

Free Grace Missionary Bible Church

Christian Goodness part 3

The Fruit of the Spirit

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*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 is now the third installment in the series on the fruit of Christian goodness. I didn't intend to do three studies on goodness but the more that came out onto the paper, the more it became obvious that goodness is such a fundamental concept that it is really important to look at it from multiple angles. And we have looked at goodness from a few different angles. I showed that goodness is a simple concept, an ineffable concept, one which which defies definition. Any attempt to define it leads to disaster. Many attempts have been made to define the good, as pleasure, popularity, wealth, power, accomplishment, human society, etc. We've all been exposed to these worldly ideas and each of us has certainly held and might still hold to one or more of these false ideas of the good in the back of our minds. It is critical for us to interrogate ourselves to discover our own personal idea of the good because it exerts such a major influence on our thinking. It sets our direction and final destination. Where our treasure is, there will our heart be also.

Of course we know that goodness is the essential nature of God. God alone is good. "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Psalm 34:8) When considering the fruit of the Spirit, we need to look to the Triune God to see what the fruit must grow up into, since the work of the Spirit is to reproduce the character of God in our own souls. We're not being made into separate, independent godlike creatures, rather we are growing into the divine nature and becoming more and more dependent on His life, such that the growth and development of the fruits of the Spirit in us is what Peter called "being partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). We know that the Triune God of Scripture is perfect and lacks nothing. There is no need in God, no lack, no deficiency; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are One God, perfect in goodness, knowledge, love, peace, joy. God exists in absolutely perfect blessedness. The inner, essential goodness of God is that blessed richness of inner life, the abundance of love, joy, peace, truth, righteousness, strength. All these have their source in the Living Triune God – the One whose riches far exceed our imaginations. But our experience of our own inner life is far from that of the Living God – the more we know ourselves, especially in relation to God, the more we become aware of our own emptiness, our own lack of anything good within us. We must come to the realization that His life must be our life or we have no life at all. Henry Scougal wrote a marvelous little book called *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, in which he wrote:

And so it may be called, not only in regard of its fountain and original, having God for its author, and being wrought in the souls of men by the power of his Holy Spirit; but also in regard of its nature, religion being a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the soul of man: nay, it is a real participation of his nature, it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endowed with it may be said to have God dwelling in their souls, and Christ formed within them. [Scougal, Henry. *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, p. 8]

And so this is a glimpse of the inner, essential goodness of God that must be in us or we are destitute of goodness. But, as we noticed in the last study, the inner essential goodness of God is a different kind of goodness from that which moved God to create. The inner goodness of God is like an infinite ocean whereas the goodness which creates is like a fountain which continually overflows. This is the marvel of

God's goodness in that its inner nature is perfectly sufficient in itself and yet God chose to overflow into the creation. We should ask ourselves why? It is helpful to consider why God created the universe because it gives us insight into the primary purpose of God. In terms of this study, the good or the end at which He aimed in creating the universe must be our good as well, if we are to be His children and think His thoughts after Him. God is good, His inner trinitarian life is all light and joy and peace. God is eternal, not subject to changes of time, and so the blessedness of the inner life is perfect rest. God is unchangeable. And yet, there is in God a will to create and hence a desire to create and hence a purpose for creating. So what is God's purpose for creating and what is the connection between God's essential, internal goodness and His goal or purpose or end in creating?

Jonathan Edwards wrote a very helpful work called, *The End for Which God Created the World*, that considers this question. I will give a few short quotes which are taken from this work and I hope everyone will read it for themselves. He wrote,

It is a regard to himself that disposes him to diffuse and communicate himself. It is such a delight in his own internal fullness and glory, that disposes him to an abundant effusion and emanation of that glory. The same disposition, that inclines him to delight in his glory, causes him to delight in the exhibitions, expressions, and communications of it.

God's disposition to cause his own infinite fullness to flow forth, is not the less properly called his goodness, because the good he communicates is what he delights in, as he delights in his own glory.

Nor is this disposition in God, to diffuse his own good, the less excellent, because it is implied in his love to himself. For his love to himself does not imply it any otherwise, but is as it implies a love to whatever is worthy and excellent. The emanation of God's glory is in itself worthy and excellent, and so God delights in it; and this delight is implied in his love to his own fullness; because that is the fountain, the sum and comprehension of everything that is excellent.

