

Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness

Various Passages

31 May 2020 | Grace Bible Church Corinda | Mark Parkinson

Big Idea: My Goodness should Reflect God's Goodness

Big Question: What is Goodness?

Introduction *(slide start)*

Once upon a time, there was a man who lived an upright and amazingly good life.

He was known far and wide as a man of integrity, honour, treating others with unbelievable kindness and generosity and was a pillar in the community of good morale living.

He was the perfect example of a good person, in fact he was undoubtedly the most upright person throughout the whole land.

During his lifetime, friends and family had told the man of the good news of Jesus.

But in the man's mind, his outstanding living standards would surely allow safe passage into heaven, especially compared to everyone else who lived in the land.

One day this good man reached the end of his appointed days, sadly passing away.

At his funeral, the minister spoke of how the man had lived his life, having the morals and virtues that most people dream of, always putting others before himself, treating them with kindness and generosity that would be spoken about in the years to come.

His name would go down in folk legend, songs would be written about him, and his name would endure through the ages.

The minister told of how the man would be welcomed through the pearly gates of heaven, and how the angels would sing and dance playing harps at his entrance in the soft white clouds in heaven above.

But when the man reached heaven and stood before the almighty God and creator of the universe.....

How do you think this story should end? Is being a good person who's lived a good life enough to earn you entrance to heaven and gain eternal life? What if this person is you ?

If you believe being a good person is enough to get you into heaven, you're not alone.

A variety of religions teach that people will be rewarded after death if they simply do more good deeds than bad ones. But this is not what the Bible teaches.

This kind of thinking often leaves us with more questions than answers.

For example, what exactly is the definition of a good person? Is a good person just anyone who doesn't commit a serious crime?

Or maybe the bar is higher? Maybe being good also means working at a food kitchen once per week serving the less fortunate. Or maybe it should be twice per week?

How do we know how high the bar is set and how can we know if we made the cut? *(scales slide)*

Others say that you simply need to do just enough good deeds to tip the scales. If all your good deeds make up at least 51% of what you do, then heaven should be your final destination.

But how can you be sure that at least a little more than half of your life has been good? And don't some good and bad deeds carry more weight than others?

We're continuing through our sermon series on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit (*slide*)

Looking back over previous weeks, we've covered Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, and this week we'll be looking at possibly the most undervalued fruit of them all – **GOODNESS**. (*slide - goodness*)

We've heard through the previous sermons and we read from Galatians chapter 5, that if we let the Holy Spirit guide our lives, then we won't do what our sinful nature wants.

The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite to our sinful nature.

We've learnt that these two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results very clear !!

But when you let the Spirit guide your lives, the resulting fruits in your life are also very clear !!

The undervalued fruit

In my opinion, goodness as a fruit does not receive the recognition or praise it really deserves.

If I asked you to list out the fruits that you wanted or needed more of in your lives, then I suspect that your answers might be along the lines of:

*"I need to have more **patience** with my children" (home schooling comes to mind for some!)*

or

*"I wish I had more **self-control** in this area of my life" (money burning a hole in ya pocket come to mind ?)*

or

*"I need to stop being so grumpy and show more **kindness** and **gentleness** to others in my life"*

For most of us, goodness probably wouldn't be the fruit at the top of the "fruit salad" so to speak.

Goodness is not the Cherry on top for most when talking fruits of the spirit. Maybe most have a big serve of goodness already, and don't need anymore.

Although I suspect the more likely answer is that we understand what it means to be loving, patient, and kind.

These type of characteristics are more tangible, and easy to measure. But understanding what goodness actually is, is a little more difficult.

Today its meaning has been diluted because we use the word “goodness” so many times in our day to day lives, and can have slightly different meaning depending on the context in which it’s used.

It’s used to emphasize that you do not know something “Where are they?” “**Goodness** knows.”

It’s used to express surprise – “**Goodness** me, the Rabbitohs won a game!”, or “My **goodness**, you have been busy” (*Mr Hogg in the kitchen!*)

And it’ also used to say that you are pleased about something – “Thank **goodness** for that!”

The Definition of Goodness

This led me to do a bit of research to find out “what is goodness”? Of course I turned to the trusty interweb to find out how the world defines goodness.

Google describes goodness as: (*slide - google*)

“Conformity to the recognized standards of right conduct: a citizen of the highest morality.”

It also suggests that “goodness is consciously or steadily maintained, often in spite of temptations or evil influences.”

I actually quite like that description.

Especially the last part. “Goodness is maintained in spite of temptations”

The Oxford Dictionary defines goodness as (*slide - Oxford*)

- the state or quality of being good.
- the best part of anything

And luckily for me, I was able to find Good Country Index.org which actually ranks countries around the world in order of their Goodness. (*slide – good country*)

But what’s the **biblical** or **Christian definition** of Goodness? (*slide – Christian goodness*)

Goodness is about being moral and upright.

Goodness is doing good over evil and right over wrong.

In fact the opposite of goodness is evil:

Psalm 52:3 You love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking the truth.

But this isn’t just goodness for goodness’ sake.

Or being good to get onto Santa’s “nice” list.

