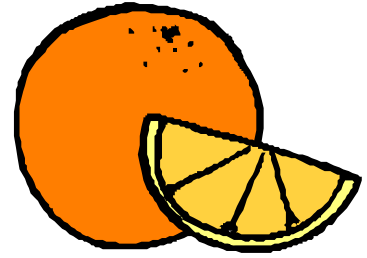


Spirit Fruit

Galatians 5 v 22 - 23



1 fruit 9 segments

6. Goodness

‘Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart’
(Psalm 73:1)

The root of the word used in Psalm 73 v 1 is a very general one and includes the ideas of being good, beneficial, well, pleasing, pleasant, favourable, lovely, cheerful, happy, comfortable, right, to make good, to do well, to do good, and to cheer. It covers all aspects of goodness, from practical, economic or material good through the abstract idea of goodness (pleasant etc) and to quality.

Particularly, in Psalm 73 v 1 it is moral goodness and uprightness that stands at the top of another long list which is very similar to that above.

In Galatians 5 v 22 it is active goodness including expressing goodness, but it can be shown in zeal for goodness by rebuke, correction, chastising if it is used to bring about good.

As we consider the fruit of goodness we must consider it as active goodness in all its forms and colours.

We began with Psalm 73:1 which itself is a beginning. It is at the start of Book three of the psalms. It deals with a lifelong perplexing question – why does it seem that the wicked and disobedient seem to get away with their rebellious lives, while those who seek to follow God appear to suffer? The answer to such a question has to be the goodness of God and the fact that ultimately the wicked suffer eternal punishment while the righteous enjoy the eternal presence of their Lord.

The Psalmist declared that God is good in other Psalms...

- 86 v 5 forgiving and good
- 106 v 1 good and forever loving
- 107 v 1 good and forever loving
- 118 v 1 good and forever loving

GOODNESS AND CREATION

- Genesis begins the teaching of God's goodness Genesis 1
v 4,10,12,18,21,25,31

We often think of creation being good – but what does that mean?

- Paul touches on creation and its place 1 Timothy 4 v 4

JESUS' TEACHING ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD

- Jesus declared the goodness of God Matthew 19 v 16 – 22

The rich young man was looking at goodness as a means to an end – to gain eternal life, or righteousness by works. The word for eternal, used here (aionios) is not eternal time, but eternal vision, referring to such as befits God, belongs to God or is characteristic of God. The greatest characteristics of God are, loving, giving and forgiving, qualities that seemed to be lacking in the man. Jesus was showing him that eternal life is not built on law, but lifestyle and the things that this man so longed for, fulfillment, joy, peace and satisfaction were only found by looking towards eternal goals and godly living.

Jesus responded to the man by saying 'why do you ask me about WHAT is good. The man was asking about what (works), when he should have been asking about who (God). Mark 10 v 18 and Luke 18 v 19 record this question slightly differently 'why do you call me good'. When the man was asking about what is good, he was really asking what is good in Jesus, as if there were certain steps Jesus took that could be followed. It is rather like asking a professional gardener for some tips on weed control. Jesus' response must have come as a bit of a surprise 'why ask me'?

The man, looking for eternal peace, fulfillment and satisfaction was seeking some action that he could take in order to achieve his goal. Goodness is not just about what we do, but more about what and who we are.

Jesus explained that goodness was not achieved by an act but by God. God is good and only God is truly good, so all goodness must stem from Him. We begin to see this clearer when we look at Jesus' answer – keep the commandments. When the man asked which ones, Jesus answered him by reciting 6 of the 10 commandments.

It is generally accepted that the 10 commandments can be divided into two sections.

The first 4 commands concern our relationship with God...

1. Do not worship other gods.
2. Do not worship idols.
3. Do not misuse God's name.
4. Keep the Sabbath holy.

The last 6 deals with our relationship towards others...

5. Honor your father & mother.
6. Do not murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not lie.
10. Do not covet.

