

The Goodness of God, p.2

By Jeff Noblit

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: James 1:17-21
Preached on: Sunday, March 3, 2019

Anchored in Truth Ministries

1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

Chapter 1. Let's turn there together and complete this exhortation as James is the pastor of a local church and he, ah, gets quite quickly down to brass tacks or where the rubber meets the road and tries to deal with issues that are important, ah, to what's happening in the church he's overseeing and evidently some of the members of this local church had their thinking quite upside down because in the verses before our text, he reproved them very sharply and said, ah, "God's not responsible for the temptations you come into to sin, and certainly not responsible when you commit sin." He said, "The reason why you're tempted to do these wrong things and then often you do fall into doing wrong things, is because you're bad. God's not bad. Sovereign God didn't put you in a bad situation. All of the things you are in, the trials, the, ah, ah, the circumstances that perhaps caused you to be more vulnerable to sin only exposed what your heart is, your heart is fallen and prone to selfishness, prone to an independent and rebel spirit. So God's not responsible for your lust to sin, your temptation or your falling into sin."

Then he comes down to our text, James 1:17, and he starts talking about that God is fully and wholly good. "The Goodness of God" is what we, we've entitled this exposition. James 1:17, he says,

17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. 19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

First of all, we talked about the absolute goodness of God. He says contrary to what you're implying about God did this and he didn't help you, or God did that and in our culture today we hear all these things, "Well, God made me this way." A person gets involved in some weird, wacky, perverse behavior, "Well, God made me this way." No, he did not. Your, your heart is fallen in sin and you're responsible for what you are. And so he says far from that, our God is good and everything that comes from God is good

and perfect. He's the glorious true light of heaven. He is true perfection and true righteousness. There's no shifting of sand. There's no shade of, of bad in God. There's no shade of wrongdoing in God. Everything about God, his absolute goodness and we brought out some of the ways that, um, God has demonstrated his absolute goodness, and that is he, he's good to, ah, his creatures, and, and, and, all of that, those that he has made. He gives them satisfactions and pleasures.

Look at the world of nature. A bird that sings or a dog that wags his tail, you just name it, God shows his goodness all around us. That's who he is in his nature. Ah, his, his goodness to the angels in that he puts the angels in his holy presence and they get to rejoice in the great infinite wonders and pleasures of the Triune Godhead. And by the way, folks, the greatest pleasures, you could add up all the pleasures of a million good lifetimes and it wouldn't come close to one moment in the presence of God. When we get to God in heaven, we're gonna have pleasures beyond comprehension, and we'll have perfect minds, perfect hearts and perfect emotions to take them in and enjoy them all. That's, do you know why? Because God's good. God is good. Everything bad and everything evil in our life is the result of sin, not the result of God's doing. He's not the author of those things.

We talked about the goodness of man, how he gave us our five senses and through these inlets of these senses, we can take in such pleasure. Again, with our eyes as we behold the wonders and the beauties of nature. I saw a picture this morning of the cherry blossoms blooming in Japan and they're just marvelous in their beauty, and can you just imagine what it's gonna be like when the curse of sin is removed from creation. It's gonna be a, a, a, infinitely greater and more beautiful. But God gave us all of these senses to enjoy so many wonderful and good things. He gave us minds that we're able to comprehend and understand and find happiness in so many things, and all this is because we are made in the image of God. We're not like the rest of creation and that's why we so abhor the concept of abortion because human beings are not just another creature, they're unique. There is a sanctity, a holiness to human beings and there ought to be a respect and a, a dignity and a protection for all human life. We must never ever ever back up on that.

Where have we come in our country to where now the outrage is, now they want to kill children right after they're born. Well, what happened to right after they're conceived? You know, that's what the culture likes to do, it just likes to keep pushing the fight further to the left. I'm going the wrong way. To the left. Just keep pushing it further to the left. It's amazing the things that, ah, we have to deal with and I'll be honest, in the last 20 years, the plunge into depravity around us is so rapid and it makes me wonderfully thankful for my church family. I feel like this is an oasis of sanity. I mean, truly an oasis of sanity. Now I'm not saying every church member does exactly like they ought to be, but there's a strong core. I can tell you this much, if we have a rebel spirit or an intentional and indulgent sinner in this church, they have no voice and no influence, and if we know about it, they'll be disciplined. I mean, that ought to start with me. I'm talking about willful, hardened, open wickedness and rebellion. We all sin and have to repent every day.

