

JULY 5, 2020

LESSON 5

# CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

## GOD DOES GOOD (ACTS 10:38)

In his sermon to Cornelius and his household, Peter made this statement about Jesus: “He went about *doing good*” (Acts 10:38). Whatever Jesus did for people, it benefited them, including acts of healing or teaching. As we strive to imitate him, we too must do good to others.

So then, as we have opportunity, let us **do good** to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal 6:10).

Do not neglect to **do good** and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God (Heb 13:16).

But what exactly does it mean to “do good”?

### How to “Do Good” (Matt 19:16–21)

Do you remember Jesus’ initial response to the rich young ruler?

“No one is good but God alone” (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19).

“There is only one who is good” (Matt 19:16).

Of course, Jesus wasn’t suggesting that he himself *wasn’t* good. He was, after all, sinlessly perfect (cf. 2 Cor 5:21). When Jesus says that God alone is good, he means that only God is perfect in every way, especially in regard to his blessings (see Matt 19:21). In this passage, the rich young ruler failed to live up to the goodness of God when he refused to sell all he had and give it to the poor (Matt 19:22). As expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, our acts of mercy must exceed expectations (Matt 5:20, 48), not merely meet the minimum requirement.

God “does good” to everyone. He demonstrates his goodness in so many ways—and not just to those who “deserve” it.

- In creation, God made everything perfect (Gen 1:4, 31; 1 Tim 4:4).
- His gifts are perfect and generous (James 1:17).
- He “sends rains on the just and on the unjust” (Matt 5:45), demonstrating his perfection (Matt 5:48).
- He wants us to be happy, despite our own sinfulness (Jer 29:10).
- We can confidently rely upon God’s goodness (Ps 23:6; Phil 1:6).

### 1 Timothy 4:4–5

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

### **Ephesians 2:10**

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

When the rich young ruler asked about good deeds, Jesus listed the last six of the Ten Commandments (Matt 19:16, 18–19). The young man responded by saying, “All these I have kept.” *But had he really?* Jesus knew he really hadn’t; and that’s why this rich young man was challenged to part ways with his treasure and do some real good with it. Unfortunately, the young man refused (Matt 19:21–22). Just as Jesus knew this young man’s heart (cf. Mark 10:21), he knows our hearts, too.

Because we have clothed ourselves with Jesus in baptism, we have committed ourselves to a life of good works. You see, Christians have been “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph 2:10). When we serve others, we are simply fulfilling God’s intentions for our lives.

### **Membership Has Its Benefits**

While it is certainly true that God provides wonderful gifts and blessings to all people, we, his covenant people, are the recipients of special blessings. God “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:3). These spiritual blessings certainly include forgiveness, the privilege of prayer, the peace of God in our hearts, and many others.

We share in these blessings because we have eradicated sin from our hearts. When we live for Christ, we “[taste] that the Lord is good” (1 Pet 2:1–3; Ps 34:8). Only after removing the “bad taste” of sin can we appreciate the sweetness of God’s spiritual blessings.

### **The Right Motivation**

Sometimes people help others because they hope their charity will be reciprocated. Imagine if we sought out people who can’t possibly pay us back for our kindness (Luke 14:12–14). That’s exactly what God did for us when he forgave us of our debt of sin. He didn’t have to save us. But he did it out a deep love for his creation (Rom 5:8).

Have you ever seen someone who need financial help, and you gave it to them anonymously? Maybe you’ve even been the recipient of such a gift. Jesus said that, when we are doing our good deeds, “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret” (Matt 6:3–4a). The reason why is because “Your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you” (Matt 6:4).

And so, the same blessing that is given in secret without selfish motives can be given by someone else who is only motivated by a desire for the accolades of others. In other words, it’s not so much the gift that’s important, but the attitude of heart with which it is given.

What are some “random acts of kindness” you could do this week? To whom will you give your selfless gifts? Make a list, pray over it, and plan it out. God will bless you for your kindness in his time and in his way.