

The Fellowship Digest

Edition 24, Volume 3

February 2020

The Goodness of God

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THE GOODNESS OF GOD

By Eric Alexander

Many years ago, my wife and I were on our summer holiday. At church on Sunday morning, we met a friend whom we had known as a student. He was a bachelor, and we took him to lunch. As we talked, he confided in us that he had recently been diagnosed with a serious cancer. Before we parted, he told us that he had already made some tentative plans for the future. “If God is good,” he began, “I may be able to retire early, and live not far from here.” Unfortunately, he had to hurry away. All I had time to say to him as he left was, “Do remember that Romans 8:28 will always be true.” Afterward, the phrase which kept repeating in my mind was, “If God is good.” Four words, of which the first is the most significant.

I hope our friend did read Romans 8:28 before that day was done. We lost contact, but I do want to tell you what he might have discovered from that verse. It reads, “We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Let me first of all point out two things Paul is not saying. First, he is not saying that life is guaranteed to be trouble free for the Christian. Indeed, in verse 17 of this very chapter, he tells us that “sharing in Christ’s sufferings” is a condition of “sharing in his glory.” Second, Paul does not claim to know or understand all of God’s mysterious providences. “We know” in verse 28 sits comfortably in the same chapter with the disclaimer in verse 26: “We do not know what to pray for as

we ought.” But we do know God, and we know that whatever He decrees or permits will be for our ultimate good and for His glory.

Now we can follow Paul as he elaborates the way God is at work in our lives.

First, *God is personally at work for us*. You must have heard the secular version of this conviction, which has absolutely nothing to do with God, the Bible, or Christianity. It is usually expressed like this: “Don’t worry; everything will work out alright, you’ll see.” That is human optimism, founded on nothing but wishful thinking. Paul’s conviction, on the other hand, is founded on the character of God as a loving Father who cares for us and on His personal government over every detail of our lives (see v. 32).

Second, *God is ceaselessly at work for us*. We know this from the tense of the verb Paul uses. It is the present tense, which implies an unceasing action. That means God is working out His purposes for us whether we are spiritually dry or spiritually refreshed. He never gives up. As A.W. Tozer put it, “Our heavenly Father . . . does not keep office hours, nor set aside a time when he will see no one. God never changes His moods, or cools off in His affections, or loses enthusiasm.”

Third, *God is universally at work for us and in us*. Notice that Paul says “in all things.” That means that nothing is excluded from the personal government of God over what happens to us. It includes the bitterest as well as the sweetest of experiences. It includes the sinful acts of others, as Joseph states in Genesis 50:20: “You intended it for evil to me, but God meant it for good.” John Calvin said, tellingly, “Whatever

poison Satan produces, God turns it into medicine for His elect.” Spurgeon said, “Omnipotence has servants everywhere.”

Now the final question is, what type of person is able to say that God is working in all things for my good?

Well, Paul is anything but vague about that. Indeed, he is quite specific. His first description is “those who love God.” But, of course, that love, in Scripture, is the love of commitment. I have often spoken with young people who told me they had declared their love for someone, only to receive the answer, “Oh now, I don’t want to get too serious!” There are many who say that to God. Could you be one of them?

The second description in Romans 8:28 is “those who are called by God.” Now, whenever someone hears the gospel message, they hear the external call of God summoning them to personal faith in Jesus Christ. But that call, when it is truly heard inwardly by those to whom God has given spiritual ears to hear it, actually draws the sinner to Christ: “I heard the voice of Jesus say ‘Come unto me and rest’: I came to Jesus, as I was.” The question is, have you heard the call of God in the gospel, and have you found it drawing you to Christ? So, “all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called by God.” They then discover that they are caught up into the perfect, sovereign purposes of God, which involve His “good and acceptable and perfect will” (Rom. 12:2).

I well recollect Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones preaching in Glasgow from Psalm 73. He told us that he had discovered that the first line of Psalm 73 could be better translated “God

‘God is *unchangeable* in
the midst of the *changeable*
effects of providence.’

