

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, PART 6 (GOODNESS)
Galatians 5:22-23

Did you enjoy anything this week? Anything good in your life that you enjoyed? Was God good to you? Did you taste and see that the Lord is good? If you say no, you just weren't paying attention because this world is full of God's goodness and good things. God, in his goodness, has absolutely filled this world with so many good gifts for us to enjoy that we're in over our heads in them. We're drowning in God's goodness. So much so that we forget to rely on Him in this land of milk and honey. We have so many things that we don't even need. We're just constantly enjoying and taking in God's goodness, and you know, we don't deserve any of it. He does it because He's good. God's goodness to us is **steady** and it's **abundant**. It's one of the greatest proofs of His existence and reasons why we sing praises! "The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works." (Ps. 145:9). When I think of God's goodness, I often think of the wonder of creation and how He holds it all together. The beauty of it, complexity of it, harmony of it, order of it, diversity of it, mobility of it. "He is the Wellspring of the joy of living... All thy works with joy surround Thee, earth and heaven reflect thy rays, stars and angels sing around Thee, center of unbroken praise. Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea, singing bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in Thee." We are surrounded by God's goodness in this world.

And God's goodness goes beyond the physical as well. In Christ, He has provided everything we need for our spiritual needs! We have everything you need in Christ. You may have really blown it this week in your spiritual walk, but if you know God's Word, you know that you can rest assured in Christ. You don't have to beat guilt and shame over your head. He remembers you're but dust. His mercy and grace is there to catch you and give you a fresh start. 1 Chronicles 16:34 says, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His mercy endures forever" (1 Chron. 16:34). You can't even begin to number or keep up mentally with all the wonderful blessings we experience constantly. Try and keep track of all of God's goodness to you. You can't do it. God is infinite in His goodness. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" Jas. 1:17. That's the steady and abundant goodness of God! He is good and He does good (Psalm 119:86). His goodness is the drive behind everything He does. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we walk by the Spirit, we can be partakers of His goodness and be good like Him. If you're just joining us this morning, we have been working our way through Galatians and have made it to the fruit of the Spirit and looking at each virtue individually. Keep goodness in mind as we read our text for today, think of God's goodness because **the Galatians had forgotten all about God's goodness in Christ and were lacking goodness for one another.**

Now this word for goodness is not as easy to grasp as the other virtues have been. And that's because it is such a broad term. Even in English we just throw it around a lot of times without much thought: This is good, that's good. How are you? Good, How was your day? It was good – and the married men in here have found out that that response doesn't work – that doesn't go over very well. Your bride expects a little more detail than that guys. In classes on writing and even classes on preaching, "good" is one of those words we're encouraged to replace with one more specific, more creative. It's a word that's broad in definition and typically overused. But when it comes to God, and saying that God is good, it means He is the ideal standard and perfection of all that is good. He's the definition of it. As I studied this word out and was taking notes, I couldn't help but notice two major sides of this coin of goodness. The **first side of the coin** is that of moral integrity or character. The **second side** is generosity. To be good and to do good. And based on our present context, the Galatians needed both and Paul will address both in chapter 6: he will tell

those who are spiritual to restore a sinning brother, being generous by bearing one another's burdens, sharing and doing good. Goodness is a **God-honoring and benevolent character that is what it is and does what it does is for the benefit of others**.

❖ **Goodness is nourishing in every way.**

Always for the best. Always **life-giving, making life sweeter and better**. It's a sweetener, an additive to **your tea**. It is to be benevolent and full of good will towards men.¹ You want the best for them. To be filled with goodness is equated with spirituality. Being able to bring restoration to people's lives through the way you live and the things you do. You have a beneficial and good effect on those around you.

And the first thing we need to notice about goodness is that...

