

THE GLORY OF GOD SERIES

Exodus 33:18 and [Moses] said, "Please show me Your glory." Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." And shortly after in Exodus 34 the Lord did exactly what He promised to Moses. In verse 5 *Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.*

We are looking at the glory of God. When God manifested His glory to Moses, He mentioned five attributes. The Lord came down and proclaimed the name of the Lord, saying, "The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful, gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth." This tells us that the glory of God that came down consists of five ingredients - mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, goodness, and truth. We have already seen mercy and graciousness earlier.

In this message, we want to look at the word *goodness*, which is one of the ingredients of God's glory. We desire to grow in God's glory. We want more of God's glory upon our life. The bible prophesied that His glory would be on His people. All the Gentiles shall see the glory of God. We need to grow in glory and in order to do so, we need to understand what glory consists of. We must grow in these five elements of God's glory in order to grow in glory. We must grow in mercy. If we stop growing in mercy, we will stop growing in glory. We must grow

in graciousness. If we do not grow in graciousness, we will not grow in glory. We must also grow in goodness. Otherwise, we cannot grow in glory.

In the last message, we saw that graciousness is tied up to holiness and righteousness. They are the impartation of God's very nature and being into us. In fact, all five would have relevance to God's nature but each has its special aspect. For example, holiness and righteousness has its own aspect, which we have touched on in our previous message.

Do you notice the God summarizes all the five ingredients into one general word *goodness* too? In Exodus 33:19 *I will make all My goodness*. I did not know goodness is a substance. But God says goodness is a substance. I will make My goodness pass before you. Is goodness an attribute or a substance? It is both. Goodness is an attribute of God, which consist of His attitude. Do you notice that most of the time we understand goodness either in two forms? This reminds me of the Chinese operas. The musicians would sound the Chinese instruments and the main actor makes a dramatic entrance, saying, "I am a good man." They always make an entrance this way.

So when we say a person is good, what do we mean by good? A good person usually means that he or she does not do evil. Again, it is a negative perspective. It does not define what it is. It defines what it is not. He is a good man that means a person did not do anything wrong. It does not give a definition. It gives a non-definition. It tells us what it is not. The same way like we were trying to define holiness and righteousness in our last message. Most of your answers about holiness and righteousness were non-definitions. Non-definitions tell us what the term is not but they do not tell us what the term is. Holiness is the very nature of God Himself. It is not the absence of sin but it is the presence of God. And righteousness is both a right standing with God and in the New Testament it became a substance through Jesus Christ a gift of righteousness.

When we say that someone is a good person, people think about what that person did not do. The other aspect is we think that the attitude of a good person is being

kind, benevolent, amicable, meek, gentle, and all kinds of positive words to describe a person. So, we sometimes think of goodness in terms of attitude.

When God speaks about goodness, He speaks about substance and attitude. Your answer would be half correct if you refer goodness to be an attitude like kindness. The other half is that goodness is a substance. Otherwise how can Ps. 23 say, *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me."* Something following me cannot be an attitude. If the attitude is following me, it should be my attitude. It should be in me, not following me. But there is something following us. *Surely, goodness and mercy is following me all the days of our life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.* So goodness and mercy are powerful things.

Here is why it is powerful. Ps. 37:23 says *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delights in his ways. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down.* Now, don't you think that is powerful? A good man may make mistakes and fall, yet the Lord will raise him up again. But if you are a bad man and you fall, you fall. You lack the substance of goodness to prop you up in troubled times.

But apparently there is something powerful about goodness. When it gets a hold of us, it preserves us. It preserves us in imperfection. It preserves us when we make mistakes. It preserves us when we fall. So, it is powerful. If we understand goodness and apply it in our lives, we become essentially in substance and attitude, a good person. The quality of goodness has a preserving power in our life.