The thing signified by that name, the glory of God, when spoken of as the supreme and ultimate end of all God's works, is the emanation and true external expression of God's internal glory and fulness; meaning by his fulness what has already been explained; or, in other words, God's internal glory, in a true and just exhibition, or external existence of it. (p. 199)

What does all this mean? Edwards is saying that God is the essential good and that God's delight is in His own essential goodness and that this translates to a disposition to exhibit that inner goodness. When you are thrilled with something, you really want to share it, right? We believe that God was free to create or not but the choice is still a reflection of His nature and character. And since God is abundantly delighted in Himself, the Father in the Son, etc., God chose to create a universe in which to display His nature and attributes – to create creatures made in God's own image who are capable of receiving and transmitting that revelation, even coming into personal relationship with that revelation. Thus God is glorified in revealing Himself – God is the ultimate good and it is good for the ultimate good to be made manifest. Maybe our sinful minds find it offensive that God would be altogether delighted with Himself and therefore create so that His perfections would be on display. It seems self-centered and wrong to us. But how could God set His heart on a lesser good? Should God have as His greatest good something less than the true greatest good? If you think it through you will come to realize that God must set His heart on Himself as the ultimate good. As Paul wrote at the end of Romans 11, "For of him, and through

him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” (Rom 11:36) These words teach us that not only are all things from God but that all things are to Him and for Him and all of it, every single thing in all of creation, redounds to His glory alone. It is good to have any knowledge of God but beyond comprehension that we might become partakers of the Divine nature – drawn right into the heart of God in Christ. Amazing grace!

So, the purpose of creation is that God would delight to send forth the revelation of Himself as the sun sends beams of light streaming forth. God delights to make Himself known, but He does so in strict accordance with His own eternal purpose. This is what Paul teaches in Romans 9,

[What] if God, willing to shew [his] wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, (Romans 9:22-23)

God makes Himself known to both vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy, though not in the same way. On vessels of wrath, God allows them to suppress the knowledge of Himself and it is not a saving knowledge because not effectual. But to the vessels of mercy, God reveals Himself in their hearts and gives the effectual knowledge of Himself, and ever greater increases which grow up into eternal life.

I’ve been studying through Ezekiel recently and it struck me how often the phrase is repeated: you/they “shall know that I am the LORD.” This phrase occurs 77 times altogether in the OT. You’ll recall that it occurs in the Exodus where God revealed Himself to Pharaoh in power to redeem His people from the Egyptians. He did it so that they would know that He is the LORD. But the great majority of the times, 63 to be exact, are found in the book of Ezekiel. This shows that the main purpose of God in dealing with Israel is that not only Israel but also the whole world would know that it is the LORD who has done all those things. God reveals Himself in judgment: “And they shall know that I [am] the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries” (Ezekiel 12:15). And God reveals Himself in grace – “And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD, that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done,” says the Lord GOD.’ ” (Ezek 16:62-63). This phrase is quite a refrain throughout the book. 63 times! It is the central purpose of God.

And so the ultimate purpose of God in everything He does is to manifest Himself. It is all self-revelation – God’s goodness even works through the wickedness of moral agents, such as those wicked hands which crucified the Lord. That was God’s eternal plan to reveal Himself as righteous and merciful and to bring about an eternal redemption to reveal His goodness. The cross is the revelation of the righteousness and the mercy of God. God’s goodness shines right through the wickedness of man. The knowledge of God was revealed through the original creation but how much more now through the gospel? What beams of mercy and pity and grace shine on such wretched creatures as ourselves!! What glorious shafts of light stream forth from the cross and the empty tomb: Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other (Psalm 85:10). And this comes bound up with the revelation of God as Triune. The salvation that God wrought is as much a revelation of the Trinity as it is of the attributes of God. It is the goodness of God to reveal Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the performance of our redemption. We come to know Him through His great love for us. It is His marvelous goodness to bring sinner into union with Himself, who is the only good. Many reject Him but not for any reason in God who is altogether lovely and altogether good. They hated Him without a cause. (John 15:25)

Truly God is good, God is goodness. He alone is good and so all good must be of Him. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of Lights says James 1:17. Likewise, there is no higher good for the eternal God than Himself and so God's good can be nothing less than God, that is, the glory of God. God is not man-centered, God is God-centered because it is right and proper for God to adore the Highest Good. Surely God is no idolator. And so, as Paul wrote, all things are of Him and all things are to Him – but how does God accomplish His purpose? Or what does it mean to say that all things are through Him?

Ultimately, these two aspects of goodness of inner, essential and external communication must coalesce into the same mysterious unity of the thrice holy Divine essence but we need to treat them separately because they correspond to the two fruits we are considering now, the fruits of kindness and goodness which must be cultivated in our souls.

