

# Goodness

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now today we're looking at goodness in Galatians We have the fruit of the Spirit which has been our kind of foundation text for the last number of weeks The fruit of the Spirit is love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self-control gent Galatians 5:22 and today we're looking at goodness And can I just by way of introduction again if you haven't been with us remind you that these are not Individual separate characteristics that stand on their own It's not the fruits of the Spirit's the fruit of the Spirit so that we recognize They are kind of all dovetailed in together. It's not easy to have one without the other we should as Christians As we are engrafted into Jesus Christ and as we are part of him as the vine We are bearing this cluster of grapes as it were this fruit of the Spirit Maybe in greater or lesser degrees, but nonetheless we look at that

So I don't want you today to think oh wow goodness That's easy. I've got that but maybe it's something else. I'm not so good at I want us to come under the The word of God and the power of the Spirit and look and be challenged by this for our lives. I Would really like that that is what we do today Because when we look at goodness Probably more than any of the others definitions are very important See we come together today, and we come under the authority of the Bible We're coming together, and we're preaching I'm preaching from God's word which we believe In its claim to be the truth. We accept that we've accepted that we've accepted Jesus is the truth We've taken him into our lives. He is our Lord We come under his authority and we believe then when he speaks from his word that it is Authoritative for us and the definitions that he gives are very important

So goodness is one of these that really needs to find doesn't it Because whenever we will go in life people have their own definitions of goodness And we can't just take our own definitions and apply them to this text through the Spirit is love to a good goodness Oh goodness. Yes. I know about that. I have got my own ideas about goodness And that's the kind of fruit that I'll bear here. No, we need to define Our terms here is very important that we do so because we're coming today We all come into life and into situations with presuppositions Whatever they are either suppositions of belief or unbelief We're coming today with that presupposition that we believe in what God is saying and we take our definitions from him because we have come to put our trust in Jesus Christ and We are engrafted into member. That's what we started this whole series on looking at being engrafted into Christ and As we remain in him we bear his fruit

So we're looking at bearing the fruit the characteristics the likeness of Jesus Christ Okay, so I think just for a moment or two. We're going to we're going to Make definitions. We're going to define our terms Because for the majority of people the goodness that spoken of here is not the kind of goodness That they would use as a definition is it and maybe it's not the kind of goodness that you would use as a definition for most people moral goodness is Something that simply comes from within ourselves It's something that's intuitive to us that we we know the difference between right and wrong So I know it's good. I can sense it It's what I have within me internally and maybe for us that's something that evolves and changes over time Maybe what you thought was good and important 20 years ago is different today

Now that moral goodness, I'm not saying it's it's I'm not asking you to wipe that away completely And but it is subjective and it is personal I think that's a good thing That's really good to do that That's what I believe I believe in this kind of goodness you we hear that all the time we often say ourselves So there's this subjective goodness that we feel from within ourselves that Motivates and governs our understanding of right and wrong and maybe that is along with that at hand in hand with that we will be affected by the culture that we live in and the democracy around us so that the people that we're around Help to govern our idea of good and bad and the society in which we live helps us to Understand and govern our ideas of what's good and bad I know from within my see I feel that's good sometimes internal sometimes we say we believe that's good

[ 5 : 15 ] We've come to that decision. We've voted on this. We think it's good. So it might be democratic It might just be cultural it might be our peer group and Your peer group might think something's good that another peer group might not think is so good But nonetheless, these are the things that shape most people's ideas of goodness, isn't it?

By the philosophers among us, sorry philosophers among you. I'm not a philosopher might argue against that kind of reasoning I'm not sure I'm willing to to be corrected on that But for a simple thing like me, that's how I see things and I also see the problem sometimes of that is that these definitions are not absolute are they they're changing all the time and They sometimes therefore bring tensions and difficulties politically What you think is good might not be probably what I think is good medically People have different ideas of what is good and what is not good traffic management All of us think differently about what is good and what is not good and what is a reasonable speed and whereas a reasonable place to park and what is not Family rules different ideas of goodness morality different ideas and so very often tensions and difficulties arise from that And we need to work them out don't we in society and in families and in relationships What is your standard? What is your absolute? Because we're going to come around to recognizing what God says is absolute and what is good Because I think for many people for the majority who mold their own ideas of goodness and and what is appropriate evil is inexplicable evil is inexplicable it doesn't make cultural or democratic or Personal or even evolutionary sense in many ways does it?

And we will seldom internalize evil We will see it something out there the opposite of good, but we will never really internalize it or see it necessarily in ourselves But how many how much of society or how many people who reject the Bible and who reject God and Jesus Christ have genuine answers to our behavior and to our personal evil and to violence and family division and Ultimately to the greatest evil of all which is death or Is it just natural?