Let me illustrate something more powerful. You remember Abraham. Essentially, he is a good man but he did stumble and fall. He is human. Essentially, he is good but he is still made of flesh and blood. He makes mistakes. He went with Sarah his beautiful wife into king Abimelech's territory. When he went into Abimelech's territory, Abimelech took one look at Sarah and said, "Get her for my harem." When the armed men approached Abraham and said, "Our king wants her," Abraham was thinking about his life. He has made an agreement with Sarah saying, "If any body ask who you are to me, say that you are my sister. Don't say you are my wife otherwise I will be killed." So, these guys came and asked him. He says,

“She is my sister,” so they took her and Abraham did not do anything about it. Some of you look innocent as if you never told a lie before. What about half-truths? People call it a white lie. A white lie is a partial truth given so that you will not know the whole truth. You have given incomplete information in such a way that your hearer will be misled to a wrong conclusion. It is true that Sarah is his sister as she is Abraham’s half sister. But that is half the truth. Abimelech concluded that therefore Sarah is not Abraham’s wife if she were his sister. Abraham was afraid that the other half of the truth would get him into trouble. So he refrained from speaking the other half of the truth and he fell into sin.

But the amazing thing is our Father God. King Abimelech took Sarah to his harem and when king Abimelech was asleep, God gave him a dream. In Gen. 20:6 God told Abimelech in a dream. God said, *Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart.* Now Abimelech apparently has some integrity too. That is also why God worked a dream in his life. See God preserves the man of integrity too. *The righteousness of the upright will deliver them (Proverbs 11: 6) For I also withheld you from sinning against Me, therefore I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man’s wife.* Abraham was the one responsible because Abraham told a lie. He could have trusted the Lord to defend him. If he dies for telling the truth, so be it but tell the truth. He told a lie and Sarah went along. And He says, “Restore the man’s wife for he is a prophet.” God is defending a liar. God is defending a man who has fallen. Question, why? - because essentially he is a good man. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand.* (Psalm 37:23-24)

Now when you fall you pay a price for it. I am not saying you do not pay a price for sin to a certain extent. But the fact is there is restoration. Why is God working restoration so fast? Abraham walked in goodness. He would qualify the description of a good man in Ps. 37:23 whose steps are ordered by the Lord. See it does not mean that you failed once that you are a failure. It does not mean that when you told a half-truth, which is wrong, and a lie in some pressurized situation, you are a liar. But if you continue at it, you may become a habitual liar but the fact is those who are good do not intend to continue that habit of lying. That is the difference.

It is because of goodness that God worked in Paul’s life. In the book of Acts, Paul

was a cruel man from the outward perspective. He took Christians from their homes, threw them into prison, separated families, killed, and was involved in the killing of Stephen. He was on his way to Damascus to work more destruction when Jesus appeared to him. Why did Jesus work in his life that way? Most Christians would have been praying, "Fire from heaven, come down and fry him." Why did God work in his life? There are two reasons. One is intercession. We believe Stephen's prayer helped. "Lord, lay not this to their charge." He exercised mercy and forgiveness. Secondly, despite his cruelty and destructive streak, Paul was a good man. Outside he looks like a bad person but inside he was sincere in what he was doing. He genuinely thought he was protecting God's interests.

Paul recognized his former life in I Tim. 1:13 when he wrote, *although I was formerly a blasphemer*. We are not saying that his former life of cruelty was not wrong. It is still wrong. Wrong is wrong, sin is sin. But restoration is possible when there is essential goodness. Don't we do that to our children all the time? It is a different thing when you punish a child who persistently and constantly chooses to do evil. But it is a different thing when your child failed under fear of pressure, so they came back and told a lie. Essentially, they do not intend to do that. But they yielded to the pressure of fear. Evil may try to creep into their hearts but essentially, they are good.

Now let me draw a careful line here. If we constantly repeat our failures, sins, or shortcomings, it can turn us into an evil person. So what we are teaching is not an excuse or license for sin. But what we are teaching is to understand the mercy and goodness of God and how He deals in our life. I believe if not for the mercy, the grace and the goodness of God, not one of us would be sitting here. Who amongst us here can say, "I have never fail." Who can say they have never faulted. None of us. But God continued working in our life. He searches the deep things of the heart. He knows essentially you are good.

Essentially Paul was good. He really wanted to do well but he was self-deceived. He was doing evil things while thinking he was doing good. This is what he says in I Tim.1:13 *although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*. He did not do it purposely. He

did it ignorantly and out of lack of knowledge. If you understand this truth, you would be more merciful to others than you ought to. We write off many people because we look on the outward, and do not see on the inward. If God adopts that attitude towards us, we will all be finished. That is why sometimes people may hurt us with their words and in their actions but we need to see beyond their words and actions. If we do so, we can see their love and intention and we can nurture fellowship too. Otherwise, there is no fellowship.

