

Galatians 5:22-26

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.²⁴ And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

The next spiritual “fruit” is that of “goodness” which is the Greek word “*agathōsynē*”. The word is only used 4 times in the New Testament and is translated as “goodness” each time. The word for “good” (“*agathos*”) is used 102 times. The word “goodness”, however, is a uniquely biblical word that was not used in secular Greek and it is only used by Paul in the New Testament. It specifically speaks of a person’s disposition and character. Obviously, as with each of these “fruits of the Spirit”, any “goodness” in a believer’s life is anchored in God’s goodness. It has often been said that God has never stopped being good, but we have just stopped being grateful. Just think for a moment of all of the people who simply do not see God as being good, but see Him as being oppressive, controlling, domineering, and unresponsive to their wants. They accuse Him of being unloving, uncaring, unjust, and indifferent I love [Psalm 34:8](#) that simply says “Taste and see that the Lord is good...” [Psalm 119:68](#) speaking of God says,

Ps 119:68 (NKJV) **You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes.**

[Psalm 136:1](#) says,

Ps 136:1 (NKJV) **Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy *endures* forever.**

[Nahum 1:7](#) says,

Na 1:7 (NKJV) **The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.**

It is important to appreciate that God never stops being good. It is not as if He runs out of goodness. What is important about understanding that particular aspect of His being is when we may have failed in our life in some way, or just had a really bad week, and we begin to get down on ourselves and feel like God is just totally displeased with us, even angry with us. To the contrary, God is constantly pouring out His grace, His mercy, and His goodness onto our life, even when we do not deserve Him doing so. He is doing it simply because that is His very nature. It is the idea that God by His very nature is inherently good and cannot be anything but good.¹ I have always loved [Genesis 50:20](#) when Joseph spoke to his brothers who had sold him into slavery when he said to them,

Ge 50:20 (NKJV) **But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.**

Then to highlight God’s goodness even more, my life verse is [Romans 8:28](#) which says,

Ro 8:28 (NKJV) **And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.**

¹ Chery, ep.

If a believer is faithfully and genuinely trusting God, then they can never go wrong - even when they may be wrong. Why? It is because God is working everything out for their good and according to His purpose. This should be a great encouragement to every believer, even under the most difficult of circumstances. [Galatians 6:9-10](#), speaking of doing good things says,

Gal 6:9 (NKJV) **And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.** ¹⁰ **Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

It should be noted that the idea of doing good things for people even extends to a believer's enemies. Jesus said in [Luke 6:27-28](#),

Lk 6:27 (NKJV) **"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,** ²⁸ **bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.**

[Luke 6:32-33](#) takes it a step further when it says,

Lk 6:32 (NKJV) **But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.** ³³ **And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.**

[Luke 6:45](#) says,

Lk 6:45 (NKJV) **A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**

[1 Peter 2:20](#) says,

1Pe 2:20 (NKJV) **For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, *this is commendable before God.***

Now, these have been a lot of Scripture verses using the word "good". Obviously, they are connected in a biblical way to the term "goodness" because "goodness" comes from the root word "agathos". However, there is a difference between the two words, as well as a defining quality about the word "goodness" that needs to be identified and understood. So, what does the word "goodness" actually mean? Well, one definition of the word "goodness" is that it is defined as "*uprightness of heart and life*".² It is the idea that someone who has this quality of "goodness" in their life also is a very upright person, someone who has biblical righteousness being manifested in their heart and their life. The definition includes when a believer does something that they know will ultimately benefit another person who may not even deserve the benefit. However, it should be noted that the word "goodness" is different than the previous attribute of "kindness" in that even though it expresses itself in doing benevolent things for people, one of the very interesting characteristics of this word is that it often will express itself to someone else with a rebuke or a correction because it has such a zeal for truth. I.e., one of the aspects of "goodness" is that it is never satisfied to just sit back and ignore things that are obviously and blatantly wrong. It would be similar to what Jesus did when He expressed His righteous indignation in the temple

² Fruit, ep.

and turned over the tables of the money changers.³ So, it is the idea that when “**goodness**” is shown to other people, it does not always imply that they will be gentle with the individual. It has a much sterner aspect to it than does the word “**kindness**” and at times is unafraid to use firmness and reproof with a believing brother or sister. This sterner aspect comes out some in [Romans 15:14](#) which says,

Ro 15:14 (NKJV) Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

The word “**admonish**” simply means to warn someone, to caution or reprove them, to put what is right into their mind.⁴ Of the eight times this English word is used in the New Testament, on four of those occasions it uses the term “**warn**”. It is clearly referring to redirecting someone from something that is wrong and to correcting their behavior. Parents do this all the time with their children. Admonishing and warning someone is directed at shaping their will.⁵ For those who lead in a church, this is one of their major tasks. [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#) says,

1Th 5:12 (NKJV) And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,

[Ephesians 5:9](#) says,

Eph 5:9 (NKJV) (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),

So, it would be accurate to say that “**kindness**” is more passive in its nature than is “**goodness**”. It is also accurate to say that “**goodness**” is actually demonstrated in a stronger way than “**kindness**” may be demonstrated. It is doubtful that “**kindness**” would be demonstrated with a rebuke or a reproof, but “**goodness**” certainly would be if it was required. “**Goodness**” is directly related to both honesty and firmness in its relationship with other people – something that is often overlooked in church settings because we do not want to offend someone.

