Transformed By Fire – Fruit of Goodness

Galatians 5:22-23 / Luke 4:3-11

8/8/21

What determines the value of something? A child may think that a quarter is worth more than a dollar bill because the quarter is shiny & pretty, or that a candy bar is worth more than a handful of dollar bills because it wants the candy more. So, what really determines value?

* If my house caught fire, one of the first things we would try to save would be a box of family pictures, for they’re valuable to us. But they wouldn’t be to you. So how do you determine the value of something?

During the past few weeks, as we have looked at Galatians 5:22 & considered the fruit of the Spirit, we have talked about some very valuable fruit, like love & joy & peace & patience.

But what about goodness? I’m afraid that people just don’t seem to be very committed to the idea of goodness anymore. While love & joy & peace step to the plate & hit homeruns, goodness does its best just to get a single. To many, goodness is just not considered important or even desirable today.

Well, I hope before this morning is over that you will realize that goodness is a very valuable & important "fruit of the Spirit."

**I. GOODNESS IS DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR THE RIGHT REASON**

One of our problems with goodness is the same problem we have with love. The word "good" is used in so many ways, just as we use the word "love." We love our children, we love apple pie, & we love a beautiful sunset, but each of these "loves" are entirely different.It’s the same with the word "good." We say, "I had a good meal," or "I met a good person," or "We had a good cry." They’re different, aren’t they?

So, let’s look at how the word "good" is used in the Bible. For instance, in the opening chapters of Genesis God created the heavens & the earth, & then He created life in the sea & in the air & on the ground. After each creation, God looked at it & said, "It is good." What does that mean

* Well, I guess it means that when God looked at what He had done, He was pleased with it. So maybe we could say, "Goodness means something that pleases God." Or maybe we could go a step further & say, "A good person is a person who is pleasing to God."

The Bible also tells us that "God is good." Now what makes God good? Well, God is pure, God is holy, God is forgiving, God is generous. So therefore, if we’re good people, then all those characteristics would be true of us, too.

* Sometimes, when someone tells me “Goodbye," they’ll add, "Now be good," & I should respond, "Hey, in my profession it’s hard to be anything else." Think about that. You expect me to be good because I’m a pastor, don’t you? After all, everybody knows that pastors are to be good. You all are good for nothing, but I’m expected to be good.

Well, without going any further on that, let me give you another definition of goodness. It is a pretty simple definition. But if you’ll remember it, I think you’ll begin to see the value of goodness. "Goodness is doing the right thing for the right reason."

Now I suppose we could do the right thing for the wrong reason. And I suppose that we could even do the wrong thing for the right reason. But "goodness is doing the right thing for the right reason."

**II. A DEMONSTRATION OF GOODNESS – JESUS**

During the past few weeks, we have been reminded again & again that our model, our example, is Jesus, that these fruits, these characteristics are Christs. When you want perfect love, look at Jesus. When you want joy & peace, etc, look at Jesus. And the same is true of goodness.

Now don’t make the mistake of thinking that being good came naturally for Jesus. He lived in the flesh just as we live in the flesh. And Satan tempted Him over & over again. But turn with me to the 4th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, & let’s look at one of the times that Satan tempted Jesus. There are 3 temptations here. The first is the temptation of selfishness. The second is the temptation of compromise. And the third is the temptation of popularity. And Satan is still using those same temptations on us, even today.

Listen to Luke 4:3-4, "The devil said to Him, `*If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’ Jesus answered, `It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone.*

* Now here is the age-old struggle between selfishness & love. It started in the Garden of Eden & it continues today.
* Today’s culture tells us that if we have food & nice clothing, if we live in a nice home & have a good automobile, & are able to live in comfort, then we are a success & ought to be proud of ourselves.
* But here is Satan, trying to get Jesus to focus on Himself. He tempts Jesus to turn the stones into bread. Now you must understand that Satan always tempts us in our area of weakness, & Jesus had been fasting for 40 days. He was extremely hungry, & it would have been so easy for Him to have used His power to do what Satan suggested.

Now do you understand what Satan was trying to do? If he could just get Jesus to be concerned about satisfying His own needs, of making things easy for Himself, of taking the easy way out, then Jesus would never be willing to pray, "Not my will, but thine be done."

And He certainly would not have been willing to pay the price for your sins & for mine. He would never have gone to the cross for us. If Jesus were concerned first about His own needs, then He would never have gotten around to being concerned about us.

But Jesus, because He had come to do the will of His Father, knew that the most important thing was not Himself, but us. So, He says, *"It is written, `Man does not live on bread alone.*’" He did the right thing for the right reason.

Now the second temptation was a temptation to compromise. Luke 4:5-7 says, "*The devil led Him up to a high place & showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to Him, `I will give you all their authority & splendor, for it has been given to me, & I can give it to anyone I want to. So, if you worship me, it will all be yours*.’" Boy, what a temptation!

* You know, every week people line up by the thousands to buy lottery tickets, fantasizing about buying new houses, & new cars, & taking exotic vacations, & doing all the things that they couldn’t do otherwise.
* "Here it is, Jesus," Satan says, "I have control over the people of this world. They’re serving me. So, let’s make a deal. Don’t set your standards so high. Just compromise with me, & all this can be yours."
* Is Satan using that same temptation on you? Are you playing fast & loose with the truth, cutting corners, compromising with that which you know to be wrong? All this just so you can get more & more?