“*He knows if you’ve been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake*” comes to mind!

It’s being good for the sake of others as well as ourselves.

Pete spoke about the fruit of kindness last week.

As I listened to his sermon, I realised that kindness & goodness are actually very similar. They “overlap” in some sense.

However, there are subtle differences.

Kindness might help the old lady across the road, but goodness doesn't rip someone off.

The person who's good will do good things for others. Even when it costs them.

Goodness summed up, is having such worthy character that you will always do the right thing by God and man, no matter what the circumstance.

The main theme or idea to take away from this morning is:

My Goodness should reflect God's Goodness (*slide – big idea / question*)

This research on goodness leads us into our three main points this morning (*slide*)

1. Gods Goodness
2. Man's lack of Goodness
3. Goodness in Christ

1. God's Goodness

First, we can see what goodness is by looking at God. God is good.

We see his goodness in the way that he made mankind and the world in which we live. It was good, perfect and sin-free....

Reading from Genesis 1 vs 27 (*slide*)

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”

and the jumping down to vs 31

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good”

His goodness is shown in creating a very good world. Every day we can see his majesty and goodness in the world around us. The world is full of his goodness!

God is holy, just and good and He does all things in truth.

Psalm 33 vs 4 – 5 *“For the word of the Lord is right, and all his work is done in truth. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord”*

God's goodness is also shown by the fact that his love and faithfulness endures forever!

It has continued from the very start of time, and continues even now, through all generations.

Our God is a faithful God who loves us through our good and bad.

Even in our lowest of lows, when we feel a million miles away from God, or when we're not in a good place, Gods goodness and love remains as steadfast as ever.

It doesn't depend on our circumstances or if we're tipping the scales of good deeds in the right or wrong direction. God's goodness to us remains the same every day.

Reading from Psalms 100 vs 6

"For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations"

1.1 God works all things together for the good

Not only is our God good, he works all things together for good. His goodness works good for people like us.

Reading from Romans 8 vs 28 *(slide)*

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"

God works in all things – not just isolated incidents – for our good.

This does not mean that all that happens to us is good.

Evil is widespread in our fallen sinful world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our long-range good.

God is not working to make us happy, but to fulfil his purpose.

Psalms 107:1

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever."

Psalms 34:8

"O taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!"

The Bible shows us what goodness is by showing us God. God is good.

2. Man's lack of Goodness

Secondly, we're going to see man's lack of goodness.

Most of us think that we're good. After all, we're not BAD people. We haven't killed anyone.

Since the creation of the world, and the fall of Adam allowing sin to enter the world, Satan has influenced the world allowing humanity to come up with its own measure of what's good and bad.

Most people decide what's right or wrong based on whatever mood, feeling or personal experience they've had on a subject.

They can often be influenced by the media, news and the internet, by sporting stars who are considered as role models, by work colleagues and by family & friends.

This determines or guides the world's view of goodness, and continually "resets" mankind's moral compass.

What once was deemed bad or sinful a mere generation or two ago, is now considered good, correct and acceptable to modern society.

The past generations are considered old-fashioned because their view of goodness was so narrow and was guided by religious & Christian leaders.

We can't agree on the standard, but what we're sure of, is that we meet it.

But that's not how God sees it. He says that we don't meet his standard.

Reading from Romans 3 vs 10-12 (*slide*)

*"As it is written; There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands. No one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even **ONE**."*

Paul is referring to Psalm 14 vs 1- 3. There is no one righteous means no one is innocent.

Every person is valuable in Gods eyes because God created us in his image and he loves us.

But no one is righteous – no one can earn right standing with God. Humanity in its present sinful condition, is unacceptable before God.

Have you ever thought to yourself, "well I'm not too bad.

I'm a pretty good person"

Remembering the Ten Commandments from our recent catechism questions, have you ever lied?

Have you ever hurt someone's feelings?

Romans 3:23 says that all of have *"sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."*

In short, even the best person among us falls far short of what God expects. His standard is complete obedience and no one has ever met that standard except Jesus.

3.1 Mixed Motives

We often think we are truly good, or acting out of the "goodness in our hearts" when we do good for others.

But often there are mixed motives at play for doing good.

We might do "favours" for others purely for what we might get out of it. Like two people exchanging favours.

We might repay good because we feel we owe a debt to someone who's shown goodness to us in the past.

Or we might show goodness to others purely to gain praise or recognition from people around us.

If these examples are what motivates us to show goodness, then I wonder if it's actually true goodness at all?

These motivations are more self-centred, selfish, and seeking to lift ourselves above others.

Outwardly we might be seen to show goodness, but inwardly our motivations could be quite different. *(slide)*

Luke 6:32-33 *“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do that”*

Doing good to someone who does good to you, is not pure goodness.

But God’s standard of goodness is the very highest!

2.2 If no one is good, where does that leave us?

You may be thinking to yourself, “Wait a minute!

That seems a little extreme.

I’ve done so many good things and kept almost all of the commandments in the Bible! I’ve never hurt anyone.

I’m not perfect but I’m certainly better than most people I know.” Similar to the person in our story at the beginning.

