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**Presentation Transcript**  
**Fruits of the Spirit – Part 7 – Goodness**  
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As we work our way through this series – *Fruits of the Spirit* – we come to the seventh presentation about a quality the word for which has been translated *goodness*. The one before it was gentleness. So these, along with most all the others on Paul’s list in this series, seem to be simply human qualities, having nothing to do with spiritual things.

So let me explain that before we go on. When God created Adam and Eve, He created them in His own image we’re told – not so much that we *look* like Him, although we probably do in some way, but capable of similarity of values and behaviors. Our minds work – our minds were fashioned – after His. We can act and think like God, without the Holy Spirit in us, in some ways. In Romans 2:14, Paul says:

**Romans 2:14-15** – *But when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature – by nature – do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.*

So, as Christians, we have a battle going on inside us, but before we were Christians, we had that as well, because our mind is ordered like God’s, and He functions according to His law, and we try to.

We can also know that He, when He created Adam and Eve, made their minds capable of connecting with His Spirit. Animals, for example, don’t have that capacity – though they do have an animal spirit, the Bible tells us, that determines what they’re like – what’s important to them, etcetera. And it’s clear that, in their own way, some animals can develop relationships with other animals and even with humans. So that’s a part of the way God operates. But the things of God are beyond animals. Because of the way God made humans, they are capable of the qualities that Paul lists, even though they may not have the Holy Spirit in them.

So, these qualities are the fruit – are the result – of God and Christ living in a person when they're amplified by the Spirit. When God and Christ live in us, our choices can tend to go toward these things more than they normally would.

I was looking at the section titled – for this part of Galatians 5 in the *New King James* – which says, “Paul is urging the Galatians to get in step with the Spirit” – that is, to remember how to act in a Godly, loving way toward members of their own congregation. That was the context of this commentary in Galatians. So it seems to me that after the first fruit, which is love, all the rest of them are ways of expressing God's kind of love.

So, today, we're going to look into the quality translated *goodness* in the New Testament. The word means “the act of generous giving, with the implication of its relationship to goodness; to be generous, or generosity,” according to the Louw & Nida Lexicon. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testaments says, “This word indicates a quality which a man has who has moral excellence as well as goodness. Its possibility constitutes the content of the Christian life. This use is controlled by the Christian's radically new possibility of life.” So, when we become converted – when we have the Holy Spirit – there's a radically new possibility of an application of these principles or behaviors in a way we never could before. At the very least, we can say that this word is a word with broad meaning – as much as the word *goodness* is – as is the word *generous*. Anyone who is generous is a good person. And any discussion ensued has to cover a lot of territory. So, let's get on with it.

Louw & Nida said, “Generosity,” but it's clear that the word means more than just that. So let's say generosity of spirit – something that goes out of us to other people. Let's look in 2 Thessalonians 1:11:

**2 Thessalonians 1:11** – *To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power.*

Notice that phrase there – *may fulfil every resolve for good*. Is that your resolve that He's going to act on? It sounds like it. But how could God do that if He gives us free will? Let's look at the same scripture in the *King James Translation*. I think it's more clear.

**2 Thessalonians 1:11** – *Wherefore, also, we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power.*

So, this is more likely a better translation. It's God's own goodness toward the Thessalonians that Paul was praying for. So, again, a general term, but it could include letting someone off the hook for something disrespectful they did to us. It could include being a good sport when we lose a game or a match. It could include sharing our sandwich or a stick of gum with somebody who is

lacking in those. It could include acknowledging the help of others when someone is acknowledging them.

I was watching a movie some time back, where the Treasury Department had just captured a criminal and had called a press conference. And the press was acknowledging that a good job had been done, and the superior who had received all the attention said, “I would like to turn the rest of the meeting over to the man who is directly responsible for the success.” He’s graciously pointing out someone else who had a part in it. And when this man took the mike, he said, “This was all accomplished by some good old-fashioned detective work, mostly done by...” and he gives the agent’s name. So, both of these people at this press conference were sharing the glory with those under them, without which it would have been impossible to get the good results that they got. Jesus, also, when He was lauded for His teachings and His healings, would say, “This all comes from My Father.”

As I studied these fruits in various commentaries and dictionaries, I ran across the term *graces* in reference to these fruits. So, in granting others grace, grace comes back to us.

Another thing for us to notice about this quality of goodness – and I think this is a clue for us to identify within ourselves, when we’re expressing the kind of goodness Paul’s talking about here – if we feel good about it, it’s the kind of generosity of spirit that this word is about. Paul tells us, “God gets pleasure when He expresses His goodness toward us.” God causes the rain to fall on everyone, not just on us. God clothes the birds of the field with beautiful colored feathers. He gives us beautiful sunsets. He provides an angel to watch over each one of us – at least it sounds like that in Acts, when the brethren said they thought it was Peter’s angel who was at the door, when, in fact, it was actually Peter.

Another one is in Jeremiah 29:11, where God says:

**Jeremiah 29:11** – *“I know the thoughts that I think toward you,” says the LORD, “thought of peace and not of evil, to give you and expected end.”* Or, *“I have a plan for you....”*

So, He likes to do these things. It is pleasurable to Him. And, in the same way, *we* feel a sense of fulfillment, or satisfaction, and pleasure when we do random acts of kindness, when we give to those who are desperate, we employ people who really need the work, when we tithe or make offerings, when we give our gifts to our kids – such a general application of this word.

