

Free Grace Missionary Bible Church

# Christian Goodness part 2

The Fruit of the Spirit

Jim Beale  
4-16-2022

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.** (Galatians 5:22-23)*

## Introduction

This study is a continuation and application of the previous study. The previous study was more (maybe too) technical but unfortunately it is hard to avoid – to understand the words we need to consider them in the original languages, at least with a Strong's concordance to compare uses of the same Greek or Hebrew word. Instead of making reference to original language words this time, I will just use the word 'kindness' instead of 'gentleness' and 'goodness' will naturally refer to 'goodness'.

If we contemplate the list of the nine fruits of the Spirit before, we might note that they naturally fall in groups of three. The first three fruits (love, joy and peace) are primary dispositions of the soul in reaction to the gospel. The fruits of love, joy and peace must grow up into the whole human nature – the mind, the affections and the will. True love flows from understanding the gospel of free grace wherein is expressed a perfect love set forth in perfect righteousness as our propitiation at the cross. We love because He first loved us. True joy flows from understanding the scope of the covenant blessing as somewhat beyond our ability to presently comprehend. Knowing that we are promised union with God in Christ and so to be partakers of the Divine nature in resurrected bodies for all eternity. This is joy unspeakable. And peace is our abiding in Christ, it is His work. We understand that this is He who works all things for His own glory, who is perfect in covenantal faithfulness. These three are in some sense one, and grow together. We can't imagine a true kind of love that doesn't rejoice in the beloved. We can't be satisfied with a love that is changeable or fickle. We can't imagine a joy where there is no taking possession of the thing desired. Taken together, they provide the Christian with a firm foundation on which the next layer of fruit can be laid, or a threefold cord which is not easily broken.

I tried to support the idea when we studied long-suffering, that the fruit of longsuffering needs the foundation of the first three fruits. Love is needed in order to provide the direction or motivation of the action. Why allowing oneself to suffer? It was the love of the Savior which made Him set His face toward Jerusalem. It was love that kept Him on the cross to bear the full weight of God's wrath. But His long-suffering requires joy for strength, it was for the joy which was set before Him that He endured the cross, despising the shame. The joy of the Lord is our strength. And long-suffering requires the peace which passes understanding, as Jesus said, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John 16:32).

The secular poet William Blake was amazed that he could see a world in a grain of sand, and heaven in a wild flower. We should likewise be amazed that we can discover the mind of God in the words of Scripture. Oftentimes individual words are like a grain of sand, or like a geode which, though appearing to be an ordinary dull-looking rock, reveals a marvelous inner world when cracked open. The Bible seems that way at first, like a dull and ordinary book, until it is opened and one sees Christ in His splendor on every page and reflected in every word of Scripture. The last time, I showed that the Hebrew word for 'good' encompasses both of the two fruits before us: kindness and goodness. These words are distinct in the Greek of the New Testament. What I wanted to show is that the idea of goodness, in relation to God, has two distinct aspects. The one is God as He is in Himself, who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His Being, Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth. The riches of His goodness are as extensive as His Being because God is His goodness in His essence, which is to say that God is essentially good. There is another aspect of goodness is the different idea of taking that

constitutional goodness of God's nature and spreading it abroad. If I can give an example, it is great to have a local library full of good books but if it is never open then its goodness is only internal to itself. You might say, what good is it, if it's not open but it is still good in itself. The library itself is one good thing but opening it to the public to circulate those books is another. More on this later.

## Background

What is good? We all have our own ideas about what is good which we've picked up from various sources and, even more than that, we have a general idea of the good which we may not be aware of, yet which exerts a large degree of control on our thinking. It ought to concern us that our thinking might be controlled by something of which we're only dimly aware. But we ought to realize that most people are not aware of the main controlling principles in their thinking. There is a "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" by subtle means which are not obvious to the natural man. One of the primary switches that the evil one uses is our own idea of that good. By a general idea of the good, I mean something that we seek after as our primary good, even though we might not have ever thought the issue through. Jesus said, "take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)" (Matthew 6:31-32) and we all seek those things on a daily basis, do we not? Jesus said, "take no thought," but we express almost all our thoughts in terms of such things, don't we? We are Gentiles. 😊 We have to work, eat and sleep! What does He mean, take no thought?

