

# Goodness

**Fruit of the Spirit Series, August 7 & 8, 2021 | Colossians 3:12-17, Luke 6:43-45**  
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## **Introduction & Prayer**

For the past five weeks of summer, we have been in a teaching series focused on the Fruit of the Spirit. The first week, we outlined how the Holy Spirit produces godly character within us, and this is the fruit. It is singular but has many flavors. Since the first week, we have gone through four of the flavors. We have talked about joy, love, faithfulness, and gentleness. Today, we are going to continue to outline a flavor of the fruit. It is important to note that there is an interconnected nature to the flavors; while they are different, they are also related to one another. So, some aspects of what we are going to talk about today are connected to what you heard last week, and many of the things we are going to discover inform and relate to next week. With that out of the way, let's dive in.

Today we'll investigate goodness. The goal for today is not simply to define goodness from a biblical standpoint, but to get equipped to know how to do goodness as an outpouring of the fruit of the Spirit within us. God wants to show us the tool that He has given us to do good. We'll discover that tool by moving through three questions.

The first question is, What is good? The second question is, Can we be good? The final question is contingent upon the other two, and that is, How can we do good?

- 1. What is good?**
- 2. Can we be good?**
- 3. How can we do good?**

Most of the time today will be focused on question three, but we need to survey the first two in order to discover the tool God wants us to have.

### **What is good?**

Jesus answers this question well in Luke 18:18-19. In this passage, a wealthy ruler questions Jesus. *"And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good*

*except God alone.*" So, Jesus is making an exclusive statement about what is good and what is not good. So, is Jesus good then? Yes, Jesus is good because Jesus is God. We find that in the beginning of the Gospel of John. The Word of God becomes flesh and dwells among that which God created. Peter proclaims Jesus to be the Christ, Messiah, Son of God, and Jesus praises him for it. The Gospel of Mark states that Jesus commands creation itself when He calms the winds and waves. In his message at the beginning of the book of Acts, Peter tells the people that God made Jesus Lord and Christ. Additionally, Jesus himself refers to himself as the Son of Man, the title that the prophetic and apocalyptic book of Daniel utilizes to refer to the person that is both God and man.

Therefore, we can say that Jesus is good. Now the Holy Spirit is interconnected with Jesus, because Jesus sends the Spirit of Truth. It is something that believers receive when they believe in Jesus through repentance, acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God, and a commitment to live for Jesus and His Kingdom.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit, as God, is good as well. So, what is good? **God is good,** Jesus is good, and the Holy Spirit is good.

### **Can we be good?**

Jesus, being good, addresses this question in Luke 6:43-45. Jesus says, *"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."*

What this teaching shows us is that goodness is produced by that which is good, and evil is produced by that which is evil. What Jesus is telling us is that without goodness inside of us, it is not possible to produce goodness. Also, what we know from question one is that God is the only source of goodness. **Therefore, without the Holy Spirit within the believer, the good produce is not possible.**

This is not complex. How can one produce goodness without that which is good? How can one have the godly character, known as the fruit of the Spirit, without the Spirit? Of course, it is not possible.

But those of us who do have the Holy Spirit would deceive ourselves if we thought that there is not an intentional process that we step into when we seek to produce

goodness. To put it into a personal example: just because I believe in Jesus and have His Holy Spirit does not mean that my impatience with my kids is now suddenly good. Instead, the Holy Spirit is the builder that steps into a home full of junk, decay, mold, and massive damage and says, "Let's renovate."

### **How can we do good?**

This is our last question, How can we do good? Again, while we cannot be good without God, we can develop godly character by the Holy Spirit so that we can do good. The answer can be found in Colossians 3:12-17.

*"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*

The things that Paul talks about in verses 12-16 are good. How do we know they are good? Because they are characteristics of God. He highlights things like humility, kindness, patience, forgiveness, harmony, and peace, and the best example of all those things is Jesus, God in the flesh. However, what we are going to draw our attention to is verse 17, because in this passage Paul outlines the tool to discern how to do good through the power of the Holy Spirit.

*"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*

This is the tool, and Paul uses this passage to summarize and outline all the other things he just described. The original language of this section is intentionally rough. Paul says it like this, "And everything, whatever you do, words or actions, everything in the name of Lord Jesus." He defines, clarifies, and emphasizes what the Colossians should be mindful of as they live their lives. And to reiterate, it means everything. Paul is extending the parameters of faithful living to Christ to any topic, even those Paul does not cover. Therefore, he is talking about how one will do business, how one

treats a relevant issue in the culture, the way someone spends their money. Everything the Colossians are supposed to do and say should be done in the name of Lord Jesus.