But James 2:10 says, *“For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God’s laws.”*

Just one act of disobedience in an otherwise good life is all it takes to be found guilty and worthy of punishment in the eyes of God.

No one wants to be a person who does evil.

We talk about someone being a “goodey two-shoes” – someone who’s so good that it’s sickening. And we see that as a very negative thing. Why do we feel that way? It’s because we don’t want to be held to a standard that we think that we can never make. So, we lower the standard.

And we want to think of ourselves as being good, while still having part of us that’s “a little bit naughty”.

Not too bad, but not too good either. That’s an overinflated sense of ourselves.

The bible tells us that no one is good, not even one person. No one can reach God’s standard of goodness on their own.

3. Goodness in Christ

And finally we’re going to see that in Christ, we can have goodness.

We can only be good by taking on Jesus’ righteousness. We are right in Jesus.

The Bible specifically says that we are not saved from God’s judgment by our own good works.

Ephesians 2 vs 10 says *(slide)*

“For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift – not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are His creation – created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.”

We can only be saved by putting our faith in Jesus, the Son of God.

We must believe that He loves us. We must believe that He is ready to forgive us even though we don’t deserve it.

How is that possible? God made it possible Himself.

He couldn’t just let our disobedience go unpunished. That would make Him a bad and unjust judge.

Opposite to what we read in Psalms 33 a little earlier. Someone has to face the consequences for what we’ve done.

God, in His love, was willing to sacrifice His Son, Jesus, to face death in our place.

The Bible explains it this way: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

And that’s very **Good** news!

3.1 Take off old, put on new

As people who are walking in step with the Holy Spirit, we need to take off the old and put on the new.

Reading from Ephesians 4:22

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”

Our old way of life is completely in the past.

We need to put it behind us like old clothes to be thrown away.

We must put off our former way of life, where we are continually being led astray by its sinful desires.

When we decide to accept Christ’s gift of salvation, it’s a once for all decision and also a daily conscious commitment.

We shouldn’t be driven by desire & impulse anymore.

But we must put on our new self, head in the new direction, and have a new way of thinking that the Holy Spirit gives.

It means that your conduct should match your faith.

It’s more than just making good resolutions and having good intentions; it actually means living your life as Christ would have lived.

2 Corinthians 5 vs 17 *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come”*

3.2 Only through Christ can we show Goodness

Goodness isn't a quality we can manufacture on our own. But in Christ, we can now have true goodness. But it's a fruit of the Spirit in us, not of ourselves.

And God gets the praise for the goodness in us, as we reflect God's goodness to people around us.

We effectively become a walking signboard advertising God's goodness shining out of our lives. This shining should be like the bright light, beaming out from a lighthouse on a dark and stormy night.

(last slide)

Matthew 5:16 *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

God's goodness is reflected through our goodness!

James 1 vs 17 says

"Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow"

The bible often compares goodness with light, and evil with darkness. As children of light, our actions should reflect our faith. We should live beyond reproach morally so that we'll reflect God's goodness to others.

Ephesians 5 vs 8 – 9

"For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)"

In letting the Holy Spirit control our lives, we can be blessed with the fruit of goodness.

So it's only with Christ that we can have true goodness in our lives.

4. Conclusion

Remember the story I told at the start, talking about a good man.

Everyone knew he was good. What would happen when he came to the throne of judgment?

What did you think? What do you think now?

If he was relying on his own goodness, he was sunk.

I told this story to illustrate the fact that man's standard of goodness is actually not high enough to meet God's standard of goodness.

The world's definition of goodness is also different than God's definition.

Luke 6 vs 27-28 demonstrates how the spiritual fruit of goodness actually reflects God's goodness in our lives.

"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you"

This biblical goodness separates us from the world we live in, and helps to show the world what true goodness really is!

With Gods help, we can actually start to:

“Love our enemies” and “do good to those who hate us”

These characteristics or qualities are almost impossible to find amongst society today, but we as Christians are called to show the “fruit of goodness” in our lives, impacting the world around us.

And if you’re not a Christian this morning, and don’t know Jesus as your personal saviour, it’s not too late to repent, turn from your former way of life and put on the new, and accept Jesus’ goodness and offer of salvation.

If that’s you this morning, or you simply have more questions about finding true Goodness in this life, please chat to our Pastor Ben Shannon or one of our elders here at Grace Bible Church Corinda.

And finally, some biblical encouragement to help us reflect Gods goodness to others is found in Galatians 6:9-10

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”

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Big Idea: My Goodness should Reflect God's Goodness

Big Question: What is Goodness?

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree that goodness is the "undervalued" fruit?
2. What characteristics make someone a good person? a) In the world's eyes and b) in God's eyes.
3. How do we know that God is good?
4. What are some ways that God shows his goodness to us?
5. Why is goodness so hard to define? Surely goodness is just being good. Simple.
6. Mark put forward this definition of goodness. How is it similar and different to kindness?

Goodness is having such worthy character that you will always do the right thing by God and man, no matter what the circumstance.

7. What is the problem with mixed motives?
8. Can a sinner still reflect God's goodness?
9. What should our goodness point people to?