—*Stephen Charnock*



~Preaching Schedule for February 2020~

February 2

AM: Hebrews 6:9-12

PM: Judges 1:3-36

February 9

AM: Hebrews 6:13-20

PM: TBD [Wellington]

February 16

AM: Hebrews 7:1-10

PM: Judges 2:1-5

February 23

AM: Hebrews 7:11-19

PM: Judges 2:6-23



~Announcements~

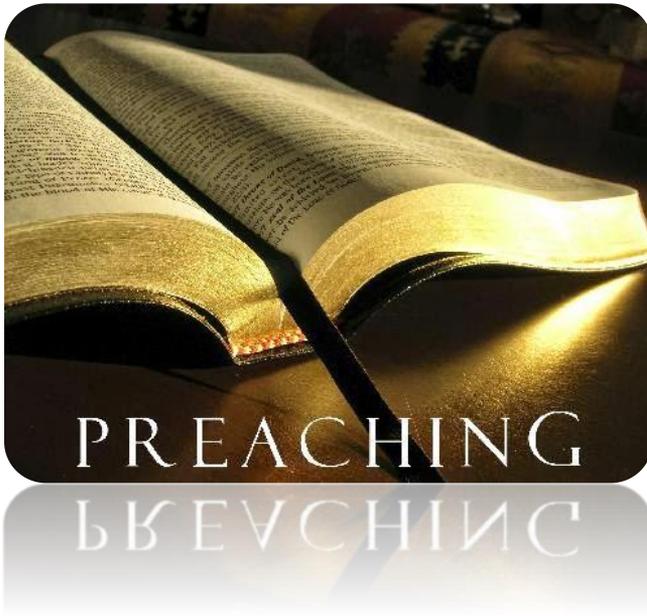
- **Reminder:** The Session is asking that all members attend all stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered.
- The **pulpit ministry of Fellowship** is on **SermonAudio**. You can access the sermons preached by our pastor on the Fellowship website at www.fellowship-pca.org or go to <http://www.sermonaudio.com/fellowship-pca>
- **The bulletins** for the services of the church are now available on the church website.
- Starting with next month's **Digest**, the pastor will be offering **book recommendations** and writing a **book review** of a selected volume.
- The pastor can be heard **on the radio** each **Tuesday from 10-10:30 AM on WLIK**. You can listen locally at **97.9 FM, 1270 AM** or **stream** it over the internet at www.wlik.net.
- **Every second Sunday evening of the month**, Fellowship will be hosting a worship service for the residents of **Wellington Manor**. We will meet there at **6 PM**.
- **The church library is now open. Please take a look!**
- **REMINDER: Every FINAL Lord's Day of the month, we will worship at 2 PM**, immediately after the fellowship lunch.

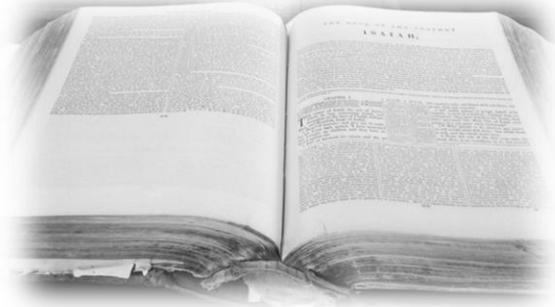
~The Preaching of the Word of God~

Westminster Larger Catechism – Q160

Q. 160. What is required of those that hear the word preached?

A. It is required of those that hear the Word preached, that they attend upon it with **diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine** what they hear by the Scriptures; **receive the truth** with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind as the Word of God; **meditate, and confer** of it; **hide** it in their hearts, and bring forth the **fruit** of it in their lives.





Note: Each month, to help us prepare for worship and the preaching of God's Word, the pastor will be offering a summary of the upcoming sermons. These will include discussion questions that can be used for family or personal worship.

