasty and deceitful, their religion will build itself around that

concept. And they will try to be sneaky with their god and act the way their god acts.

If they believe, on the other hand, that God is one God, that He is a high and true and noble God, then even though they are not redeemed, their religion will tend to follow their concept of God upward, even though it is a pagan religion and does not carry redemption.

Christianity at any given time is strong and weak depending upon her concept of God. And I insist upon this and I have said it many times, that the basic trouble with the Church today is her unworthy conception of God. I talk with learned and godly people all over the country, and they're all saying the same thing. Unbelievers say, "Take your cowboy god and go home," and we get angry and say, "They're vile heathen." No, they're not vile heathen – or at least that's not why they say that. They can't respect our "cowboy god." And since evangelicalism has gone overboard

to "cowboy religion," its conception of God is unworthy of Him. Our religion is little because our god is little. Our religion is weak because our god is weak. Our religion is ignoble because the god we serve is ignoble. We do not see God as He is.

The psalmist said, "O magnify the Lord with me" (34:3). "Magnify" may mean one of two things: "make it look bigger than it is," or "see it as big as it is." The latter is what "magnify" means as the psalmist used it.

If you want to examine a very small amount of matter, you put it under a microscope and magnify it to make it look bigger than it is. But it is impossible to make God look bigger than He is. When we say "magnify the Lord," we mean try to see God somewhere near as big as He is. This is what I want to do. This is what, by His help, I have dedicated myself to do.

Continuing...

A local church will only be as great as its conception of God. An individual Christian will be a success or failure depending upon what he or she thinks of God. It is critically important that we have a knowledge of the Holy One, that we know what God is like. Of course we can know from the Scriptures – that’s where we go to get our information. We can know some of it from nature too: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork: (Psalm 19:1). But while the pen of nature writes without too much clarity, the Word of God is very, very clear.

It is important that we know that God is good. We read that God is good and doeth good and that His lovingkindness is over all His works, and all of those passages of Scripture quoted above. Take a concordance and look up the word “good” or the word “lovingkindness” and see how much the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, has to say about God being kindhearted.

What “Good” Means

God is kindhearted, gracious, good-natured and benevolent in intention. And let us remember that God is cordial. We only think we believe, really. We are believers in a sense, and I trust that we believe sufficiently to be saved and justified before His grace. But we don’t believe as intensely and as intimately as we should. If we did, we would believe that God is a cordial God, that He is gracious and that His intentions are kind and benevolent. We would believe that God never thinks any bad thoughts about anybody, and He never had any bad thoughts about anybody.

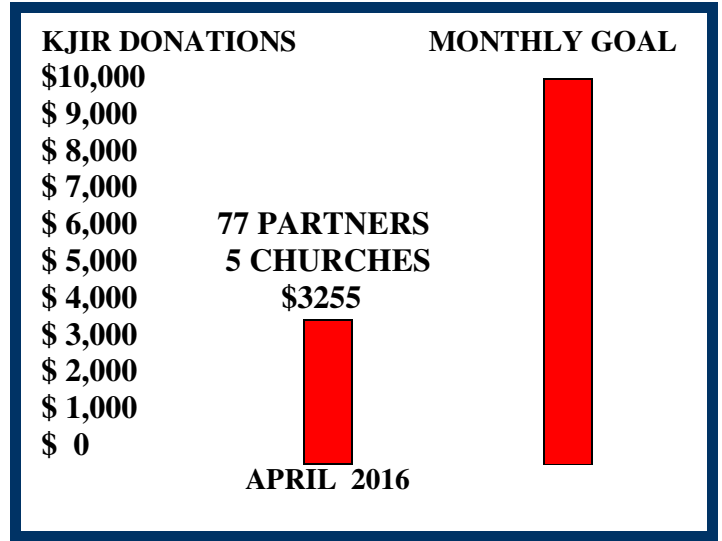
Now all this that I have said means that God is good. All this He is infinitely. Why do I say that? Because infinitude is an attribute to God. And it is impossible for God to be anything and not be completely, infinitely what He is. It is possible for the sun to be bright, but not infinitely bright because it doesn’t have all the light there is. It is possible for a mountain to be large but not infinitely large. It is possible for an angel to be good, but not infinitely good. Only God can claim infinitude. When I say that God is good, that God has a kind heart, I mean that He has a heart infinitely kind and that there is no boundary to it. When I say that God is good-natured, good and kindly of nature, I mean that He is infinitely so.

God is not only infinitely good; He is perfectly good. God is never partway anything! When I say that God is kindhearted, I mean that He is perfectly so. I do not mean that there are ever times when God isn’t feeling good and isn’t kind.

There are never any times when God won’t be cordial.

Even the best Christian doesn’t always feel cordial. Sometimes he didn’t sleep well, and though he’s not mad and he’s living like a Christian, he doesn’t feel like talking in the mornings. He doesn’t feel cordial; he’s not overflowing; he’s not enthusiastic. But there’s never a time when God isn’t. Because what God is, He is perfectly.

I joyously announce to you that what God is, He is immutably. God never changes. What God was, God is. What God is and was, God will be. There will never be any change in God. Don’t call me a heretic; check on me. Go to



the Word and see if it’s right. If you’ll be a good Berean and go to the Scriptures to see if these things are true (see Acts 17:10-11), then that’s all I ask.

Remember that God is enthusiastic about His works. God is not an absentee engineer running His world by remote control. The Scripture says that He is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3). The presence of the invisible Word in the universe makes things run. God is the perfect Creator and He runs everything by being present in His works. That’s all through the prophets, the Psalms and the book of Job – all through the Old Testament.

When we hit the age of science we forgot that; we have “laws” now. The Bible knew nothing about “the laws of nature.” The Bible knew only that God was there. If it rained, it was God watering His hills from His chambers. If there was lightning, it was God, and if there was thunder, it was the “voice of the Lord” that maketh the hinds to calve” (Psalm 29:9).

The writers of Scripture were acutely God – conscious, and they were never lonely because God was there. “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not,” said Jacob (Genesis 28:16). This idea that God is an absentee engineer running His universe by remote control is all wrong. He is present in perpetual and continuous eagerness, with all the fervor of rapturous love pressing His holy designs. If you don’t feel that way about it, it’s unbelief that makes you feel otherwise; it’s preoccupation with this world. If you would believe God you would know this to be true.

The goodness of God means He cannot feel indifferent about anything. People are indifferent, but not God. God either loves with a boundless unremitting energy or He hates with consuming fire. It was said about the second Person of the Trinity, “Thou has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:9). The same Lord Jesus that loved with boundless consuming love also hated with terrible consuming fire and will continue to do so while the ages roll. The goodness of God requires that God cannot love sin.

A.W. Tozer