

## **SLIDE 1**

### **God is Great and God is Good Psalm 119:65-72**

**When I was a child, we had a set prayer for mealtimes – “God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food.” There was more. It was something like “By his hands, we are fed, give us Lord our daily bread. Amen.”**

**God is great and God is good. Do you believe that? It may be harder to accept than you think, at first blush. God is sovereign over all things, and we are okay with that – until we have a crisis of conscience about how we live in comparison to some who do not have nearly the resources we do. Or, until a child we know is abused or we are humiliated at work with no one to defend our good name or a child in the family gets sick. Really sick. One of the ways some people deal with the vicissitudes and inconsistencies of life is to say that God is a good God, but he is not powerful enough to overcome the evil in the world. A thoughtful person rarely is able to stay in that place long, though.**

**So, even though our problems are overwhelming, we profess that God is both great and good. Our problems are not His fault. But when you think about it, he *is* in charge of all things. It is not that we are lying when we say that God is good when we are not so convinced on the inside, it is just that our faith can waver in a tough spot.**

**But He is great and He is good. And we know it. We just need to be reminded sometimes. That’s what God’s word is going to do this morning – remind us that God is good all the time. Our text is Psalm 119:65-72. We will read the text first, then look at the structure of this magnificent psalm and consider a more literal translation of the psalm that will show God’s goodness a little better**

than the ESV that we use here on Sunday mornings, wonderful translation that it is. Would you please stand as we read God's word together? **SLIDE 2**

**65 You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word.**

**66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments.**

**67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.**

**68 You are good and do good; teach me Your statutes. **SLIDE 3****

**69 The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep Your precepts;**

**70 their hear is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in Your law.**

**71 It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn Your statutes.**

**72 The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. **DURING PRAYER SLIDE 4****

As you know, Psalm 119 is all about God's word. All but three verses mention God's word in some form or another. There are 22 sections in the psalm. That's one section for every letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are eight verses in each section, and each verse begins with the letter of that section. It is like the psalmist is extolling the wonders of God from A to Z, we would say. Our section today contains verses beginning with the Hebrew letter "teth." Five of the verses begin with the Hebrew word "tov," which means "good." To help you see that better, let's look at a more literal translation of this psalm. It is a bit awkward, but it will help you see the emphasis God puts in this section of Psalm 119. **SLIDES 5-6**

- 65 Good You did, O LORD, to Your servant according to Your word.**
- 66 Good discernment and knowledge, teach me, because I believe in Your commands.**
- 67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey Your word.**
- 68 Good You are and You do only good; teach me Your decrees.**
- 69 Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I with all my heart watch Your precepts.**
- 70 Callous and unfeeling are their hearts; I delight in Your instruction.**
- 71 Good for me it was that I was afflicted, so that I might learn Your decrees.**
- 72 Good for me the instruction of Your mouth, more than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.**

Sounds kind of like the “Yoda” version, doesn’t it? The psalmist is convinced that God is good, and that He communicates His goodness through His word. That is the primary way we know God, isn’t it – through His word? These are not random thoughts about God’s goodness. There is a flow, a purpose to what is being said. Do you see a theme in this section – a theme, that is, besides God is good all the time? Here is a hint – it has to do with the purpose of trials in our lives. **SLIDE 7**

We will use our literal translation as we look at this psalm. Let’s take it step by step, just as it was written, beginning with verse 65: “Good You did, O LORD, to Your servant according to Your word.” Now, if that is all we were to read, we would simply accept this as a general principle and that would be enough, but the writer knew that he was going to write about trials when he stated that God did something good to him through His word. God’s word is designed for our benefit, would you agree with that? If you agree, does the time you spend with the word reflect your profession of

**belief that His word is beneficial for you? Sometimes difficulties drive us to the word – and, that’s a good thing! Certainly that is what the writer is communicating in verse 65 – anything that causes us to go deeper in the word is a good thing.**

**Verse 66: “Good discernment and knowledge, teach me, because I believe in Your commands.” Now, this is interesting. We can expect discernment and knowledge when we come to the word – with a believing heart! If you have a poor view of Scripture when you come to the Bible, you will find what you want to find, but not necessarily what God wants you to see. That may be comforting in the short run, but when we are facing trials we need to hear from God. Do you believe that He will meet you here, in His word? If so, He will teach you what you need to know in your time of pain.**

**Verse 67: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey Your word.” Has this ever been true in your life? You had lost focus, but affliction brought you back to God’s word – back to obedience to His word, in fact. It is important to know what the psalmist was saying, here, though, and we will start by establishing what he was not saying. He was not saying, “Before God punished me, I lived like a pagan, but now I have my act together.” Maybe a fuller explanation of this literal translation would be something like, “Before a great trial came into my life, I had a tendency to rely on my own judgment. I called the shots, I exercised discernment, as far as it goes in this life. Then, something came that was beyond my pay grade. You better believe I turned to God in repentance, confessing my sin of relying on human wisdom and failing to trust Him. Now, I obey God’s word, following it as far as I am able, because I recognize that His wisdom far exceeds mine.” He was saying something like that. And, close contact with – and observance of – Scripture led him to a conclusion about God. Verse 68:**

**“Good You are and You do only good; teach me Your decrees.”** You don’t get to this place by accident. You don’t just wake up one morning after your heart has been broken in two and say, “God is good!” You get here because God draws you to this place, and you respond to the Spirit’s gentle call to trust Him no matter what. Time in His word expedites the process for us. The longer we stay away from God’s word, the longer it takes for us to see His goodness and His plan for us in our pain. But look at the last part of verse 68 – “Teach me Your decrees.” This is not a day when we are inclined to look far from ourselves when we suffer. We tend to focus inwardly, using all kinds of self-help talk to help us feel better about ourselves and about our circumstances. What better spirit, though, than to look to God and praise Him for His goodness? **SLIDE 8**

Let’s look at verses 69-70 together: “Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I with all my heart watch Your precepts. Callous and unfeeling are their hearts; I delight in Your instruction.” Now we see what his affliction was! We do not know who wrote Psalm 119, but there is a possibility that Ezra wrote it. He would have faced great opposition to the re-establishment of God’s word as the law for Israel. Enemies of Israel would have said cruel things about him. You would expect that to discourage him. I am sure it did for a time, but once he turned to God’s word, he did so with all his heart, and he found – joy! God’s word is not a straightjacket designed to break our spirits and dampen our enthusiasm for life. Rather, it is a delight to those who trust God. It is a source of light, life, and joy!

Now in verse 71, the writer states, with a grateful heart, what he has learned: “Good for me it was that I was afflicted, so that I might learn Your decrees.” Well, if we really believe that God knows better than we do, sometimes the only way to fully internalize that truth is to walk through deep waters. It is often the case that we have to get on the back side of trials, though, before we can

**acknowledge God’s goodness in our circumstances. When we put our trust in God’s word – and ultimately in God – we begin to adopt a different value system than the one world holds. Our whole perspective changes. Verse 72:**

**“Good for me the instruction of Your mouth, more than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.” Indeed!**

**Let’s take a moment before we sing our final song and thank God for His wisdom. Thank Him, even if you are in the midst of the greatest trial of your life. Affliction is a profound teacher, and even if you don’t see it now, there is value in thanking God in the midst of your suffering. You may need to take a moment and confess your disappointment, your frustration, your unbelief, or even your anger toward God that has come as a result of your trial. You may just want to read through this psalm in a spirit of prayer to the Lord. Whatever you may choose to do, take a few minutes and respond to God’s word.**