If you consider the nine fruits of the Spirit, which are really one fruit, holiness, you will notice that they can be written in a 3x3 grid. Write Love, Joy, Peace across the top, Long-suffering, Kindness and Goodness as a second row under the first, and then Faith, Meekness and Temperance as a third row across the bottom. What we see is that Kindness is in the center, surrounded by the other fruits. If we consider the whole grid as a geode, and we were to crack it open, we would discover that Kindness lies at the heart of the fruits of the Spirit. And it is this fruit which corresponds to the Triune God's kindness in externally communicating His inner essential goodness. God reveals Himself in the truth about Himself. This is like that light which shines in the darkness, which has shown in our hearts, to give knowledge – light is knowledge and in His light we see light. What does light do? Light must shine. Light cannot be still. Light travels at 186,000 miles/second. It must go forth and it must bear the truth. And so it is with God – there is an inner essential goodness in God which is all light – God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. God is all righteousness, truth, peace, joy and love in Himself – but this inner goodness is shed forth by kindness. God's self-revelation is the revelation of His goodness: "Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way" (Psalm 25:8).

Jonathan Edwards again,

Thus we see that the great end of God's works, which is so variously expressed in Scripture, is indeed but one; and this one end is most properly and comprehensively called, the glory of god; by which name it is most commonly called in Scripture; and is fitly compared to an effulgence or emanation of light from a luminary. Light is the external expression, exhibition, and manifestation of the excellency of the luminary, of the sun for instance: It is the abundant, extensive emanation and communication of the fulness of the sun to innumerable beings that partake of it. It is by this that the sun itself is seen, and his glory beheld, and all other things are discovered: it is by a participation of this communication from the sun, that surrounding objects receive all their lustre, beauty, and brightness. It is by this that all nature receives life, comfort, and joy. Light is abundantly used in Scripture to represent and signify these three things, knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

What has been said may be sufficient to show, how those things, which are spoken of in Scripture as ultimate ends of God's works, though they may seem at first view to be distinct, are all plainly to be reduced to this one thing, viz. God's internal glory or fulness existing in its emanation. And though God, in seeking this end, seeks the creature's good; yet therein appears his supreme regard to himself.

God's self-revelation as the purpose of creation is a marvelous idea. That God would so delight in Himself that He would be pleased to create and reveal Himself to the creation, refracting His simple holiness through the prism of the fallen creation so as to reveal His full character and nature. There are those who reject the goodness of God and through this means God makes known His justice and wrath and power on the vessels of wrath, who freely fit themselves for destruction in God's will. On others, the vessels of mercy, by grace God makes known the riches of His glory. These are drawn right in to nothing less than His very own, most glorious, most adorable, nature of infinite goodness.

And it is likewise a marvelous thing to realize that one of the fruits of the Spirit corresponds to God's purpose to manifest Himself and another to God's glorious essential goodness. If I can make the mapping explicit: The fruit of kindness, which we saw as the heart of the 9 fruits, corresponds to the emanation or shining of the light of the knowledge of God. And the fruit of goodness corresponds to the inner, essential goodness, the internal glory.

And so, these two fruits of the Spirit are intimately bound up with these profound aspects of God's character. We may liken the idea of God's goodness to an infinite ocean and His revelation of that goodness to a fountain that bursts forth from the deep. We may liken God's goodness to an inexhaustible sun and the revelation as the light and warmth which streams forth from it. This all is very lovely as poetic metaphors but what does it mean to us in terms of the fruit of the Spirit?

Fruit of the Spirit

This second row of three fruits of the Spirit is directly related to the purpose of God in glorifying Himself by making Himself known. In order to cultivate these fruits, we must consider the original in God. God is active in revealing Himself, as light is active. And so this fruit must be the corresponding idea in us. Jesus said not only "I am the light of the world," (John 8:12) He also said "ye are the light of the world" (Matt 5:14). Our growth in the fruit of kindness corresponds to the increasing shining of the light. These three fruits are related because the shining of the light flows from the inner goodness which is Christ Himself, which inevitably leads to resistance and persecution. The continued growth of kindness requires long-suffering, and cultivates goodness. And goodness flows forth with greater light unto greater resistance and greater persecution. It is a virtuous cycle.

We need the light IN US, if we are to shine. Yet by nature, as we are born into the world, we do not have this light. By nature we do not have any light because we are naturally darkness and not light. By nature men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. By nature we all hate the light and will avoid the light because it exposes our thoughts and our deeds as evil.

