

## The fruit of the Spirit, part 6: Goodness

The keys to healthy friendships, businesses,  
and marriages

Message for Sunday, February 21, 2016  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** Galatians 5:22-23; Mark 10:18;  
2 Peter 1:3

**Children's Message:** The fruit we looked at last week was "kindness." Kindness is doing a nice thing for someone.

Today we're looking at the next fruit: goodness. Goodness is doing the right thing.

Mark was very poor at spelling. On examination day he was stumped by many difficult words. His mind started thinking, "What if I just peeked over at Jane's paper; she's a good speller and always gets them right!" Mark heeded the suggestion and copied several answers.

The teacher noticed his actions and was greatly surprised, for she had always thought of him as an honest boy. When it came time to collect the completed work, she observed that Mark was having an inner struggle. After bowing his head for a moment, he suddenly tore up his paper. Although at first he had yielded to temptation, he finally decided to take a zero rather than be dishonest.

Calling the boy to her desk, the teacher said, "I was watching you, Mark, and I want you to know that I'm proud of you for what you did just now. Today you really passed a much greater examination than your spelling test!"

**Message:** "The fruit of the Spirit: Goodness"

Here is our theme Bible passage for this series:

Galatians 5:22-23, New International Version:  
The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

### 1) Only God is good

What do we mean when we say that someone is a "good" person? I think every funeral I've ever been involved in, people have said, "She was a good woman" or "He was a good man." If everyone is

good, then that word kind of loses its meaning; there's nothing distinctive about it.

One way to help us understand what goodness is, is to look at similar words, and their opposites.

<u>similar meaning</u>	<u>opposite meaning</u>
good	bad, evil, wicked
pure	corrupt, impure
moral	immoral
integrity	lacking a conscience
godly	ungodly, sinful

I like to think of myself, and I'm sure you all like to think of yourselves, with words from the first column. But let's be honest. There are parts of me, and there are things I've done, which belong in the second group. And I'm not talking about the old Bruce, before I became a Christian. I'm talking about the Bruce of today, the one standing in front of you. And I'm talking about the you of today.

The Bible says the same thing about us:

Isaiah 64:6, New International Version:

All of us have become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

Psalms 14:3, New International Version:

All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Now some of that sounds pretty extreme: "no one who does good, not even one." But maybe that's because we're comparing ourselves to other people like us. What if we compare ourselves to God's goodness? We're not even close. In comparison to God's purity and goodness, then indeed "our righteous acts are like filthy rags."

Only God is truly good. Even Jesus said that, when someone asked him a question, calling him "good teacher":

Mark 10:18, New International Version:

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."

You might wonder, then, what hope there is for us...

### 2) God makes us good

... Our hope is in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, our sins are forgiven, we are washed clean, and we have

new life in him. While our own goodness is worth little, we receive his goodness like a blood transfusion!

**2 Peter 1:3, New Living Translation:**

**As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness!**

The best way I know how to talk about this is to give an example of someone's life. One of the most famous examples is Nicky Cruz, the gang leader in David Wilkerson's book *The Cross and the Switchblade*. Nicky had a poor home life, and was out on the streets of New York City most of the time. He loved nothing better than getting in a fight and beating up someone else. He became a leader of the Mau Maus, a street gang.

David Wilkerson was a preacher with a heart for youth in trouble, and he held a service specifically for all the gang members in New York. Here's how Nicky describes what happened:

**The preacher said the Holy Spirit could get inside people and make them clean. He said it didn't matter what they'd done, the Holy Spirit could make them start new, like babies.**

**Suddenly I wanted that so bad I couldn't stand it. It was as if I was seeing myself for the first time. All the filth and the hate and the foulness like pictures in front of my eyes.**

**"You can be different!" he said. "Your life can be changed!"**

**I wanted that, I needed that, but I knew it wouldn't happen to me. The preacher told us to come forward if we wanted to be changed but I knew it was no use for me.**

**Then Israel told us all to get up. "I'm President [of the Mau Maus]," he said, "and this whole gang is going up there!"**