So we have these difficulties that people face and we have the problems of just coming to a natural internal or societal conclusion about goodness But when we come to God's Word and we come to the Bible we are brought face to face with the claims of Jesus Christ and The claims of Jesus Christ are absolutely clear for us We read at the other weekend church when we were looking at another passage when Challenged about his own goodness Jesus ends up making a hugely significant statement No one says in Luke and Matthew to sorry mark 10 verse 18. No one is good except God alone and He summarizes there the teaching of the Bible and he summarizes the revelation of the Bible about God That God is good alone absolutely perfectly entirely completely good

[ 9 : 05 ] Without anything bad without anything That is capricious without anything that is evil without anything that is selfish completely good just pure loving good good good He's good It takes a long time to get into our psyche that God is good because every Sinful atom that we have rebels against that says God isn't good He's not absolutely good. He can't be perfectly good But that is what we are faced with and what we know and I've come to accept my faith in Jesus Christ God is good. He's good in his being Absolute being and when he created the world he created it good. I'm gonna come around to goodness Stick with me. Don't fall asleep. Don't think about the rugby or anything else from yesterday Just concentrate on where we're going here by God's grace pray

God saw all that he had made and it was very good. It's very good So we're starting from a presupposition that God is absolutely good. I should know that How many times this week have you challenged God about his goodness?

How many times have you argued that's not that's not good what you're doing I think our theory and Our practice is sometimes very different So God is good the world he made was very good when he made it He looked at it the physical world the trees the mountains the rivers The green grass the blue sky all these things he made them and when he made them he said they are very good He made the animals that were good. He made people in his image Perfectly good, so you know there's a goodness is a real cool-hearted goodness at the very core of creation You're made in his image. So these are important things aren't they in our understanding of good made this world good This is not this was not made an evil world This is made a good good good world But the Bible is the story of our rebellion against his goodness, isn't it?

Isn't that what it is and and this is where it becomes personal and becomes difficult for us sometimes and uncomfortable Even in the confiest of church pews it becomes uncomfortable sometimes for us because the Bible makes clear from the very beginning the reality of a malevolent personal spiritual evil being Satan Satan and his angels who are the genesis of evil and who

opened the door of rebellion by Bringing humanity to question God's goodness Saying that God had lied saying God wanted to keep the glory to himself and they could share that Saying that they too could be gods that he is mean and nasty and oppressive and That evil is what we chose as a nation as sorry as a humanity as a race through Adam and Eve to believe that of course has led to moral and spiritual disaster brokenness sin evil separation death and yes, I'm not afraid to mention it hell That is the reality separation from God and from life and from goodness and Yet within that He is still a good God He's still Matthew 5:45 Jesus says causes his son to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and then the unrighteous So all of us whether we accept Jesus or not our greatest friends who are not Christians that we love and long and pray for Are those who receive our recipients?

[ 13 : 33 ] Daily of God's goodness and his patience and of his love and of his grace in their lives in so many different ways And in life in general and I want to say this because I think it's important we too have experienced good and We do good. I'm not saying that we're all devils and they were all evil At that level what I'm saying even our best good acts. I think someone mentioned that recently here are tainted and That they will never be acts that would make us right before God from whom we've become separated They're never good enough to make us perfect before him and that we still are guilty before him They will never justify as we're still lost even the very best of us and there's lots of people here who are Humanly and naturally far better than I will ever be or any minister or preacher or Christian of 50 years will be a human kind of level But before God

He says we need something greater to make us right before him again Now I would argue that many people doubt that I would argue that many Christians doubt that Because that's been the story of humanity from the beginning. We'll just do our best I Don't believe all that stuff about being separated and about Heaven and hell and God needing to come and do us right in our place. I'm not that bad We're uncomfortable and I know that we're uncomfortable at the talk of sin and of personal evil or Badness We would hate to categorize ourselves or anyone else like that, but we would maybe go as far as say well, nobody's perfect I'm not perfect. I know that but we would never go as far to say that the darkness within us is enough to separate us from God Just for a moment before I go on to goodness, which I'll finish with I just want us just for a moment

To challenge that doubt that maybe you don't have but maybe many other people will have when we speak to them about the gospel And I just want to ask the question. What did humanity do and we're all we all link We're all linked as part of humanity. What did what did we do? I'm gonna say we okay I'm gonna include all of us in it. What did we do when Jesus Christ came? Okay, John 1:1 tells us Jesus God in the beginning Was the word and the word was with God and the word was God and the word became flesh John 1:14 So we have there the definition of Jesus Jesus is the communication the word of God who is God who comes?

