

# **Praise for Divine Goodness**

by E.W. Bullinger

"Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men" (Psalm 107:3).

This sacred exclamation, this devout desire is repeated four times in this Psalm. It seems as though, when God had heard the cry of His people and had delivered them, they failed to glorify Him for it. Like their forefathers they were a faithless and thankless generation. This lack of gratitude seems stamped on human nature. Hence when the Lord had healed ten lepers of their despised, loathsome and incurable disease, only one came back to give God thanks: out of the ten, only one cried out, "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness." May we learn this lesson ourselves. May our hearts be roused to thankfulness, that we may be uplifted by the spirit of our text to give thanks to His name for His wonderful works to the children of men. God's people are here regarded as crying to Him in their trouble, when in the hand of the enemy, when hungry and thirsty, when their soul fainted within them, when exceedingly depressed, when wandering in the wilderness, but when the time of deliverance came, their praise was silent. There was need for the exclamation of the text, "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness... Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy."

## Two subjects of praise

There seem to be two subjects of praise here; the goodness of God, and His wonderful works, and both these are blessed subjects of meditation, as well as of praise. We are not sufficiently accustomed to dwell on God's attribute of goodness. Sometimes we dwell on God's mercy, and love, and holiness, but our text invites us to contemplate this glorious declaration, His goodness. In all that He has revealed of Himself in His Word what else can we discover? Yes, even in His judgments on sinners we can see it; for if He be not able to manifest His abhorrence of sin, where is His goodness in having mercy on sinners?

He will not overlook sin, "He will by no means clear the guilty," then how good is He in providing a surety for sinners and a saviour for the lost, and an atonement for the guilty. He will not overlook sin in His people; this Psalm is a witness of how He brought trouble on them, and chastened them sore, brought them low and afflicted them. Was this goodness? Yes, for if He had not thus visited them they would have gone on from iniquity to iniquity, and have never cried out for mercy. So would you, so would I. Oh, what goodness there is in thus bringing us back from our wanderings, our rebellion, our ingratitude and our departure from God!

Note David's words, "Thou Lord hast made me glad through Thy work " (Psalm 92:4). "Thy work," not "my work." This will indeed make us glad and ready to praise the Lord. That is why he says in the last verse of our Psalm, "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." See the work of God in Hannah after her prayer! She went home with her countenance no more sad, but with a blessed song in her mouth. See the work of God with Naomi, she went out contrary to faith in God. Though chastened sore she was not given over to death. God loved her the same in Moab as in Judah, and He made her glad through His work. In one Psalm

David says, "I am shut up, I cannot get forth" but in another "Bring my soul out of prison." Why? "That I may run after the vanities of the world? No! "That I may praise Thy name." This is the burden of this Psalm (verses 6, 13, 19, 28). And so, whether we look at the Lord's power, omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, compassion, or faithfulness, we find the goodness of God exhibited in all. If His mercy were exercised at the expense of His justice, His faithfulness would be violated, His truth would be broken. But God is good in all the perfection of His nature, and in all His attributes.

### God's purposes

We specially behold His goodness in His purposes. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all Thy pleasure." Just think for a moment of these purposes:

(1). He purposes to have a family as His own distinct from the world, distinct from angels, and to make them partakers of the Divine life. Was there not goodness in this? The whole posterity of Adam had perished but for the goodness of this purpose.

(2). Moreover He purposed to adopt them as sons, to give them into the hands of a Surety under solemn responsibilities. He purposed that this Surety should deliver them from the guilt of sin, from the dominion of sin, and from the power of Satan, and to be "zealous of good works." Oh, the goodness of this wonderful purpose!

Man can speak about the goodness of God in creation, how His sun shines on the evil and the good, how His showers descend on the just and the unjust, how He giveth food to all flesh, and the fruits of the earth in due season. All has been His own doing, and it excites our wonder! Others can speak of His goodness in providence, how He has protected righteous kings, delivered them from their enemies, and caused the winds to blow and change for this purpose. But only those who know His goodness as displayed to His living Church can

really enter into the words of our text and say "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men."