**I was the first one at the rail. I kneeled down and said the first prayer of my life and this was it: "Dear God, I'm the dirtiest sinner in New York. I don't think You want me. If You do want me, You can have me. As bad as I was before, I want to be that good for Jesus."**

**Later the preacher gave me a Bible and then I went home wondering if the Holy Ghost was**

**really inside me, and how I would know. The first thing that happened, when I went in my room and shut the door I didn't feel scared. I felt like I had company in the room—not God or anyone like that, but the way I'd feel if my mother came back. I had four pot sticks in my pocket. I ripped them up and threw them out the window.**

**The next day everyone was staring because word had gone around that Nicky had religion. But another thing happened that made me know it was real. Little kids would always run when they saw me, but on that day two little boys stared at me a minute and then they came right up to me. They wanted me to measure and see which one of them was taller—nothing important. Only I put my arms around them because I knew then I was different, even if it didn't show except to kids.**

The book goes on to describe what happened to Nicky, and to hundreds of other youth like him who asked for Jesus to fill them with his goodness.

You may be thinking, though, "I'm nothing like that! I'm a decent person and I live a clean life." Wonderful! But you still need God to work in your life, every bit as much as the hardened criminal. Speaking of which, that reminds me of another story!

A large church in London, England had started three mission churches in the slums. On the first Sunday of the New Year the members of all the churches came together at the large church for a combined Communion service. The mission churches were largely made up of people who had once been drunkards, prostitutes, thieves, and so on; but they all knelt side by side at the Communion rail.

At one of these services, the pastor saw a former burglar kneeling beside a judge of the Supreme Court of England — the judge who had sentenced him to prison where he had served seven years. After his release this burglar had been converted and become a Christian worker.

After the service, the judge was walking home with the pastor, and the judge said, "Did you notice who was kneeling beside me at the Communion rail this morning? What a miracle of grace." The pastor

nodded in agreement, “Yes, what a marvelous miracle of grace.” Then the judge said “But to whom do you refer?” The pastor replied, “Why, to the conversion of that convict.” The judge said, “But I was not referring to him. I was thinking of myself.” The pastor, surprised, replied, “You were thinking of yourself? I don’t understand.”

“Yes,” the judge replied, “it did not cost that burglar much to get converted when he came out of jail. He had nothing but a history of crime behind him, and when he saw Jesus as his Saviour he knew there was salvation and hope and joy for him. And he knew how much he needed that help. But look at me. I was taught from earliest infancy to live as a gentleman; that my word was to be my bond; that I was to say my prayers, go to church, take Communion and so on. I went through Oxford, took my degrees, was called to the bar and eventually became a judge. Pastor, nothing but the grace of God could have caused me to admit that I was a sinner on a level with that burglar. It took much more grace to forgive me for all my pride and self-deception, to get me to admit that I was no better in the eyes of God than that convict that I had sent to prison.”

Good people find it extremely difficult to accept the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Maybe that’s you. You’ve lived a fairly decent life, and you’re hoping that you’re good enough for God to take you in.

If you ever say, “I sure hope God will take me,” that shows that you are putting your faith in your own goodness. My friend, if that’s you, I say to you just this: get rid of your pride. It is ruining you. God sent Jesus to be not just your model for life, but also to be your Saviour. Let him in.

### 3) Live out the goodness

Once we give freedom to the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, the next step is to live accordingly.

**Matthew 5:16, New Living Translation:**

[Jesus said,] “In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

In a certain village was a man who sold wood to his neighbours, and he always took advantage of them by cutting his logs a few inches under the required

four feet. One morning in the local store, people heard gossip that the woodcutter had become a Christian. Nobody believed it, for they all declared that he was beyond hope. One man, however, slipped quietly out the door while the discussion continued. He soon came running back in excitement and shouted: “It’s true! He is a Christian!” They all asked, “How do you know?” “Well, I measured the wood he cut yesterday, and it’s a good four feet long!” The crowd was convinced.

### Next Steps:

- Pride is one of our worst enemies. It prevents us from admitting we’re not as good as we like to think we are. So push pride aside, and ask for God’s forgiveness and healing.
- Surrender to the Holy Spirit. Let God’s Spirit work in your life, filling you with his goodness.
- Enjoy doing good!