

The Compelling Character of God's Nature, Works, Servant and Word

"Thou art good and doest good; Teach me Thy statutes."

Psalm 119:68 NASB

Dear Christian, meditate on this verse and it will lift your mind to the heights of heaven. Cling to its precious truths regarding God's character until you see the world and all that transpires in creation, in particular your own life, not through the valley of despair, not through the slough of despondency, not through the experiential perspectives of either pain or pleasure, but through faith. Such vision will further fit you for the ages to come.

In this verse see the:

Character of God's nature

Character of God's works

Character of God's servant

Character of God's Words

The character of God—*Thou art good*

This is an absolute statement about God. It penetrates the core of His nature as it embraces and conveys the character of every aspect of every attribute of the nature of God. No part of His being is excluded. The character of that which God has revealed concerning Himself through the revelation of Scripture as well as the character of the hidden things of His nature are disclosed in this single all encompassing statement—God is good! Consequently, there is no evil, there is no bad, there is nothing vile in God. If it were possible to explore the depths of God's being (it is not) nothing would be discovered that is not good. If somehow we could examine every element of God's essence under some kind of spiritual microscope (we can not) we would find in every element of His essence nothing but good. He derives no pleasure from wickedness and no evil dwells with Him (Psalm 5:4).

Note the text tells us that God *is* good. The ESV and updated NASB translate the verb in the present tense, "You are good..." In the Hebrew it is simply, "You good" leaving no room to perceive God in any other way than that of being good. Not only does the verse address the goodness of God's nature but it also addresses the constancy of His good nature. God did not become good. He is not becoming good. He *is* good. He has always been good and He will always be good. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. James calls Him the, "Father of lights in Whom there is no variation of shifting shadow." (1:17) The more we learn about God from His Word the more of His goodness we discover. God may seem to become better to believers as we mature in Christ but the fact is that as we mature we only realize more and more that which is already and has always been true of God. It is not God Who changes but us.

The character of God's works—*And doest good*

This second phrase is intimately tied to the former and again conveys an absolute condition. God is good and what He does is good. God's doings are good. Just as every aspect of His nature is good so is all that He does. All of God's actions are good. God does not do something good because it is good to do it but it is good because God does it.

In the Hebrew language this phrase is also in the present tense and is translated in Young's Literal Translation as "Good Thou [art] and doing good..." God is not merely at rest in heaven

waiting to act and by that action display His goodness. He is acting or in other words doing something at this very moment and yes, because God is good and all that He does is good, He is at this very moment displaying His goodness by His actions.

One might ask at this point, “What is it that God is doing at this very moment?” It is impossible to answer such a question **specifically**. To **specifically** describe absolutely everything God is doing at any given moment is infinitely beyond our ability. However, the Bible does address this question in a general sense when it tells us that God, at this very moment, is upholding all things or holding all things together by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3).

“And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...” NASB

Furthermore, the Bible tells us that He is not merely holding all things together just for the sake of holding all things together. He is holding all things together for the sake of His purpose. Scripture says that God is working all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11).

“...also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will...” NASB

Note the phrase “all things” in each of those references. Even though these three verses from the New Testament were written many centuries after the Psalm before us, the writer of this Psalm understood the truth conveyed by them very well. It seems that he summed them up when in verse 91 of this Psalm he wrote, “For all things are Thy servants.” Note again the phrase *all things*. So what is God doing at this very moment? He is holding *all things* together as He works them after the council of His will so as to accomplish His purpose and as we have seen in Psalm 119:68 this is good.

The character of God’s servant—*Teach me*

As indicated by verses 89-91 the psalmist knew that all things are in God’s hands and that all things are servants to God’s purpose. Furthermore, the Psalmist was aware of the presence of sin in his own life (vs. 11, 67, 133) and wickedness in the world (110, 113, 118), yet he did not ascribe evil to God but maintained the goodness of God and His every action as is explicitly evident from verse 68. So how does he approach what might appear to some to be a dilemma posed by the facts of God’s goodness and His complete sovereignty over creation and the presence of evil in it? The answer is in four words—“Teach me Thy statutes.”

This phrase is also intimately tied to the previous two and yet it deals with something quite different. In the former two phrases “Thou art good” and “doest good” the Psalmist acknowledged the absolute goodness of the nature of God as well as the goodness of God’s actions. Then, in the light of these (God’s goodness and the goodness of His doings) the psalmist acknowledged his own lack of knowledge. Instead of ascribing evil to God or diminishing from God’s sovereignty by ascribing sovereignty to evil, the psalmist prayed for God to teach him. By doing this he acknowledged that the quandary is not with God neither is it with creation but that the quandary actually rests in one’s own lack of understanding of God’s statutes. He saw God as

the good teacher and himself as the learner. Thus, he humbled himself before God and petitioned God to teach him.

Note in this very Psalm how the psalmist himself learned God's good use of evil as a good work of God in his own life:

“It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Thy statutes.”

Psalms 119:71 NASB

“I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me.”

Psalms 119:75 NASB

Furthermore, the psalmist recognized:

1. God's sovereign use of evil does not make God evil—He is good (Psalm 119:68)
2. God's sovereign use of evil does not negate our responsibility to pursue holiness (Ps. 119:11)
3. God's sovereign use of evil neither negates nor minimizes the believer's accountability to God (Ps. 119:75)
4. God's sovereign use of evil neither negates nor minimizes the unbeliever's accountability to God (Ps. 119:126)
5. God's sovereign use of evil does not minimize a believer's reverence for God (Ps. 119:38)
6. God's sovereign use of evil does not minimize the believer's hatred of evil (Ps. 119:128)

You too dear believer, in the light of God's sovereignty goodness and His good works, remember that God is sovereign over all that transpires in your life and be humbled before Him knowing He causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Ps. 119:68, Rm. 8:28-30).

The character of God's Words—*Thy statutes*

Furthermore, the psalmist knew the answer to the quandary rested not in reason itself but in the wisdom of God's Word. Thus, he did not invent a system to explain evil's presence in a good God's world rather; he called to God to teach him His Word, “Teach me Thy statutes.” Ten times in this Psalm the writer calls for God to teach him (vs. 12, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, and 171). In each instance it is the Word of God he requests he be taught. He knew that the Word of God effects many things in the believer. Here are a few of the things the psalmist listed which the Word of God produces in the life of the believer:

- Holiness (119:11)
- Reverence to God (119:38)
- Direction (119:105)
- Understanding (119:104, 130)
- Revival (119:107, 149, 154, 156, 159)

- Help (119:175)
- Strength (119:28)

In essence, it is apparent in this Psalm that the psalmist realized the goodness of God through the Word of God. We are living in a day and age where many in evangelical circles are turning from the Word of God. The apostle Paul warned of such an apostasy (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Others, while not out and out turning away from the Word of God, have adopted the practice of allowing others to read and explain the Word for them as opposed to themselves drinking from the source. Dear Christian, I urge you to drink from the source. Meditate on God's Word and as did the psalmist of Psalm 119, you too will come to know more fully the goodness of God.

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