Paul wrote,

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now [are ye] light in the Lord: walk as children of light:
(For the fruit of the Spirit [is] in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) (Ephesians 5:8-9)

The language Paul uses here is striking – he didn't say that we were darkened, though he did write in the previous chapter that our understanding was darkened (Eph 4:18) and elsewhere that "their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom 1:21). Here he says that we were darkness. It is one thing to be in a dark room, after a while your eyes will adjust and you can make out some shapes. Paul is saying that we were darkness. Not a darkened room, but deep in a cave, with such absolute darkness that could be cut with a knife. If you've ever been deep in a cave, and turned out all the lights, you know that your eyes can

never adjust to the pitch dark and your mind and your eyes make up wild images as if you were dreaming with eyes wide open. You see, if there is no light, our eyes and our minds will make us think we're seeing something, even if it is nothing but our own imaginations. That's the way of the natural man. They have no light so their minds and eyes see all kinds of wild image and swirling patterns which they mistake for reality until they fall upon the stone and be broken. As Jesus said, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt 6:23) It is such a darkness as masquerades as light! What a dreadful condition.

But praise God we weren't left in that state! Paul goes on to say that now we are light in the Lord. We're not just enlightened, as if the lights were turned on, but we are light, says Paul. And, how can that be possible? How can darkness be changed into light? Well, first darkness is not a thing, so it can't be changed into anything. The only thing that can turn darkness into light is to shine light into the darkness. And that is exactly what the Lord does. Let's look again at 2 Cor 4:6-7

(6) 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. (7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:6-7)

We once were darkness but now we are light in the Lord, because it's not just that the the light shines within us to illuminate us – it is deeper than that! The true Light takes us into union with Himself and so, it's not just that we are enlightened, though we are, but we are made light in the Lord. If Christ is in us, and we are in Christ, then we are light in the Lord. We are not made like the moon, though we are naturally as a barren, lifeless, dark rock. But now, because of Christ, we do not shine merely because the light of the sun reflects off us. In that case we would be like cakes not turned (Hosea 7:8), bright on one side and dark on the other. Rather we are made light, with a light emanating from ourselves, which is the light of Christ, who is our life and our light.

And what then is the treasure that we have in earthen vessels? It is the light that is the treasure, but of course it is Christ who is the light, and who makes us light in union Himself. We have this treasure which is Christ and is our inner goodness, by means of a vital participation in His goodness. Paul tells us that this is one of the mysteries that God is making known: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (Col 1:27)

Continuing on in 2 Cor 4, what consequences can be seen to follow from this inner change? I see two main consequences which are directly related to today's topic. I will present them in the reverse order –

The first consequence is speaking. In verse 13, Paul wrote, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Corinthians 4:13). This is the fruit of kindness because there is no greater kindness than to speak the words of life to the men and women of the world. Do you have the light of Christ in you? Then you have the same spirit of faith. The light must shine forth! This is the purposeful sending forth of the goodness that has been implanted within us. The emanation occurs when we speak – the light goes forth when we open our mouths and speak the words of the gospel to the lost.

The second main consequence which appears is in vv. 8-10, Paul wrote

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; [we are] perplexed, but not in despair; (9) Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; (10) Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. (2 Corinthians 4:8-10)

Here is a marvelous gospel reality. The troubles begin for a person soon after the light shines within the heart. A man's testimony begins to develop at once because he is now a new creation of God, now a child of light. Repentance and faith and first love in conversion cause an immediate change in the position and orientation of the life. All things are made new, and reformation must take place. Then what happens? Peter wrote, "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with [them] to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of [you]:" (1 Peter 4:4). The renovation of the heart amounts to a change of mind and a change of affections which leads to a change of will, and this is faith – the evidence of things not seen – working through love. The world hates the light and will attempt to smother the light. When you refuse to partake with your former companions, even in subtle ways like no longer using foul language, they will notice and speak evil of you. They have to suppress the discovery it makes of their own evil deeds. But this is just the beginning.

Paul wrote that "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29). Paul joins together believing in Christ and suffering for His sake as if they were joined at the hip like Siamese twins. And that is what the Scripture teaches! "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12) for "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). The persecution or suffering of the Christian arises from the shining forth of the light of the gospel. The world will not persecute you if you live a moral life but never open your mouth about Christ. Recriminations and abuse come when you speak of Christ to your friends, neighbors and strangers. We should not be surprised when it happens and we certainly shouldn't shy away from it. Rather we must embrace it! It is a great blessing to us. How so?

The fruit of kindness grows when we take of the treasure in the earthen vessel, which is the right knowledge of God in the gospel, and we spread it abroad. Though there will be much rejection and many objections, there is a virtuous cycle in all this. When we engage in a purposeful gospel discussion with the lost, there is bound to be much challenge and difficulty. As those with whom we share the gospel are darkness in themselves, they have many false ideas about God, about themselves, about everything. Those darkened imaginations are bound to mock and ridicule the doctrines of grace but that is what must be confronted. We labor and strive with men to get them to understand the gospel. The reactions to the gospel are often challenging to us and we find ourselves in deep water, over our heads.