Let's think of it in terms of our personal good. Every purposeful action, every action we take, is in pursuit of some good; and so a person pursues their own goods, and we can know what a person thinks is good by what that person seeks after. What do you seek? That's what is the good to you.

But our mental catalog of goods is not one and not so simple. It's not flat like a grocery list, but more like a tree, an arrangement of means and ends. We have a hierarchy of goods since we seek some things in order to get other things. A person seeks to get a college degree in order to enter a desired line of work. Getting a college degree is good because it opens the door to getting certain kinds of job. But we always have to ask why? Why do you want that kind of job? It could be for wealth, or prestige, or self-esteem, or security, etc. But why does a man seek wealth? Things become murky at some point. It doesn't take many WHY questions to exhaust a man's knowledge. But we should ask ourselves this question more often – asking why reveals the motive of the heart. Why?

A man might see himself as hard-working and self-sacrificing, to be driven to sacrifice and scrimp and save. Why? For retirement, at which time he plans to enjoy relaxation and pleasure. All the intermediate ends he sought were bent to his ultimate good, which was to travel the world, have fun and pleasurable experiences. Appearances can be deceiving.

Our own ultimate idea of the good may not be obvious to us because we might keep it secret from ourselves. We might really never examine ourselves to discover what it is we are really seeking. Yet our ultimate good might nevertheless control us, block us and prevent us from recognizing, considering, appreciating, seeking and accepting another, a different idea of good. Our personal idea of the good blinds us to other ideas of good which are foreign to whatever we consider the greatest good for ourselves. A man who seeks his own comfort and pleasure does not comprehend the idea of serving his country by joining the military. It won't enter his mind as a possibility – he mocks the ideas of self-sacrifice and service since they are contrary to his idea of good which is wallowing in sinful pleasure. It is

easy to multiply examples. Think back on your own life when you were most likely a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God (2 Timothy 3:4), or maybe you still are? It's not easy for us to tell because our hearts are deceptive above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?

In the parable of the tares and the wheat, the householder instructs his servants not to attempt to pluck up the tares from among the wheat "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them" (Matt 13:29). The idea seems to me that it is quite difficult to distinguish between wheat and tare and by trying to weed out the tares, it is likely that a good plant would be uprooted by mistake. That's no good. So, we are led to understand that wheat and tares appear outwardly similar while the plants are immature and that telling them apart is not necessarily easy. Of course, bearing fruit is the obvious discriminator between wheat and tare since tares will never bear wheat. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

Fortunately, Scripture is abundant in revealing to us the errors in our thinking. Thankfully the men and women whose hearts are examined in Scripture give us a rich mine to discover the ways we can be treasuring up on for ourselves earth – for where a man's treasure is, there his heart will be also. So, by examining our motives in the light of the Scriptures, we may see some reflection of our own inner hierarchy of good and discover that we have imbibed some very common worldly mindsets which though common are nevertheless completely contrary to the gospel.

What distinguishes a regular piece of iron from a magnet? If you could look at a single atom of iron, you would see that it is like a little magnet with a N and S pole. But when you have a regular piece of iron, all the atoms are randomly oriented so the magnetic field of each iron atom is canceled out overall. Interestingly though a regular piece of iron can be magnetized by repeatedly rubbing a magnet along it. This process aligns the iron atoms in the regular iron so that the individual magnetic fields are going in the same direction and work together to produce a magnetic field. The magnet is magnetic because all the atoms of the iron are aligned in the same direction. It doesn't look any different from a regular piece of iron but it has an attractive power because of the internal alignment of its atoms.

