

Attributes of God (Series 1): God's Goodness

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God's goodness, which is infinite, perfect, and the reason for existence, salvation, forgiveness, and answered prayer.

Duration: 49:31

Scripture: Psalm 19:1, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 36:7, Psalm 119:68, Psalm 139:17, Isaiah 63:7, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Attributes of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that all the attributes of God are different aspects of one God in three persons. He encourages the listeners to think right and align their thoughts with the truth of God's nature. The preacher also discusses the wonders of God's creation and contrasts it with the limitations of human inventions. He highlights the power of God's word in upholding and sustaining the universe. Additionally, the preacher emphasizes that God desires His people to find joy and pleasure in Him, and He came to heal and restore all the brokenness and pain in our lives.

Transcript

I want to talk on God's goodness as it relates to us, his redeemed people. Let me read some verses, just almost at random. I've jotted them down here, not quite at random, almost.

Psalm 119, 68, Thou art good and doest good. Isaiah 63, 7, I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercy, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses. And then, how precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them! For the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy father.

Psalm 36, 7, How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust unto the shadow of thy wing. Psalm 34, O taste and see that the Lord is good. And remember now, in no instance here is he talking about morality.

This is not saying God is holy, though God is holy, infinitely so. This is something else. Then Jesus said, If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask? The Father gives good gifts to his children out of his good heart, and how much more will the Father? So tonight I speak about God's goodness, and I have over 30 years here spoken twice before on the subject, always dealing and treating it differently.

But now it is most important that we know this about God. It is most important that we know what kind of God God is. What is God like? It is the question that must be answered if we are going to be any kind of Christians at all.

What is God like? What kind of God is God? Now, don't take that for granted and say, I already know. No, you don't. And don't say, Well, we Christians know.

Let me remind you, my friend, that no tribe or nation has ever risen above its religion. There are those that say religion is something graft on a man, and that it is the result of man's weakness or superstition or something else. But let me tell you that history will show that no tribe or nation has ever risen morally above its religion.

If it had a debased religion, it was a debased people. And if it was anything but a debased people, you will find its religion, though not Christianity nor Judaism, nevertheless was relatively high in the scale of non-revealed religions. And remember that no religion has ever risen above its conception of God.

Remember that, that no religion anywhere has ever risen above its conception of God. If they even believe that God is a tricky, sulky, nasty, deceitful God, their religion will build itself around that concept. And they will try to be sneaky with God and act the way God acts.

If they believe, on the other hand, that God is one God, that he is a high and pure and noble God, 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. But that would be something what I've said up to now for the students, for students to think about. But we all ought to remember this, that Christianity at any given time, Christianity at any given time is strong or weak depending upon her concept of God.

And I insist upon this, and I've said it many times, I insist upon it that the basic trouble with the church today is her unworthy conception of God. Now, that is at the bottom of it. I talk with learned men and spiritual men and evangelists and godly people all over the country, and they're all saying the same thing, or at least agreeing to it, when I say that the trouble with the church is that our conception of God has been greatly lowered.

The heathens say, take your cowboy God and go home. And we get angry and say, oh, they're vile heathens. No, they're not vile heathens.

They may be vile heathens, but that's not why they say that. They can't respect our cowboy God. And since evangelicalism has gone overboard to cowboy religion, and where it hasn't even, its conception of God is unworthy of him.

And the result is that 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.

I mean by that that we do not see him as he is. The psalmist said, oh, magnify the Lord. Now, magnify may mean one of two things.

Magnify may mean make it look bigger than it is, or it may mean see it as big as it is. And that's what magnify means as the psalmist used it. If you want to examine, say, a very small amount of matter, you put it under a microscope and you magnify it.

That is, you make it look bigger than it is. But it's impossible to make God look bigger than he is. When we say magnify the Lord, we mean try to see God somewhere nearly as big as he is.

And this is what I want to do in my preaching. This is what by his help I've dedicated myself to do. If I preach to many or few, and I could if I wanted to do it, preach to many.