So, Paul obtained mercy because of his essential goodness. He acted out of ignorance and lack of knowledge. Many people do things and say things that they should not say or should not do because they know not what they do and know not what they say. Sometimes what they do and what they say is hurting. It cripples, depresses, and discourages others. It could actually cause people to turn away from the Lord. And normally we would say that such sin is worthy of the punishment. But yet, God looks at the heart. He sees goodness in a spark there. He deals with it. He would step in. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, though he fall, though he fall, he will not be cast down.

Paul also says this in the book of Acts 22:3 *I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.* Do you know that when Paul was persecuting the Christians he thought he was doing the right thing? He thought he was helping God to get rid of the heretics who were destroying the Jewish faith. See his zeal was not for selfish motives. He went all out against them thinking that he is serving God. He was zealous towards God. Then the other portion was his ignorance and unbelief. This proves to us that essentially he was a good man. We know because when he came to know the truth that he was wrong and that the Christians were right, he became a different man. He became a blessing instead of a curse. He became a solution instead of a problem. He became an encourager instead of a depressor. He became one who contributes instead of one who destroys. That change came in an instant because essentially that was his desire to serve God and to do what is right. But he lacked knowledge and he did the wrong thing. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord though he falls he will not be cast down.

Some of you sitting right here are on your way to Christian perfection. You fall from time to time. And you wonder how you are going to pick yourself up and press on. When some people make a mistake, they dare not face anybody any more. They feel like hiding at home. All of us make mistakes but what makes the difference is to get out of it quickly. We get back on the right track and we press on. Of course, it demands a teachable attitude. It demands that we are able to correct what we did. Paul was very frank about it. He admitted that he was wrong. I think one difficult sentence people have to say is, "I really love you with agape love." Not many people really can say that and mean it. The other is, "I am wrong. Please forgive me." Human pride does not want to say that.

From the time of Adam's fall, God asked, "Adam, Adam, where art thou?" Do you know that God knows where Adam was? Of course, God knows where Adam was. Don't tell me God doesn't know. Then what kind of God are we talking about? God knows where Adam was but God wanted Adam to respond and say, "I have failed you, I have made a mistake." Adam did not do such a thing. Adam was hiding and God asked, "Did you eat of that tree? See God knew the answer. He wanted an answer from Adam. Adam did not even say, "I did." He said, "The woman gave me to eat." God asked the woman. The woman said, "The serpent." But every one of them cannot come to God and say, "I am sorry. I was wrong. Forgive me." See that demonstrates whether you are a good man or not. A good man though he falls will not allow himself to be cast down he will get up again and walk off. Goodness is powerful. We have to develop goodness in our lives. Goodness is both an attitude and a substance.

While we are on the subject of Adam and Eve, I want to digress and share some prophetic significance for our times. There is a local church where every first Saturday of the month, the pastor sends some of his members on study tours to heaven. Since we are fast approaching the end times, the Holy Spirit wants to accelerate our learning. These study tours of heaven will reveal many secrets for our times. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the pastor walks up and down the aisle and picks a few members who were chosen by the Holy Spirit to make a trip to heaven. He asks them to prepare by confessing their sins and asking for grace. Once they are ready, the pastor points his forefinger at them, one by one, and they fall to the ground like dead men and women. He asks the ushers to examine them and roll them on the floor and there is no response from them. Their breathing and

their heartbeats even slowed down considerably. They are then carried to the stage for an hour or so before the pastor claps his hands to wake them up. They then go to the mike to make their reports to the congregation.

In one of the reports, a member described how he was taken to a computer screen by an angel to see what really happened in the Garden of Eden. He saw that Adam was very, very handsome and Eve was even more beautiful and pretty. She was so beautiful that Adam loved her very deeply. Adam loved her so much that he did everything to please her. He obeyed her every desire to the point of even being submissive to her. Eve had a peculiar penchant for snakes. She would carry a snake about her and let it twirl around her body. She loved to play with her pet snake. She would constantly talk with the serpent too. Of course, this was before the fall, and the animals were friendly and harmless. The serpent was not seen to be evil and there was nothing squeamish about it. It may have been very beautiful and attractive as well. Eve also greatly admired Adam for his knowledge and wisdom. She yearned for that kind of wisdom that Adam had. She saw that Adam could name all the animals and administrate the Garden of Eden with great knowledge and wisdom.