You may view it as "putting down the mighty from their seat, and exalting the humble and meek." You may view it as overturning empires and kings; there is goodness in all this, but it pales before that which is connected with the salvation in Christ Jesus. All the purposes of redemption, satisfaction, substitution, all the purposes of operation upon sinners' hearts in their calling, justification, sanctification, preservation and glorification, all were purposed in the goodness of God, and therefore cannot fail. You could not talk about goodness if all these things were matters of chance and might all fail. If all were left to the caprice of man, and the decision of carnal worms of the earth. But when we see all that pertains to the salvation of a sinner as settled and secured in the eternal purpose of God, then we exclaim, "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

### Goodness in the Saviour

Then look at it as displayed in the Saviour Himself. All is goodness here. Had all this purpose to save and pardon been left to the individual transactions of carnal men, to the efforts of mortals all must have been a failure! But when we look at this eternal purpose, anointing, ordaining, appointing, providing, giving, sending a Saviour in the person of Christ, constituting Him as the Covenant Head, making Him "head over all things to His Church," constituting every individual believer a member of His Body, trusting them all to His care so that He should not lose one even in death, numbering them every one into His hand, then we see the goodness of God who purposed all this in Christ. Then we see the goodness of our precious, glorious Saviour in accomplishing all that he undertook. "Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God, yea,

Thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:7,8). Oh, what goodness! "Lo, I come" equal with the Father, sharing the eternal glory. He looked down as it were and saw the fallen, apostate race, the devil leading them captive, and He undertakes to rescue His own sheep. He saw the depravity of man's heart, and He undertook to subdue its enmity, conquer its rebellion and fit His arrows sharp and fast in men's consciences. Was not this goodness? Then it is not as if He left them alone! If so, they would have destroyed themselves every one.

### God's goodness to the Church

We pass over the goodness of His earthly life and sufferings and death, all was goodness in the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep, but let us turn our thoughts to Him now. Ascended up again to the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession for us, not tired of His work, not leaving us ever, when He has bestowed upon us the spirit of prayer -- no, for we use His name and plead His merits and He intercedes and prays for us Himself. Oh, what goodness! And while our souls are overwhelmed with it, hear him saying, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me; for Thou lovedest Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

And not only individually, but collectively we see this goodness to His Church. The members thereof could not exist a day without His own preservation. They must be ruined by their own depravity. The devil would destroy them if it were possible, but Christ preserves them; their preservation is in Christ Jesus. So with the increase of His Church. The Lord is the great Worker, and whilst He works, there is no rebel so proud, no enemy so stout, no infidel so bold, no sinner so vile, but Christ can conquer him and His goodness can lead him to repentance.

## God's goodness in His gift

Then mark the goodness of God in the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is now the Doer of those wonderful works to the children of men. What a wonderful work when He creates in a depraved heart a capacity for the enjoyment of God. When He makes the dead to hear the voice of the Son of God, and gives him life to praise God. It is this that makes all the difference between carnal men and spiritual men, between the world and the Church of God, between believers and the ungodly. No one can enjoy God but living souls, those into whom the Spirit of God has breathed the breath of life, and who have become "living souls" in this new creation. Apart from this the duties of religion (so-called) are an irksome task, but with it they are real Christianity, the soul's meat and drink. Then His wonderful works are manifested in His comforts, His consolations, His implanting of graces, fulfilling of promises, providing strength equal for the day, and taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to His people. It was the contemplation of all this that established the confidence of St. Paul: "Being confident of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it into the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

Where this goodness is realized, and these wonderful works experienced the praise will be real. It will not be the repetition of prayers, it will not be mere sounds of harmonies correctly sung, it will not consist merely in a bright service, a pretty tune and appropriate words, but these precious truths will be the experimental expression of the heart. Oh that men -- ! What men? Find the answer in verse 2. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." No other men can say so. Say what? "Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever (verse 1). Because the Lord hath forgiven their iniquity, redeemed them from the hand of the enemy, from the

curse of the law, from the power of Satan, from the thralldom of sin; because He hath redeemed them with His precious blood.

Are there any who disobey the exhortation of this Psalm, and have never praised God for His great salvation? Man can glorify man, glorify himself, glory in his possessions, his acquirements, but forget to glorify God. Let us rather be of the number of those who cry with the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."