That is, they do come here and there in conferences and other places where men go, and I'd be no different. But I choose deliberately, I want to instruct the people. Now, this church will only be as great as its conception of God, and you as an individual Christian will be successful or a failure depending upon what you think of God.

So you see, my friends, it's critically important that we have a knowledge of the Holy One. It's critically important that we know what kind of God God is and what God is like. And of course, we can know from the scriptures.

That's where we go to get our information. Not all of it. We can know from nature too.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork. But while the pen of nature writes rather without too much clearness, the word of God is very, very clear. And I shall be preaching, as I preached in my previous sermons, also out of the word of God.

Now, it is very important that we know that God is good. It is critically important that we know this. And when we read here that God is good and doeth good and that his lovingkindness is over all his works and all of these passages of scripture, if you want to do it, you take your say concordance, if you've got a good one, and run down the word good or the word lovingkindness or such passages, such words as that, and see how much it has to say about it in the Old Testament as well as the New, that God is kindhearted.

Now, let's get this straight. God is kindhearted and God is gracious and God is good natured and that God is benevolent in intention. The intention of God is benevolent.

And let us remember that God is cordial. And you'll find that now in the Hebrew, you'll find that the cordiality of the great God. You know, we only think we believe, really.

We only think we're believers. We are, in a sense, and I trust we are 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, that they're benevolent, 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, that God is good, that God is kindhearted, that he is amiable, that he is cordial and gracious and of benevolent intention, all this he is infinitely. Now, why do I say that? Because infinitude is an attribute of God.

And it's impossible for God to be anything and not be completely infinitely what he is. It's possible for the sun to be bright, but not infinitely bright. It doesn't have all the light there is.

It's possible for the mountain to be large, but not infinitely large. It's possible for, say, an angel to be good, but not infinitely good. Only God can claim infinitude.

So when I say that God is good, that God has a kind heart, I mean he has a heart infinitely kind, that there's no boundary to it and no limit to it anywhere. When I say that God is good nature, that he is good

and kindly of nature, I mean that he's infinitely so. And not only infinitely, but there is another attribute, and I haven't preached on this one yet.

I've been putting it off like a task that you want to do and you're afraid to tackle, that sometime I'm going to jump in and have to get out and announce that I'm going to preach on the perfection of God. My friend, that angel's spoons rush in where angels fear to tread. And for a man to talk about the perfection of God is to rise on poor, weak wings.

My wings aren't very long, but I can flatten fast and see if I can't get off the ground and see what we can say about the perfection of God. But remember this, that anything God is, is perfect. God is never partway anything.

He's always completely something, or else he isn't that thing. And when I say that God is kind-hearted, I mean that he is that perfectly. I do not mean that there are ever times when God isn't feeling good and that he isn't kind.

There are never any times when God won't be cordial. Why, even the best Christian doesn't always feel cordial. The best Christian feels sometimes he didn't sleep well and he's not mad and he's living like a Christian, but he doesn't feel like talking in the morning, 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. And then I joyously announce to you that what God is, he is immutably. Which means, and I preached on that attribute way back there, I mean that God never changes.

But what God was, God is. And what God is and was, God will be. And there will never be any change in God.

Then I want to add this, and I want you to take this home. Remember that usually you're going to hear what I'm preaching tonight, so don't say this man, this man is a heretic. Don't say that.

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 and see that these things are true, then that's all I ask.

I don't ask you to listen to me and take for granted what I have said as being true. You know, there are preachers that if they just clear your throat, he just clears his throat, the audience will believe it. He doesn't have to say anything, all he has to do is just make a noise.

But I don't want to be like that, and I don't want you to be that kind of people, and I don't think you are. And remember that God is enthusiastic about his works. I said last week, and I repeat now, God is not an absentee engineer running his world by remote control.

They send a rocket up from Cape Canaveral and they guide it by remote control. And if it isn't doing what it should, they blow it up so it won't hurt somebody. But God never stays off and does his work by remote control.

The scripture says that he upholds everything by the word of his power. The presence of the invisible word in the universe makes things run. That's what makes them tick, you know.