It was for these reasons – that Eve was friendly with her pet snake, that Eve admired Adam for his wisdom and that Adam was submissive to Eve – that the devil pounced upon to bring the downfall of man. He had been observing this for many years and finally when Adam and Eve were about thirty years old, the devil used the serpent to talk to Eve about getting the wisdom of God by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve fell for it since she trusted her pet snake and since she wanted to be Adam who had such great wisdom. After Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, she gave some to Adam to eat as well. By this time, Adam had already cultivated the habit of obeying Eve all the time because of her great beauty and he too fell into the devil's trap and obeyed Eve. The sin of Eve is greater than the sin of Adam.

Recently, there seems to be a craze for keeping pet snakes. I watched a Discovery Channel documentary that showed many teenaged girls buying pet snakes. Ironically, when Discovery Channel interviewed them, many of the girls said that their keeping pet snakes had nothing to do with the serpent and the devil and

“stuff like that.” You would notice that their minds were automatically led to associate the serpent with the devil. I believe that their consciences were pricking them and warning them but they chose to drown out their inner voice by saying it is ok to keep pet snakes. They do not realize that a bigger picture was being played out and they were the mere pawns of the devil. The devil is leading them to adopt the habit of Eve, who also loved to play with pet snakes. At the time when the devil was permitted to test Adam and Eve, he used Eve’s pet serpent to speak to her. So will it be in the last days. Satan will use these pet snakes to communicate with their mistresses, perhaps by telepathy or ESP, to mislead them to accept the Antichrist and rebel against God. Christians too who keep religious statues, icons and pictures at home have also to beware. In the last days too, Satan will speak through these statues and mislead them to accept the Antichrist. It is much better to get rid of them than allow them to be your stumbling blocks. Do not be surprised to find that your devout mother or wife is kneeling before the altar, and there is a religious picture or statue there. Suddenly, she hears a voice coming from that statue or picture saying that the Antichrist is a great and holy leader sent from God. She believes that deception, tells everybody what she heard, and lead the whole family and neighborhood to worship the Antichrist. Terrible deception will take place during the end times and woe to those who do not have the Spirit of truth with them.

Many bible teachers teach that Adam should have exercised his headship over Eve and commanded her to obey God rather than listen to the voice of the serpent. He should know what God has commanded and he should command his household to obey God. All this is true but we should understand the hold that Eve had over Adam. In fact, the heaven’s report states that Eve was domineering over her husband, Adam. She was constantly ordering Adam around, and Adam was being very submissive to her. So it should not be a surprise that Adam obeyed Eve when she gave him the fruit to eat and that was the fall of mankind. Like a chess game, the devil had already studied his opponent’s weak points and placed his pieces in strategic locations before springing the checkmate on Adam.

This same heaven’s report states that the devil will use this same tactic to trap mankind in the last days. Satan has always used women to bring about the downfall of man. Witness the number of ministers and ministries, families, government leaders, even businesses collapsing because of an illicit liaison with a

woman. *For by means of a harlot, a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.* (Proverbs 6:26) Just as the devil used Eve to bring down Adam, so will he use women to lead in the rebellion against God and side with the Antichrist in the last days. It is no coincidence that you see the rise of many woman politicians and government heads in the last decade. It is also no coincidence that feminism, feminist theology, the worship of goddesses has gained ascendancy in many societies. All these are part of Satan's chess moves to spring the final assault on mankind. This number will increase as the world heads rapidly towards the final scenario.

Now, let us come back to our topic. Like CNN, sometimes I will have to interrupt the topic to bring you the latest from heaven. We need to keep up with what God is doing in our present times. I am sure you will not mind.

