
The God who does good to us, as He defines good

Philippians 3:7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

*Romans 8:28 We know that in everything **God works for good** with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.*

*Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

We deny God's truth that doesn't jive with what we want to believe.

We distort God's truth into something that does jive with what we want to believe.

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When God's Ways Shake Us—part 3

Saul: Distort and Deny

(The counterfeit gospel)

March 22, 2026

Theme verse:

Isaiah 55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

When God's ways shake us we have three options:

- a. Jonah—Resisted and ran from God.
- b. Saul—Distorted and denied God and His message
- c. Habakkuk—Trembled and trusted when life shook him.

What core beliefs drove these men's response?

- a. Jonah: "I know better."
- b. Saul: "I can make it better."
- c. Habakkuk: "There is nothing better."

When God's ways shake us, we:

- **Deny** God's word that I don't like and **Distort** the parts into something we will like.
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Who was Saul of Tarsus?

Acts 7:57 *At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

⁵⁹ *While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.*

Acts 8:1 **And Saul approved of their killing him.** *On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ **But Saul began to destroy the church.** Going from house to house, **he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.***

Acts 22:2 ... Then Paul said: ³ *“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. ⁴ I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison...*

The gospel distorted from...

Genesis 12:1 *The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. ² “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

Matt. 22:37 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.

The gospel distorted to...

- They turned His laws into rules for living that turned God into a vending machine, and furthered man’s self-centeredness driven by deeper pride.

Mark 7:6 Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “ ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁷ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’

- They turned faith into “If I do what God says then I’ll get the life I want.”

Romans 8:28 We know that in everything God works for good with those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.

- They turned the faith into a way to build their identity, value, and satisfaction through their efforts without having to depend on God.

Philippians 3:4 ... ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

Matthew 23:5 Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries ⁷ wide and the tassels on their garments long; ⁶ they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷ they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.