Ok, let's stop there. That is a phrase that we can hear, affirm, and simply move on. The tendency is to gloss over it, but I want to lean in. Within the Bible, a name is far more than a label for someone. It is an inseparable part of who they are and even outlines their purpose. Even in the ministry of Jesus, Jesus wants the name of the demons because in a name is power and their nature. To do something in the name of someone else is far beyond a label but taps into the power and authority of that very person. Therefore, doing something in the name of Jesus displays his heart and purpose.

The exhortation that Paul gives the Colossians in his letter is that everything they say and do should be an outpouring of Jesus's heart and purpose. How can we test that something is truly done in the name of Jesus? Paul tells us in the final part of this verse. The Colossians' actions will give thanks to God the Father through Jesus. Therefore, gratitude will be the marker by which one can be confident that what is done is good. Again, that gratitude is through Jesus and, therefore, rooted in his saving purpose and message. That exhortation gives us the tool we are searching for. It is also the answer to our third question, How can we do good?

We do good by the power of the Spirit by having our words and actions display Jesus' heart and purpose. Those actions and words will be kept accountable through thankfulness; in other words, it can be tested by gratitude to God. Again, that gratitude is rooted in the Gospel and in the truth of the Gospel.

What this means for believers is that because God is good, we have a tool to do good in all situations, not only in biblically explicit situations. By asking whether our words and actions display Jesus's heart and purpose, we have a comprehensive tool to discern whether our actions are good or not. And if you aren't exactly sure, you can circle back and ask if it is marked by thankfulness to God on the basis of and through Jesus's saving work. So again, this is not thankfulness because of anything you have done, or have, or are, but thankfulness because God through Jesus chose you even though you've done nothing, have nothing, and apart from God are evil. So, in light of that amazing good news, we act and speak with Jesus' heart and purpose in mind.

What Paul is telling us is rich, deep, and wide. In today's landscape, this makes doing good possible and purposeful! Let me start off by saying that apart from the Holy

Spirit, we cannot do good. It is because God is good and within us that we can do good. If we have the Holy Spirit, then becoming someone who does good is possible because God is good. With the Holy Spirit, there are two areas of reflection that I check myself on.

### **1. Are the things that I do good?**

What this means is that are they done in the name of Jesus, which means done with his heart and his purpose?

Do those things that I do demonstrate God's deep love for people?

Are the things that I do marked by thankfulness based on the Gospel?

Do my deeds point to God's great grace, mercy, goodness?

Are my actions done from the foundation of the reality of the Gospel, with Jesus's life as my example, and my understanding of my own sinful heart as a backdrop?

Are there good things that I am not doing?

Are there things that are intimately connected with the heart of Jesus and his purpose that I am not doing?

Are there things that are close to Jesus' heart that I intentionally avoid because of who else might be there?

### **2. Are the things that I say good?**

Are the words that I am speaking stem from the reality that Jesus loves this person as much as He loves me?

Are the things that I say fragrant with thankfulness to God considering Jesus's grace?

Do I talk to others in a way that shows God's love, which means giving to them what they need the most when they deserve it the least?

When the temptation is to make my point clear, do I instead listen and seek to discern the Holy Spirit's guidance for my words?

Am I focused more on being right or am I more focused on speaking like Jesus, with His heart and purpose?

What I also remind myself is that what I say extends into the digital sphere as well. Are my in-person words completely different from what I type online?

As we close, I want to let you know that knowing what is good and doing good by the power of the Holy Spirit is one of the best tools we have. When we take everything we say and everything we do, and do it and say it in the name of Jesus, with his heart and purpose, it will make a difference.

This past week, a young man who is in college reached out to me. He thanked me, but truly the ministry here at Valley for all that it did. What stood out to him was the goodness that the people who served in the ministry demonstrated. He said he always knew how much we cared for him even when he was difficult. He said, "I never forgot how incredible God's love was, and as I grow in my faith now, I'm so thankful for all that was poured into me in on Wednesday nights and the weekends."

To those who serve, thank you. You are doing good because we have a good God. By doing what you do, you show that we have an incredibly good God and incredible love. May we be a people who are marked by goodness. We have the tool to know what is good and what God wants for us. Now, may our actions and words be so in Jesus' name. If we do so, we will be known not only by a people that do good, but also a people marked by gratefulness. Something that we can all do a better job of, especially in hard times where it can be easy to forget the goodness of our good God.