I don’t think there is anything wrong with material things. God gave them to us. But who is really the owner of the things that we have? Is God the owner, or am I? If God is the owner, & He’s just loaning all of this to me, then my responsibility is to be a good steward of it, & to make sure that God is exalted by the way I use it.

Jesus did the right thing. Vs. 8 says, "Jesus answered, `*It is written: `Worship the Lord you God & serve Him only*.’’" So, again He did the right thing for the right reason.

The third temptation is the temptation of popularity. Vs’s 9-11 say, "*The devil led Him to Jerusalem & had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. `If you are the Son of God,’ he said, `throw yourself down from here. For it is written: `He will command His angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’’"*

* Here is Satan taking scripture out of context, & he does it very well. He is tempting Jesus to do something spectacular to amaze the crowds & show them His power. Why bother spending 3 1/2 years walking back & forth through the land, accompanied by just a few Galileans as His disciples?
* If Jesus would do something marvelous like throwing Himself down from the top of the temple in Jerusalem before the leaders of Israel, & then have God’s angels swoop down & catch Him like in "Angels in the Outfield," everyone would eagerly follow Him.
* Then if He would do it again occasionally, people would come from far & near to see it & praise Him. He would instantly become the most popular man in all Israel! It would be so easy for Jesus to do, & then the people would follow Him anywhere!

This was the temptation that Satan brought to Jesus. And it wasn’t the last time. He did it again as Jesus hung on the cross. Listen to the people crying out, "Jesus, if you’re really the Messiah, come down from the cross & save yourself. Then we’ll believe in you. Show us that you’re really the Son of God. And we’ll follow you."

What a big temptation that must have been because Jesus could have done it. He could have saved Himself. But He could not have saved Himself & us, too.

Jesus said to Satan in vs. 12, "*Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*" And vs. 13 says, "*When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Him until an opportune time."*

But Satan didn’t stay away long. He kept on tempting Him. Don’t ever think that it was easy for Jesus to be good. He had to deliberately do the right things for the right reasons.

Some churches are constantly being tempted to focus on more & more spectacular services because they want to be popular. But the right thing to do is to focus on Jesus as our Savior & our Lord.

III. TANGIBLE WAYS TO DISPLAY GOODNESS

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks about a good tree & a bad tree. He says that the "good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit" [Matthew 7:17]. And He says, "The good tree cannot produce bad fruit, & the bad tree cannot produce good fruit."

Then He says, "If the good tree does not produce good fruit, we cut it down & throw it into the fire." He ends it by saying, "By their fruit you will recognize them."

So the question is, "What kind of fruit are we producing?" And as you look at the fruit, do you see goodness? Is it there? Well, here are 4 ways to display goodness.

1. We can display God’s goodness by being forgiving.

* Listen to Matthew 6:14-15, "*If you forgive men when they sin against you, you heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*
* Now those are frightening verses, because they say that if I’m not forgiving, then I cannot be forgiven. If I go around holding grudges, then I won’t receive the forgiveness of God because it is blocked by my unforgiving spirit.

So, the first step is to **do the right thing for the right reason & to become forgiving as God is forgiving.**

1. The second step is purity.

* We can display goodness by being morally pure. Now that is counter-cultural because our culture embraces impurity & is constantly telling us that everybody is doing it.
* In the 1980 Gary Hart ran for president but withdrew his candidacy when it was revealed that he had an affair. It was pretty much certain in the 1980’s that we as a “Moral” people would not vote for a candidate who engaged in extra-marital affairs. But Gary Hart was quoted many years after that “that our nation has matured, & now we freely accept & elect candidates who have had affairs.”
* The census is “Everyone’s doing it”

But the Bible disagrees. And if you’re going to be a good person, you are to be a pure person, keeping your life pure before the Lord.

The third way we display goodness is through graciousness.

* 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that when we are in Christ, we’re a new creation. Now why are we new? We’re new because God has changed us.
* It is the good person, the gracious soul, the generous heart who helps the down-trodden." So, the gracious person is one who has a heart of compassion. He looks around & sees others who are suffering & need help. So, wherever he can reach out & help them, he does.

Now, others may never know. You’ve performed good acts & you may never hear a "thank you." But here’s the promise, when you’re gracious & good to others, one day you will hear the voice of God Himself, "Well done, good & faithful servant." And that’s all the recognition we will ever need.

Finally, we express goodness through generosity.

* 1 John 3:1 says, *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us."* It is so much love that we cannot even receive it all. God is a giving God. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." And He gives & He gives & He gives some more.
* So in turn, then, if we are to participate in the goodness of God we need to become generous, too. But that’s a touchy subject, isn’t it? Shouldn’t we give cheerfully? Shouldn’t we give because God has given us so much? Shouldn’t we give just because we love to give to God?
* Someone has said, "You never look more like God than when you are giving." Don’t give out of guilt. Don’t give out of obligation. Give because it’s the right thing to do.

Closing:

It’s important to note that goodness is not a quality we can manufacture on our own. James 1:17 says, "Every good thing given, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." This certainly includes a life characterized by goodness.

In letting the Holy Spirit control, us we are blessed with the fruit of goodness. You see as others see our good works; they will praise our Father in heaven!

* Matthew 5:16 - In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

After having said all that about goodness, let me say this last thing...Goodness will never get us into heaven. We will never be good enough or do enough “good” deeds to get into heaven. It’s only through the mercy, grace, and GOODNESS of our God that we can be saved and have eternal life! Thank God for His Goodness!