Here's my point: we need an oasis of sanity in this world and that's why I always charge you and I'll continue to do so, be careful with all of the weak, if not out-and-out sinfully counterfeit Christianity that's out there that promises you all these fun and all these games and all this stuff that basically the children, ah, really will enjoy and really have, have, have a great time with. But folks, what are you gonna do in the end of that? What are you gonna do in the end of it? You need, you need real Christianity to make it in this world today. Not only that, you need real Christianity because it's right and, and false Christianity, of course, is wrong and dishonoring to God. I don't know how I got off on all that. We're talking about God's goodness. He's good to give us all that he has as his creatures.

Then we went forward and talked about how he, ah, has, or talked rather about God's redemptive goodness. All of that was God's absolute goodness. Then he talks about God's redemptive goodness. He's talking about far from God, ah, being the cause of any bad thing in your life, look what he did, look at verse 18, "In the exercise of His will," that means he personally, ah, was intentional and, ah, executed this, he takes full responsibility. Well, what is this? Verse 18, "He brought us forth," that means birthed us, "by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures." So when God saves you, you become a believer, you become a Christian, you become the first, you become the highest and the best of God's works. Of all the works of God, his highest and best work is taking you from a wretched, wrath-deserving sinner and making you holy and giving you a holy righteous standing, even the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That's a great work. That, that's by far, that's a great journey to go from the depths of sin and woe and the rightful object of wrath, to be one who bears the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ and is welcomed and accepted before God as the Son is accepted before God. You're not, the first doesn't mean necessarily chronologically, it means the first of this type. We're the highest and the best type of what God can do and what God has created.

Now we talked about how this was, um, redemption was planned in the heart of God, that is, the choice to offer salvation, the method to provide salvation, and the securing of our individual salvation was all the initiative of God. He did all of this. And then he brought us forth. It's the idea of regeneration. It's the idea of birthing. He birthed us and brought us into this Christianity, this new, ah, life, we're made new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Now, let's go on down to III, and this is new material, and, um, ah, well, I'm not gonna say that. III. Let's talk about his parental goodness. Here he gets a lot more practical as our, our, he says, "Now here's what your heavenly Father wants to tell you and wants to instruct you about, and He does this in his great goodness." When God gives you his word, when God gives you instruction, that's not some woeful thing. What kind of abominable thinking when we think that if God gives us commands or if God gives us instructions, that's sort of impeding upon us, that's holding us back or that's hindering us? No, they are always a blessing. These things come from a loving heavenly Father who gives us his commands and his guidance to help us. It's a part of his parental goodness.

Now, A. under this, I, I want to talk about reject worldliness, and then in a moment, B is gonna be receive the word. But first of all, reject worldliness. As a matter of fact, go, go over to James 4 right quick, would you do that? James 4 and look at verse 1. Let's read just, ah, down through, um, ah, verse 5. He says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that way war, wage war rather in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. And you ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend it on your pleasures." So he says that's where you, that's the worldliness as a child of God you need to be repenting of and growing out of. The purpose of your, of your life is no longer whatever comes across your heart and mind that you want. Ah, you know, some of the charismatics have fallen into this today with the, the word of faith movement and the health/wealth notion that if there's certain chants you can do and certain ways you can believe and certain, ah, ah, ah, mantras you can quote, you can get what you desire and that's what God wants. Well, nothing wrong with going to God and asking for something, but you oughta go to God with the motive but, but, but God, you're my treasure and you're my joy. Now if this thing is good, I pray you would give it to me. If this item is good. I've had God give me things. No doubt in my mind. I've asked God for certain things and he has given them to me in this world but I went with the motive it, of this, "God, if it's pleasing to You and if it doesn't take my joy in You away." And it has been the pattern of my own life that God gives me stuff when I longer, no longer have to have stuff. Did you hear that? God gives me stuff when I don't have to have stuff. When he knows I'd be happy to have it, but happy if I don't have it because I have him, then he tends to give me stuff. God help you as a child of God if you keep, ah, ah, running after stuff and missing the contentment only God can give you because the stuff's never gonna give it to you. It's never gonna give it to you.

