

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (GOODNESS)

INTRODUCTION

What is the first thing that you think of when you hear the word “good”? Most of us like to think that we are good people. We like it very much when people call us good. And we call people good if they have been good to us. Doing good to someone who does good to you, is not really goodness. It is rather two people exchanging favors.

What does it mean to be a good person? What makes them good? *[Ask COOL members if they can name characteristics of good people that they know]*

We compare ourselves to others and say we are not as bad as they are. We never murdered anyone. We don't cheat on our spouse. We "mostly" obey speed limits. We never break the law! But never breaking the law does not make a person good. It makes them a law-abiding person.

Doing nothing wrong does not automatically make you good. Goodness – is more than NOT doing BAD. It involves virtue equipped at every point. Goodness means that we are prepared at every moment to help, to improve, to make better. We are prepared at every moment to offer love and kindness.

One of the most famous passages is Luke 18:18-19. The rich young ruler calls Jesus good Teacher. “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good, except God alone”. And so Jesus responds by laying out the starting point for any study of goodness. No one is good except God alone. In other words apart from God, goodness doesn't exist. He is the absolute standard of goodness. He is the highest good. Anything else that is good derives its goodness from Him. Jesus says it even more bluntly, No one is good.

SHARING

1) Goodness characteristics

Goodness has 2 characteristics:

a) Faultless

This characteristic is best seen in Daniel's behavior. He lived such a good life that his enemies could not find any fault from his works in government and personal life. Later on, they laid a trap by deceiving the king to on his prayerful life. Daniel's goodness shows maturity of character and devotion to his duty.

Paul referred to such characteristics as good reputation, well thought of by those outside, lest he become involved in slander and fall into the devil's trap (1 Tim 3:7). We know this is not the case in many believer's life such that the world mock Christians. We must develop this characteristic in our lives through the works of Holy Spirit.

b) Doing Good

Jesus commands us on this character in Luke 6:35. Read it in your own translation.

CEV says “But love your enemies and be good to them (your enemies). Lend without expecting to be paid back. Then you will get a great reward, and you will be the true children of God in heaven. (God) He is good even to people who are unthankful and cruel.”

to love our enemies and (expressing it by) do them good (Luk 6:35)

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Now, let's combine these 2 characteristics: faultless inwardly and doing good outwardly – Goodness. If Christians are producing this fruit of Spirit, our Heavenly Father will be glorified. Witnessing is going to be much easier. We won't hear people's mockery on sins of Christians, and rather we'll hear Christians' good reputation. Wouldn't it be great? So, let's learn how to cultivate this character.

2) Developing Goodness

The points below certainly are not exhaustive but let them help us grow and develop Goodness in our lives.

a) By yielding to Holy Spirit

This is the same as any other fruit of the Spirit. If we want to be faultless, how could we do it with our own effort? Or, does anyone of us naturally love someone who cheats us, slanders us with malicious gossips and harms our family? Naturally we will fight our enemies and retaliate to all evils they do to us.

In Romans 7, Paul was disappointed that he had tried very hard to do good but had failed. He was not strong enough to do it on his own (verses 18, 19). But in chapter 8, verses 1–4, he showed the Christian's secret for overcoming the problem by walking and living in the Spirit.

When we are born again when we believe, we are re-born through the Spirit of God. We have the seed of God (God's character, including goodness) in our lives. We have potential and capacity for goodness. Rather than struggling to live a good life, we must let this spiritual seed to grow and flourish by yielding our lives to Holy Spirit. Act 10:38 – by God's anointing with the Holy Spirit and with power, Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. Holy Spirit will empower us to love and do good like Jesus does!

b) By leading a life of loving and forgiving

If we claim we love and yet do not forgive, we are actually contradicting ourselves. Where there is love, there is forgiveness. God is love and He showed us how to love and forgive. When Jesus was crucified on the cross, He forgave those who crucified Him. If you have difficulties in forgiving, surrender it to God and He will help you. You need to learn to put the past behind and allow God's grace to work in your life.

Forgiveness is extending God's goodness to others. When we forgive our trespassers, we are lifting a burden from their shoulder. They will feel enlightened and be able to move on their lives. In today's world there are many people whose lives are destroyed because of unforgiveness. Not only their lives are affected but many times also it affects people around them. That is why Jesus came to give hope through the forgiveness of our sins. As His disciples, empowered by His Spirit, let us live a loving and forgiving life.

c) By practicing graciousness and generosity

True goodness is looking beyond oneself. We need to extend it to others the goodness of God. God can do it Himself but He wants us to be His extension of His goodness. When people are touched by God's goodness, they will come to God. All of us come to the faith in Christ, when we experience God's goodness (example: forgiveness of our sins, justified, being helped, being encouraged, many more).

Anything done to help others, to improve their lives, caring for a person's physical needs, tending the sick or injured, feeding the hungry, offering prayers for others and contributing money out of your own abundance to help others is demonstrating God's goodness. Les Miserables, a story of about an ex-convict's life, was turned around when a bishop showed him forgiveness, graciousness and generosity. Although he stole the silver candlesticks and was caught, the bishop instead told the police that the ex-convict actually forgot the rest of the candlesticks! When everyone else shut their door at him, the bishop welcomed him and showed God's goodness beyond his comprehension. He then went on to show grace and generosity to those around him.

CLOSING

1. Share your testimonies in doing "good works" in Mat 5:16 and how it can glorify God. Let these testimonies inspire and encourage others to do good.
2. Pray that more and more Christians (including our COOL members) develop "faultless and doing good" living for God's glory.

REFERENCES

We would like to give credits to the following materials as sources of inspiration to this writing.

1. The Fruit of The Spirit by John W. Sanderson,
2. Melvin M. Newland, www.sermoncentral.com