Jesus chose to cite the final section, our dealings with others – moral goodness

There was nothing that the rich young man could perform for God that would impress Him, but there was a lifestyle change which should be demonstrated towards others, not to gain eternal life but, rather, to exhibit eternal life.

It is also interesting to note that Jesus chose to quote one of these commandments out of order. Honour your mother and father should come at the top of the list of the final six, but Jesus places it last as recorded by Mark and Luke, also in Matthew who then quotes Jesus as concluding with 'love your neighbour as yourself', which Jesus refers to as a new commandment in John 13 v 34.

Jesus obviously chose to leave the commandment regarding parents to the end. We do not know anything about the man's parents, but their situation was appropriate to this command. Perhaps his wealth had left him ashamed of his less well to do parents, and therefore could have used the law of Corban to justify his behaviour and still claim to satisfy the law (Mark 7 v 9 – 13). Although he may have satisfied an earthly law, the Lord continues to highlight the principle of goodness which goes beyond the law and into love, including selling our belongings to show goodness to the poor, not just to benefit the poor but also to benefit him. There was a common Jewish thought that wealth was a mark of divine favour, so why would anyone ask him to give some or all of it away?

Do we ever struggle to give up something for goodness sake.

There is another possible situation represented here. Like the prodigal son, this man may have had wealthy parents who he had began to take for granted. He was certainly living a high-flying way of life and perhaps he felt that he deserved a special place with Christ.

Is there a tendency in each of us that we can look to the what of goodness, the where of goodness rather than the who of goodness.

We have seen in this story of the rich young ruler that each of the three gospels which cover this event, bring out different emphasis. How do we handle the gospels, when they vary in some detail? To some, it is evidence that there is a conflict and that scripture therefore contradicts itself and is unreliable. However, if the main teaching holds true, and it always does, we could hold a very different view. That is that, rather than contradicting it shows that the gospel writers are individuals, recording events for themselves, rather than one gospel being written first and the others simply copying it. If that is the case then it stands only to prove the quality and reliability of these individual gospels rather than placing doubt on them. After all, if more than one writer records the basic facts in his own words and others do the same, that has to be seen as confirmation rather than contradiction.

GOODNESS AND GIFTS – God demonstrates true goodness in giving

- The Holy Spirit likened to good gifts Luke 11 v 5 - 13

God's goodness is seen here in His willingness to impart to us the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit, but there is more to be seen in context.

The picture here is of a person, embarrassed by an unexpected late visitor. In Palestine it was an accepted practice that anyone traveling late into the evening, to avoid the mid-day sun and heat, would be welcomed to a friend's house. We see this clearly in the account of Jesus on the Emmaus Road in Luke 24 v 13 – 35, where the travelers encouraged their new friend (Jesus – unknown to them) to stay the night and avoid the hidden dangers of robbers.

In chapter 11, a visitor arrives and hospitality would have been absolutely essential and to fail would have been most embarrassing. The owner of the house had no bread, possibly because it had been eaten to avoid it going stale in the hot conditions. Beside himself with worry, he goes to a neighbour's house to see if they could help, but they would not answer the door. A house in those days consisted of a lower area occupied by the animals with a raised area where the family would sleep close together to keep warm on mats on the floor. For one of those people to answer the door, would have caused a great commotion and woken the family and animals alike.

The story shows that the desperate host kept knocking and it was his persistence that evoked a response. the N.I.V calls his behaviour, bold. The Greek here, is 'shameless recklessness.

Parables can be used in two ways. The word parable means to lay alongside, either as a parallel, or in this case, to highlight an opposite. The point that Jesus is making here, of course it that God is willing to come to us and meet our needs. Not that we keep on like spoiled children, nagging and wearying our parents, but that by asking,

seeking and knocking, he will supply the gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift from God's goodness.

- Mary spoke of God's good gifts Luke 1 v 53
- God's good gifts should keep us from temptation James 1 v 13 – 18

In verses 2 – 16 James teaches on overcoming trials and temptations, then in verses 17 – 18 he shows the complete answer – the good and perfect gifts of God through Jesus.