Jesus talked about this, too, in Matthew 7:7. He said:

**Matthew 7:7** – *Ask, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. That’s because God likes to do good things for us. For everyone that asks receives, and he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened. What man is there of you whom, if his son asks for bread will give him a stone? Or, if he asks for a fish will he give*

*him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask!* God likes to do that. It's how He is. And the fact that we like to do that, even though we are imperfect and not God, we can know that God *is* that way.

Doctors derive this kind of satisfaction when they know patients are recovering as a result of the care they've delivered. And I think God feels this way too. Because a doctor is activating, or encouraging, or facilitating God's healing of our bodies. So I think that when anybody gets better from an illness they've had – no matter how that happens – God is really responsible for it.

I remember one time I got a terrible infection from a tiny break in the cuticle on one of my fingers. I went to the doctor finally, who lanced it, and then gave me a couple antibiotics. And when I returned three days later, he unwrapped it and looked at it, and said, "I don't think we need to do anything else at this point, but let nature takes its course." He could see that the infection had been weakened, and now the regenerative power that God had built into the human body was doing its thing to restore my finger to its former state. As he explained this to me, I could sense that he was feeling really good about what was happening.

Sometimes, when I tell some of my therapy stories, listeners will say, "Well, that must feel extremely satisfying or rewarding to help someone in that way." And that's true. It feels great. But that helps me to remember that the ability to do that comes from God and also from the person I have helped. After all, they did the work. I'm not the only one involved in that process. I'm just one participant of several – God included. And I think that might feel even better than claiming all the credit for myself – to feel like I am a part of a group that's working on this problem.

Now, since Louw & Nida tells us the word emphasizes generosity per se – giving of what we have to help others – let's think about giving of material goods in relationship to this quality called goodness – and also the extension of that, to a generous spirit. Jesus, at one point in His ministry, pointed to an impoverished widow who had given her last two pennies as an offering. And He said, "She gave more than the wealthy. She gave everything, while they only give a small part – compared to what they had." For that, she would be granted more than the rest because of her generosity – not the two pennies, but what giving of them meant about her. Listen to what else Jesus has to say about in Luke 6:37.

**Luke 6:37** – *Judge not, and you will not be judged. Condemn not, and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put in your lap. For with the measure you, it will be measured back to you.*

So, this scripture is about what happens to those who live life with a generous spirit. It comes back around. But why? Well, people say it's karma. Actually, it's because God is also of a

generous spirit. His response to our generosity is His – not just in giving stuff. It's *way* more important than that. If we hope God will forgive us the sins we have committed against Him so that we can live eternally with Him, then one sure way to get a nod of mercy at the judgment is to be merciful to other people for the sins they have committed against us.

In a society where vendors would present themselves as measuring out an exact amount of product for a given price, while they were using lighter or heavier weights on the scale to their own advantage, Jesus tells us, if we're selling a bushel of wheat to somebody, we should shake it down so that the basket is holding all the wheat it can possibly – just fill it to the top and then let it spill over – just pile it on. Give more than their money's worth. Be generous about it. Or, like the bartender, when he's pouring a shot, fills a shot glass and keeps pouring from the bottle while he's dumping the shot glass into the drink. Or, like someone who works a bit overtime, rather than leaving early.

That's what God is like. When He sees us doing those kinds of things, He responds to us in that same way. So, we know that because that's how Jesus was when He was walking the earth. He didn't hassle people about their problems. He wasn't a knit-picker. He fellowshiped with everybody, not just the upper crust – the popular people – or the people who were rich enough to take a bath every day. He fellowshiped with everyone. He didn't walk by people who came for help. He healed them because He could. So we can expect that kind of treatment from Him if we're that way ourselves. That's how He responds to it.

So, this quality is called *goodness* in the Bible. It's a great quality. When people see it in another person, they call them a good person. Ever heard that expression? We often hear this when someone is saying of someone else, "Well, he's not a Christian, but he's a good person." And they are. To be a sharing, giving, generous person *is* to be a good person. It doesn't matter whether you're converted or not. And we all like to be around those people. It's a very endearing quality. I know many people who say this about themselves to explain how they are. And it's true that being a good person is defined by that term, and it is important to God. However, being a good person is only *one* of the qualities God seeks to develop in us. There are other things God wants from us as well. And do you know how He's doing that? It's in our Bible. Let's take a look at it. It's in Psalms 19:7:

**Psalms 19:7** – *The law of God is perfect, converting the soul.* What does that mean? Well, it means that God is about perfection and perfecting us. One of the ways He does that is with His law.

So, people say, "Well, I'm not that way. Being a good person is enough for me." Well, that would be fine...if you're a good person in this life, that means people will like you and you'll receive benefits for it. But if we are really serious about a relationship with God, we need to follow Him all the way. Just sharing our joint with another pot smoker won't cut it. We have to ramp up from being a casual Christian and do *more*, according to the Bible.

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So, don't forget to check out our Website, [liferesource.org](http://liferesource.org). d

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.