I. THE SPIRIT PRODUCES GOODNESS. (V. 22)

We have to keep reminding ourselves that this is not something we can produce in our power. We have to yield to the Spirit of God. To get a grasp on goodness, we have to think of God's goodness and the emphasis today will be on His goodness because when you're focused on His goodness to you, it encourages us to do good for others. Only God is truly and wholly and completely good. **Perfect goodness belongs to God alone**. When someone called Jesus, "Good Teacher," He replied, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone," He wasn't denying His deity – He is Yahweh – but revealing what this man thought of Him and stating a fact. Only God is truly good. Man just isn't. We are not born good. We are born in sin and with a sin nature. David said, "In sin did my mother conceive me." No one is born sinless. We've looked at that in Sunday school recently. A baby or child may be considered innocent by God (Jer. 19:4) until they reach a **level of accountability**, but they are not sinless. The moment they come out of the womb they have a bent towards rebellion. We're just not good from the get go. Psychology's premise that man is inherently good is all wrong. And until we admit we're not good, and receive Christ, we can't partake of His goodness, because "All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one." (Rom. 3:12). Only God is good. He is the only person without defect and without flaw, perfect and complete and wholesome. He is the ideal personage. "The Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him" Psalm 92:15.

But the good news is that this is an attribute or characteristic that **He desires to share with us!** When you get into the attributes of God, you realize quickly that there are attributes of God that are **communicable and non-communicable**, attributes that **He shares and doesn't share**. A non-communicable attribute, one He doesn't share, are obviously any of those omni's: Omniscience (all-knowing), Omnipotence (all-powerful), Omnipresence (all-present). He doesn't share His transcendence – He is above everyone and everything and nothing will ever be superior to Him. Everyone and everything is subject to Him. These attributes are reserved for God alone. But through our faith in Christ, we have been born again by His Spirit, and as we walk with Him, He is going to produce some great characteristics of Himself in us like His love and joy and peace and patience and goodness. In fact, unless you have put your faith in Christ, you can't even begin to apply this. Goodness is a virtuous characteristic of God produced by His Spirit. And anyone who genuinely comes to Him in this way will not be turned away, because He is good. There is a goodness in a complete sense that only belongs to God alone, but He does want us to share His goodness with others through us. You might even be surprised to hear Paul say to the Romans in Romans 15:14, "I myself am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness..." In Ephesians 5:9 he says, "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all **goodness** and righteousness and truth).

There is a side of goodness that is firm and unyielding but a side that is definitely generous and yielding. **The firmness of it has more to do with being and generosity more with doing.** When He stands firm in something and refuses to compromise who He is, He does it because He's good. There's firm side to His goodness that will not flex. The Lord is good. He will not not be good.

II. **GOODNESS IS FIRM – IT IS GOOD.**

Where the flesh is being stirred up and agitated by the legalism in the Galatian churches, resulting in immorality or impurity or sensuality – goodness is meant to produce the opposite – character and that which is morally pure. We're in battle of good vs. evil. We're to overcome evil with good. And goodness is in accordance with God's character and **anything that is being produced that lines up with His character, who God is, is going to be beneficial.** When something is pure and godly and good, it is healthy and beneficial. If it's immoral or evil, it's unhealthy and destructive to people's lives. Goodness has an **uplifting effect on the quality of peoples' lives.**

❖ **Goodness uplifts the quality of peoples' lives.**

Goodness is firm in that it refuses to support something that's destroying peoples' lives, like legalism or license. They both steal your freedom and spirituality. The opposite of goodness is that which destroys and tears down peoples' lives and encourages sin. Goodness, however, is not willing to compromise and call sin okay or evil okay because that wouldn't line up with God's goodness or purpose or desire for anyone's life. To flex and support sin in someone's life is to support their destruction, now and in eternity.

And there is a wax fruit of goodness that confuses evil things with good things. That happens a lot today, people calling good, evil and evil, good – darkness for light and light for darkness. Isaiah wrote about that (5:20). Wax goodness says, "Do what makes you feel good." Good is what you think it is. But real goodness is that which is in accord with God's character and not simply on feelings or emotions because it understands that eventually, those things that feel good may destroy you. And the writer of Hebrews warns us to train our senses to discern good and evil through the solid food of the Word of God (Heb. 5:14). There's a lot of evil out there that looks like light but isn't light. Satan has all sorts of counterfeits out there trying to deceive people by making darkness appear as light in the religious world. The only antidotes are the Word of God and praying for wisdom. There's another form of wax fruit goodness that tries to be good and do good, but it just wants to make themselves look good. It's not really for the benefit of others but for their own narcissistic love of self. The Judaizers, like the Pharisees, were known for this wax fruit goodness – praying in the streets so everyone knows how holy they are and making a display out of their offerings. They did it out of love for self and not for seeing other built up – Judaizer take pleasure in seeing others fall, because it makes them look better.