So each of us has to look within, to bring every thought captive to Christ -- to constantly check that the Biblical idea of the good is used to examine every thought and intent of the heart – our thoughts and intents are naturally wicked and scattered to the winds of disorderliness like the nations at the Tower of Babel. We are born and our thoughts scatter in every direction. But by grace, and by the work of the Spirit, the Biblical idea of the good to bring all aspects of our inner lives into an inward harmony and unity. This is the fruit of spiritual goodness and spiritual power. Paul warned us, of those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5) and so we know that there can be outward appearance which lacks the inward reality. By diligent use of this means, we can reorient our inner motivations into a single polar direction, toward the glory of Christ Jesus.

### **Hedonism:**

There is a general American, even a Western democratic life principle, promoting consumption of goods, the use of labor-saving devices, all bent toward a life of ease. Early on we find ourselves set on the path of working and saving for retirement. That's what we are all taught to strive for, isn't it? That is the American dream. But why are we doing this? What is the good that is sought in this case?

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, [and] be merry. But God said unto him, [Thou] fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So [is] he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:16-21)

Here was a man who received a windfall of surplus material goods, like one who wins the lottery, and what is his reaction? His ultimate good is revealed: "Soul, take thine ease! Eat, drink and be merry." This is what his soul had been truly seeking all along – ease, pleasure, enjoyment. His purpose for working and gathering much was so that he could stop working and enjoy life. I think most working people have this in their minds as a life goal – perhaps their only life goal – to save up enough goods to be able to retire. But such a life goal might easily come to dominate the mindset and prevent the true seeking of a very different kind of good thing. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful (Matt 13:22). Ultimately, the end sought in this world can easily prevent the recognition and acceptance and whole-hearted pursuit of seeking the greater good of God through the gospel.

We can see a similar mindset in Nabal in the story of David and Nabal in 1 Samuel 25:6-11. David had provided protection for Nabal and had a right to share in the surplus of goods which resulted. But Nabal would not provide anything for David and his men because his heart could not comprehend the good in it. He would not provide from his abundance because his heart was bent towards his own pleasure and storing up treasure on earth. Nabal assumed he had control over his own goods and set his heart upon them, rather than upon the good of his neighbor who had already shown him much good. The name Nabal means "fool" and the Lord expresses the principle like this, Thou fool ... so is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:20-21). If you've got in your mind the idea to work and save and one day retire, consider if this is your ultimate goal in life.

Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. (Amos 6:3-6)

Amos describes what sounds like a typical American life – plenty of time to drink beer and watch sports on TV while lying on the sofa, but not a single thought for the gospel. But why? They are those whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (Philippians 3:19) and it would be a reasonable approach to take – but we have another idea of the good which conflicts with it. If, as Paul wrote, after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. (1 Corinthians 15:32) Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant (Isaiah 56:12). Ahh, but we who believe that the dead will indeed rise, cannot remain in that because our idea of what is good is radically changed.

**Stoicism:**

Consider the Sadducees in contrast with the Pharisees. As we read “the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both” (Acts 23:8). Yet we almost always read of them grouped together in much of the gospels. The Pharisees and Sadducees came to John the Baptist in the wilderness and he lumped them together as a generation of vipers. Paul used their difference on this point to divide them in Acts 23:6-8. Josephus wrote of them that they suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to every one, that they may act as they please, so that we are ourselves the causes of what is good, and receive what is evil from our own folly. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades.

But think now, these two groups have a completely, radically different world view. They must have had much agreement about how to behave, although there must have been some wild ones, but certainly some lived a good life, regardless of the lack of eternal perspective. The difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees in their respective motivations is profound. It is much easier for us to understand the Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection and eternal life, but sought it by works, than the Sadducee who lived as an atheist. What could motivate the Sadducee to live a good life?

Let's suppose that the best of the Sadducees sought to obey the commandments just because the commandments were ethically right but with no thought of anything beyond this life, no thought of punishment or reward. The motto is, the life well-lived is its own reward. Whatever is sought, is the good – and here the ultimate good sought boil down to a feeling of self-satisfaction. If the Sadducee could lie on his death bed and believe he had lived his best life, then he could die happy. What is this but to set oneself up as Judge and submit to be Judged in accordance with one's own goodness.