That's what makes them tick. I heard a talk last night, I listen to it every Saturday night. It's about my bedtime Saturday night, but I won't tell you what time it is, because I don't want you to know how early I go to bed Saturday night.

But this professor gave a talk on space, and he said that there were, he believed there were some of them out in space. He's a professor from one of the universities, so he's no ordinary chap. He said that, how could we get to the farthest star? Well, he said, there are huge rockets that are going to be made, a mile long and so big, so broad, that it would be over several blocks.

And that they're going to fix it so that you can live in it for several generations. And this generation can start to get their kind and raise a family right in that rocket while it's moving at terrific speed toward the farthest star somewhere. And that after the passing of several generations, say 10 generations, the 10th generation will arrive on a star.

Well, in the meantime then, they're guiding it. It was said that I heard on the radio where there's a way they have now of getting energy from the sun. Certain fins stick up, and when the sun hits it, it makes it run.

And then if you pull the fin down, it puts the brakes on. Well, they're thinking of running things by remote control, but God never runs anything by remote control, never. There are not a half a dozen pulleys and chains.

God is the perfect creator, and he runs everything by being present in his works. Now, that's the Old Testament teaching. That's all through the prophets and the psalms and the book of Job, all through the Old Testament.

When we hit the age of science, we forgot that. And we have laws now. The Bible knew nothing about the laws of nature.

The Bible knew only God was there. If it rained, it was God watering his hills out of his chambers. If it lightened, it was God, and if it thundered, it was the voice of the Almighty that made the God was always there, and they were acutely God-conscious.

So they were never lonely because God was there. God was in this place, and I knew it not, said the man Jacob, from whom Israel got their name. And 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 design. Now, you say that I haven't felt that way about it. Well, 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. Now, I'd like to point out to you this, that God can't feel indifferent about anything.

People are indifferent, but God isn't indifferent. God either loves with a boundless, unremitting energy, or else he hates with consuming fire. It was said about the second person of the Trinity, Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.

Therefore God thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. The same Lord Jesus that loved with boundless consuming love, also hated with terrible consuming fire, and will continue to do that while the ages roll, because God is God, and the goodness of God requires that God cannot

love sin. Now, the goodness of God is the only valid *raison d'etre*.

You know, that's not good French, but at least I don't know anything in English equivalent to it. The reason for existence, the reason, the explanation for things, the reason underlying things. And the goodness of God is the only reason for it.

Don't you imagine that you deserve to be born, and don't you imagine that you deserve to be alive? You know, the unbelieving poet said, Into this universe, and why not knowing? Nor whence, like water willy-nilly flowing, and out of it, like wind along the waist, whither I know not, willy-nilly blowing. And then he charged God with it all, and said, For all that I've done that's wrong, O God, forgive, and take my forgiveness. That was Omar Khayyam.

Well, he thought God owed him something. But remember this, sir, that you can answer every question, every question with this expression, God of his goodness willed it. God out of his kindness willed it.

Why were we created? Was it that we deserve to be created? How can nothing deserve something? And there was a time when there was no human race. How, therefore, could a human race that hadn't existed deserve something? How could a man that wasn't yet created earn anything, or pile up any merit? It couldn't be so. God out of his goodness created us.

And why, when we sinned, were we not destroyed? The only answer to that is, God of his goodness spared us. God out of his kind heart spared us. The cordial, kind intention of God spared us.

And why would God the Eternal Son bleed for us? The answer is, out of his goodness. It was the goodness of God, the loving kindness of God, therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wing. It is the multitude of his loving kindnesses.

That's the answer. And why will God forgive me when I've sinned, and forgive me again, and forgive me again? Because God out of his goodness acts according to that goodness, and does for his loving heart dictate that he do. And why does God answer prayer? Let's not imagine that it's because somebody was good.

You know, we Protestants think we don't believe in saints. We believe in saints, all right. We don't canonize them 25 years after they're dead, but we put an ST behind them, which could mean street or saint.

We don't do that, but we do canonize them. And we have Saint George Mueller, and we have Saint Spurgeon, and we have Saint Moody, and we have Saint Simpson. We have Protestant saints, and we get the idea that God answered prayer for them because they were real good.