Well, that's what they were basically doing, they were chasing their pleasures as their primary purpose in life and it was a, it was a chasing of worldliness. So he says, verse 4, "You adulteresses," he don't mean spiritual adultery, he means spiritual adultery here, "do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility before God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." Now he's not saying necessarily you are the enemies of God, he's saying as a child of God why are you acting like you're an enemy of God? Why are you acting like the world is your hope? Why are you acting like the pleasures of this world are the highest pleasures to you? Yeah, we enjoy pleasures in this world but in your heart are they the highest things to you? That's being a spiritual adulterer. That's putting something before God. That's wasting our pleasures, ah, ah, our desire for pleasure in the world and once you begin to taste, you know the Bible even says taste and see that the Lord is good, taste and see that the Lord is good, and once you begin to taste the joys and the pleasures of God, everything sorta kinda gets in perspective. Now, and don't be holy Joe and holy Jane where you talk about, "Well, nothing in the world gives me pleasure." God gives you things in the world to give you pleasure. Don't, don't try to be too spiritual on this, but you enjoy those things because you know it comes from a God who loves you and you love him. It's always God-centered in everything that we do.

Well, he says reject worldliness. Now back to chapter 1, verse 19, he gives some sus, suspi, specific, sorry about that. I wasn't going on there. I'm having a struggle with something. Specific instructions about how he wants us to deal with some things and, and now the context, well, it doesn't say it, ah, outright, appears to be that they're having trouble in their fellowship. They're, they're having some fighting and some wrath and some meanness within the congregation, stuff we had years ago. Hadn't had it in a long time so don't start any of it, alright?

He said, "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear." Quick to hear. I think he's talking about mainly quick to hear the word of God, but I do want to suggest, I'll say, I do believe it's certainly implied that that means quick to hear in general. You ought to live your life quick to hear. Of course, in a moment he's gonna say slow to speak because that's the other side of the same coin. Ah, the Bible says in Romans 10:17, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing the word of God." We ought to be quick, "God, what do you want me to hear?" Can I ask you this evening, do you come to church, do you sit under my preaching with an active attitude of, "God, what shall I do? God, what would You have me to do? God, what would You have me to repent of? Where's my thinking? My motives? My viewpoints in contradiction to Your word? God, show me what I need to change because these are the words of life and if I'm contrary to these words, I'm only hurting myself and dishonoring You."

So quick to hear. Quick to hear. Quick to hear like the servant is quick to hear the master's voice. Quick to hear like the mother is quick to hear the baby's cry. There's a beautiful story in 2 Samuel 23 as, as the Philistine, ah, garrisons have, ah, ah, captured Israel in the environs really around Jerusalem and a, David is out hiding in a cave and David just gives out the statement that oh, if he could have just a drink of the waters from the springs of Bethlehem. It was just a figure of speech. He just happened to mumble it out loud, "If I could just have a drink from the water that come from the springs of Bethlehem." Three of his mighty men heard that word and immediately took off, fought their way through the guards, got a cup of water, fought their way back out and brought it to David and said, "We brought you the water." Quick to hear. "God, what would You have me to do?" Too often we find ourselves hearing the word and quick to argue, quick to explain away, quick to dismiss, not quick to hear as the word goes forth. The old adage is that God gave you two ears and one mouth.

A few thoughts about just being a good listener in general, disciplined listening. Boy, if there's an area that your pastor has to keep repenting in and growing in, it's being quick to listen and not being so quick to speak. Anybody else with me on this? Am I the only sinner here tonight? I think I heard, I, I saw a hand back there. Can I get a witness?