From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. (Psalm 17:14)

## Analysis

We all have goals and purposes, there are things we strive for, long-term and short-term. It may not always be obvious to us but these form a tree or list of lists. Some goals and purposes are short-term, like putting gas in the car, so that you can drive to the store to get food. Some goals and purposes are long-term, such as saving for retirement, or paying off your mortgage, etc. We have subordinate goods which support chief goods, and we can ask why to get to the bottom of our motivation tree but things become quite murky because our hearts are deceptive indeed and hard to know.

Let's start with what is actually easier because it is all light.

## Divine Goodness

We will consider the divine goodness in two parts.

The first is that essential goodness of God which constitutes His being. Stephen Charnock wrote, “This is the true and genuine character of God. He is good, he is goodness, good in himself, good in his essence, good in the highest degree, possessing whatsoever is comely, excellent, desirable; the highest good, because the first good; whatsoever is perfect goodness is God, whatsoever is truly goodness in any

creature is a resemblance of God. All the names of God are comprehended in this one of good. All gifts, all variety of goodness, are contained in him as one common good. He is the efficient cause of all good by an overflowing goodness of his nature. He refers all things to himself as the end for the representation of his own goodness. 'Truly God is good,' Ps. 73:1."

The Triune God of Scripture is perfect and lacks nothing. We understand that before the foundation of the world there was no need in God – the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is perfect in knowledge, love, peace, joy. God eternally exists in perfect blessedness – He did not create the universe because of any lack or need. The heavens declare the glory of God but they do not increase that glory. "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isaiah 40:17). The whole creation is as nothing compared to God. Why then did God create the universe?

Jonathan Edwards wrestles with this question in his dissertation on the end for which God created the world. He wrote, "there is something in that disposition to communicate goodness that shows God to be independent and self-moved in it, in a manner that is peculiar, and above the beneficence of the creatures. Creatures, even the most excellent, are not independent and self-moved in their goodness; but in all its exercises they are excited by some object they find; something appearing good, or in some respect worthy of regard, presents itself, and moves their kindness. But God, being all, and alone is absolutely self-moved. The exercises of his communicative disposition are absolutely from within himself; all that is good and worthy in the object, and its very being, proceeding from the overflowing of this fullness."

Ultimately, this goodness seems even more mysterious than the essential goodness of the Divine being. Fortunately, though, we don't really need to pry into things which are too high for us to reach, and too deep for us to sound to the depths. We will simply accept the revelation of the goodness of God which seeks the dissemination of His essential goodness as it is revealed in Scripture. And that is the foundation of what we need to cover today.

When we consider Adam and Eve in the garden, we normally consider them to be blessed, right? We think to ourselves that we have fallen from such a height and that we will be greatly blessed to return to that state. But was it so great, so as to be sought as an end in itself? I think not, and the reason for it is because there was no way to progress from that state to a higher one. That is, though Adam and Eve were made in the image of God, and though created righteous and holy, yet they were separate from God with no clear path toward greater blessing. And what is that greater blessing?

It is what Peter wrote, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). Couldn't we say that Adam and Eve were "partakers of the divine nature" in that they were truly image bearers of God? Yes, in some sense, but no, not in the same way that those who are brought into union with God through Christ – not even close. Adam and Eve were not in union with God and there was no path forward for them to come into union with God. How could God be their righteousness, sanctification and wisdom when God had bestowed such things upon them in their constitution? But, dear brothers and sisters, the union that Christians experience only comes to those who are utterly destitute of goodness in themselves. As Adam and Eve were sufficient in themselves, they could not be emptied to partake more fully of the Divine nature. Could they be long-suffering? No, there was no suffering before the fall, so the idea of long-suffering would have made no sense to them.