There is suffering in this because the hearts of men are dead set against the gospel and they will squirm this way and that, try to twist your words and the word of God to their own destruction, and seek to undermine the truths of the gospel. In this we must not only have the fruits of love, joy and peace, we also require the growth of the fruit of long-suffering. The fruit of kindness is manifested by spreading the knowledge of Him. "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). Because the love of Christ constrains us and it is His goodness which makes us light in the Lord. And so we must grow in this fruit by meditating on the great purpose of God to spread the knowledge of Himself, as ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:20).

This is the fruit of kindness because there is no greater kindness than continuing to declare the truth of the gospel in the face of rejection. What does it profit a man if you give him the whole world but he loses his soul? Since a man can give nothing in exchange for his never-dying soul, the greatest good that a Christian can do is to shine the light of the gospel to as many people as possible. Jesus implied that giving a cup of cold water in His name can be a witness (Matt 10:42). Daniel wrote, “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3). Turning many to righteousness is through the revelation of Christ in the gospel. He is our righteousness and sinners must be told that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for all who believe, because it is only by grace through faith that we can be justified.

Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39)

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 find yourself in a gospel conversation with an educated unbeliever (JW, Mormon, Muslim, atheist) and be unable to answer some questions or respond to their assertions. You might not remember verses when you need them, find yourself unable to defend against attacks against the gospel, and feel as if you have been defeated by the enemy. Rejoice! Count it all joy, dear brothers and sisters. Because there is a blessing hidden in it which the goodness of God will open to you. Take it to the Lord in prayer and go back to the Word of God and the Scriptures 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. You will really learn about the sovereignty of God and the gospel will come alive to you in ways you had not ever anticipated. This is a cycle of growth of the fruit which takes you deeper into the relationship with the One who is the light. The fruit of goodness will grow in surprising ways as you go forth and open your mouth to speak of Christ to the people all around you.

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’re set on a hill. You cannot hide. Shine! You are a light set in the midst of many people. Open your mouth and speak of the glory of reconciliation through the cross of Christ. Don’t be afraid! God will bless you abundantly.

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). If you have this understanding, then you are light in the Lord and you are called to walk as a child of light. Shine as you go. Bring tracts with you wherever you go. The Scriptures are abundant on this point:

O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. (Psalm 51:15)

This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise. (Isaiah 43:21)

But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: (1 Peter 2:9)

Some people may shine in some context before some people but in other company, they will, as it were, put the light under a basket, most likely because of fear of man to avoid persecution. This is extremely dangerous – and we must question what our ultimate good actually is in such a case. We make ourselves out to be more like the moon, which has a dark side, than the sun which cannot but shine all around. If we examine ourselves, maybe we will discover that pleasure or wealth or power are really our primary motivation after all! But, then, please consider the end of this hypocrisy. For, if you are NOT light in the Lord, you are darkness, and your latter end is utter darkness. O Lord, open our lips that we might tell of your glorious gospel!

If we have this treasure then we **can't not** open it to others any more than the sun might refuse to shine. This is a treasure that grows by giving it away. Give it away and more is added. The light shines in the darkness, and then, when suffering comes, as it certainly will, we will be forced back to God our strong tower and to the Word for strength, for wisdom, for knowledge. Our participation in the goodness of God will necessarily grow as the fruit of goodness in us, and by grace 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)

And may the gospel so captivate our hearts, as it has captivated the Lord's heart, since it is the revelation of His glory, that we will earnestly desire to make the truths of the gospel clearly known. Our goal must be to affect the conscience of the hearer. The conscience is the principle target, to which the preacher of the gospel must direct himself. The man whose conscience is not troubled like the waters of Bethesda is impotent and unable go down to be healed. The gospel must be directed to the mind in such a way that the conscience is convicted of guilt, to confront the person with the dire situation of their guilt before a holy God and their desperate need of salvation. We must preach the law to kill and the crucified and risen Christ as the end of the law for righteousness. The gospel message must first kill before it can give life. We must plead with men to be reconciled to God through Him knowing it is God's work. Treasure up this gospel in your heart. Then, if you have the same spirit of faith, speak! When challenges arise, take them to the Lord in prayer and search the Scriptures daily. And the fruits of long-suffering, kindness and goodness will flourish by God's marvelous grace. Amen!