Well, they would deny that fervently if they were here. Every one of them would deny it. Nobody ever got anything yet from God on the grounds that he deserved it.

Remember that. Nobody deserves anything to start with, and then having fallen, he deserves only punishment and death. So if God answers prayer, it's because God is good.

And the answer is God of his goodness thought of it. God of his goodness, out of his lovingkindness, his good-natured benevolence, God does it. So remember that's the source of everything.

Now, I'd like to throw this in, and I'd like to tell you that those are the only grounds upon which anybody has ever been saved since the beginning of the world. There is an idea abroad that in the Old Testament, men were saved by law. In the New Testament, we are saved by grace.

That is all wrong. The idea that in the Old Testament, men were saved by keeping commandments. In the New Testament, they are saved by believing on Christ.

The second is right, but the first is wrong. Nobody has ever been saved from the day that Abel offered his bloody lamb on a homemade stone altar down to the latest convert made tonight. No one has ever been saved except out of the goodness of God, out of God's grace, his mercy, his lovingkindness.

Because God was good and gracious and cordial and approachable and kindly, he saved people. It was all by grace. Don't forget that.

We've taken the word grace and made a technical word out of it, and it's become technical. We draw the vision between grace and law and say grace saves us now, they were saved by keeping law. Nobody was ever saved by keeping anything, because we deserved hell.

And if God had acted according to justice alone, he simply would have pulled the stopper out and flashed us all down to hell and been done with it. But God, out of his lovingkindness, graciously forgave those who would come according to the conditions which God laid down, so that everybody is saved by grace. Abel was saved by grace, Noah was saved by grace, and Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Remember that? Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and Moses and all the rest, down to the coming of Jesus and his dying on the cross, all were saved by grace out of the goodness of God. And everybody has been saved by grace out of the goodness of God ever since, if he had been saved. Now, you say, but let's not become too seraphy here, let's not drown in seraph, because good God is severe.

Yes, Romans 11 tells us about the severity of God. It says, Behold the goodness and severity of God. And it says that God, because Israel turned away from God, God was severe with Israel and temporarily broke her off from the good olive tree, and that he grafted in the Gentiles instead.

So, behold the goodness and severity of God. Remember that God is good toward all that accept his goodness. And those who will not accept his goodness by rejecting his goodness, then there's nothing that God, even the Almighty God, can do if he is going to allow man his free will.

And I believe in free will. Don't imagine I don't. I believe in man's free will.

That was given to God as a gift of God's sovereignty. So he's given a little provisional sovereignty to us out of his absolute sovereignty, and they said, now I'll allow you within a little framework to be your own boss and to choose to go to heaven or to hell. So that if a man will not take God's goodness, then he must have God's severity toward all who continue in moral revolt, in insurrection against the throne of God, and in rebellion against the virtuous laws of God.

There's nothing God can do, and so his justice disposes of all such. But we're not thinking about them tonight. We're thinking about those who have surrendered to his love.

Those who have surrendered to his love. And those who have surrendered to his love, but somebody says, but what about it, Mr. Tozer? God being holy as well as good, and being righteous as well as kindly,

what, and we being sinners as we are, aren't we before laws, and must we not perish? Is it not moral logic that we should perish? Well, let me quote from the little book I told you that I would be quoting from a little. It says, God of his goodness has ordained means to help us full, fair, and many.

Written 600 years ago in the old-fashioned English. God has ordained means full, fair, and many. Means to help us, and the chief being that which he took upon him, the nature of man, and in coming as a man became where we were, and coming where we were, he understands us by sympathy and empathy.

I don't want to get off into psychological terms, but sympathy is a good old-fashioned country word. By sympathy, where we use the same word as k-pop, means feeling or suffering often, and sym is the same as our word symphony, so that sympathy then is God feeling and suffering along with us. Empathy, of course, is a bit different.

It means the ability to project yourself into somebody else and feel as they feel. The wonderful thing, and every old grandmother on any old farm in Tennessee knows what that means, but it took a good scientist to give it a name. Let me read it for you from the Bible in biblical language instead of in the language of psychology.

