



Goodness

If you were asked to name some good people, you would probably have no difficulty finding names. Perhaps they are not even Christians. You may be a bit surprised to find *goodness* mentioned as a fruit of the Holy Spirit. But what is goodness as the Lord means it?

Goodness is one of God's perfections. The Lord is good and kind. God is an overflowing Fountain of all good. After God finished creation, He saw that it was very good. God does good to all men. "*He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good*" (Matt. 5:45b). The Lord shows His goodness especially in saving His people from their sins.

God is good, but man is bad. By sin we have become evil. The testimony of God's Word is very clear. "*No one is good except God,*" (Matt. 19:17) Jesus says. And Paul states that "*there is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Rom. 3:12b). Yes, there are 'good' people in a general sense, such as the unbelieving neighbour who is helpful to others. However, no one is able to do what is good *in God's eyes*. Out of our hearts proceed all sorts of sins, such as murder, lying, theft, fornication, etc. The Holy Spirit alone can renew us. Then we become like a good tree that bears good fruit. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Are you such a fruit bearing tree?

Goodness is closely related to the previous fruit of gentleness. The difference is that goodness is related to action. Goodness shows itself in *deeds* of goodness. As a noun it occurs only four times in the New Testament: Rom. 15:14, Gal. 5:22, Ephesians 5:9 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11. In all these instances goodness is related to this fruit of the Holy Spirit. (Note: 2 Thess. 1:11 may be taken this way also).

In God's Word we find many examples of people that did good to others. But first and foremost notice the goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ. He went through the land "*doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil,*" (Acts 10:38). Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and many other things. How encouraging this is for sinners to apply themselves to Him for grace and mercy!

Barnabas is an example of a good man. God had worked in his heart and converted him; he had become a Christian. He was a son of consolation. He sold his land and laid the money at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:36&37). Later on, we find him introducing Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). Barnabas was sent to Antioch to visit the church there. He was the right man to do this, able to exhort them.

"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

(Acts 11:24a)

Here we find the two joined together: he was *good* and full of the *Holy Spirit*.

Another example is a woman named Dorcas. She was a disciple of the Lord, and "*full of good works and alms deeds which she did*" (Acts 9:36). She made coats and garments for the people around her. The people loved her very much for this. She knew that she did not earn heaven by her good works; she did them out of love for the Lord Jesus Who had saved her from her sins.

What about you? Is this fruit of the Spirit found also in your life? God calls us to do good to all men, even to those that hate us (Matt.5:44), but especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). Many occasions arise where we can do good to other people such as visiting a sick person, doing volunteer work, showing hospitality, being attentive to the needs of others, offering time or money, giving practical advice or just listening to the person God brings into our lives. When God does so, we never have an excuse that we are too busy. Are you then ready? A true believer wants to be like his or her Master. As Jesus did good, the believer also wants to do good.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

(Eph. 2:10)

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