

Introduction:

- I have titled our message today as: The Dazzling Radiance of God's Goodness. It is taken from Heb 1:3 *"The Son is the dazzling radiance of God's splendor, the exact expression of God's true nature—his mirror image! ..."* (TPT The Passion Translation).
- What we believe about God shapes our perception of God. Misperceptions of God give me a wrong understanding an unbiblical understanding of who He is and how His Kingdom operates.
- Have you ever looked at unbelievers around you and say to yourself, possibly out loud:
 - "God, I don't get it. I am tithing, I go to church, I love you, I live right and those heathen are the ones who seem to be prospering and having a good ol' time."
 - Or maybe your conversation goes like this: "God, how is it that I am busting my buttocks to live righteously, make right choices and do right and those sinners across the street, cause trouble, have no consequences, no pain and yet everything seems to go right for them?"
 - Have you ever looked at folks not living for Jesus and become envious of them. They have a nice ride, they got a fresh look on, walkin' with swag, like some big Willie grabbing all the attention.
- Psalm 73:1 "No doubt about it! God is good - good to good people, good to the good-hearted." (Message Bible) Psalm 73 presents us with a slippery slope.

I. A Slippery Slope

- A. It is interesting that Psalm 73 starts with God's goodness and ends with God's goodness and in between is a man who has stepped onto a slippery slope! He has started down a slippery slope covered with banana peels.
 1. Ie. When you start down a slipper slop you start down it very carefully. You are watching every step. You are carefully placing your feet. You do not take the next step until you are sure current step is secure. Ie. Icy steps in the winter.
 2. If we see God as anything other than good we will create a theology of God that brings Him down to our level, or our level of experience. That, my friends, is a slipper slope. It causes us to see God in a way that is not Biblical. The devil loves that.
 3. God never intended us to bring Him down to our level. His intention, always was to come down, reveal Himself, have us to believe and bring us up to His level. He intended to come down to our level in order to bring us up to His. Ie. God came down in the form of a man, Jesus, to reveal Himself to us so that we could come up to His level. In the words of Jesus, *"That where I am there you may be also."* John 14:3.
- B. In Psalm 73 we see Banana Peel Christianity *as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*" (Psalm 73:2, 3, ESV)
 1. Banana Peel number one, *I was envious*. vs 3
 - a) Websters 1828 Dictionary defines envious as – *"pained by the desire of*

- possessing some superior good which another possesses."* He was envious of the wicked. He wanted what they had.
- b) "*A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.*" (Proverbs 14:30, ESV) How many agree rotting bones are not good?
 - c) "*Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day.*" (Proverbs 23:17, ESV)
 - d) Ecclesiastes 4:4 Solomon called this activity of envying a 'striving after the wind.'
2. Banana Peel number two, *I saw the prosperity of the wicked*. He was looking at tempting fruit.
 - a) When we get our eyes off of God and onto what others have we have stepped onto a slippery slope.
 - b) It was what Jesus faced in the wilderness: He was shown all the kingdom of the world and their glory. But Jesus kept His eyes on God...it is written.
 3. Banana Peel number three: *All in vain I kept my heart clean*. vs. 13 Following God is vanity.
 - a) The Hebrew word means empty. There is nothing there.
 - b) I have been following God and it is doing nothing for me.
 - c) "It is empty to obey God." (Back to opening examples: Tithe, live right, etc, for nothing).
 - C. If we take our eyes off of God's goodness, we bring Him down to our level. At that point we are no different than the world we live in. We are here for a purpose—To reveal Jesus to a world living in darkness.
 1. This was why it was so important for Moses and Israel (Ex. 33) to see God's goodness in spite of them. They were in a wilderness. They ate boring food. Water was scarce. In that setting it would be easy to become envious of the powerful nations living with no lack.
 2. If we question His goodness we will question His promises. If we question His promises we most likely will not receive them.
 3. Taking our eyes off of God's goodness will change our countenance. As long as we see God as good, we become carriers of hope, joy and simplicity in this sin darkened world.
 4. The Psalmist in 73:15 said, "*I almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.*" *I nearly betrayed a generation!* vs 15 He almost went down the slippery slope! Praise God! He keeps us from slippery slopes!