Being quick to hear and slow to speak, and I thought about it a moment and I thought, well, as I have been helped in this journey, I, I'm not without any sanctification here, I thought a few, few things. 1. One thing that helps me to be a disciplined listener is the doctrine of sin. If I'll think on what the Bible says I am as a sinner, it helps me keep my mouth shut. I mean, when you really think about what we are before a holy God as lost, fallen, depraved sinners, even the enemies of God, even those who are as Ephesians, ah,

chapter 2, 1 through 3, talks about by nature we're children of wrath, our very natures cry for God's judgment, if you will carry with you, "Blessed are the poor in the spirit," Jesus said, that means you walk your life with some sort of spirit in your heart of acknowledging and knowing what you are before a holy God. Now not beaten down because you know in Jesus you're righteous and accepted, but you know in and of yourselves apart from Jesus, you have nothing good, it just helps you to not run off your mouth so much when you know what you are before a holy God. The doctrine of sin. The doctrine of man's depravity. This breeds a humility and this breeds a greater willingness to hear and to learn.

2. Another thing that will help us with being a disciplined hearer or listener is the doctrine of divine sovereignty. You know what the doctrine of divine sovereignty, you know how it helps us in, in being a disciplined listener? Because you're aware that God can use unworthy vessels to teach you stuff. God is a specialist at using people that maybe shouldn't be qualified but to actually help you.

What was it happened in our house years ago? One of our children was being disciplined and there was some anger in one of her parents as they gave the instructions, and she was just real little and she went upstairs and all of a sudden we hear a voice heralding from the upstairs like a voice crying in the wilderness, something like, how's the verse go? "He who controls his anger is mightier than," what is it, Pam? What is it? It was about if you control your anger, you're mightier than something else. Boy, she oughta gotten a spanking right there but it was a good word for her parents.

Divine sovereignty mean God's can use vessels you don't think are qualified to help you so you might ought to be quick to hear and slower to speak. Ah, ask Baalim about that. Baalim's going to pronounce a curse on the armies of Israel and God sent an angel and the angel had a sword drawn and Baalim's donkey could see things Baalim couldn't see and he finally spoke to him and said, "Why do you keep beating me up for not going? Don't you, there's somebody here's trying to kill both of us." Divine sovereignty. God can use vessels that you may not think he can use.

A, a third thought from Proverbs is this: poor listening is the habit of fools. Poor listening is the characteristic or the habit of fools and we all can be foolish though we may not be classified as a fool. But now as always, there's a balance here and that is that, um, you're not supposed to listen to everybody. I, I'm just telling you right, about right now in our culture there's about 85-90% of what's being said on the tv and the radio and everything else in our modern culture that's just not worth listening to, and there's a balance there for the Bible says in Proverbs 14:7, "Leave the presence of a fool or you will not discern words of knowledge." In other words, don't listen to him. There are things you don't need to keep listening to because if you keep listening to them it will cloud your ability to grasp truth or true knowledge. You, you, you're like a, a sponge, everything you get around has some, stays with you to a degree. We have to work at sometimes what we don't listen to.

How do you know when you're in the presence of a fool? Here's one good way to determine if you're in the presence of a fool, is when they use so-called sophisticated or intellectual arguments to support indefensible sin. When they use so-called in, intellectual or sophisticated arguments to defend the indefensible. Abortion. Homosexuality. Fornication and 1,001 other things that our culture no longer just does in secret with shame but now parades and, and celebrates in the street. When they're, when they're trying to defend something that's just radically indefensible, that's a fool. That's a fool. We don't need to listen to those arguments.

So in general life with our Christian brothers and sisters in our homes etc., we oughta be quick to hear and certainly under the word of God we need to be quick to hear, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" Well, then he gives the other side of the coin. He says also we ought to be a, slow to speak. Slow to speak. The Bible says in Proverbs 10:19, "He who restrains his lips is wise."

Now the idea of speaking here I think correlates with James 3:1. Look at James 3:1 right quick. In James 3:1 he says, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment." So the point is, is, is, speaking with authority, let not many of you put yourself in the place of the master/teacher. Let not many of you be about considering yourself a divine teacher to instruct others. He said be slow about that.