And so we understand that the Fall of man was a necessary prerequisite to the ultimate blessing which can only come through a full union with God. Then the revelation of God went out through general revelation. Now the revelation of God goes out to all men through general and special revelation. It is always God's grace to reveal Himself – because to know God is the highest and greatest good that can be conceived. And so, I ask, what is that great kindness of God? Is it to give wealth, pleasure, honor, or other temporal things? No, those things all pass away – isn't it rather to give Himself – to disseminate Himself to the creature in such a way that the creature comes to know the Living God personally in such a way as to become a partaker of the divine nature? This is amazing.

If, as Peter wrote, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3) then it is the dissemination of the knowledge of Himself which is the great kindness of God. I am not talking about a dry and theoretical knowledge of God – as if God could publish a Systematic Theology and be done with it. No, all things which pertain to life and godliness do not come through knowledge ABOUT God as much as through the knowledge of God which derives from union with Him. A knowledge which derives from personal union with God does not shun an intellectual knowledge of God. These two ought to go hand-in-hand since the more we know God, the more we should want to know about Him, and our theology takes on a more profound character. Good theology always leads to doxology. In the life of the Christian, there is no way to separate knowledge of the great truths about God from the participation in the divine nature. We are creatures with intellect, affections and will and so our union with Christ must be a union in all our parts and aspects.

In His High Priestly prayer, the Lord said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Calvin comments on this verse, “Almost every one of the words has its weight; for it is not every kind of knowledge that is here described, but that knowledge which forms us anew into the image of God from faith to faith, or rather, which is the same with faith, by which, having been engrafted into the body of Christ, we are made partakers of the Divine adoption, and heirs of heaven.” The verse says that knowing God is life eternal and Christ is that life – to have Christ is to have eternal life and not to have Christ is not to have eternal life. And so, this knowledge that Jesus speaks of is the having of Himself.

In the context of redemptive history, this greatest imaginable blessing – to come into union with the ultimate Good, to partake of the Divine nature – presupposes the creation of man in God's image and the subsequent Fall. The knowledge of God that is here spoken of is not comparable to other kinds of knowledge. It is not natural, nor discoverable through natural means. Jesus said it this way: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and [he] to whomsoever the Son will reveal [him]” (Matthew 11:27).

Here it helps to distinguish between general and special revelation. The knowledge of God shines forth in the creation. But we know from Rom 1 that man naturally suppresses the knowledge of God. As Calvin wrote in the Institutes, “the greater part of mankind, enslaved by error, walk blindfold in this glorious theatre” and he says “many, who seem most sharp-sighted in other respects, behold without profit.” The knowledge of God that Jesus was referring to in John 17:3 and Matt 11:27 does not and simply cannot come through general revelation. One does not become reconciled with God through studying nature.



Special revelation is that book in your hand, if it is a good Bible, it is the very Word of God which reveals the very Word of God. It was He, the Word of the Word, who was in the beginning with God and who was made flesh and dwelt among us. He is that True Light which is shining even now. John says, “we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). To what end? Why did He come? John tells us: For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1:17-18). Special revelation is the propositional revelation of God that comes to our minds through words. Faith comes by hearing, says Paul, and hearing by the Word of God. We must be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:23). So there is a need for special revelation to be spread abroad. How can they believe in Him of whom they have never heard?

Now, with respect to special revelation, we need to distinguish the general call from the effectual call of the gospel. Jesus said “many are called but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14) and Paul wrote in Rom 8:30 that those “whom he called, them he also justified”. What are we to make of this difference? We distinguish two senses of the word “call” such that there is an external call which goes out to as many as will come under the hearing of the gospel. But it is only effectual in conjunction with the secret, efficacious work of the Holy Spirit in the heart – regeneration – which is the giving a new heart, a new controlling idea of the Good, which makes the external call, by His grace and mercy, to be effective. It is like the changing of the polarity of the magnet – before regeneration the heart of man is polar opposite our hearts repel and are repelled by God. But the work of the Holy Spirit changes the heart, turns it around so that it is utterly attracted to God and His amazing goodness. It is like the sort of change when you’re playing with the repelling of two magnets in the wrong direction and suddenly one flips and clicks on and holds tight. It happens in an instant. It is like turning on a light switch – the dark room is instantly filled with light.

