

Goodness

[Galatians 5:22-23 HCSB](#) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, (23) gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Introduction:

What determines the value of something? A child may think that a quarter is worth more than a dollar bill because the quarter is shiny and pretty, or that a candy bar is worth more than a handful of dollar bills because it wants the candy more. So what really determines value?

Again, we all have things that we consider valuable. If our house caught fire, one of the first things we would try to save would be a box of family pictures, for they're valuable to us. But they wouldn't be to you. So how do you determine the value of something?

I'm afraid that people just don't seem to be very committed to the idea of goodness anymore. While love and joy and peace step to the plate and hit homeruns, goodness does its best just to get a single. To many, goodness is just not considered important or even desirable today. I hope before this morning is over that you will realize that goodness is a very valuable and important "fruit of the Spirit."

I. GOODNESS IS DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR THE RIGHT REASON

One of our 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 apple pie, and we love a beautiful sunset, but each of these "loves" are 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.

A. Goodness is whatever pleases God. For instance, we read in the opening chapters of Genesis that God created the heavens and the earth, and then He created life in the sea and in the air and on the ground. After each creation, 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."

B. Goodness is whatever is God-like. The Bible also tells us that "God is good." Now what makes God good? Well, God is pure, God is holy, God is forgiving, God is generous. So therefore, if we're good people, then all those characteristics would be true of us, too.

Sometimes, when someone bids me "goodbye," they'll add, "Now be good," and I respond, "Hey, in my profession it's hard to be anything else." Think about that. You expect me to be good because I'm your preacher, don't you? After all, everybody knows that preachers are paid to be good. I'm paid to be good while Brian Hagens is good for nothing!

C. Goodness is doing the right thing for the right reason. Well, without going any further on that, let me give you another definition of goodness. It is a pretty simple definition. But if you'll remember it, I think you'll begin to see the value of goodness. "Goodness is doing the right thing for the right reason."

Now I suppose we could do the right thing for the wrong reason. I suppose that we could even do the wrong thing for the right reason. But "goodness is doing the right thing for the right reason."

II. JESUS - A DEMONSTRATION OF GOODNESS

During the past few weeks we have been reminded again and again that our model, our example, is Jesus. When you want perfect love, look at Jesus. When you want joy and peace, look at Jesus. And the same is true of goodness.

Now don't make the mistake of thinking that being good came naturally for Jesus. He lived in the flesh just as we live in the flesh. And Satan tempted Him over and over again.

Turn with me to the 4th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, and let's look at one of the times that Satan tempted Jesus. There are 3 temptations here:

1. The temptation of selfishness.
2. The temptation of compromise.
3. The temptation of popularity.

Satan is still using those same temptations on us, even today.

A. The temptation of selfishness: Listen to Luke 4:3-4,

- [Luke 4:3-4 HCSB](#) The Devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." (4) But Jesus answered him, "**It is written: Man must not live on bread alone.**"

Now here is the age-old struggle between selfishness and love. It started in the Garden of Eden and it continues today. Today's culture tells us that as long as we have food and nice clothing, as long as we live in a nice home and have a good automobile, and are able to live in comfort, then we are a success and ought to be proud of ourselves.

But here is Satan, trying to get Jesus to focus on Himself. He tempts Jesus to turn the stones into bread. Now you must understand that Satan always tempts us in our area of weakness, and Jesus had been fasting for 40 days. He was extremely hungry, and it would have been so easy for Him to have used His power to do what Satan suggested.

Now do you understand what Satan was trying to do? If he could just get Jesus to be concerned about satisfying His own needs, of making things easy for Himself, of taking the easy way out, then Jesus would never be willing to pray, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

And He certainly would not have been willing to pay the price for your sins and for mine. He would never have gone to the cross for us. If Jesus were concerned first about His own needs, then He would never have gotten around to being concerned about us.

But Jesus, because He had come to do the will of His Father, knew that the most important thing was not Himself, but us. So He says, "It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone.'" He did the right thing for the right reason.

B. The temptation of compromise: Now the second temptation was a temptation to compromise. Luke 4:5-7 says,

- [Luke 4:5-7 HCSB](#) So he took Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. (6) The Devil said to Him, "I will give You their splendor and all this authority, because it has been given over to me, and I can give it to anyone I want. (7) If You, then, will worship me, all will be Yours."

You know, every week people line up by the thousands to buy lottery tickets, fantasizing about buying new houses, and new cars, and taking exotic vacations, and doing all the things that they couldn't do otherwise.

"Here it is, Jesus," Satan says, "I have control over the people of this world. They're serving me. So let's make a deal. Don't set your standards so high. Just compromise with me, and all this can be yours."

Is Satan using that same temptation on you? Are you playing fast and loose with the truth, cutting corners, compromising with that which you know to be wrong? All this just so you can get more and more?

I don't think there is anything wrong with material things. God gave them to us. But who is really the owner of the things that we have? Is God the owner, or am I? If God is the owner, and He's just loaning all of this to me, then my responsibility is to be a good steward of it, and to make sure that God is exalted by the way I use it.

Jesus did the right thing. Vs. 8 says,

- **Luke 4:8 HCSB** And Jesus answered him, "**It is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.**"

So He did the right thing for the right reason.