I, I, I like to tell young guys who think they're called to preach that you wait for God to open the doors. Don't you go push them open. You just be faithful, you be available and see what God does. Well, there's been many a young man run ahead of the counsel of his elders because he has some giftedness and he, he has some natural abilities but he doesn't yet have the wisdom and he doesn't yet have the character he needs to be a pastor. Well, but that can be true of any of us, though, where we assume we have certain things that we ought to teach. He said be slow about that.

Proverbs 17:27 says, "He who restrains his words has knowledge." Proverbs 10:20 reminds us, "The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver." He's careful and he speaks what needs to be spoken.

Then he continues in verse 19 about avoiding, ah, worldliness. He says, "and be slow to wrath." Be slow to wrath. James 1 again, there in verse 19, "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger." Now this corresponds over to, ah, James 1:2 where he says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials." When a trial hits you, instead of re, ah, ah, resorting to anxiety or anger, back up a minute and say, "What, what's God doing here? God, give me wisdom. Help me see this the way You're seeing it." And that's one of the best habits you could possibly have as a Christian is when events happen say, "God, give me wisdom. Help me see this the way You see it." Some sort of conflict happens, some, some, ah, issue comes up, somebody is offensive, somebody really is doing you wrong, but before you are quick to anger and quick to speak, back up, "God, give me wisdom. What are You doing here? Help me to see this the way You see it." Now that's a pattern I've used

through the years to try to help keep me in control and in context. Wish I could tell you I'm batting a thousand there. I am not but it does help. "God, let me have wisdom to see what You're up to."

Remember, ah, King David? He's already committed the evil of taking Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, he's already committed the evil of having Uriah killed, and Nathan the prophet comes in and Nathan gives the whole story about a man who, who had lots of livestock and lots of sheep but he stole his neighbor's pet lamb and killed it to serve some guests who came to his house, and David said, "Well, that man oughta be killed!" I don't know exactly what the text says but David said, "The severest punishment oughta be administered to that man for taking that pet lamb when he had many that he coulda used of his own." And, and Nathan said, "Thou art the man. Thou art the man." David would've been wise to have been slow in his anger, slow to speak on those things.

Peter in the garden. Remember the week before Jesus' death he would go into Jerusalem and teach during the daytime and he had him a little retreat area. I believe they actually rented it. It was a olive farm outside of Jerusalem and, and it had, it had a Gethsemane in it. Do you know what a Gethsemane is? It's a olive press. It's just where they press the olives and it's called the garden of Gethsemane but really it's an olive farm with a, with a place in it where they brought the olives in and pressed them when they were ripe and came off the trees. Well, that's where Jesus had the olive farm rented out. They would go out there in the evenings and they would stay and, and then it became time in the sovereign plan of the Father for Jesus to be arrested and the whole, ah, Sanhedrin, the Roman cohort came out there and they, they got close. You know, they only had torches so it was hard to see and, um, ah, ah, I think it was one of the disciples said, "Who are you seeking?" And they said, "We're seeking Jesus, the Nazarene." And Jesus said, "I am Him." And the soldiers fell back and as they're falling back, Peter's pulling out his sword and he just takes a slash at one of them and cuts off the man's ear, and the Lord had to stop him. The Lord basically said, "Don't you understand this is what I came for? I'm to go to the cross and your anger is getting in the way of what I'm trying to do."

Are you mad about something because God's trying to do something in you and you need to cooperate with the thing that you're getting mad about? There's some holy sandpaper in your life and that holy sandpaper usually has a name, and you're getting mad when God says, "Why don't you back up and try to figure out what I'm trying to do in you. I have a purpose and I love you." Ask God for wisdom. "What am I accomplishing in you," the Lord would be saying to us.

Somebody said a temper is a valuable thing and it's a shame to lose it. Temper can be a good thing. There is a righteous indignation and there's righteous anger. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:26, "Be angry and yet do not sin." We're to be angry about some things but not a sinful anger. The Bible says in Psalm 77:10, "Hate evil, you who love the Lord." There is an anger against the evil, the, the things that dishonor and try to rob God of his, of his honor and his glory and his praise. There's a place for anger but not for, for ourselves and our self-pleasures, but for the purposes of God and the glory of God.

So use anger righteously. Don't misuse it in unrighteous, selfish and self-pleasure pursuits. The Holy Spirit in us will produce an anger against sin and evil but man's anger is always wrong. Look at verse 20 where he reminds them here, he says, "for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." Never has. Never will. Now there's some things he says we need to be putting off and look at verse 21, "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness." Filthiness is the idea of a dirty garment. He said there's a garment put on you, and really this garment was put on you at conception and you've lived your life with it, and he said now that you're a Christian, you need to take that thing off. Take off the filthy garment and it's just a broad and a, a, a, a generalization of all the things of the fallen flesh.

He says then also and wickedness. The word "wickedness" means "an abundance of malice; an overflowing of premeditation and evil motives." Now we all sin but you don't have to walk in a premeditation to do harm to others for selfish gain. Did you hear that? You don't as a Christian walk in a pattern of planning harm against another for selfish gain. You can't do that if you're a child of God, radically contrary to everything in your new nature as a Christian. He said now take that stuff off. Get that off of you.

Then he goes to the second thing, so all that I've just said is under, ah, reject worldliness, put that aside. Now he says, "I want you to do something and this is the key to getting the other off," the last part of verse 21, "in humility receive the word implanted." If your Bible says "engrafted," that's not the best word. This is not the Greek word for grafting in. That's another word. This word means to plant. "Receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

So in humility, again, it ties into what he said earlier about quick to hear. You come to church. You sit under the word. You study your Bibles with a spirit of humility, "God, what would You show me? What do I need to repent of? What do I need to learn? What would You have me to do?" Then you not only with that humility are you submitted without argument to receive the word, then you do receive the word implanted. It has the idea of taking root and I love that picture because you're a new creature in Christ Jesus. Christianity is not grafting into the old man some new ideas. Christianity is not turning over a new leaf in the old man. Christianity is having a new heart and being a new man and in the new man you take God's word and you plant these truths in there and they begin to take root and grow and they become the prominent thing of your life. The old anger, the old jealousy, the old clamoring, the old slandering, the old malice, the old stuff begins to be crowded out because the new truth of the word of God has taken root in the new soil of the new man and it's growing up and producing a, a harvest of beautiful Holy Spirit-wrought fruit in our lives.

Then he makes this statement, it's, it's able to save your soul. This process and this is a process of continually receiving the word and letting the seed of word truth come into your life, grow and mature and become the dominant fruit of your life. This is a process that is saving your soul. I think the main idea here is not saved from the penalty of sin but saving your soul from the power of sin.

Now the Bible really kind of leaves those so interconnected. We want to be careful always separating them but I believe the primary idea is you're saving your soul from wasteful and God-dishonoring service. Did you hear that? You can be a Christian and yet use your life, your soul and your body, in non-useful, non-eternal purposes. He said don't do that. You're wasting it. Save it for God. Reserve it for the Lord to use. When you turn yourself over to wrath and anger and hatred and harsh words and malice and all the other wickednesses and filthinesses, that's the word the text uses, then you're wasting what God gave you.

Now what's the context of this whole thing? The context of the whole thing is your local church, it's the way they're behaving to each other in their church life. You see, the word of God, the preaching of the word of God, the truth of the word of God saves us from the penalty of sin but it also saves us from the power of sin. Now listen to this statement. This is why I mean these always go together. One of the sure ways to know you are saved from the penalty of sin, you're going to heaven, you're not going to hell and be punished for, with the penalty, one of the sure ways to know you're saved from the penalty of sin is that you deeply care about being saved from the power of sin. Did you hear that? One of the surest ways to know you're one who is indeed saved from the penalty of sin, you're going to heaven, is because you deeply care about being saved from the power of sin. Now you hadn't gotten there yet. Everybody that's been saved from the power of sin completely, I want to meet you after church to find out what the key is. But you do care about it. You are burdened about it. You do long for it. You do want victory over it. Something in you has changed. You have new want-to's inside of you. George Swinnock said, "In a godly man's heart, though some sin is left, no sin is light, and though sin remains, no sin reigns."