Lets look at Exodus 33:19 *Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you.* When God said, "I will make My goodness pass before you," and then mentions mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, goodness and truth, He implies that goodness covers all the five aspects of His glory. Then in chapter 34 he repeats again in verse 6 *And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.* Do you notice among all the five attributes, goodness was emphasized?

There are five attributes mentioned there they are mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, goodness and truth. But goodness is the one that has a word placed next to it that says, "abounding." There is an emphasis on goodness.

Now the Hebrew words for *goodness* found in Exodus 33:19 and in Exodus 34:5-6 are different. The word in Exodus 33:19 where He says, "I will make all My goodness pass before you," is the Hebrew word *tob*. The Hebrew word *tob* is the essential word for goodness. All the five attributes of God's glory come from *tob* and are available because He is a good God.

Exodus 34:6 where He says, “abounding in goodness,” is a different Hebrew word for the word *goodness*. There is a play on Hebrew words here. The Hebrew word for the word *goodness* in Exodus 34:6 is the word *hesed* and that word is normally not translated as goodness. The normal word for goodness in Hebrew is the word *tob* but this word *hesed* occurred 240 times in the Old Testament, and has been translated as *kindness* 38 times. *Hesed* is also translated as loving-kindness, steadfast love, grace, mercy, faithfulness, goodness and devotion. I like the word where the bible uses the word *kindness* because it conveys two things again - attribute and substance. So, the second goodness in Exodus 34 should strictly be translated as kindness, “*abounding in kindness.*”

We all sing the song “Thy loving kindness is better than life.” What do we mean by “Thy loving kindness is better than life?” If we can understand that, we can understand goodness also because they are related. See loving-kindness is a substance as well as love. So the meaning is this God’s loving-kindness is so long you could say that God’s loving-kindness starts from eternity to eternity. So everything is God’s kindness; it is one long line of loving kindness, of all His goodness and kindness. Our life is only that short. You could live for a thousand years and you would not have tasted the fullness of what God can do for you.

We are talking about goodness compared with kindness, or rather comparing *tob* and *hesed* since they are connected. In the book of Gen. 1 it tells us here that as God created this planet earth, there was one word God always uses. It tells us in verse 10 *And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.* Then verse 12 *And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.* Verse 18 *He makes the light to rule over the day and over the night and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.* Then verse 21 *So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.* Verse 25 *And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.* Verse 31 *Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning*

were the sixth day.

God made all these things and He says that it was good. He made some more and says that it was good. When He made and women He says very good. Notice that all the creation of God is summarized by the word *good*. Everything that God gave is because He is good. That expresses an attribute of goodness. Goodness and being good is not just refraining from evil. When we say, "I am good to you," or, "He is a good man," we should not use it in reference to just somebody who refrains from evil. That is how the world measures goodness. The world uses an incomplete yardstick to measure goodness. The world does not add the spiritual dimension. But when God speaks about something being good, it means it has the ability to do something that improves you. It is not just the ability to refrain from evil. Goodness does something that makes you happy. So a good man is not just a man who sits down and do nothing. The bible qualifies a good man to be somebody who reaches out of his way, who makes a sacrifice for himself, who pays a price that you can enjoy.

All of you mothers know what it is like. You cooked hot tasty meals for your family. You sweated it out. It took one hour of planning, one hour of cutting the vegetables and meat and one hour of cooking. You prepared a great feast and when your husband and children sat at the table, they devoured the food in just five minutes. However, you did not mind. You feel satisfied that your family enjoyed your cooking. You did not cook to please yourself. It was for your loved ones to enjoy. You knew that your husband loves corned beef and cabbage and your children loved spaghetti. So you cooked these dishes so that they would have a very satisfying meal. That is the essential meaning of goodness.

So are you good to people? Goodness is not just having a quality of non-retaliation and non-evil. Goodness in a person says, "Let me see what I can do to improve your lot. Let me see how I can bless you. Let me see how I can solve your problem. Let me see how I can increase your happiness. Let me see how I can add something to you so that you can have a great day."

You see God did not create man and woman to work 8 to 5 only. God did not make man and woman on the first day so that they have to help God to create the rest. God made them on last day, the sixth day so that when everything was created, man just had to come and enjoy God's creation. That is goodness. That is also mercy because the general word for goodness called *tob* refers to everything that God has revealed, everything God has given of His love, of His blessing, of His mercy, of His graciousness, of His truth, everything He has given is classified by the word goodness. That is why He told Moses in Exodus 33:19 *I will make My goodness pass before you*. And that that goodness or *tob* consists of the five attributes including *hesed*, which is kindness.