~February 2 – AM Worship~

Sermon Text: Hebrews 6:9-12

Main Point: Fruit of one who says they have faith is their labor and work.

Discussion Questions:

1. At 6:9, the writer says, “Though we speak in *this* way...” To what is the *this* referring?
2. What do you think the writer means when he refers to “things that belong to salvation”?
3. Define the term “salvation.”
4. What is the solution to sluggishness?

~February 2 – PM Worship~

Sermon Text: Judges 1:3-36

Main Point: The conquest and failure of the people in taking the land.

Discussion Questions:

1. Judah and the rest of the tribes are being compared in this opening chapter. How?
2. What point is being driven home in 1:27-36?

~February 9 – AM Worship~

Sermon Text: Hebrews 6:13-20

Main Point: Through the use of two encouraging items, God's people have hope.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the promise made to Abraham?
See Gen. 12, 15, 17.
2. By whose name did God swear? Why?
3. Who are the ultimate heirs of the covenant promise made to Abraham?
4. Why are we encouraged to hold fast to the hope of the promise of God?
5. Who is our hope?

~February 9 – PM Worship~

Sermon Text: TBD

Worship at Wellington Manor

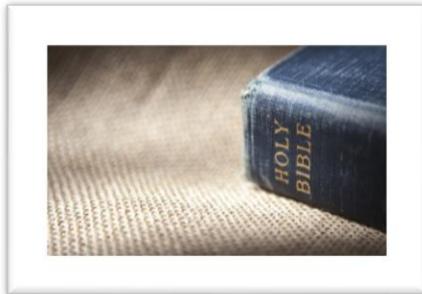
~February 16 – AM Worship~

Sermon Text: Hebrews 7:1-10

Main Point: The importance of Melchizadek.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the event that introduces Melchizadek in the Bible? See Gen. 14.
2. How is the name “Melchizadek” translated? Why is that significant in this passage?
3. What is the second name given to Melchizadek? Why is that significant in this passage?
4. Compare the priesthood of Aaron and that of Melchizadek.



~February 16– PM Worship~

Sermon Text: Judges 2:1-5

Main Point: The sin of the people has disastrous consequences.

Discussion Questions:

1. 2:1 mentions the “angel of the LORD.” Do you think that is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ? Why or why not?
2. What is the sin of the people?
3. What is the consequence of their sin?
4. The issue of idolatry will plague the people of God throughout the Biblical record. Yet, it does not stop there. Idolatry is a huge problem in the lives of people today. What idols do you have? What will you do about them?
5. What is the response of the people when they are confronted with their sin?

~February 23 – AM Worship~

Sermon Text: Hebrews 7:11-19

Main Point: Jesus and Melchizadek are compared.

Discussion Questions:

1. The writer starts this passage with an “if” question. Why do you think he does so?
2. From what tribe did Jesus descend? Why is that a problem if He is to be the High Priest? How is this problem resolved

~February 23 – PM Worship~

Sermon Text: Judges 2:6-23

Main Point: The unfaithfulness of the people compared with the kindness of the LORD.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does the writer tell us about the death of Joshua at this point in the narrative?
2. 2:10 states that another generation was raised that did not know the LORD. How is that possible? What must happen if the next generation is to know and fear the LORD?
3. Describe the unfaithfulness of the people. What is the central sin?
4. How does God help His people in spite of their unfaithfulness?



At **Fellowship Presbyterian Church**, we believe that the **preached Word** is central to our worship. It is to be attended to with diligence and care. The Word of God preached is the living and active voice of the Lord Jesus Christ to His people.

