

6. The Fruit of Goodness

Luke 6:43-45 & Galatians 5:22

Intro

A few weeks ago after when I preached on patience a person told me that their most difficult time with patience was driving the car. Sometimes they just lose it and get angry with other drivers. I too have to admit that driving is one of the areas in my life that I can be very impatient and close to losing my anger.

I thought about that and wondered, is it really a problem with impatience or is it that we have a problem with our inherent goodness? Are we self centered people who believe our rights and feelings are more important than the person in the other car? But we need to admit that we too have been an irritation to other drivers.

Defining Goodness

The well known poet W. H. Auden said, "*Goodness is easier to recognize than to define.*"

One of the problems with goodness is the same problem we have with love. The word "good" is used in so many ways, just as we use the word "love." We love our children, we love our spouse, and we love a beautiful sunset, but each of these "loves" is entirely different.

It's the same with the word "good." We say, "I had a good meal," or "I met a good person," or "We had a good cry." They're different, aren't they?

So let's look at how the word "good" is used in the Bible. For instance, we read in the opening chapters of Genesis that God created the heavens & the earth, and then He created life in the sea and in the air and on the ground. After each created thing, God looked at it and said, "*It is good.*" What does that mean?

Well, I guess it means that when God looked at what He had done, He was pleased with it. So maybe we could say, "*Goodness means something that pleases God.*" Or maybe we could go a step further and say, "*A good person is a person who is pleasing to God.*"

What is at the heart of "goodness"? It is difficult, because it is not the same as "*good works*". That is how we see it, but we all know that "*good works*" can be faked, can be put on the exterior like a mask.

Our own goodness won't get us one toe into the kingdom of God.

Isaiah 64:6 says, "*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags: we all shrivel up like a leaf and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*"

In our sinful, selfish human nature there is no motivation to live God's way and accomplish His purposes.

Goodness is a characteristic of the heart where the Spirit of God is alive and active and molding us into Jesus' likeness. Goodness is when the Holy Spirit is taking the "old" and making it "new". The actions follow, as a reflection of the heart.

God's Goodness

God's Goodness – as the fruit of the Spirit means to be God-like.

25 times in the Bible goodness is used to describe the moral or ethical character of God.

Edward J. Carnell in his book, *Christian Commitment* said, “*God never urges himself to be good, because he is good. That is, his nature always inclines irresistibly toward righteousness. God is never torn by evil motives. God is light and in him is no darkness at all. So he does not need to be reminded about the duty of his deity.*”

No one needs to say, “Now today, God, mind your manners, do what's right, and avoid evil.” When a person *is* good from their innate nature, he does not need to be told to be good.

God is good because He is pure, holy, forgiving, loving, and giving. So therefore, if we who are believers are good people, then these characteristics must be true of us.

Biblical Definition of Goodness

1) First, the New Testament Greek word used here for "goodness" is found only in scripture. Even in scripture it's only used four times in relation to people.

2) In contrast, the word "goodness" is based upon the root word, "good." This word is used over 500 times in the New Testament. However, because it's used so often, it has a wide variety of ways how it can be interpreted. As I mentioned earlier consider the different ways we use the word good. It can describe a good book, a good meal or a good person. It can mean the characteristic of something that is top quality or excellent.

3) Now the fruit of kindness is closely related to the fruit of goodness, but they aren't the same. Kindness is a more mellowing quality; it is a gentle spirit. The word goodness is a more energized word. It is more vigorous and sharp in its very nature.

4) This word goodness here in Galatians 5:22 carries the idea of generosity like someone who goes the second mile when only one mile is required. This certainly isn't natural, because these are traits that are ultimately produced by the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

Goodness (Greek: *Agathosune*) means inherently, morally, or practically good; that which is profitable or beneficial to others.

So the believer who is controlled by the Spirit of God will bear the fruit of *agathosune*. They will selflessly act on behalf of others. Giving to the poor, providing for one's children, visiting the sick, volunteering to clean up after a mess. To gently confront someone about a sin demonstrates goodness, and praying for an enemy. These are a few examples of someone producing the fruit of goodness.

Encouragement from Scripture to be Good and do Good

In Luke 6:45, Jesus said, "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good.*" True goodness comes from a person who possess a good treasure in their heart. Goodness was personified in the life of Jesus, and Christians are to imitate Him.

Colossians 1:10 teaches “*that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*”

Ephesians 2:10 says, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*”

Also 2 Thess. 2:16-17 says, “*May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved*

us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.”

Good People are a Powerful Witness

In Acts 11:24 we read about that *“Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith - and many people were added to the Lord through him.”*

Acts 9:36 *“At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.”*

In Matthew 25:21-23, Jesus said that a good servant is one that uses his talents and abilities for the glory of God and the good of others.

We are commanded to be good to believers. Galatians 6:10 instructs us, *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”*

Conclusion

In conclusion the fruit of Goodness means: *“That which is profitable or beneficial to others.”*

I want to share with you a true story which explains the meaning of *“That which is profitable or beneficial to others.”* The story is told by Rebecca Pippert (Christian writer & conference speaker).

“The story begins with a fellow named Bill. He had wild hair, wore a T-shirt with holes in it, blue jeans and no shoes. In the entire time I knew him I never once saw Bill wear a pair of shoes. Rain, sleet or snow, Bill was barefoot. This was literally his wardrobe for his whole four years of college.

He was brilliant and looked like he was always pondering and thinking deeply. He became a Christian while attending college. Across the street from the campus was a church full of well-dressed, middle-class people. They wanted to develop a ministry to the college students, but they were not sure how to go about it.

One day, Bill decided to worship there. He walked into the church, complete with wild hair, T-shirt, blue jeans and bare feet. The church was completely packed, and the service had already begun. Bill started down the aisle to find a place to sit. By now the people were looking a bit uncomfortable, but no one said anything.

As Bill moved closer and closer to the pulpit, he realized there were no empty seats. So he sat down on the carpet right up front. (Although such behavior would have been perfectly acceptable at a college fellowship, this was a scenario this particular congregation had never witnessed before!) By now, the people seemed uptight, and the tension in the air was thickening.

Right about the time Bill took his "seat," a deacon began slowly making his way down the aisle from the back of the sanctuary. The deacon was in his eighties, had silver-gray hair, a three-piece suit and a pocket watch. He was a godly man - very elegant, dignified and courtly. He walked with a cane and, as he neared the boy, the church members thought, "You can't blame him for what he's going to do. How can you expect a man of his age and background to understand some college kid on the floor?"

It took a long time for the man to reach the boy. The church was utterly silent except for the clicking of his cane. You couldn't even hear anyone breathing. All eyes were on the deacon.

But then they saw the elderly man drop his cane on the floor. With great difficulty, he sat down on the floor next to Bill and worshiped with him. Everyone in the congregation choked up with emotion. When the minister gained control, he told the people, "What I am about to preach, you will never remember. What you've just seen, you will never forget." (By Rebecca Manley Pippert, Chicken Soup for the Christian Family Soul.)

That folks is the fruit of Goodness in that deacon: *“That which is profitable or beneficial to others.”*