Hebrews 2 and Hebrews 4. Wherefore, in all things it behooved him, that is, when he took on him the seat of Abraham, in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of his people, the people, for in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. And then in Hebrews 4, for we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmity, but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

There is sympathy and empathy. There is not only a feeling along with us in our wretchedness, but there is an ability to project himself into us so he knows how we feel and can feel with us. There is good theology.

Now, God's of his goodness has ordained means both fair and many, and that is all of God's goodness, remember. Sometimes we talk about, some day I'll preach on the justice, some night I'll preach on the justice of God, and I want to feel my own thunder just long enough to say one thing. We say sometimes the justice of God requires him to do so and so.

Never use that language, even if you hear me using it. Don't use it anyhow, because it never should thus be spoken. There is never anything that requires God to do anything.

Always remember that God does what he does because of what he is, and there is not something standing outside of him requiring him to do something. He does what he does out of his own heart, and God being just, acts justly. Let's not say justice requires him, forces him, compels him.

Let's not say mercy compels God, as though mercy was outside of God and came over to God and said, Now, God, you listen to me. You forgive that bum, he's on his knees there in Pacific Garden Mission, and he's got a New Testament there and he's weeping and he wants to be saved. You forgive him because I require it of you.

No, no. Mercy is not something that stands outside of God and tells God what to do. Mercy is God.

You see, all the attributes of God are simply facets of one God in three persons. Is that clear or is that muddy? I hope it's clear, because it'll help you to think right. If you think right, you tend to be right.

Not necessarily so, but at least it'll help you. Lecture 11 Justification and Sanctification 3 Well, what is this, then? What are these fearful many means that God has made for his people? Why, the precious amends that he's made for man's sins, turning all our blame into endless worship, turning all our blame. Sometimes I say things to God in prayer so terribly bold, almost arrogant, and I've never been rebuked by God yet, never been rebuked.

They said about Luther, I'm certainly not drawing any comparison. I'd have been glad to have cleaned his shoes and carried them and put them at his bedroom door. But they said of Luther that when they heard him pray, it was an experience in theology, that when he began to pray, he prayed with such self-abnegation, such humility, such repentance that you pitied him.

But as he prayed on, he prayed with such boldness that you feared for him. And I've sometimes in my private prayers gone to God with thoughts that I hesitate to mention, but I'm going to mention this one. Only this last Friday I said this to God in prayer.

I'm glad I sinned, God. I'm glad I sinned, for thou didst come to save sinners, and I've got lots of good people. There are a lot of good people.

I'm not a good man. I'm a girl. You have to use slang to describe me by nature.

I come that way. When I saw it in my boys, I didn't blame them. I appalled them, but I didn't blame them.

And when I see it now in my grandchildren, I don't blame them. There's something miserably nasty about the Tozers and the Jacksons. They married up, and I got here, through the Tozers and the Jacksons.

My father's name was Jacob S. Tozer, and my mother's name was Prudence Jackson. They married, and she had six caustic, sharp tongue abuses. All but one.

He's a nice guy. He lives down in Florida. He never hurt anybody, but the rest of us all had sharp tongues.

So I haven't anything. I can't go to God and say, God, I didn't do what that fellow did. I've done everything either in actuality or in thought that could be done.

The devil himself couldn't have thought of anything that I haven't thought of in my lifetime. So I was praying to God about it, and I said, oh God, these good men, these good men. And I began naming good men, these good men.

I can name them around here, good men. And compared with me, they're good men. But I said, God, they can't love you as much as I do, for he that is forgiven much, he loves much.

And the more God has pardoned, and the farther up he's brought us from the deeper depths, the more we'll glorify him in that day. The doctor that saves a man who only has a runny nose, he wouldn't write a book about that, or a tract. He didn't do much, after all.

The fellow would have waited out three days and taken an aspirin. He'd have got well anyhow. But the doctor who takes a man with a tumor on the brain, or with a heart with a spike in it, and puts that man asleep, and with great care and prayer and skill brings that man back to life, he has some reason to be

proud of his ability, I suppose, as a human being.