Q. 88. *What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption?*

A. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the **word, sacraments, and prayer**; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

(Westminster Shorter Catechism)



For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:12-13, ESV



Services

Wednesday

6 PM Prayer Meeting and Bible Study

Current Study: *One Lord, One Plan, One People: A Survey of the Bible.*

Lord's Day

9:45 AM Sunday School

11 AM Worship

The Letter to the Hebrews

5 PM Worship

6 PM @ Wellington Manner [2nd Sun. of the month]

2 PM [Final Sun. of the month]

The Book of Judges

~Church Life~

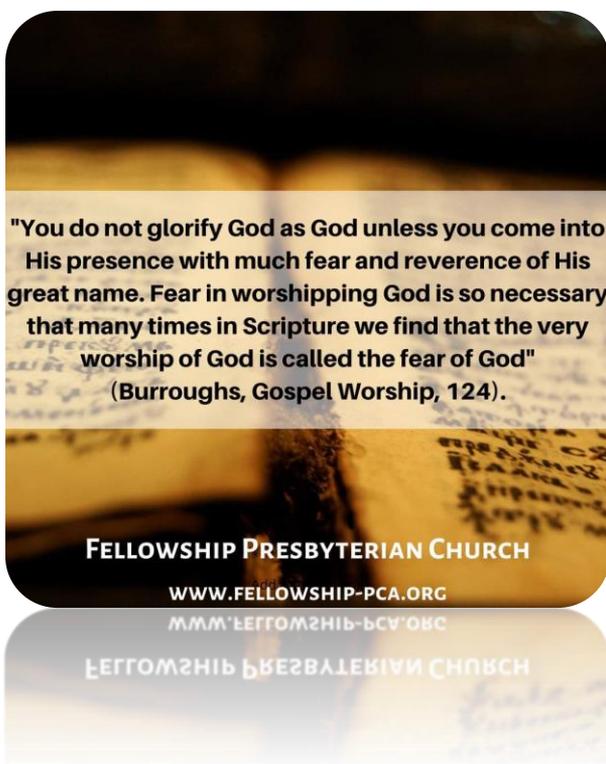
~Birthdays and Anniversaries~

Birthdays

None

Anniversaries

2/14 – Terry and Cathy Rowekamp



~Prayer~

If you have any prayer needs that you would like included in the newsletter, please let one of the elders or the pastor know.

Please submit them by February 21, 2020, by 5 PM to be included in the February *Fellowship Digest*.



- Pray for the **preaching** of God's Word.
- Pray for **growth**, spiritually, and numerically.
- Pray that FPC would be useful **salt and light** in the community to the glory of God, our Father.
- Pray for the **elders** of the church: protection from Satan's attacks, wisdom, and godliness.
- Pray for the **deacon and elder candidates and their training**.
- Pray for those in our number who are suffering physically. **NOTE:** A phone call, a card, a note to them to encourage them is strongly recommended.

~Hymn of the Month~

'Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee

Trinity Hymnal #471

This hymn will be used in worship throughout **February**.

1 'Tis not that I did choose thee,
for, Lord, that could not be;
this heart would still refuse thee,
hadst thou not chosen me.
Thou from the sin that stained me
hast cleansed and set me free;
of old thou hast ordained me,
that I should live to thee.

2 'Twas sov'reign mercy called me
and taught my op'ning mind;
the world had else enthralled me,
to heav'nly glories blind.
My heart owns none before thee,
for thy rich grace I thirst;
this knowing, if I love thee,
thou must have loved me first.

About the Author:

Josiah Conder was born in London, in 1789. He became a publisher, and in 1814 became proprietor of "The Eclectic Review." Subsequently to 1824, he composed a series of descriptive works, called the "Modern Traveller," which appeared in thirty volumes. He also published several volumes of poems and hymns. He was the author of the first "Congregational Hymn Book" (1836). He died in 1855.

--Annotations of the Hymnal, Charles Hutchins, M.A.
1872.



Do you have a favorite hymn that you would like included in worship? Let the pastor know!

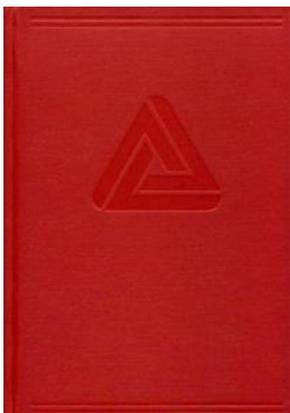


What is the chief end of man?