So when people say who's God we say well look at Jesus don't we? Jesus is God so we recognize him as God. So if Jesus is God then Jesus in his life is the Expression of goodness is they if he's God in the flesh then he's What it looks like to be a perfectly good human being is that a fair deduction?

We look at it from that point of view. So anything that we say about Jesus We could say well that is the Bible's definition of goodness that for a start make challenges So what did we do with Jesus this perfect?

[ 16 : 52 ] Absolutely perfectly good person We loved him. We loved him. We loved his miracles. We loved his rebellious teaching against the self-righteous Pharisees We loved that we loved his compassion. We loved he could break bread and they could change water into wine. We loved that We love these things But we began to reject him when he started talking about suffering in the cross John 6 verse 66 if you're a numerologist in the Bible you may have some significance in that particular text Says when he speaks about the cross many disciples said this is a hard saying who can accept it?

And from this time many of his disciples turned their back on him and no longer followed him So he was loved for a while people started walking away from him when he taught truths that pierced their hearts and Then those closest to him as he went towards the cross those who were his disciples they denied that they even knew him They ran away with their clothes on they were so desperate to get away from the situation they just They rejected him and they denied that he these were those closest to him and the rest crucified him Jesus who comes in love and in grace and in goodness to be a redeemer When goodness comes humanity crucifies it We crucified God in the flesh It is in our

act of horror against goodness his goodness

That he amazingly Works out our redemption So in our rejection of him crucify and we'd rather have the rabbis will crucify God Because we can't stand the light of his goodness the piercing gaze of his goodness the demands of his goodness And we can't accept for nothing the amazing salvation that he offers. We would rather see him dead So it's that old truth aren't in reality We suppress God and his goodness. We don't want that That's the greatest expression of the malevolence in our own heart against God We're more sinful as we've been heard recently a lot and we dare to imagine But more loved and accepted in Christ and we could dare to hope because he gives us himself even in our rejection even in our sin he says I've died to pay the price and and

Ironically in your greatest rejection and in Satan's greatest opportunity to destroy me on the cross is is salvation and hope because I've defeated death and the grave and I've paid the price for your sin He gives us the best. That's the gospel you can choose today to say no to that I'll be content to Make my own definition of goodness, but that's the claims of the gospel and so today as we come briefly to goodness With that background because we're to remain in Christ We are out of gratitude to bear this fruit. It doesn't make us right with God He's done that for us but because he's done that for us and we accept the gift of salvation He wants us to bear his fruit. We've been looking at that haven't we and so we remain in him

And we are good and bear goodness because of that now we read in Romans chapter 12 and for me that just gives a very clear Definition of what it is What does it mean to be to have goodness in our Christian lives on Galatians 6 10 he says therefore as we have opportunity Let us do good to all people especially to those who belong to the household of believers the family of believers, okay So what does it mean to have goodness and to do good? Well, I'm not going to spend time on that But I'm just going to list these things. What does it mean? Well?

[ 21 : 20 ] God gives us a kind of picture Hating what's evil? That's goodness cling to what is good. It's goodness be devoted to one another in brotherly love That's goodness Can I ask you to apply these things today as we read them to this congregation unto ourselves in our circle of influence?

Honor one another above yourself. That's goodness Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour serving the Lord. That's goodness Be joyful and hope patient and affliction faithful in prayer goodness Sharing with God's people who are in need goodness practicing hospitality goodness Blessing those who persecute you goodness We will probably say goodness me Bless and do not curse goodness rejoice with those who rejoice goodness Weep with those who weep goodness Live in harmony with one another goodness. Do not be proud goodness Willing to associate with people of low position do not be conceited goodness. Do not repay anyone evil with evil and I just I'm just making it a wee market advertisement at this moment for tonight Because it's all about revenge and retribution tonight Goodness this morning revenge and retribution tonight because we're looking at Samson that brilliant chapter in Samson and

A lot of this chapter is very relevant to what we're gonna say do not be overcome by evil But overcome evil with good. Can you see the significance of goodness is the fruit of the spirit? Maybe being a little bit different from what we think it is Because sometimes we make it kind of rather a flat Rather than sippid kind of thing, but here it's it's got great roots and great Sweet teeth that makes it something strong and something absolutely significant in our lives And it's this grace for us. It's a challenge, isn't it?

It's a challenge to how we live. It's a challenge to the Sinfulness that remains within us the selfishness the hurt the pride If grace for you and for me today isn't a challenge Then I think we've miss under you've misunderstood grace If you've read this this morning and thought of maybe 12 different people you think that would be great for them to hear that in church and I've never internalized it Which we must do then we've misunderstood the fruit of the spirit It's us remaining in Christ not demanding everyone else remain in Christ so that I am protected We need forgiveness. We will receive forgiveness. We will need to give forgiveness and live goodness in our lives What does that mean if we are in darkness today because that's a big question, isn't it?