So there's some use in life when God saves you, but not too much. But when he saved me, oh, grace divine, how sweet thou art! How sweet thou art that can save a wretch like me! Well, the precious amends that he made in turning all our blame into endless worship. You know what I think? I think that the Bible teaches, I think our Lord hinted at it, and I think Paul developed it further, that the day will be when they'll gather around us from I'm very outer space, I don't know, but at least from the identifiable heavens of the Bible, they'll gather around us everywhere and say, Behold the marvels of God! I remember reading, and you read it in the book of Acts, seeing the man that was healed standing among them.

They could say nothing. And seeing that wicked sinner, that wicked sinner standing there, what can we say? We can only say worthy is the lamb that was slain and worthy is the goodness of God that out of his infinite kindness, his unchanging, perfect, loving kindness, made the amends for us full of fair and many, turning all our sins into endless worship. My brethren, Jesus is God, and Jesus is the kindest man.

Notice I don't say was, never say was about Jesus, except when you're speaking of a historical act which is now over. Jesus was by the well, Jesus was in the manger, Jesus was in the carpenter's shop. You can put the past tense or the past perfect wherever you want to when it's a historic fact that Jesus has accomplished.

But if you're talking about what he is, never say was, for what he was, he is, and what he is, he ever will be. And Jesus is the kindest man ever to draw breath in this world, the kindest man ever to live on this earth. Kindness, you know, is something that we must have a bit of it.

It must be a reflection, a lingering flavor, like an old broken vase that once had beautiful flowers in it. And the vase is broken, but the scent of the roses hangs around the vase so mankind, fallen like a broken vase, dashed to the pavement and splintered into a million pieces, yet has something we call kindness. I remember reading, and I suppose one of the kindest men in America was Lincoln.

When Lincoln visited the hospital, here lay a young soldier, a young soldier, a young officer, so badly wounded that it was obvious that he was going to die. I've forgotten his name. I did know his name.

He was a northern soldier and was lying there, obviously going to die, and the nurses whispered, Mr. President, he can't make it. And the great, big, tall, homely president went into the hospital ward and walked about among the men. And then he went over to this dying, dying young officer, who was bled white and was dying, and went over and stooped down, kissed his forehead, and said, Lieutenant, you've got to get well for me.

And the nurses around said they heard a whispered word, Mr. President. He did. When the proclamation was signed and the war was over, he's one of Lincoln's boys, not his son, but one of the boys that Lincoln had brought back from the grave.

Another time they went into his office, where he sat, gazing out the window, looking out the window over the grassy sward below. He said, Mr. President, you seem very serious today. He asked, he said, today's butcher day.

They're going to shoot a lot of boys today in the army. They're sentenced to die for retreating under fire or doing something else in wartime. And he said, I don't blame those boys.

They weren't cowards. Their legs did it. Half-doomers, you know, along with his tears, said their legs are to blame.

They're not to blame. He said, I'm going over the list, and he flipped the papers. John Doe, Jim Smith, all down the line.

He said, I'm going to save every one that I can. That's why we love Lincoln, because, not because he freed the slaves and saved the youth, but we love Lincoln because he had a big heart. But my friends, his was a limit.

He had a limit. They used to say that when his wife Mary did things she shouldn't, somebody came on the White House lawn, and she was running, screaming, and the great tall president was behind her with a paddle. And they said, what's going on here? Oh, he said, she moved the bay.

Now, he could get mad, you see, and he could act otherwise and kind, but not Jesus. The kindest man ever to live in this world was Jesus. The kindest man ever to draw human breath was Jesus, is Jesus.

He is now, is now the kindest man ever to live in this world. Dickens said to a group of literary men, they were talking about papals in literature, they said, what, they were discussing books and deeply pathetic books, books that moved you to tears. Now, Arnold said, Matthew Arnold said of Burns that his poetry was so poignantly beautiful, piercingly pathetic, that it was hard sometimes to read, because it wounded you so deeply.