True goodness come with a holy audacity that's willing to dig it's heels in and draw a line between good and evil. It is goodness that refuses to support destructive activities like abortion or pornography or drugs because they are not wholesome and they are destroying peoples' lives. Goodness wants to uphold a standard, not just for the standards' sake, but for the benefit of all in the community and for the common good. Goodness is a light in the world that somewhat stubbornly refuses to support evil, even when others are calling it good. Goodness, if it's engrained in us, refuses to dabble in sin because we know that it isn't just affecting us, it's affecting those around us! Even our most personal sins hidden from men destroys the common good of everyone and eventually the testimony of the church. You have to think about how it's affecting others or may affect others. Just by dabbling in a little late night immorality online is creating a market for it, and that market is ruining the lives of those involved in it and may even reach the ones you love, even your own kids someday. How you live affects other people and it affects the church. Goodness

is good for the benefit of others. It takes us beyond self and thinks of others. And there's a certain amount of goodness He reserves for those who obey Him and His Word (Prov. 16:20).

And I want to answer a couple of questions to show you just how good God is and how firm goodness is.

If one of God's children is living in sin, is that going to stop God's goodness? Absolutely not. Here's why: Because **everything He does, He does in goodness**. He disciplines His children out of His goodness. Listen to the writer of Hebrews 12 (7-11): "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakes, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share in His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." As a child of God you can be living for God and in His will and His goodness will be there blessing you with this pre-peaceful fruit of righteousness. But if you get off track and you start living in a way that is clearly not His will, His goodness is going to be there in discipline, getting you back on track. His goodness just keeps on working. He's always good. Remember the words of the psalmist: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep Your word. [affliction brought obedience! Then he says,] You are good and do good. Teach me Your statutes" Psalm 119:68-69. If God puts any restraints on us in any way or any commands or afflicts us in our straying from them, we know He is working for our good. **Goodness works in wisdom in spite of someone's ignorance of what is good**. If God didn't discipline us and let us live comfortably in sin, He would be violating His goodness. My friend, **goodness never stops**. You say, "**Well what about all the evil in the world?**" Have you not read Genesis 50:20? What Joseph's brothers meant for evil, God meant for good, that many might be blessed? He can override evil and use it for good.

And what about in His judgments on this world like the global flood of Noah's day? I've said it before but God so loved this world that He flooded it. In goodness He flooded the world because through the flood He was working through goodness for restorative and preservative purposes. And the world in Noah's day was so wicked and so evil that God flooded it to preserve it. God loves us so much that He didn't let us destroy ourselves with sin that would have overtaken us. And this might hit some folks like a smelling salt, but what did He create immediately following the flood **to be a minister of God in the world for good** to maintain good? Government and capital punishment. God gave man divine permission to bear the sword: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed." The world needed that. It's for man's good. So that, unlike before the flood, evil would be restrained and man could prosper. In the next verse God says now, "be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it." Romans 13:1-7 indicates that without some form of government in the world, the quality of life would be terrible. God puts it there to do good. Our nation needs this message. "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. **For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil**. Do you want to have no fear authority? **Do what is good** and you will have praise from the same; **for it is a minister of God to you for good**. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; **for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an**

avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake." The government has this God-ordained principle it operates according to, whereby those who are evil and murderous can be executed, justly, to protect the innocent and restrain others from doing the same and protect the common good of man. Are there times where, out of conscience sake, we might have to obey God rather than the government? Yeah. Caesar will never be God. But this a solid biblical principle to understand. Just because someone is in the military and takes the life of some terrorist in war, does not make them a murderer. They are operating under the oath of the government God ordained to keep evil in check. My point being in these things is that goodness is firm, and must remain firm for the benefit of everyone.

Goodness is also generous with an active generosity. It abundant and benevolent to all. This is more about doing than being.

