

Will you show this fruit of goodness, this fruit not of ourselves by nature, but which the Holy Spirit grants and works through Christ in us and with us?

Here I come to our last point. This message is a divine call for us all to have and bear this fruit, goodness. The call is for all of us to look to Christ, believe in Him, belong to Him, and live for Him, depending on Him for everything. All that the Lord requires from us, He will freely give to us in Christ. How sad when some hearers of the gospel refuse to trust and obey the gospel and will not grow and show the fruit of the Spirit. In Jeremiah 6:16 and following, God solemnly warns those who refuse to walk "*in the old paths where is the good way*" that God sets before us, the only gospel way. God warns there in verse 19, "*Hear, O earth: behold I will bring evil [judgment] upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it.*" I pray God this solemn warning of God will awaken anyone still not saved and not showing the fruit of the Spirit, goodness.

I give the call in Jesus' Name, to take care by God's grace to be knowing and showing the fruit of the Spirit, also this fruit of goodness. It is not a time to be slack in seeking the Lord and serving the Lord and bearing fruit to His praise. Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone, also in the way of showing kindness always and again with a purpose true, having, in other words, this fruit of the Spirit, goodness, too. In Ephesians 5:9 Paul calls God's people to walk as children of light with the fruit of the Spirit "*in all goodness, righteousness, and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*" I ask you, in Jesus' Name, will you so live by God's grace? Will you so live, not bearing the unfruitful works of darkness, but the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness [kindness], and goodness too? Amen.

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT - GOODNESS

Continuing with our series on the fruit of the Spirit based on Galatians 5:22, this time we study the fruit, goodness. It is not easy to define goodness and to distinguish it with the fruit of kindness or gentleness. Yet it is something different and more than the fruit of kindness. In trying to explain this fruit of goodness one person wrote, "Goodness embraces so much and suggests so much that it is hard to circumscribe [confine] its radiating significance within a definition." Perhaps the simplest definition of goodness, as the Bible means it, would be something like kindness in the way of godliness. Goodness is always lovingly promoting only what is right and true from God's perspective. Goodness is more than simply kindness. It is kindness on track, kindness on a higher plain, always in line with God's Word and will. You can put it this way too, the fruit of the Spirit especially in the matter of relating with others isn't only about being longsuffering or only about being kind, but it is about longsuffering and kindness that is also full of goodness at one and the same time. Let us think about this considering first the character of goodness, the challenges against it, the blessing of it, and the call to it.

What is the character of this fruit of the Spirit, goodness? I have already hinted at it with saying that goodness is kindness always in promotion of God's Word and holy will. The whole gospel message of Jesus Christ is also about God showing a kindness that is full of goodness, a kindness in salvation that upholds God's justice and holiness while showing forth infinite mercy and grace at the same time. Do you know the gospel message as full of kindness towards us and full of God's goodness too? With the gospel message God never approves of sin in any way, but He has made a way of full salvation from sin and complete reconciliation with us as sinners, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is showing us the goodness of God in Christ Jesus, and then also working this fruit of goodness in our own lives.

The character of this fruit of goodness is living in line with God's Word and always and again seeking to uphold what God says in His Word, and in view of Christ, the Saviour of sinners. The fruit of the Spirit, goodness, is lovingly and humbly, with integrity, promoting what is right and true, just and good, Christ-like and Biblical in the lives of others. Is this what you and I

reflect in our life, in any situation with whoever we may be with, at any and all times? Let me be specific here to bring this out more.

For example, I'm not demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit, goodness, when I kindly approve in someone's life what is morally wrong, what is contrary to God's law and Word. But if I kindly and humbly confront such a person and point out God's Word for that situation with the prayer that they will graciously receive it and amend their ways accordingly, then I am showing the fruit of the Spirit, goodness. If you say to a person who has left his spouse and is dating with another person, "You must break off that relationship at once and be faithful to your lawful spouse" that will not come across as so nice, but it is right. If you say to a young man, "You are wrong and living in sin with your habit of drinking, or gambling or living in sexual immorality", such rebuke might not come across as so kind, but it would be right. It would be showing kindness in a way that is also goodness. The fruit of the Spirit, goodness, never can approve of a kindness that is unfaithful and not upholding the truth of God and His Word and His gospel. Think here of Proverbs 27:6. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." The fruit of the Spirit, goodness, is kindness in the way of Biblical godliness and promotion of such.