Man's chief end is to glorify God
and to enjoy him forever.

1 Cor. 10:31; Psa. 73:25, 26
Shorter Catechism Q1

~Scheduled Hymns for February 2020~



Note: These hymns will be used in worship throughout **February**. Please review them. You are encouraged to ask the pastor for a **free *Trinity Hymnal*** for your personal use at home and in family worship.

February 2

AM Worship: 2, 471, 708

PM Worship: 100, 460, 486

February 9

AM Worship: 57, 471, 468

PM Worship: Worship at Wellington Manor

February 16

AM Worship: 55, 471, 246

PM Worship: 5, 32, 457

February 23

AM Worship: 45, 471, 308

PM Worship: 53, 524, 119

~Scheduled Topics for The Fellowship Digest~

February: The Goodness of God

March: The Love of God

April: The Wrath of God

May: Salvation

June: Christian Baptism

July: Church History

August: Moses

September: David

October: Peter

November: Paul

December: The Church

**Electronic editions of The Fellowship Digest are
available on the church website**



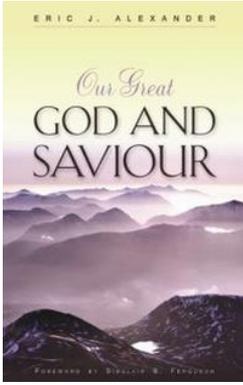
~Actions of the Session ~

The following actions were taken by the Session of Fellowship Presbyterian Church in their **January 2020** stated meeting:

1. Approved the budget for 2020.
2. Directed the pastor to send letters to supporting churches and individuals regarding the fiscal year 2020.
3. Approved a request from our deacon to open a separate bank account for diaconal purposes.
4. Approved Ruling Elder Terry Rowekamp as a delegate to the Feb. stated meeting of presbytery.
5. Established a diaconal liaison from the Session for the purpose of conducting diaconal business.



~Book Recommendations~



From the website: Eric Alexander's great concern in this series of studies is that Christian believers should know how rich they are in their gracious God and Saviour, and in His perfect work of salvation. Each study brings out a fresh aspect of this theme, as we contemplate in turn the character of God, the salvation of God, and the church of God. These warm and pastorally-directed studies will provide satisfying food for the hearts and minds of Christian readers everywhere.

~Comprehending God's Goodness~

As a child, the first prayer I ever learned was a simple table grace. It went like this: "God is great, God is good. And we thank Him for this food." At the time, I did not realize that a single biblical word captured the twin ideas of God's greatness and His goodness. The single word is *holy*.

The earliest traceable form of the Semitic root of the word *holy*, reaching to a Canaanite source, carried the meaning "to divide." Anything that was holy was divided or separated from all other things. This meaning pointed to the

difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the common and uncommon, the average and the great. In religious terms, the word *holy* divides God from all other things to put Him in a category that is *sui generis* (in a class by Himself). The Holy One is the One who possesses the supreme perfection of being. He transcends or is divided from all things creaturely. He is the most majestic, most exalted, most awe-provoking being. Since He is both marvelous and wonderful in His very essence, the creature—when contemplating the Holy God—responds in marvel and wonder because of His greatness.

Coram Deo

Take time in prayer today to thank God specifically for His goodness to you.

Passages for Further Study

Psalm 31:19

Psalm 86:10

Psalm 92:5

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<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/comprehending-gods-goodness/>

~Notes~

~Notes~



The Fellowship Digest is a publication of
Fellowship Presbyterian Church
2331 Early Rd., Newport TN 37821
Phone: (423) 623-8652

www.fellowship-pca.org

Session

Terry Rowekamp (Clerk), Rev. William Hill
(moderator)

Diaconate

William F. Hill, Sr.