Let’s look at this passage which gives us a clear view of the distinction of the general and effectual call of the gospel:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:3-6)

Here then is the difference between the general and effectual calls of the gospel. The general call of the gospel goes out via many means! The gospel goes out through churches and missionaries and ministries and individuals handing out tracts and by people opening their mouths to tell others the truths of the gospel. The light of the gospel shines upon many but the god of this world has blinded men. In terms of today’s study – the god of this world has bound them to their sin by virtue of the false idea of the good which was in us all by nature. The fiend fans the flames of our false idea of the good and by it leads us into bondage – so that we always choose to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And so, the gospel comes to those who are unable to see beyond their own idea of what is good. The gospel of Christ crucified is foolishness to them who have their portion in this life. Why would the Sadducees care about the death of Christ since they have already discounted the possibility of His resurrection because

he had his portion altogether in this life? How can anyone who has set his heart on temporal things ever perceive the greater goodness of eternal things? None will because they are prevented from seeing by their own false conception of what is really good.

The gospel goes out to many. Many are called but few are chosen. And praise God that some are chosen because otherwise none would have the slightest interest. The sovereign revelation of the knowledge of God comes to those upon whom He chooses to have mercy, and it is an inside job. The light of the glorious gospel shines externally unto the elect and the non-elect alike, and God is magnificently gracious to have shined His light outwardly upon both groups and both groups are responsible for how they handled the Word of Life which did come to them. We know and insist upon the truth that God's mercies are over all His works (Psalm 145:9) and so it is crucial that we recognize that it is God's goodness, His kindness, which is behind the revelation of Himself. Romans 2:4 says that it God kindness is the revelation of His intention that men should repent. His goodness, His kindness leads men to repentance. It should lead men to repent – what is it that melts the heart but God's goodness?

And so there is a special goodness which is manifest to the elect by the express choice of the Father – and to them the whole revelation of God is made effectual through the inner shining described in v 6. That precious light which gives the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ is, in the terms of today's study, the revelation to us of the greatest and highest Good, and the implanting of that nature in us, so that the glory of God becomes our ultimate Good. It is the highest good for us to have Him as our highest good: for our highest good to be by Him, through Him and in Him – just us in union with Him is the highest and ultimately the only good. The knowledge of the glory of God is the knowledge of our own highest good – that radical inner change from the heart set on some kind of good of this world, as previously discussed, to turn to the highest and greatest possible good, like a magnet flipping sides from repel to attract. And so the implanted Christ gives the knowledge of the glory of God in the heart as His face shines, and it is by this light we come by faith into union with the One who is Good, through His absolutely gracious and marvelous GOODNESS. When the fundamental principle of the heart – the ultimate Good of the heart is changed from things of the world to the glory of the Living God, then everything is made new for us. We say, once I was blind but now I see.

## Fruit of the Spirit

This second group of three fruits of the Spirit is directly related to the purpose of God. One does not need the fruit of long-suffering where there is no suffering and how could it be developed but through suffering? God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable and His long-suffering is intimately related to His purpose of saving some from the midst of the entire fallen race. For how can God save some unless He is patient with both elect and non-elect alike? Adam couldn't have developed a long-suffering character in the garden, and so to be fully conformed to the image of God requires a fuller revelation – a fuller union than was possible apart from the Fall, and so long-suffering is an aspect of the character of God that could not have been formed in us apart from suffering. And how can there be suffering where there is no opposition to God?

