

God's Abundant Goodness

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[0 : 00] Let's turn now to Psalm 31 in the book of Psalms. Psalm 31, we're going to look this morning at verse 19. Just this one verse of the psalm, Psalm 31 and verse 19.

Oh how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind.

Psalm 31 obviously made an impression on some of the people that we find mentioned in the Bible itself. When you look at the prayer of Jonah, for example, in the second chapter of the book of Jonah, it's obvious that this psalm and some of the content of this psalm, some of the expressions used in this psalm, were in Jonah's mind as he prayed to the Lord in that situation that he had in Jonah 2.

You also find the same thing in Jeremiah. At times, Jeremiah took phrases from this psalm, especially when he was himself the object of persecution by his enemies, and he found in the psalm words which fitted his situation and used them, just quoting them directly, as it were, from this psalm of David.

And of course, as much as anyone else, Jesus himself found words in this psalm as he came to his very final moments on the cross.

[1 : 36] He took the words there of verse 5, Into your hand I commit my spirit. That's what he said, Father, into your hand I commit my spirit.

So even the Lord himself found words from this psalm that were applicable to his circumstances that he used directly as an expression, as he prayed to the Father, as he spoke to the Father. Even there in the extremity of the cross, in his final moments in his life in this world, these are the words that he used. And that's really a reminder to us that the psalms are there not just to be used in worship, in public worship, but in private worship.

They are for that, of course, and we use them for that reason. But they are also particularly a book in the Bible to which people go and in which they find their experiences laid out.

That's one of the valuable things about this book. It meets the variety of human needs that we have. Now, the Bible is much more than just a handbook for us to find our human needs met and explained and God's answer to them.

[2 : 49] God is far more than just a kind of great spiritual psychologist or therapist for us. The Bible is really about the glory of God and the greatness of God and how God in his greatness has produced and provides salvation for us in Jesus Christ.

That's the great emphasis of the Bible. But, of course, that comes to meet our human need. And our human needs are important even as we subsume them under the greatness and the glory of God.

And one of the great things you find is that God has taken account of all our human need in providing salvation for us. And as you go to the book of Psalms, however low you may be, you will not be lower than some of the circumstances of the psalmist as he describes them.

And however high you may be in joy, you will never find yourself surely above some of the heights of joy that the psalmist expresses, not just David but others who wrote the psalms.

That's why the book of Psalms is such a great book. It's full of God. It's full of God's salvation. But it's also so full of these varied experiences that human beings like you and I have right through from birth to the grave.

[4 : 03] And they are here so that we can see that God has remembered us, that we can bring them to God, that God understands them, that no one else understands them as He does, and that He answers us even out of our perplexities.

Even when we cannot adequately describe what we're feeling to Himself or to any other people, we take assurance and comfort from the fact that God Himself knows it all, even before we come to ask

Him.

Now Psalm 31 is really, you might say, a journey, as one person described it, a journey from anguish to assurance. And it does that twice. Because you find there the words down to verse 8, that's the first section of it, you might say that's from anguish at the beginning to assurance there in verse 8.

And then the same thing starts again at verse 9. He talks about the anguish that he experiences and works through to assurance as the psalm ends. And maybe that's two different experiences the psalmist had, or maybe it's just the one experience, but he's going over it twice just to kind of bring out again for himself how valuable God and God as His refuge was and is to him.

In any case, that's the kind of thing you've got. That's how the psalm really breaks up into these two parts. And in verses 19 to 24, you really have an emphasis on the goodness of God as it fits into the psalmist's experience from anguish to assurance.

[5 : 47] He describes this goodness, the features of that goodness, verses 19 and 20. Then he tells us about the experience of that goodness in verses 21 and 22. And then there's an exhortation in 23 and 4 to others to come and celebrate this goodness and love the Lord in return for the goodness that He shows to us.

What we're doing is just taking out of that this slice, if you like, of the psalm and of this section of it in verse 19. So we're looking at the goodness of God and the features of that goodness, firstly. And then we'll look at the beneficiaries of that goodness, those who have come to benefit from it or those who may be invited to benefit from the goodness of God. Let's look at the features of it, first of all.

How abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you in the sight of the children of mankind.

Now, first of all, we have to begin by saying that goodness is inherent to God. You don't look at the goodness of God as you experience it, as if that's where goodness really begins.

[6 : 59] You've got to go back from that and see that the Bible says God is good. In other words, the goodness that we receive from God, the things in which God's goodness, and that's really, as we'll see, what the psalmist is talking about here, but you have to trace that back.

The goodness that we receive, the things that we know of, God's goodness made known in our lives, they go back to the fact that God is good. Just like you find otherwise in the Bible, God is love. You cannot think of God without Him being love. You can't think of God either without Him being goodness. And when the Bible says God is good, it means that goodness is part of His nature. It's part of what characterizes Him as God. It's part of what really God has revealed of Himself that He is. He is good.