What goodness of God. We're talking about the goodness of God, his parental goodness. What goodness in God to instruct us and even rebuke us concerning that which is hurting us, hurting our witness and hurting our assurance of salvation, and to instruct us to drink deeply of that which saves us, saves us from both temporal and eternal loss.

Let me just end with that phrase back up in verse 18, "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth." Again, it's the idea that he birthed us, he caused us and, and literally in the Greek he caused us to be formed again. He said, "You were one form and then God did something through the Gospel and the power of the Spirit, He formed you again into a new creature in Christ Jesus." He brought us forth. Now when he brings us forth or he gives us the new birth, it means – now listen – God categorically rejects everything about the first birth. Nothing in your original nature in any way appeals to God. Nothing in your original, original nature in any way appeases God's wrath against you. Nothing.

You say, "Well, I come from a noble family." Well, God rejects that. "Well, I have superior talents and abilities." God rejects that. "I've been given a brilliant mind." It doesn't matter to God. "I have such an outstanding education." God rejects that. "Well, look, I've ascended to positions of power and influence and, and, and financially I'm a powerful person." God rejects that. "Well, I have moral and ethical uprightness in my life." God rejects that, putting on your own righteousness. "Well, I'm a generous person. I

give great amounts of money and help to those who are less fortunate." God rejects that. "Well, I'm respected out in the world. People think I'm a wonderful and good person, a decent person." God rejects that. "I'm loved by my fellow man." Well, God rejects that. "You don't understand, I come from a long heritage of strong faith and devotion to the Lord. There are great preachers in my background." God rejects that. "Well, I've been baptized. I take the sacraments of the church." God rejects that. "I'm very faithful in my religious practice." God rejects that. All of this is from the first birth. You can become a great Baptist in the first birth, you can walk down the aisle, shake a hand, repeat a prayer and go to the baptistery, and come to church and give your tithes, and work faithfully in the church, and be of the first birth but you've gotta be one that God has brought you forth with the new birth, the second birth.

The first birth is Cain bringing the works of his hands to the Lord as an offering and God rejects it. The second birth, the true birth, the new birth is Abel bringing a third party sacrificed, pointing of course, to God's provision of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. The first birth is Ishmael where Abraham worked out a way that he could achieve God's righteousness his own way. The second birth is represented by Isaac. You see, God does not accept us based on what we have done or what we are, he accepts us based on what Christ has done. It's the nature that we receive at the second birth that allows, en, enables us rather, to respond properly to the hard times and not be one who is quick to speak and quick to anger and slow to listen. No, no, no, it's the new birth that puts in us the capacity to begin to be those who are slow to speak, quick to hear, slow to anger, and put aside filthiness and wickedness and be one that comes to church or has our Bible study at home and has a humble spirit that says, "Lord, what do I need to do? I want to be quick to hear what the word of God is telling me." You can't get, you can't have that, that kind of heart apart from the new birth.

John Wesley was the great Methodist evangelist and he had some doctrine I don't agree with but I believe he loved Jesus and I believe lots of souls were saved and everywhere he went to these dead Anglican churches, these, ah, Church of England churches where they were sprinkled as babies and they were packed out with people because they were all good Anglicans and John Wesley would go into those churches and he would thunder and over and over and over and over and over again he would tell those people, "You've been sprinkled by babies, you've gone jumped through the hoops, you, you, you've had the sacraments administered but you must be born-again. You must have the second birth. You must be born-again." And a man asked John Wesley one day, "Why do you always say that and why do you always preach, 'You must be born-again'?" John Wesley said, "Because you must be born-again." It's everything. It's not just one of many good things, it's the foundational stone. One of the best ways to know if you've been born-again and therefore you're freed from the penalty of sin is that you do care about fighting the good fight and striving to be free from the power of sin in your life.

God is good and this is all that I've talked about tonight is a part of his loving parental goodness to us.