So long-suffering presupposes suffering and the suffering in view is primarily the suffering for the sake of the gospel. Although physical suffering is certainly suffering and is a consequence of the Fall yet the context is focused on suffering for the sake of the gospel. Suffering for the gospel might come as we sit in our houses reading the Scriptures and praying but the emphasis has to be on the suffering that comes

from other people as the light of the gospel is shone upon them. Many people will reject the gospel and be greatly opposed to the Word of God. But growth into the purpose of God to disseminate the knowledge of God is exactly what this second group of three brings to fruition. The goodness of God, to us, is in Christ through the gospel. Paul goes on to say in 2 Cor 4 that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). This treasure is the good to which we subscribe, the very thing we treasure and this treasure is the gospel – in the broadest sense, the whole counsel of God, the inexhaustible scope of Scripture comprehended in the Triune God which we enter by Christ. We have this knowledge, if we really do have this knowledge, by the illumination of our minds and hearts unto conformance to the general good of the glory of God.

The transmission of this knowledge ought to be the passion of the Christian. Our Christian growth in long-suffering for the sake of the gospel comes in relation to our taking the treasure from the earthen vessel, that is, the Word of God treasured up in our hearts, to give an account of the gospel. There is a virtuous cycle in this in that through the goodness of God in you manifested by your spreading the knowledge of Him, the fruit of long-suffering comes by grace. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things” (Matt 12:35) and, as he does so, no doubt he will suffer. But “love suffers long and is kind” (1 Cor 13:4). There is no greater kindness than continuing to declare the truth of the gospel.

In many cases, the interaction with the lost will generate questions, challenges and difficulties. It is impossible to prepare for every situation beforehand. You may be unable to answer some questions, unable to remember verses when you need them, unable to defend against attacks against the gospel, and feel as if you have been defeated by the enemy. Nevertheless, count it all joy, dear brothers and sisters. In this there is a hidden blessing, because the goodness of God will be opened to you. The Word of God will be opened to you in new ways which you have not yet known. New connections will be made between passages – a deeper understanding will develop. This growth is a deepening of the relationship with the truth and it is the growth of spiritual fruit. This is the growth of the fruit of goodness.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)

If this is what we are – if you are the light of the world because you are light in the Lord because Christ is in you and you are in Christ – then you are designated by God to be a light in the world. You must have an understanding of the gospel. John wrote, “we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). And Paul wrote, “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). What does it mean to walk as children of light but to shine the light of the gospel as you go, wherever you go. Some people may shine in some situations but go into another situation and put the light under a basket, pretend not to know the truth, because of fear of man, or to gain some temporal advantage. This is extremely dangerous – because we must question what our ultimate good actually is. Maybe we will discover that pleasure or living a good life for its own sake were really our primary motivation after all! But, then, please consider, if you are light in the Lord, are you shining? Are you hiding under a basket? The goodness of God is to reveal His goodness and that for His own glory – He reveals His full

marvelous set of attributes – but His great goodness is shown to the elect, in Christ, in whom we have the full revelation of God’s goodness through His great Kindness and long-suffering toward us. For us to develop these fruits we must get this treasure in our hearts – faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. We must take of that treasure and distribute it to others. Then, when suffering and comes, as it certainly will, we will be forced back to God and the Word for strength, for wisdom, for knowledge. Our participation in the goodness of God will be manifest as the fruit of goodness in us, and we will grow in our desire to disseminate the knowledge of God in every place.

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one [we are] the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who [is] sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:14-17)

Amen! God makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place. This is the way we ought to be. But how can we do this? How can we grow towards this?

We have to begin by treasuring up the gospel in our hearts. Treasure up the word of God in your heart. Meditate on the gospel. Pray to be filled with the goodness of God which is Christ in us, the wisdom and power of God, and to be reconciled to the Father through the Mediator, through His blood shed on our behalf and His perfect righteousness freely given to us. Understand the great treasure of the gospel, its infinite value and the destiny of those who perish without being reconciled with God. Let that light shine because that light which is shining within you is the true light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

So let us all learn to share the gospel, learn how to call men to reconciliation with God through Christ. Let us love with that love with which He loved us and we will have a heart for evangelism and be granted the fruit of the Spirit to suffer long and the fruit of the Spirit to be kind. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; (2 Corinthians 3:5) And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (2 Corinthians 9:8). And this is the marvelous work of God.

Amen and Amen!