Have I helped you understand something of the character of this fruit of the Spirit, goodness? Does it convict you of how unspiritual we still can be and are so often in our lives? How much room for growth in this fruit of goodness there is in our lives, isn't it true? Won't every confessing Christian humbly admit this, and acknowledge many shortcomings also in the face of all the challenges to this fruit of goodness?

The challenges to this fruit of the Spirit, goodness, are many in our day. A main challenge is that so many no longer will live by God's Word and in respect and submission to its inspired divine authority. We live in times where people insist there is no absolute standard of right and wrong and where they look down upon any insistence that there is, and that the Holy Bible gives it to us. 'Who has a right to impose such an idea upon us?' people say. The result is people insist on a kindness today that is tolerant towards all and that accepts whatever choices people make. The tragic outcome of this spirit of our age is that the one thing people are intolerant about is the fruit of the Spirit, goodness! People want kindness but not goodness. This makes it not easy to live out this fruit of the Spirit in our times.

Another challenge with this fruit of the Spirit, goodness, is the fear of man and the desire to leave others happy and to like us still. Proverbs 29:25 says truthfully, "*The fear of man brings a snare.*" "Let's just show kindness and never mind goodness so much, godliness in all our ways, what is right and true. No, just love and accept everyone and whatever they do and however they live, and be sure not to offend anyone, please; don't make

anyone feel bad, if you are a gentleman!" Isn't this a pressure you feel sometimes too? It can be the easy way out, also even in family life in the raising of our children - forget this matter of goodness for that takes discipline and sometimes tough love that at the time seems more cruel than kind. So the easy way out is a challenge with this fruit of goodness. Who doesn't also feel this challenge sometimes?

What shall we say too about the challenge of our own sinful, deceitful heart by nature and the challenge of wanting to go more by majority opinion and peer pressure rather than by God's Word? The challenges against this fruit of the Spirit, goodness, are such that it should make us all the more prayerful and diligent in depending on the Lord and seeking to be guided by His Word in our times, to be faithful and true to Him. Won't this be true of every Christian, by God's grace?

Saying that brings me also to our third point about the blessing of this fruit of goodness. Why is this fruit attractive and so good to promote and demonstrate? One reason would be certainly it brings glory to God and His Word, glory and honour to Christ as Saviour and Lord when we have this fruit of goodness and show it in our relationship with others. Having and showing this fruit means ultimately living that others too may come to know Christ and to walk in His way of grace and truth for that is the good way. If people will follow their own goodness, being sinful by nature, they will be following ways that are evil and of this world, and that lead to death and destruction. Man's goodness by nature amounts to nothing before God. Romans 3 states, "*there is none that does good, no not one.*" But good and upright is the Lord! He is the Good Shepherd and those who hear His voice and follow after Him will testify with the psalmist of Psalm 23, "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!*"

Because it promotes God's honour and His gospel and Word this fruit of goodness is such a blessing. But it is such a blessing also because it looks for the very best for anyone and everyone. The fact is God's ways are the best ways for us. The paths of the Lord and living in heart submission and service to God as revealed in Christ is not something awful but awesome, not something burdensome but beautiful, not a curse but a comfort, not a drag but a delight, not something to escape and evade but something to embrace and enjoy! The goodness of the fruit of the Spirit is goodness without measure in quality and quantity and reliability and riches. The goodness of the Spirit is not only so blessed for being God-honouring and truly most wonderful for us, but also it promotes the stability and establishment of society and especially also the Christian church in society and the coming of God's kingdom until the final day. The fruit of the Spirit, goodness, is that quality divine-like goodness which gives hope yet for this world and what makes God's people shine as lights in this world of darkness.