



7 - GOODNESS



In this chapter, we come to the fruit of goodness. The kind of goodness we're talking about here is virtue that's both inside and out. It's the difference between doing good for the right reason, which is to glorify God, and doing them for the wrong reasons which are selfish gain and attention. More clearly defined, it's uprightness of heart and life.

We're not talking about simply being good, since many people we know are kind-hearted, honest, and polite. What I'm referring to here is a servant's heart. The kind of "well doing" that Paul talks about in his letter to the churches of Galatia.

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. (Galatians 6:9-10, NIV)

Mathew Henry wrote, "Our present time is seed time; in the other world we shall reap as we sow now."

We're impatient farmers though, aren't we? After we plant a few seeds, we wait and we watch, we hope, and we pray that we'll see a return on our labor. Don't get me wrong, it's good to hope and to pray that our seeds will take root—in fact that's an essential part of the planting we do. It's the discouragement we have watch out for. Planting without return can be weary, it can slow down our work, and in many cases bring it to a complete halt. But hope and revival come to those who joyfully serve for the sake of the Lord.

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

All three persons of the Godhead are evident in the Fruit of Goodness. The Father has ordained us unto good works, Christ is our living example, and the Holy Spirit helps us to achieve this.

Remember, "This Little Light of Mine?" If your childhood was anything like mine, you probably sang it in the 80s a lot. And you probably put your finger up like a candle when you sang it. Didn't we all?

Did you ever stop to consider what that light was all about? It's more than just professing our faith to the world, it's also living out our faith in a way that reflects the goodness of God. This kind of goodness leaves an undeniable impression upon a heart. It says more than our

words ever could, because love is a powerful thing.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16, NIV)

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

Goodness (along with righteousness and truth) is described as “The Fruit of Light” in Ephesians 5:9.

What Paul is referring to here is the result of walking in light where we exemplify the character of Christ.

Goodness is a powerful force, in fact the Bible goes as far as to say that husbands can be won over without a word by their wives (1 Peter 3:1). What does that say to you? To me it says that behavior speaks volumes. The question is, what are we shouting? Are we proclaiming the goodness of God by the way that we live, or are we turning others away?

The other day I came across an incredible video of a race from December 2, 2012. It was the Burlada Cross Country Race in Spain—a race that stands out from the crowd because one athlete stepped down so another could shine.

Just as Ivan Fernandez was approaching the end of the race, he noticed his fellow competitor, Abel Mutai from Kenya slowing down and checking his watch, just short of the finish line. This was Ivan’s chance to get ahead and reach for the prize, but instead of grabbing an opportunity to take the lead, he showed the world what it really means to love your neighbor as yourself.

Ivan knew that Abel was faster than him. He knew that Abel would have already won if he wasn’t confused. And so, he chose the road less traveled—a path that’s paved with goodness and grace.

In the video we see Ivan slowing down and pointing ahead as he’s telling Abel to keep on going. Since Abel didn’t understand his language, however, it didn’t help. And so, we see Ivan with one hand on Abel’s back pushing him ahead through the finish line.

In the same way, we’re running a race in this world and we’re running to

Overcome Evil With Good

win, but if we're not cheering on others and pointing the way, we're not running well. We're not called to be self-centered, we're called to be Christ-centered and to let our light shine. We're here to draw others to Christ, not to ourselves.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, "Don't shine so that other can see you. Shine so that through you others can see Him."

People are often confused when it comes to good deeds. In fact, some think that they're saved by good works. Others think that once we come to Christ, we're finished our work. But here's the thing, the purpose of doing good work is to bring glory to God.

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

God is the one both planting and empowering
the fruit of goodness within you.

When the Bible tells us to let our light shine, it's telling us to be an example of God's love and compassion to others. Everyone always thinks that they have more time to get ready. We say, I'll call that person another day. I'll give to the poor next week. I'll visit that person tomorrow. I'll tell them about Jesus next time. I'll stew in my anger today and say sorry tomorrow. I'll volunteer next year...

I'm reminded of the Parable of the Ten Virgins. The Bible tells us that five of them were foolish and five of them were wise. You see, five of them were ready when the Lord returned and five of them were not.

Their only job was to shine, just as we are called to shine a light in this dark world. All ten of them had lamps, but here's where five of them were foolish: they failed to recognize the fact that a lamp without fuel is nothing more than religion without Christ.

"Sure, I believe in God," many would say, "but I'd rather have fun now and get serious about my faith later."

"Sin today, salvation tomorrow" is a dangerous mindset to choose, for we don't know the day or the hour when the Lord will return. We need to start shining today. We need to let our behavior speak louder than words. Let's look at Luke Chapter 3:8 where John the Baptist says,

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'

What that says to the modern church is, religion won't save you. You're not saved by association, you're not saved because you're a member of a certain church. John is preaching repentance here, and telling them that fruit is a result of repentance. Those who have truly repented desire the holiness of God.

He goes on to say in verses 9-11,

The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

“What should we do then?” the crowd asked.

John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

What does Galatians 6:8 say? Write the verse here.



The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.

- C. S. Lewis -



How is goodness most clearly defined?

What does it mean to shine our light, and why do we do it?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6. What does Paul say about those who sow sparingly? What are the seeds they are sowing?



In Galatians 6:9 Paul talks about reaping a harvest. What do you think that means?
(Also see 2 Corinthians 5:10)

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, what made five of them foolish? What did they fail to recognize?



Can you think of a time when you did something good for the right reason?

Can you think of a time when you did something good for the wrong reason?



We can know the right words yet never be changed. This is the difference between information and transformation.

- A.W. Tozer -



What might Luke 3:8 say to the modern church?

Fill in the Blanks:

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all _____ and _____ and truth.
(Ephesians 5:9, KJV)

Be not _____ of evil, but overcome evil with _____.
(Romans 12:21, KJV)

But love ye _____, _____, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again;
and your _____ shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is
kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. (Luke 6:35, KJV)

We are the Bibles the
world is reading;
We are the creeds
the world is
needing; We are the
sermons the
world is heeding.

Billy Graham





8 - FAITHFULNESS



Looking to Galatians 5:22, we find the word faith. The Greek word for faith here is Pistis (Strong's G4102) defined by Thayer's Greek Lexicon as: fidelity, faithfulness, i.e. the character of one who can be relied on.

And so, we see that faith is more than simply believing that God exists (even Satan himself believes that), it's a matter of being faithful to God. Looking to Hebrews chapter 11, we see this word "pistis" appearing over and over again. In fact, the author uses the word 23 times in that chapter alone. In nearly every place the word appears, it's followed by behavior and action. For example, Hebrews 11:7 says, "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family." And verse 8, "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."

In James 2:17 we read, "Faith without works is dead." (ESV) Does that mean that we're saved by works? No, but it does mean that faith and works should go hand in hand. If we say that we love God we should love His people. If say that we follow God than we should follow Him at all cost.

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

The Hebrew Word for faith in the Old Testament is emuwn which comes from the root word 'aman (Strong's H539), which means to support, confirm, or be faithful. Does it sound familiar? It should because it's also where the modern-day word "amen" comes from.

Faith is taking the first step and trusting God with the second. It's giving Him your best and trusting Him for the rest. One of the best examples of this is found in the story of Cain and Abel. Genesis chapter 4 tells us that Cain brought some of his fruit as an offering to God, while Abel brought the firstborn of his flock.

Like Cain, we can all give God some of our money, some of our time, and some of our resources, but are we willing to give Him our best? Do we trust Him enough to provide if we do?

By bringing the firstborn of his flock, Abel was trusting God for the second, and third, etc. It's like giving your first paycheck to God and trusting in His continued provision.

By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. (Hebrews 11:4, NIV)

Without faith it's impossible to please God. It wouldn't matter if we sacrificed all day at the altar—if we didn't have faith it wouldn't please God. Oh, and it does happen—people do good deeds all the time for the wrong reasons. They write big checks to the church, they volunteer for the fun stuff, they visit the friendly people in the hospital. But when it comes to giving a sacrifice, that's when they back off. In Mark 12 we read,

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44, NIV)

Of course, faithfulness is about more than just giving. That's just one example of the many ways we can be faithful to God. The point is that we are willing to give Him our best, even if and when it calls us to sacrifice.

Faithfulness is faith in action. And what is faith? Charles Spurgeon explains faith by saying that it is made up of three things—knowledge, belief, and trust. We gain knowledge of Who Christ is by reading the Word. We believe that He is Who He says that He is, and we trust that He will do what He has promised to do.

It's more than simply believing God exists, it's understanding and accepting His supreme authority. It's believing that He is everything He says He is. It's believing that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. It's putting our worries and cares in His hands as we're trusting that He will prove Himself faithful. It's believing that He's all powerful and wise.

An incredible example of faithfulness is found in Genesis Chapter 22. God tested Abraham's faith by asking him to give up the one thing he cherished most in this world, his son Isaac.

"Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah." He says. "Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." (v. 2)

Early the next morning Abraham set out to do exactly what God com-

Faithfulness is Faith in Action

manded of him. He took wood for a fire, carried a knife, and climbed the mountain where he built an altar, tied up his son, and laid him on top of the wood. But just as he was about to kill Isaac, Abraham was stopped by an angel of God.

Abraham was willing to give God his best and trust Him with the rest because He knew Who God was, He believed in the power of God, and trusted that God would fulfill His promises to him.

Even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death." (Hebrews 11:18-19, NIV)

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

The word "faith" in its Hebrew from "aman" (Strong's H539) appears for the first time in scripture in Genesis chapter 15 where God makes a covenant with Abraham. It says, "Abram believed ('aman) the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:6, KJV)

Let's compare Abraham's faith to that of a rich young ruler found in Mark Chapter 10. The Bible tells us that he kept all of the commandments. He didn't steal, he didn't murder, he didn't lie, he didn't commit adultery, he didn't bear false witness, and he honored his mother and father, but he was lacking one thing—faithfulness. Jesus told him to go sell everything he had and to give it to the poor, but instead he walked away sad.

Like Cain, he was willing to give God some of his money, some of his time, and some of his resources but he wasn't willing to give God his best.

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

Faith is not blind as many might say. It comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, which offers us proof of Who Jesus is and His work on the cross. Even the conviction of things not seen is based on a promise made by a trusted source.

Just recently, we finished our month-long job of painting and cleaning and sprucing up our home. We washed the last of the windows, swept the front steps, and vacuumed the carpets. We are completely done and ready to sell. Finally.

As I stood back and looked at all the work that we've done, I got to thinking about Paul's words in 2 Timothy Chapter 4,

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7, KJV)

And with that, I'm reminded that one day I'll stand before Christ. One day I'll finish this race set before me.

It's my sincere hope that when I do, I'll see Him smile and hear those words I've longed to hear, "Well done my good and faithful servant."

That's when I'll see that keeping the faith was well worth the fight, and that hard work is always worthwhile.

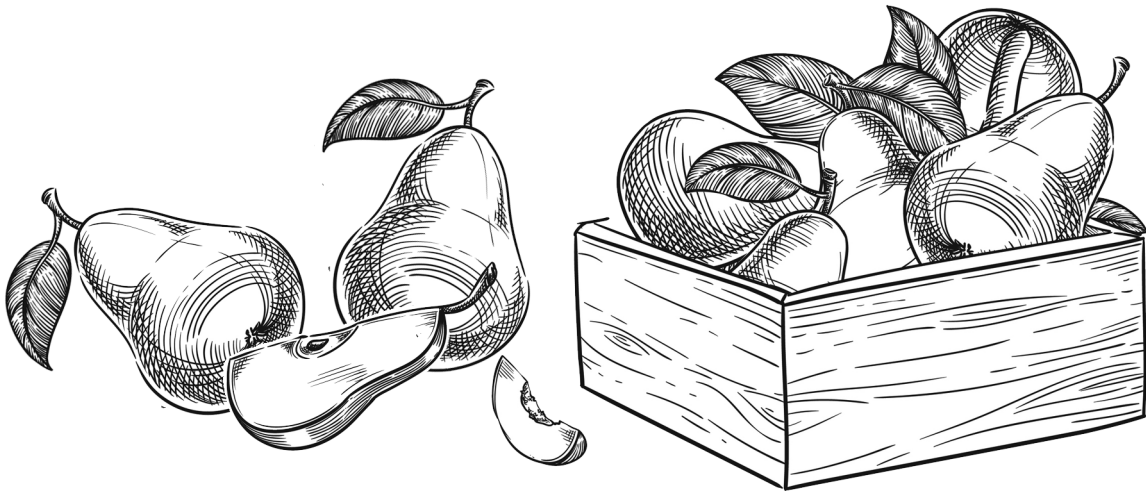
Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:8, NIV)

What does James 2:17 mean?



What is the Greek word for faith, and how is it defined?

Why was Abel's offering better than Cain's in Genesis chapter 4?



Why was the poor widow's offering better than the others in Mark chapter 12?

What are some of the ways that faith was expressed in Hebrews chapter 11? In other words, what actions did they each take? Can you find 5?



Faith begins with a backward look
at the cross, but it lives with a
forward look at the promises.
- John Piper -



How does Abraham's faith differ from that of The Rich Young Ruler
in Mark chapter 10?

In what ways, if any, was The Rich Young Ruler like Cain?



To trust God in the light is nothing, but
to trust Him in the dark—that is faith.

- Charles Spurgeon -

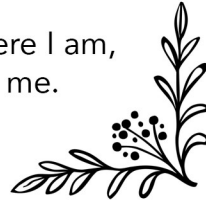


Have you ever had to give something up for your faith? If so, what was it?
And, was it hard to give up?

Charles Spurgeon explains faith by saying that it is made up of three things.
What are they, and how do they work together?



Faith is the bridge between where I am,
and the place God is taking me.
- Unknown -



What is the difference between blind faith, and the kind of faith that
Charles Spurgeon is talking about?