Biblical “**goodness**” can be either gentle or sharp. However, what characterizes this attribute is that it is always concerned with the well-being of the person that is being corrected. Martyn Lloyd Jones comments that this attribute of “**goodness**” in an individual reveals that they are balanced, noble, and that everything in their life is working harmoniously together.⁶ I.e., even when the individual may be sharp in their correction of someone else, they are not doing so because of improper motives or an offensive disposition. They are balanced in their approach as to what they are doing and why they are doing something. They see the problem and they address the problem, but with a balanced attitude and approach.

So, “**goodness**” is seen as a more aggressive and a more active term than “**kindness**”. The problem that this creates is that in the English language the word “**goodness**” has many meanings that speak of it in nice, kind terminology. However, in the Greek language it really only has one meaning or one particular quality that simply does not come out in the translation of the word. It can be seen in someone’s life when God corrects them, and even when He does severely. It is God’s goodness in action. It would be

³ Zodhiates, 63.

⁴ Strong, 1256.

⁵ Harris, *noutheteō*, #3423, ep.

⁶ Ritenbaugh, *The Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness*, ep.

similar to a parent who is correcting and disciplining their child for something that they are doing wrong. That response by the parent, if handled properly, should be seen as an act of goodness for the child's benefit, and not something that is negative.⁷ When God deals with someone's life in a corrective way, it is because of His goodness being directed towards them. [Exodus 34:6](#) actually states this about God,

Ex 34:6 (NKJV) And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,

So, when someone is inclined to biblical "**goodness**", it means that they will do so with the correct disposition, the correct motivation, the correct knowledge, and the correct instruction. It does no good to correct someone out of anger or out of frustration. That is the wrong disposition if someone truly wants to be effective. It would be like the woman in Walmart who is yelling at her kids out of frustration with their behavior. It would also be wrong to correct someone and not have the correct knowledge. It is impossible to properly teach and correct someone if the one doing the correction does not have the right knowledge about that for which they are correcting someone. So, the caution for this word is that it is something that should never be done with a kind of meanness of spirit to it. For instance, it would be wrong to just "chew someone out".⁸ That is not this attribute of "**goodness**". This attribute has to be integrated with the other fruit of the Spirit, especially that of "**kindness**". In fact, it would be correct to say of all of these various fruits of the Spirit, and especially this idea of "**goodness**", that they are inseparable from godliness.

What is important about this quality is that it is an attribute that must be intentionally cultivated in a believer's life. It should be more than apparent that every believer lives in a world that is not good, and in a world that seems to be constantly bent on evil and hurt and bringing pain into other people's lives. The culture does not teach us to be good as God is good, but is constantly undermining all that is good. That which is righteous and has great virtue and honor associated with it is seen as being evil, oppressive, and now in the current culture something that is criminal. Speaking out on abominations as provided in God's Word is seen as a hate crime. Those who are opposed to abortions are described as self-righteous, insensitive, and a menace to society. The world and its values teaches a man to be self-centered and self-absorbing in his interests and pursuits. So, "**goodness**" simply is not a part of the cultural language.

Now, one of the things that is important to draw out from a study on any one of the "**fruits of the Spirit**" is that when the Holy Spirit is working in a believer's life and that believer is responding to the His work, then that person's character is being supernaturally changed. This is such an important reality to grasp – how God is constantly working on a believer's character, on virtue and goodness in their life, on integrity and righteousness, on honesty and morality, on uprightness, on diligence and faithfulness. God is always there working, ever patient and forgiving for all of those times when we failed Him and neglected His work and influence in our life. In the past, there were certain negative qualities that characterized the believer's life such as anger, impatience, hurtful speech, rebellion, selfishness, unkindness, harshness, insensitivity, being impulsive, and even forms of cruelty towards other people. However, as a believer yields themselves to God's work, what was negative becomes biblical – such as kindness or goodness being demonstrated in their life rather than harshness and criticism. This is great.

⁷ Ritenbaugh, *The Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness*, ep.

⁸ Ritenbaugh, *The Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness*, ep.

This is how God works. It has to be appreciated that none of these fruits, including “**goodness**”, comes to the believer naturally. A natural man’s indwelling inclination is to actually resist and to actually defy and attack God’s goodness. Even with a believer, sin is so powerful that it has the innate ability to cultivate and attach itself in the believer’s heart when they are unresponsive to God’s ongoing work in their life.

So, as far as “**goodness**” is concerned, there needs to be a kind of firmness developed in a believer’s life to be willing to address things in another person’s life that need obvious correction. None of us are on the Christian Gestapo, so there has to be great charity, patience, and discretion when we do deal with someone firmly. It may not work out as we had planned, so we have to be prepared for that reality and its potential fallout before we ever enter a corrective mode. It is my opinion that most Christians are not very acclimated to reproof and correction, but are generally offended when someone does correct their life or reprove them for something that they obviously do not see as wrong. So, it is important to be cautious, and certainly it would help to ask others for counsel before being firm with someone on an issue. Whatever we do, it still has to be balanced out with the other “**fruit of the Spirit**” in order to be effective.

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