That is why the book of James did not just say, "Every perfect gift is from above," but it says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." (James 1: 17) Goodness means a gift that enhances you, that blesses you. That is the meaning of goodness. So according to the bible qualification of goodness if you are someone who just sits around doing nothing, the world may call you a good man. Why? Because he didn't sin, he didn't smoke, he didn't drink, he didn't do this and do that. But that is a non-definition. But in God's qualification, a good man is one who constantly looks for things to do for others, things to bless others, things to enhance others. A good person is actively doing good to others.

Do you know Abraham was such a man? Abraham constantly looked for strangers to take in. Roland Buck mentioned in the book "Angels on Assignment" that when he went to God's throne room, God pulled out three files belonging to Abraham, Paul and himself. God told him a hundred and twenty things that he would experience before he die. But God also pulled out Abraham's file. He read all the records of Abraham's file. Of course, the shortcomings and sins were washed out and were no more in the record. So Abraham's failures mentioned in the Bible were not in his file since they were washed under the blood. But an emphasis was mentioned in his record up there. That Abraham was a hospital man. He was a man who always took in strangers. You saw a glimpse of that in the bible. When he sees these people, he would run to them and ask them to come in. He went out of the way to welcome his guests and told his wife to slaughter the fattest calf.

How many people will do that today? We will just give one dollar to a hungry

stranger and tell him to buy his own lunch. Abraham was that kind of person to reach out to make people happy, and blessed them. He loves to bless others. That is what it means to be a good man. Goodness is the attitude of seeking to enhance somebody else's enjoyment. It seeks to make life better for others. That is goodness. It is an attitude.

The other part is that everything that comes from God of His spiritual blessings, of His mental blessing and of His physical blessing are all categorized as His goodness. So when you have a financial blessing, it came from God's goodness. When you are blessed with a car, remember it is God's goodness to you. When you are blessed with a house, it is God's goodness. When you are blessed with a revelation, it is God's goodness. When you are blessed with musical talent, it is God's goodness. When you are blessed with a good voice, it is God's goodness.

Everything of substance is also included as goodness. The thing is that goodness is a substance that produces all the other blessings. Psalms 23 says, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." If goodness was just an attitude, it would have been worded as, "Surely, goodness and mercy *shall be in me* all the days of my life." Instead, it says, "*shall follow me*," indicating that goodness is like a person following you wherever you go.

In Exodus 34:6, God mentioned the five attributes of His glory and one of these is the word *hesed* or kindness in. What do we mean by kindness? Is it someone who is gentle? It is someone who gives you things easily. Kindness includes generosity. You would not call a stingy man, kind. So all the things that God has given in our life are not because of what we have done. You show mercy when somebody has done something wrong against you. But you show goodness to someone when there is nothing for or against you at all. You just desire to start the relationship by being good. God started the ball rolling when He made this world. Mercy is needed when there is a fault and judgment is required. But goodness is when there is nothing to begin with. For example if somebody sinned against you, you could pronounce judgment on them or you could take action against them. But in this case, you show mercy instead and the glory of God increases in your life. But showing goodness begins when there is no record of indebtedness to one another or obligation to show

favor or when a person has not done any wrong to you. Goodness is when you reach out and say, "Let me see how I can bless that person." Goodness is willing to be generous. So, God has been generous to us. When we say, "Thy loving kindness is better than life," it means that God's loving kindness is bigger, wider, longer lasting than our lives. See life is only that short. His kindness is better than that. Now we know the meaning. When we say that God's loving kindness is better than life, it means it is longer and greater than life. God's kindness is so powerful.

God's loving kindness is something active that flows from God's essential nature of goodness. God is a good God and He is not sitting up on His throne with a big stick waiting to punish somebody. No, He is sitting up on His throne with a handful of blessing looking for persons to pour His blessings upon. Don't get the worldly image of God; get the bible image of God. God is looking for places and peoples He can put His blessings on. God has so much blessings that if He gives to every single human being it will only touch a drop of water in the ocean of what He could give. So great is His kindness and goodness onto us.

