

# “GOODNESS”

## The Sixth Characteristic of “the Fruit of the Spirit”

Chuck Northrop

The next description or attribute of "the fruit of the Spirit" is goodness. In the original language, goodness is a moral quality. It is uprightness of heart and life. Goodness is very closely associated with gentleness. Gentleness describes the kindlier quality of goodness whereas goodness describes the sterner or disciplined aspect. Sometimes goodness is shown by gentleness, but on other occasions, it is shown by discipline. Therefore, goodness stems from a zeal for the truth which rebukes, corrects, and chastises.

To illustrate this definition consider Jesus as He cleanses the temple. In John 2:13-17, we read that on the Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem "and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting." Consequently, He made a scourge, drove them out, poured out their money, and overturned their tables. Upon seeing this, His disciples remembered Psalm 69:9 which says, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Because of a zeal for God, Christ in all goodness corrected the situation in the temple.

Also, consider the denouncing of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:13-19. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). To follow after the Scribes and Pharisees was and is a very serious matter for their ways will lead one to destruction. Jesus, on the other hand, desires "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4) as clearly revealed by the fact that He willingly gave Himself on the cross. Thus, because of Jesus' zeal for truth and true righteousness, and His desire of salvation for all men, He warned, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

A final illustration to help in our understanding of goodness is found in Hebrews 12:6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Generally, we think about love and goodness in terms of gentleness. However, love and goodness ought also to be thought of as discipline. We as parents should understand this. Why does the mother slap the hand of the child reaching to the top of the stove? Because she loves that child and does not want any harm to come to him or her. Is this goodness? Of course it is! Why does God discipline or chasteneth His children? Because "it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11). This is God's goodness in action.

Although other forms of this word is used numerous times in scripture, the noun form as used in Galatians 5:22 is only used four times.

- Romans 15:14 "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."
- Ephesians 5:9 "(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)"
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11 "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."

In adjective form, this word describes being good in character and is beneficial in effect. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, he addressed Him as, "Good Master" or "Good Teacher" (Mark 10:17). Coupled with the fact of his kneeling before Jesus, he was saying Jesus was good in character and beneficial in effect as a teacher. In reply, Jesus pointedly asked, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark 10:18). The point Jesus made was this: by referring to Him as "good," the rich young ruler was acknowledging His divine nature.

However, there is another side to this account. The rich young ruler was obviously conceited about his own goodness. When Jesus told him to "keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17), he said, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth" (Mark 10:20). Once again, the good character of Jesus is displayed. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21). In kindness, Jesus invited him to be a disciple, but in goodness, Jesus was stern and candidly pointed out his lacking. As in "the fruit of the Spirit," both qualities stem from love. Because of His love, Jesus was direct with the rich young ruler, and in so doing, He convicted him that he was really not as good as he thought. Sadly instead of repenting, the young man went away grieved.

The opposite of goodness is evil or bad. Concerning the children of promise, Isaac and Jacob, Paul wrote in Romans 9:11, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." The action of Isaac and Jacob, whether good or evil, did not influence God's choice. God's providential plan to bless all the nations of the earth was through Abraham's and Isaac's seed. Isaac was blessed over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau not because they were good or bad,

but because they were children of promise. Thus, through the seed of Isaac and Jacob — Christ, we, too, are children of promise.

Also, in 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul writes, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." In the original language, the word "bad" in this verse and the word "evil" in Romans 9:11 are the same. It means base, wrong, or wicked and refers to a person or thing that lack those qualities they ought to possess whether in action or thoughts. Similarly, Jesus said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). Those who are characterized by "the fruit of the Spirit," goodness, will be rewarded with eternal life, and those who do evil will be rewarded with death (eternal separation from God) and damnation.

What does it mean to do good? Can a person simply do acts of kindnesses and expect to inherit eternal life? The answer is NO! Remember Jesus said, "there is none good but one, that is, God" "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Doing good doesn't take away or "balance the scale" concerning sin. Instead, the perfect blood of Christ was shed to take away sins (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7). Therefore to have forgiveness, one must come into contact with His blood which is a true act of goodness on man's part. In order to come into contact with the blood of Christ, one must obey the gospel (see 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). A person obeys the gospel after hearing the word, and based upon this hearing, one comes to believe "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:30-31) and turns from his or her sins by repentance (Acts 17:30). A person, then, continues in obedient faith by confessing his or her faith before others (Matthew 10:32-33) and by being baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). This is just the beginning! Once a person obeys the gospel, he or she must live faithfully as a Christian — a life characterized by "the fruit of the Spirit."