C. The temptation of popularity: The third temptation is the temptation of popularity. Vs's 9-11 say,

- **Luke 4:9-11 HCSB** So he took Him to Jerusalem, had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. (10) For it is written: **He will give His angels orders concerning you, to protect you, (11) and they will support you with their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.**"

Here is Satan taking scripture out of context, and he does it very well. He is tempting Jesus to do something spectacular to amaze the crowds and show them His power. Why bother spending 3 1/2 years walking back and forth through the land, accompanied by just a few Galileans as His disciples?

If Jesus would do something marvelous like throwing Himself down from the top of the temple in Jerusalem before the leaders of Israel, and then have God's angels swoop down and catch Him like in "Angels in the Outfield," everyone would eagerly follow Him.

Then if He would do it again every once in a while, people would come from far and near to see it and praise Him. He would instantly become the most popular man in all Israel! It would be so easy for Jesus to do, and then the people would follow Him anywhere!

This was the temptation that Satan brought to Jesus. And it wasn't the last time. He did it again as Jesus hung on the cross. Listen to the people crying out, "Jesus, if you're really the Messiah, come down from the cross and save yourself. Then we'll believe in you. Show us that you're really the Son of God. And we'll follow you."

What a big temptation that must have been because Jesus could have done it. He could have saved Himself. But He could not have saved Himself and us, too.

Jesus said to Satan in vs. 12,

- **Luke 4:12 HCSB** And Jesus answered him, "**It is said: Do not test the Lord your God.**"

And vs. 13 says,

- **Luke 4:13 HCSB** After the Devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him for a time.

Some translations put it this way: "When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Him until an opportune time." Satan didn't stay away long. He kept on tempting Him. Don't ever think that it was easy for Jesus to be good. He had to deliberately do the right things for the right reasons.

Some churches are constantly being tempted to focus on more and more spectacular services because they want to be popular. But the right thing to do is to focus on Jesus as our Savior and our Lord.

III. TANGIBLE WAYS TO DISPLAY GOODNESS

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks about a good tree and a bad tree. He said:

- **Matthew 7:17-18 HCSB** In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. (18) A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Then He says,

- **Matthew 7:19 HCSB** Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

He ends it by saying,

- **Matthew 7:20 HCSB** So you'll recognize them by their fruit.

So the question is, "What kind of fruit are we producing?" And as you look at the fruit, do you see goodness? Is it there? Here are 4 ways to display goodness.

1. We can display God's goodness by being forgiving. Listen to Matthew 6:14-15,

- **Matthew 6:14-15 HCSB** "For if you forgive people their wrongdoing, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. (15) But if you don't forgive people, your Father will not forgive your wrongdoing.

Now those are frightening verses, because they say that if I'm not forgiving, then I cannot be forgiven. If I go around holding grudges, then I won't receive the forgiveness of God because it is blocked by my unforgiving spirit. So the first step is to do the right thing for the right reason and to become forgiving as God is forgiving.

2. We can display goodness by being morally pure. Now that is counter-cultural because our culture embraces impurity, and is constantly telling us that everybody is doing it. Have you noticed how we've shifted, even in the last few years?



¹Remember Gary Hart? He ran for president in the 1980's, but withdrew his candidacy when it was revealed that he had an extra-marital affair. It was pretty much certain in the 1980's that we would not vote for a candidate who engaged in extra-marital affairs. But recently Gary Hart said that our nation has matured, and now we freely elect candidates who have had extra-marital affairs.

¹ <http://www.johnnygoodtimes.com/ghart.jpg>



²Dolly Parton has said that "Marital unfaithfulness is okay as long as no one gets hurt."



³Raquel Welch says, "Men have sexual flings and it's okay. Just expect it."

But the Bible doesn't say that. And if you're going to be a good person, you are to be a pure person, keeping your life pure before the Lord.

3. We display goodness through graciousness. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that when we are in Christ, we're a new creation. Now why are we new? We're new because God has changed us.

Robert Keller writes, "*It is the good person, the gracious soul, the generous heart who helps the down-trodden.*"

So the gracious person is one who has a heart of compassion. He looks around and sees others who are suffering and need his help. So wherever he can reach out and help them, he does.

Now, others may never know. You've performed good acts and no one ever knew that you did them, right? You may have never heard a "thank you." But here's the promise, when you're gracious and good to others, one day you will hear the voice of God Himself, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And that's all the recognition we need.

4. **We display goodness through generosity.** 1 John 3:1 says,

- **1 John 3:1 HCSB** Look at how great a love the Father has given us, that we should be called God's children. And we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn't know Him.

It is so much love that we cannot even receive it all. God is a giving God. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." And He gives and He gives and He gives some more.

² http://prenatalvitamins.files.wordpress.com/2008/03/dolly_parton_in_nashville_april_2005.jpg

³ http://www.michaelmanning.tv/news/uploaded_images/raquel-welch-picture-1-707077.jpg

So in turn, then, if we are to participate in the goodness of God we need to become generous, too. But that's a touchy subject, isn't it? Shouldn't we give cheerfully? Shouldn't we give because God has given us so much? Shouldn't we give just because we love to give to God?

Someone has said, "You never look more like God than when you are giving." Don't give out of guilt. Don't give out of obligation. Give because it's the right thing to do.