GOODNESS AND THE LAW

- His laws are good and deliver us from disgrace (in affliction) Psalm 119 v 39
- Jesus taught that the law is there for our good Mark 3 v 4
- The law is there to help us with sin, not to condemn us for it Romans 7 v 7 – 12
- God's promises are good and sure 1 Kings 8 v 56

What does the presence or absence of goodness show/not show?

To the unsaved

- it is not the qualifying denominator for God's love Romans 5 v 7 - 8
- it is not the qualifying denominator to come to Christ Ephesians 2 v 8
- it is unachievable without God, so a sign of His grace Romans 3 v 12
- goodness is not a native of an un-forgiven believer Romans 7 v 18
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To the saved

- goodness is an un-reached goal without the Lord Romans 7 v 19
- goodness is achieved only through a committed life Romans 12 v 1 - 2
- lack of goodness displays an unrepentant heart Matthew 12 v 34
Titus 1 v 15 – 16
- it is the qualifying denominator of a man's inner quality Matthew 7 v 15 – 20
- it is the qualifying denominator for all to please God Romans 2 v 10 – 11

- it is a testimony that we belong to God 3 John v 11

How is Goodness part of the fruit of the Spirit?

- it is the fruit of the light of Christ Ephesians 5 v 9
- it is the fruit of Christian living Matthew 7 v 15 – 20
- it is the fruit of Godliness 3 John v 11
- good fruit is impartial James 3 v 17
- each act of goodness is the fruit Colossians 1 v 9–10

What is goodness in practice?

- Micah sets the scene for answering this question Micah 6 v 8
- it is the act of turning from evil (to turn off / turn aside) Psalm 34 v 14
- goodness is something to be learned Romans 16 v 19
- it is the willingness to be harmed for Goodness sake 1 Peter 3 v 8 – 14
- goodness should be the goal of all believers Romans 2 v 7
- goodness always seeks to operate even against the tide Luke 6 v 9
- showing goodness gets us noticed for the right reasons Acts 9 v 36
- it silences the opposition 1 Peter 2 v 13 – 17
- it should operate as a witness to our employers 1 Peter 2 v 18 – 25
- and to our employees Ephesians 6 v 5 – 9
- it should be seen in family relationships 1 Peter 3 v 1 – 7
Ephesians 6 v 1 – 4
- goodness shows the grace of God in our lives 2 Corinthians 9 v 8
- true goodness operates even towards our enemies Luke 6 v 33
- true goodness is also found between believers Galatians 6 v 10
- true goodness displays the operation of the Holy Spirit Acts 11 v 24

- true goodness is attractive to unbelievers Acts 11 v 24
- it is also witnessed by others as evidence of salvation Romans 15 v 14
- the goodness of God should help us remain faithful Hebrews 6 v 4 – 6
- goodness is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit Nehemiah 9 v 20

How is goodness seen in good works?

- Hezekiah called on God to display His goodness 2 Chron 30 v 17 – 18
- others witness the fruit of goodness by our deeds Matthew 4 v 13 – 13
- living by faith is no excuse for a lack of good deeds James 14 –(17)– 26
- it is what we were recreated for in our new life Ephesians 2 v 8 – 10
- words and works go hand in hand 2 Thess 2 v 16 – 17
- goodness shows respect Titus 3 v 1 – 2
- persistent goodness shown to all Galatians 6 v 9 – 10
- goodness shares what we have and reaps a reward 1 Timothy 6 v 17-19
- abounding in goodness shows the goodness of God 2 Corinthians 9v6-11
- goodness is seen in the way we live 1 Timothy 5 v 9 – 10
- goodness (favour) coming spontaneously Philemon v 14
- it is seen in our obedience and observance of scripture 2 Timothy 3 v 16-17
- God shows His pleasure when we show His goodness Hebrews 13 v 20-21
- the word of God becomes attractive Titus 2 v 9 – 10