He is goodness. And He does good to us. The goodness He does to us goes back to the goodness that He is.

[8 : 07] Indeed, it's a moral quality, if you like, in God, and it belongs to God as part of His nature that He is good. He can't, in other words, be bad.

There is no un-goodness. Or if you put it the other way, there's no badness at all in God. In the New Testament, you find it said, God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

In other words, there's nothing unlike darkness, nothing unlike purity, nothing unlike goodness here, nothing at all that's unlike that in God.

He is pure goodness. He's goodness uncorrupted. He's goodness without any change to that goodness. And that's where our experience of God's goodness comes from.

You might say, the fact that we receive things from God, where in His goodness He blesses us, itself shows us that God is good. If God were not good, in the way that the Bible describes, we would not be able to say, how great is your goodness.

[9 : 20] You remember that at one time, an individual came to say to Jesus, good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And the first thing Jesus said to him is, why do you call me good? There is none good but God. Now, of course, Jesus didn't mean by that, that He Himself was not God, and therefore was not good, in the sense that God was good.

He really was just probing the man's mind, as to why He had put it in such a way, good master. Did He really understand who Jesus was, that He was in fact dealing with God, and with goodness.

He was trying to probe into the man's mind, but this is what He said. There is none good but God. You don't find absolute goodness anywhere else, but you do find it in God, anywhere else other than in God.

It's a great source of comfort and thankfulness to David in this psalm, that God is good, and that He has come to know that goodness, in the way God has dealt with him.

[10:30] Well, how has He come to know that goodness? What are the features of the goodness, as God has made it known to David? Because that's, as we'll say, the goodness that He mentions here, is the way that God has dealt with him.

And that can really only be in our salvation. You could say that, yes, God is good to us in giving us things in a physical sense, in a temporal sense.

You might say the ordinary things of life. He's good when He provides you with plenty of food. He's good when He provides you. It's His goodness that provides all the resources by which you enjoy the things of life, the proper things of life.

You wouldn't have that if God was not good. But the goodness of God is especially, in His Word, attached to His salvation, and shown through His salvation.

That what He has done in the Lord Jesus Christ. You might say, in fact, that everything in our salvation, whatever you think of within our salvation, and the Bible, of course, tells us so much, that our salvation contains forgiveness of sin, acceptance with God, the hope of eternal life, the fatherhood of God, and looking after us, the care of God.

[11:45] Everything that is within our salvation, you might say, is the goodness of God made known to us. God being good to us.

And there are a number of, there are three words here to describe that goodness. First of all, it's a goodness stored up. And secondly, it's a goodness that's worked or wrought.

A goodness that God has created, if you like. Not His own goodness, but goodness to us. Our receiving of that goodness. The salvation that God has, it's something that is worked for a benefit. And then it's also a goodness that's described as abundant. Let's look at these briefly in turn. It's stored up. How abundant is your goodness?

Which you have stored up. Words literally mean which you have treasured up. It's like what you do with precious goods. It's something you do with treasure, with jewels, with things which you know are your valuables.

[12:52] You store them. You actually keep them safe. And there's that idea built into it. That the goodness of God for the benefit of those who trust in Him is something that He's kept safe for them.

It's deposited for them. It's there and it will always be there for them. But that takes you into another idea. And the goodness of God that is stored up for them.

Because it actually means, when you think about it, that God's goodness is always going ahead of us. When our trust is in the Lord, you can never think of any time, whether it's in this life or in the world to come, where the goodness of God is suddenly going to stop.

Where the goodness of God is not going to be going ahead of us. What a marvelous thought that is. Today, if you are in Jesus, if you are His, if your trust is in Him, if you're saved, one thing you can say for sure, amongst all the changes that you experience in this life, and indeed, like the psalmist here, and all the adversities of life, all the setbacks, you might say, in this life, but one thing you can say is that the goodness of God, the provision of God and His goodness, is always stored up for you.

It's always going ahead of you. It's always there as you reach out as you need it, day after day after day, year by year, and on into eternity itself. One of the wonderful descriptions that you find of heaven is in Revelation chapter 7, the final part of the chapter, where John was given this great vision and description by God.

[14:35] We're actually not given all that much detail about heaven in the Bible. It's something that we, well, we'll have to wait until we get there to really explore it fully and understand it fully.

But what he says is, the Lamb, and that's Jesus, of course, who is in the midst of the throne, shall pastor them, shall be their shepherd.

These are the people who have come out of the great tribulation, who have left the worries and the woes of this world behind, and now appear before the throne of God in victorious procession, if you like.

They have palms in their hands. They have the symbols of victory. They are absolutely pure. They are cleansed. They are covered, clothed in white robes. And this is what is said of them.

The Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, the ruler of all the universe, the one who has the presidency over all human affairs, he will be their shepherd.

[15:40] You see, the care, the care in that, and will lead them to living fountains of water. God will wipe all tears from their eyes.

And it's that part of it. The Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of water. What is heaven? It's an ongoing experience of the goodness of God, bringing us again and again and again in an unending experience of salvation, bringing us again and again and again to more of this living water.

It's always his goodness as it goes before him. And that goodness of God is stored up then for us. Secondly, it's worked for us. That's too, a very important thing, isn't it? It's a goodness that's been worked in terms of our benefit. And you remember in Titus that Paul, in writing to Titus, said with regard to this salvation, where the goodness of God is made known to us as we're saying, that this was something which appeared.

Salvation of God was revealed to us. But it's interesting how Paul put it there when he wrote to Titus in the third chapter of that little letter where he says in verse 4, but he says, well he says, first of all, we were ourselves once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

[17:31] But, when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Saviour, appeared. And then he goes on to describe the things of salvation, the work of the Holy Spirit, blessing us richly through Christ Jesus.

But that's how he puts it, that's how he begins. When the goodness of God appears, appeared, when Jesus was born, God was bringing his goodness to light for us.

When Christ was crucified on the cross, God was bringing his goodness to light. When God, when Jesus was raised from the dead, in his resurrection from the dead, God was displaying his goodness.

When the Holy Spirit comes to touch your heart and change you inwardly, God is displaying his goodness to you. It is the goodness of God as it's gone before you, as it goes before you, as it's been worked for you.

And of course, it brings us especially to think of the cross itself, isn't it? Where Jesus, in his great work of creating and bringing about salvation for us, through his sufferings, through his death, Jesus is actively producing salvation for us.

[18:52] What does that mean? It means that the goodness of God, as we see it, as we come to experience it, it's being wrought for us, it's worked for us.

It's something that is active for our benefit. And nowhere more than in the death of Christ. It's redemptive goodness, but it's goodness in that it's stored up and it's worked.

And thirdly, it's abundant. Oh, how abundant is your goodness. The psalmist's celebration of that goodness is not just saying, Lord, how good is your goodness, how thankful I am for your goodness.

There's all that in it. But what he's saying, how abundant is your goodness. What are our thoughts of God today? Because God doesn't do minimums.

He doesn't do meager things when he shows us his goodness. When he blesses, he doesn't just give us the tiniest amount.

[19:59] He gives us an abundance. All the way through Paul's epistles, you find, for example, in Ephesians, chapter 1 and verses 7 to 8, you find the Lord's abundant salvation spoken of there in him, that's in the beloved, in Jesus.

We have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us, which he poured on us abundantly.

And in the same epistle, you find in chapter 5 and verse 18, and all the way down from verse 18 there, you find the same kind of thing.

Therefore, don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. See, God is inviting us and exhorting us not to think of minimums when you think of your relation to him, when you think of the salvation that he has to bestow, when you think of the work of the Spirit of God in your heart.

God is saying, don't think of minimums, be filled. Think of abundance. Think of maximums. Think of as much as you can actually receive.

[21 : 23] That's what God has to give. That's what the goodness of God means. It's an abundant goodness. You can think of it in terms of Christ bequeathing goodness to us.

He has died, and his last will and testament is that this great goodness, this abundant goodness, this abundant salvation, this salvation that is so full of life.

As he himself said, I have come that they might have life and have it in all its fullness. That's what he's bequeathed to us. That's what his will has made out to us.

That's what we draw from. That's what we eternally will have access to if we are saved in him.

Abundant goodness.

Does that excite you? Does that not just take you above your present life? Does that not actually take you to think of how much more there is of this abundant goodness for you to receive?

[22 : 32] And of how little we already experience of it? When you think that it's so full and so abundant that it will last throughout eternity and go before his people throughout eternity, these living fountains of water, you've been drawing from them since you were converted.

But when you think of what you've received since you were converted, how much more is there yet to receive of this great supply? How abundant is your goodness?

But it also challenges us. This is God towards us. This is our experience of what God gives. God is my response.

Is my response abundance? Is my response in terms of maximums? Am I satisfied with minimums to God? What about my love?

Is it meager? Is it just now and again? What about my zeal? how strong is it? Does it correspond to the zeal that God showed in his goodness and shows in his goodness toward me?

[23 : 48] What about my service? What about my loyalty? Am I as loyal to God as I should be when I know his loyalty in his abundant goodness to me?

What about my service, my worship? Do I worship him in response to his goodness with the worship that is due to him?

Am I as committed to worshipping God as he was to me? As is to me in his goodness?

These are all the kinds of questions that come from looking at the goodness of God as an abundant goodness, a goodness stored up and going before us, a goodness that he has worked for our benefit.