Well, they were talking about that literature, and somebody said, what do you consider, Mr. Dickens, to be the most, to have the most papal, the most deep feeling of all the literature that you know? Oh, he said, there's no question, the story of the prodigal son, that there's nothing like it in all. The kindest man, when I'm reading through the scriptures, and I come to that passage, and a certain man has two sons, instinctively I bow my head. Something inside of me wants to, wants to go down and do a business before the heart that could think of that, could think that stuff.

Well, I must close now in five minutes, but I'd like to say this to you, that he is not revolted by your wretchedness. He has no despite of anything that he's made, nor does he disdain the service in the simplest office that to our body belongeth. The Lord would be your nurse, your caretaker, and your helper, and he's not revolted by anything about you.

He wills that you joy along with him. The everlasting marvel, and the high overpassing love of God, the irresistible love of God out of his goodness, sees you perfectly. Even though you're not perfect, he sees you perfect, rather than perfect.

And he wants us to be glad in him. Now, I'd like to drive this home, as I might be able, occasionally, night after night. I want you to get it that God wants you to be glad in him.

He takes no pleasure in human tears, and he came and wept that he might stop up forever the fountain of human tears. He came and bereaved his mother that he might heal all bereavement. He came and lost everything that he might heal the wounds that we have from losing things.

And he wants us to take pleasure in him. Now, let us put away our doubts and trust him. There's a gentleman, a friend of mine, who's only been converted a year and a half, and he's 48 years old.

And he's one of the most zealous men that I know, one of the most zealous men. He's learning fast. Oh, he's learning fast.

He follows me around. When he hears that I'm in a town in the east, he brings his tape recorder and comes over. He's done that several times.

And he was in Pittsburgh. He came up to my hotel room. He's only been saved a year and a half.

He has a fine son, about 25, who is going to the mission. I said to him as he was leaving my hotel room, I want to say something to you, and it will take you at least five years to understand it. But I said, Don't be shocked by it.

Don't be shocked by what I'm telling you. You've only been saved a year and a half. But hear this, that God wants to please you, and that he is pleased when you are pleased.

You're his child. You're surrendered. Your will is his will, and his will is your will.

You're not in rebellion. You're not seeking your own will. You want to do the will of God.

Granted that truth, now let me tell you, he wants to please you. God loves to please his people. Did you ever see a mother or a father bringing gifts to their children? Did you ever see the lover bringing gifts to the bride? He wants to please the people he loves and the people that love him.

The idea that God must always make you miserable is not a biblical idea at all. Jesus Christ knew God, and he suffered from the irritations and persecutions of the world, and the bitterness of their polluted hearts. They made it hard for him.

But as far as God was concerned, he was pleased with God, and God was pleased with him. This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

God can say that now to his people, my brethren. So remember that God isn't pleased by your being miserable. He'll make you miserable if you won't obey.

But if you are surrendered and obedient, the goodness of God has so rocked through Jesus Christ that now he wants to please you, and he wants to answer your prayers so you will be happy in him. He wants to do that. Let's put away all doubts and custom.

I've got this little book. Gerhard Terstegen. That song, *Midst the darkness, storm and sorrow, one bright gleam I see*.

Well, I know that blessed tomorrow Christ will come for me. And then he writes six stanzas, and the last four lines are these. He and I in that bright glory, one deep joy shall share.

Mine to be forever with him, and his that I am there. Ever stop to think about that? That God is going to be as pleased to have you there as you are to be there? The goodness and mercy of God, the loving kindness of the Lord. My friends, it is wonderful, and there is only one way to end a sermon when you are talking about that, and that's just break off and quit.

For one idea suggests another forever, as you talk about the loving kindness and tender mercies of God who loves us so much that he wants to please us, and when he can bring us into such relationship to him

that he can please us without spoiling it, he pleases us, and he's pleased when we're pleased. And when we're pleased with him, he's pleased that we're pleased. One common joy will share.

Mine that I'm forever with him, his that I am there. Thank God. Thank God.

We've been a very quiet crowd tonight, but I trust you've heard what I've had to say. Take it home with you. Brutal.

Dream it. Think it. Pray it.

And let us praise the loving kindness of God forever, for of his goodness there is no end. Amen.

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