II. The Gift of God His Dazzling Radiance

- A. Jesus is called the Gift from God and the Holy Spirit too. Paul in Col 1:26-27 refers to Jesus as the Mystery. The thing about mysteries is that they cause us to explore... because we want to understand.

1. Mysteries cause us to 'look into the unknown' for the purpose of discovery. It is that Psalm 34:8 thing, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Tasting is experiencing. I experience God and it leads me to explore even more.
 2. That is why I think God refers to His Son and His Spirit as a gift to us.
- B. The nature of a gift:
1. Gifts hold mystery. Most gifts we receive come as a present with the contents mysteriously hidden by wrapping paper, or the closing of the eyes to receive. I.e. Christmas presents – the grandkids...and Kelly, both pick up the gifts to look at them.
 2. God wrapped Jesus up in the flesh of a man as a mystery that would cause us to want to handle, look at, shake, etc. All for the purpose of discovery. His Goodness is mysterious! All His attributes are wrapped up in the Goodness of God! There is so much more to be discovered in Christ.
 3. A gift is something that someone will like! It is given willingly because the giver wants the best for the receiver. The gift is given for the receivers benefit and joy.
 - a) *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."* (James 1:17, ESV)
 - b) We search the gifts to discover what is wrapped up in it.
 - (1) That is what our faith does. It searches for the purpose of discovery that it might know.
 - (2) That is what God gives—good things. *"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"* (Matthew 7:11, ESV)
 4. When you find the gift of God, not just for us, but for others around us—Jesus. There you want to abide/dwell. This is what Jesus did with the Father.
- C. The gift of God came to reveal the Father. And as we look at this man Jesus we see in the Word that He was totally dependent upon or abiding in the Father. Both John 5:19,30 speak of *"The Son can do nothing of His own accord, only what He sees and hears the Father doing."* His steps were 'sure' there! No slippery slope did He ever step upon.
1. Jesus said in Jn 15:5 *"... Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."* If we will abide in Him we too shall not set foot upon a slippery slope of destruction.
 2. Again, I repeat myself: The goodness of God in the Gift given, is an invitation to encounter God at a level that changes us. Not just for us, but for others around us.
 - a) I get a taste of God, I experience Him and...
 - b) My perception of Him changes and that perception changes my countenance and make me more attractive to the world around me.
 3. My faith wants to explore that! "Faith does not come by striving but it is the product of surrender." Bill Johnson.

- a) We know that faith comes by hearing the message. Romans 10:17
 - b) We also know that many people are hearing the message but not growing in faith. What is the problem?
 - c) People are hearing the message but they never surrender to the message heard. And a partial surrender is not surrender at all.
4. The Psalmist in Ps 73:17 went back to the Presence of God...there he began to perceive truth again. His encounter with God in the secret place changed His perception of God and those around Him.
- a) Verse 18 He saw that it was they who were on the slippery slope. And they who were falling to their ruin.
 - b) Verses 23-28 back in the presence of God he states, "It was good to be near God!"
 - c) "If you will make history with God, He will make history with you." Bill Johnson.

Conclusion:

- What we believe about God shapes our perception of God.
- If we fail to see the goodness of God: we can't trust Him, we will not trust Him, and therefore we will not receive from Him
- It was the goodness of God that He sent His Son Jesus to die for us.
 - It is the goodness of God that leads to repentance. Romans 2:4 Repentance means a change of mind, direction.
 - And it is Godly sorrow that produces repentance. *"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret,..."* (2 Corinthians 7:10, ESV)
- Goodness leads me to repentance - I am offered what I do not deserve.
- Godly sorrow produces repentance - I am broken by His love towards me.
- God has arranged for us rather than living on a slippery slope we can have a sure foundation! Jesus! It is the goodness of God that He would give us such a sure foundation.