

Goodness

One of my favorite and most thought of passages comes from Acts 10.

Peter was talking to a Roman officer named Cornelius.

Cornelius knew something about God, but not of Jesus.

Peter described Jesus to him in verse 38 as "one who went around the country doing good."

I can't think of a reputation that the world understands, that is more positive.

Everyone, both worldly and righteous, recognizes this as one who does kind things to help and benefit others, rather than themselves.

It's at the center of Jesus' teachings, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." and "love your neighbor as yourself."

Aside from Jesus, whose life was the definition of what Godly goodness looks like in someone's life, the Bible also lists others who were called good. To name a few of many:

Tabitha Acts 9: 36 says "In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor."

Barnabas Acts 11: 24. "He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith,..."

It seems to me that the title of "a good person" is something of a conclusion that people determine about someone, based on the person's life they have seen and/or heard about .

If you have walked around a cemetery where you have lived for a while, or might have lived before, and read the names on the stones, you likely recognized people you knew, but haven't thought about in a long time.

Did you ever notice that your first thought about them was either positive or negative?

That is your personal conclusion, or judgement, of them, based on your experiences of how they treated you and/or how you remember how they treated others.

It is your measure of "goodness" that was in them.

I think God will judge us much the same way, based on how we tried to live our life, the way he sees it, either positive(yes), or negative(no).

The difference in how we judge the goodness in people and the way God does, is we are limited to what we can see or hear, but God is not.

He sees everything we do and hears everything we say, and he knows the thoughts and desires in our heart.

In Job 34: 21-22 Elihu, speaking about God, said, "His eyes are on the ways of mortals; he sees their every step. There is no deep shadow, no utter darkness, where evildoers can hide."

The best definition of good I can think of is simply "what God wants".

If you devote yourself to obeying and serving Him, and treating others in ways you know are the ways "God wants," he promises He will help you get better at it, and the world will know you as "good."

And one day you will realize you do those things because you want to, not because God expects you to, and doing them makes you happy.

That is a reflection of God and His goodness, and is also what "God wants."

You can then say, as David did, "Surely your goodness and love will follow me

All the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever."