

Fruit of the Spirit

Goodness

Gal. 5:22-24 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

These are the things that we should be doing instead of practicing the works of the flesh. These are only possible if we have salvation in Christ.

Quotes

“Goodness is love in action, love with its hand to the plow, love with the burden on its back, love following his footsteps who went about continually doing good.” — James Hamilton.

I. Definitions

Goodness - (Strg. - 19) *agathosune* used only religiously, uprightness of heart and life forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs, human goodness, active benevolence.

AGATHOSUNE is difficult to define because it is so rarely used in the Bible. It occurs only 13 times in the LXX, 4 times in the New Testament, and is not used in secular Greek at all.

We could try to define this noun by looking at the meaning of its corresponding adjective *AGATHOS*, but here we face just the opposite difficulty.

The word occurs 520 times in the LXX and 100 times in the New Testament.

It describes everything from a tree, fertile ground, fruits and crops, a gift, a teacher (Jesus), a man's conscience, the will of God, the Christian hope, words and deeds, etc.

In fact, the word *AGATHOS* is so broad that it can describe that which is excellent in any sphere.

Thayer “uprightness of heart and life, goodness, kindness.”

It is rather difficult to distinguish between certain fruits of the Spirit because the qualities are so intertwined in the life of a faithful disciple.

It is especially difficult to specifically define the concept of goodness. “The difficulty about the word goodness is that it takes its meaning from its context, and from the sphere in which the particular excellence described lies.”

For example, we may say, “That is a good animal.”

If an animal is raised to be slaughtered, it is good because it is fat and fleshy.

If the animal is kept for breeding, the goodness lies in its pedigree.

If the animal is intended for racing, the goodness will lie in its trained muscles and quick response.

When we say that a man is “good at something,” we are describing a particular area of talent.

A person might be good at writing but bad at math.

One might be good at sports, but bad at spelling.

Or a good cook, but a bad mechanic.

Sometimes men are good workers but bad husbands.

An elderly person might be good in character but bad in health.

So like other words, we must be careful about context, but with this word especially so.

We must define the “good” in the same way that God does.

Luke 6:35 “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.”

The New Unger's Bible Dictionary “it expresses the supreme benevolence, holiness, and excellence of the divine character, the sum of all God's attributes. In common use goodness is the opposite of badness, the quality of character that makes its possessor lovable; excellence more particularly of a religious kind, virtue, righteousness.”

So we see the few uses of this word as part and parcel of a Christian life.

Rom. 15:14,15 “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.

15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God”

Paul was convinced that these brethren were doing right, but he still had a few things to discuss with them

Eph 5:8-10 “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light **9** (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

Do not be deceived and do evil, but do what is right, practice goodness, righteousness and truth. The children of light produce these fruits, not fruits like the world does.

2 Thess. 1:11 “To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power.”

So that we might receive a reward in heaven do every good thing that you think of.

Practice all of the goodness that you can.

II. So Few Are Good

Few were good in ages past.

Jer. 5:1 “Roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, And look now, and take note. And seek in her open squares, If you can find a man, If there is one who does justice, who seeks truth, Then I will pardon her.”

Few individuals are described as good in the pages of the New Testament:

Joseph of Arimathea **Luke 23:50** “And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man”

Barnabas **Acts 11:24** “for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.”

These were godly.

We realize that few are good, but none are righteous without God.

Rom. 3:10-12 “as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE”

III. We Must Strive Be Good

This certainly does not come naturally, else it would not a fruit of the Spirit, a part of the new life.

How should goodness manifest itself in our daily lives?

The answer is simple: We should be good in thought, in word, and in deed!

A. Good Heart

The heart is the source of action.

Luke 6:45 “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”

Therefore, let us be numbered among those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

We are what we think.

Thus it is imperative that we think on good things.

Phil. 4:8 “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.”

B. Good Conscience

God’s word is given for this very purpose.

1 Tim. 1:5 “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

How is it possible to have a good conscience?

Full and complete obedience enables us to stand before God with a clear conscience, knowing that we have tried to do his will.

1 Pet. 3:21 “And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”

Those who refuse this course will sear their own conscience.

C. Good Words

Our words must also be good.

The book of Proverbs repeatedly emphasizes the value of righteous and good words.

Prov. 10:11 “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.”

Prov. 25:11 “Like apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstance”

The same principle holds true in this Christian age.

Instead of allowing our lips to become a fountain of defilement, we should guard the tongue, speaking only those words that will edify and impart grace to the hearers.

Eph 4:29 “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

D. Good Works

Christ left us an example that we should follow in his steps. His life is our pattern in all things.

Every action of the Lord demonstrated goodness.

Peter explained to Cornelius.

Act 10:38 “You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.”

Thus we learn that “goodness” is more than an attitude.

It describes a way of acting toward others.

We must not grow weary in well-doing, but seizing opportunities as they arise, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Gal. 6:9,10 “And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. **10** So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

We were created in Christ Jesus for this very purpose.

Eph 2:10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Conclusion:

Goodness is a vital part of the Christian faith.

We must share in this divine characteristic.

Let us, therefore, be good in thought, in word and in deeds – that will produce a good conscience as well!

This responsibility cannot be underestimated. Heaven and hell hang in the balance.