III. **GOODNESS IS GENEROUS – IT DOES GOOD.**

It's more than just what we are, it's what we do. Because God has been so good to us and we are aware of that, we should be generous to others. Where the flesh was producing the selfish and greedy hearts of jealousy and envy in the Galatian churches, the Spirit of God comes into the heart of a believer walking by the Spirit and produces **generosity towards others – sharing and desiring to be a blessing to others in any way. It's virtue of benevolence: giving of ones time and money and resources and gifts and just plain good deeds.** Again I don't want to get too specific with application and ruin the application the Spirit of God has for you but it's as simple as giving to help someone in need, taking flowers to someone in the hospital to brighten up their day, serving at the homeless shelter, helping out the widow, helping a neighbor rebuild after a flood. When you lose sight of the gospel like the Galatians, your world becomes self-centered and all about you. You're worried about you getting what you need instead of seeing how you have all you need. The gospel mindset says, "God has so blessed me. How can I be a blessing?" Paul says in 6:9-10, "Let us not lose heart in **doing good**, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us **do good to all people**, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." The whole next chapter is a well-rounded message on goodness. Goodness wants to see others prosper and be blessed. It is the opposite of jealousy and envy and greed. It weeds that out of us.

In Matthew 20, Jesus shared a parable to weed that greedy and envious heart out of us. He described the kingdom of heaven like a landowner who went out at different times during the day and hired workers in the morning, afternoon and evening – and those hired in the morning agreed to work for a denarius that day. When the day was over and they got paid, the guys who were hired in the morning started to grumble and became jealous because the landowner paid everyone the same, even though they worked longer. They thought they should receive more than the others. And the landowner says, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree to work for me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am [*agathos*] generous?" As believers, envy and jealousy should have no place among us. There is nothing we have that we deserve. Even when we serve hard our whole life we should say, "We are worthless servants; we have only done our duty" (Lk. 17:10). Through this parable Jesus is weeding out of us this idea that we deserve more than others or that we are entitled to anything. We just aren't. Ephesians 5 (3-5) says, "Let there be no...greed among you...but rather giving of thanks." Don't

be greedy, be thankful! If we're filled with goodness, that competitive spirit diminished and we don't have a problem with the Lord being generous to others. And He is generous to all.

❖ **God's goodness is no respector of persons.**

He is good to all. Matthew 5:45 says, "for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good." The sun touches every face on this planet. "He and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." You didn't deserve rain on your garden any more than your unsaved and ungrateful neighbor deserved it on His, but God blesses you both because He's generous to all. He can't help but be generous. And that impartial generosity is what draws men to Himself. I don't know about you but that's part of what drew me to God. I started to become overwhelmed by just how many good things He has created for us to enjoy – I love coffee and the coffee bean is not an accident. God created it for us to enjoy. I see God's goodness in a simple cup of coffee. I also love hunting. One of my first memories of genuinely thanking and praising God, when I started to develop a relationship with Him, came the moment I harvested a nice buck with my bow. It was a beautiful buck and I knew that deer was not some accident. He gave us animals to hunt and harvest and enjoy out of His sheer goodness. At the end of each day of creation, He looked back on what He made and said, "It was good." He has provided for more than what we need. Things we don't even need but He gives just so we can enjoy and it draws us to Him. And your unsaved neighbor, if you're generous, may just see God in you and be drawn to Him. This is a very attractive virtue.

But as always, nothing expresses the goodness of God like the cross – That's the greatest expression of God's goodness. There we find unfathomable riches of mercy and grace – all provision for our spiritual needs. And **this is the main goodness of God that the Judaizers were distracting the Galatians from.** Don't let anyone distract you from that goodness. He gave Himself to free us from sin and from the Law by means of a better covenant, a new covenant, one that frees you from dead works and allows you to draw near to God. One that leaves you with a peaceful and good conscience (Heb. 2:14; 13:18) unlike the Law. Jesus is the guarantee of a better covenant with a superior priesthood and superior power (Heb. 5-10). He is our High Priest and he calls us a kingdom of priests. And He tells us that in light of His sacrifice, we should diligent to offer up sacrifices of doing good and of sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased (Heb. 13:15-16). I don't know if there's a better verse to describe the proper lifestyle and motives of those who have been blessed as we have than 1 Timothy 6:17, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed."

Lastly I want to encourage everyone to always remember God is good and does good.

❖ **Always remember: God is good and does good.**

Lastly I just want to assure you that no matter who you are or what's going on in your life, you can know that God is good. "God works all things for the good of those who love Him" (Rom. 8:28). "Surely goodness and livingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps. 23:6). And don't forget Psalm 27:13, "I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord."

¹ A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy* (New York, NY: Harper One, 1961), 82.