But then look at the beneficiaries because it tells us here as well in the verse that it tells us who these people are or how they're described if they're going to be receiving of the goodness of God what kind of people are they?

[24 : 54] And there are two phrases that describe them how abundant is your goodness which you have stored up for those who fear you. That's the first description.

The second description is for those who take refuge in you. So they are those who fear the Lord and they are those who take refuge in the Lord.

Just very briefly let's look at these. The fear of God what the Bible calls the fear of God or here those who fear you that's quite often misunderstood and it's misunderstood because some people have the idea that the fear of God really means being afraid of God.

That it means that we dare not come into the presence of God that we dare not come near to God that we actually must not do that because we're afraid that he will punish us.

Now that's a misunderstanding it's a warped view of the fear of God in the way the Bible speaks about this fear of God because the fear of God it's not a fear of punishment it's not being afraid to approach him it's not wanting to hide from him just in case we come to meet him the fear of God you could say is a loving respect for God.

[26 : 18] Sometimes the word awe is appropriate in the way the Bible uses this phrase the fear of God it's that loving respect it's that awe of God that comes to your soul when you come to know God when you come to realize who he is and what he's done for you and when you come to know especially the goodness of God it comes to be part of your relationship with him then the fear of God really is something that fits into a relationship of love and you can actually see it in relation to the commandments of God just take for example the ten commandments now I know we don't regard the ten commandments as the ground by which we come to be accepted with God that's it's Jesus Christ and it's the righteousness of Christ that gives us acceptance with God but then you

come once you're a Christian you come to realize that the law of God the moral law really sets out for it the lifestyle the pattern the things that in our lives we give priority to doing or not doing they are the expression of the will of

God and the kind of life he requires of us when you come to think of any of the commandments you don't approach them and say as a Christian you don't say well I better do this otherwise I'll be punished you don't say I'd better not steal I'd better not commit adultery I'd better not take God's name in vain I'd better not covet my neighbor's goods because if I do I'll be in trouble you don't approach it that way with the fear of God with the fear of God what you do is say these are the expression of my father's will and I love to do my father's will and I love to please my father and when his goodness has been made known to me my response is that I must love his commandments and I do love his commandments and I see in his commandments not something which if I do he will accept me for it but something which I do in response to what he has done for me it is my privilege my loving respect for him that brings me to see that these commandments are things which I must have my life framed around because

I fear him I respect him I live in admiration and loving awe of him and therefore it is my privilege not just my duty to do these things or not to do these things and then he says those who take refuge in you the second description there now David of course often made his literal circumstances like in fact in the psalm an image of the spiritual reality that's meant when he says God is my refuge he found refuge in caves at times he found refuge at times with friends when people were after him and seeking to take his life and of course he translated that into these wonderful psalms where he saw these things as an image of God's protective care God is my refuge spiritual refuge and it's important that we begin again by saying that God provides refuge for us we haven't deserved it we don't create it we don't bring it about but we do have to make it our own our refuge as it is in Christ especially how do we enter it what is the door into our being inside the refuge that God is that the salvation of God is that Jesus is for us well you have it here those who take refuge in you are the same as those who trust in you you trust in God you commit your life into his hands you trust him to take care of every aspect of it you trust him for time and eternity that's trust and it's an aspect of faith

Psalms 62 for example has the same sort of idea where trust and refuge are actually mentioned together verse 8 their trust in him at all times oh people God is a refuge refuge for us refuge trust to go together and that's how we enter that refuge that God himself is Isaiah 26 has the same idea where the song of celebration is we have a strong city he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks you keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because it is in you he trusts trust in the Lord forever for the Lord is an everlasting rock see there's the refuge the sure foundation and the trust by which you come into possession of it which you come to know its benefits for you these are the people for whom the goodness of God is laid up who can say of themselves it's a stored up goodness it's been wrought for me it's abundant those who fear the

Lord those who have made him their refuge has that been your own experience is that your experience today and mine do we know God as our refuge not asking do we know about him as our refuge do we know him as my refuge your personal refuge is your life secured is it within the security that God provides have you made by trusting in him this refuge this goodness your own how abundant is that goodness salvation and all you need to have it all you need to do all I need to do is trust in him give your life into his hands let's pray we bless you oh Lord today for the readiness with which you provided such an abundant salvation for us we ask that you would make us today conscious of our need of that salvation of our need of that goodness being ours by faith and trust in you and of how we must celebrate the fact that that goodness is stored up and will be so for eternity for all who come to trust in you and those who fear you

[33 : 34] Lord increase our trust and our fear help us in all situations to respect you and to admire all that you are we pray these things oh Lord seeking cleansing from all our sins for Jesus sake Amen thank you amen thank you for Allah thank you and to bless you and toissom to nuestrasun horas oui that are you you oh and hoe olu ■ porte the bien you are mis ■ muj