If God is good and if goodness is the fruit of the spirit why are bad things happening to me? Why does a good God let these bad things happen? I can't answer that question quickly today But we do remember that we're in a war zone still One day will be at the marriage feast But at the moment we're in a war zone and the enemy was defeated at the cross but not yet destroyed So if people cause grief to Jesus in his perfect goodness Then we will experience the same suffering in our lives. We're told that We know that Sometimes our own sins sometimes other people sin sometimes

Satan but we will experience these things and we need to fall in our knees to God for his help for his grace for his forgiveness for his goodness Even in the valley of the shadow. She's Samus knew these things And there's a text that maybe we all know maybe we all know it too well

[ 25 : 22 ] Romans 8 28 and we know that God works for the good of those who love him in all things God works for the good those who love him who've been called according to his purpose I know we thrashed that text out like it's just a piece of cheap Cheap kind of happy proverbial saying to someone who's suffering I Would argue with you today say never give that text out to anyone who's in darkness or who's suffering Unless you have first lived that text Unless you can say from your own experience and know and have submitted to the God who says yes indeed He does work out all things for the good of those who love him please don't give it in a pious and cold and Simplistic way as if it's an easy answer to those who are suffering those who are suffering are suffering They don't need pious texts thrown at them They need empathy and sympathy

And if we are going to share that text then we must have lived it and Have lived through darkness and seen In the land of the living the goodness of God or at least hoped for it As the Samus in Sam 73 says Your Christ suffered He says so we we might never have the answers to that in this life, but we know it's temporary We know we'll not abandon us. We know his experience of hell on the cross will never be ours We know he will never forsake us We know he has a great future in store for us of perfect goodness But it doesn't mean our life will be a walk in the park Goodness and in conclusion, can I just challenge people who are maybe not Christians?

To consider your definition of goodness Are you content today to say When you meet with God I'll be happy to meet with him on the basis of the kind of good life. I've tried to live Surely he'll accept that because I've tried my best I hope that I've From God's word expressed that if that is all he requires then the cross was a waste of time He did it was a hugely loving and sacrificial but ultimately meaningless thing to do If it's only our best that he will accept in his perfection He says and in his justice he says no every sin and every rebellion and every wrongness and every pride and every bitterness needs to be paid for and if it's not paid for Injustice on the person of Jesus we pay for it in eternal separation from him

Are you content to say as I've heard some people say you're just wanting this crutch in your life You're just wanting to depend on someone else. I'm quite happy at least to depend on What I can do and I'll take responsibility for it I'll just take responsibility for my own life and I'm not just hide behind the morality or the goodness or the teaching of someone else I'll be responsible and that at the face of it seems a noble way to think for people But we don't apply that in many areas of life With the same person they broke their legs. He's like, well, I'm not gonna go to the surgeon I'm just gonna just tie it up and make it better myself because I'm gonna be responsible for it and I'll just make sure that I don't depend on anyone else And don't need anyone else you hobble along with broken leg that heals wrong and the bones are all fused in the wrong way We don't do that in life. We do submit to people. We do go under the knife

We do go unconscious because we put our faith and trust in people who know better in order to be healed Why will we not do that spiritually? Why will we not let go of our own ideas about salvation and believe Jesus Christ who knows who knows you're so better than you know and better than I know my own Why would we self-serve about this when Jesus Christ has said I've done it for you And I love you more than you could ever imagine and I've paid a price that you can't pay Please don't rely on that day on your own goodness Because when we do so we're ignoring the prices paid We're ignoring that as part of humanity we nailed him to a cross though he was perfectly good And we're ignoring the reality of our own heart According to God's own verdict of our lives Please will you fall in with Jesus Christ and follow him and serve him and rely on him and his goodness

[ 30 : 33 ] Goodness is great help us to live it God and help us to accept it in Christ We'll bow our heads briefly and pray Heavenly Father we ask and pray that we would understand what it is to be recipients of your astounding goodness That we would understand what it is to recognize our own need of forgiveness and of being made right with God through Jesus That we would accept your verdict on us and the storyline of the Bible from beginning to end Which is one of your redemptive purposes for us And that we would recognize that and not just that we would accept Jesus but then we would live in grace And that we display all the characteristics and that's not an exhaustive list in Romans 12 that we read surely not Lord we know And may we begin to live these characteristics of goodness in our families, in our own hearts, in our families, in our marriages, in our homes, in our workplace

Particularly in the Christian community doing good to those that belong to the household of faith  
Because that in itself is such a reflection to those on the periphery of who we are and whom we  
serve And submit our lives and our hearts and our consciences and our character to your goodness  
we ask In the precious name of Jesus, Amen