So there are two areas of goodness - one is in attitude and the other is in substance. We could learn to receive the attitude of goodness. And it is not something that will come immediately because goodness is developed through meekness, which involves "teachability."

Turn to Ps. 23 before you can have verse 6 you must have verse 1 *The Lord is my shepherd*. And goodness starts when you partake of the Shepherd's heart. And that means letting God break down your self life. The book of Isaiah says, "Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool. Where shall I dwell? says God. Then He says He will dwell with those of a humble and a contrite spirit. We realize the humble shall be exalted. The proud shall be brought down. We need to come to God and allow Him to transform us like sheep by the Shepherd. We need to follow the Shepherd's heart. The Lord is my Shepherd. Then you can have verse 6, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Do you notice everything after verse 1 has to do with what the Shepherd done? So,

the essential thing is the Shepherd. In verse 2 it says, *He makes me lie down in green pastures* - that's the work of the shepherd. *He leads me beside still waters* - that's still the shepherd. *He leads me in the path of righteousness* - that's still the shepherd. *Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death* - that's still the shepherd. *For you are with me*. What is with me? *Your rod*. In verse 5, *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies*. *You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over*, - that's still the shepherd. See everything listed that is done is the work of a shepherd. You must allow the shepherd to lead you.

Let us read how to get into goodness. In verse 2, you must enter the shepherd's rest - lie down in green pastures. That's the way into goodness. He leads me beside still waters also that talks about stillness. So verse 2 talks about rest.

Verse 3 talks about putting something in you. When you restore a soul, you put something inside. He leads me in the paths of righteousness - you follow righteousness. You cannot truly be kind to a person if you do not understand holiness and righteousness. If a person is unrighteous and selfish, how can he really be kind? Everything he does, outwardly the world calls good and kind, but his actions are full of ulterior motives. You cannot move into goodness before you move into holiness and righteousness. In other words, you have to move into holiness and righteousness before you can really move into goodness. Unless God transform our hearts, we cannot produce one ounce of goodness. See, goodness must come from the inside out not from the outside in. So, if your heart is essentially evil it needs to be touched by God. And if this day you do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, just ask Him in and the Shepherd will come and touch you. He will touch the inner core of your being. See now there is no more ulterior motive and it is pure goodness coming out. So there must be purity before goodness.

So verse 2 you must cease from all you can do by yourself. That is why Eph. 2:8-9 says that we are saved by grace through faith and that not of our own self but it's a gift of God. But the very next verse says we are His workmanship for good works. So, you must die to your own work before you can do God's work. That is why the rest can only come after you have holiness and righteousness.

Verse 4 shows that you must go through testing. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.* I am not talking about disease or calamity. Like Paul says the tribulation worked character. You die to yourself. In dying, there is resurrection. In yielding, there is strength. Before goodness can come out of you, you must know what it is to die to self.

Abraham knows what it is. He was tested on his relationship with his kinsfolk, told to get out from his kinsfolk. I mean it is not easy to separate from your loved ones. It is hard to say good-bye to people whom you love. But the greatest test was in the book of Gen. 22 God said, "Give me Isaac." That was the test of his very love. That was the valley of the shadow of death. The valley of the shadow of death is when your Isaac die. You started your business because you dedicated it to God and God blesses you but half way along God may ask you, "Is it still yours or is it mine?" God will ask you and test you. Isaac came from God any way. But the valley of the shadow of death is when your Isaac dies and God gives you a new Isaac. Unless you have tasted that dying to self, you can never be gentle. You can never be gentle to people. You will be rough and tough because you have never died to self. Gentleness can only come from a vessel that is crushed, broken and contrite before God. So that is No. 3 the valley of the shadow of death.

No. 5 the anointing that comes. That, my friend, is the glory of God. So verse 2 you rest. Verse 3 holiness is imparted in your nature. Verse 4 your Isaac die in the valley of the shadow of death. Verse 5 the anointing of God, the glory of God. You may still have many enemies but it makes no difference now because the anointing runs over you. And finally verse 6 the goodness of the Lord shall follow you all the days of your life.

