

## **Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 57**

### **The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit**

#### **Goodness #1**

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren, once again. We are continuing in this long and exhaustive series on the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. With the last tape, we completed the subject of gentleness. I had made a mistake in my notes, and I thought I had one more tape to go, but I found when I went back to review the notes and expand them for this tape, that I had already completed all of the material for gentleness and we are now in the subject of goodness—the specific fruit of goodness. The reason for the confusion, of course, is that the same basic root is used for both words—both gentleness and goodness. There is a distinct interplay between the two fruits.

So, that, in a sense, tells us a part of the principle of goodness. As we have gone through—quite exhaustively—the material explaining this matter of gentleness as a fruit of God's Holy Spirit, so, in a sense, vicariously, we have already covered, underscored, some of the significant rationale on the subject of goodness. But, now, here is the specific definition for goodness. There are some very distinct differences. Gentleness, of course, can be uniquely related to an emotional characteristic. Gentleness is the manner in which we conduct our lives. It is an aggressive principle. It is the manner by which we control our emotions, our responses—the various stimuli of life. Whereas, goodness has no such connotation whatsoever. It is a state or quality. It is not a matter of the condition of our response—it is not a characteristic of our response—it is a state or quality of our life itself or of our being, and it means the state or quality of being good.

Now, that doesn't specifically define what "good" is. As a matter of fact, we probably will not define it right now, although I have decided, specifically, that later on, after I complete the subject—or perhaps after I've gone through all of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit (I don't know which or when)—that I want to cover this matter of what "good" really is. Remember, it is not a part of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit, but it is involved in goodness.

So, goodness itself is a state or quality of being good. Now, although we know that God *is* good and men are not good, "for there is none good, no not one," says the Bible over in Romans the third chapter. There is no man that is good, yet, men can acquire that state of being—that quality of life. But he acquires it by the power of God's Holy Spirit and by dedication and purpose to God's call. So we can become good, but we are going to see how and by what means as we go along. So it is a state or quality of being good. It means kindness. Being good means to be kind. It means to be beneficent. It means to be generous—and I don't mean generous only with the primary concept that human beings have, which has to do with the pocketbook. Not at all. You know, so many people think of every word that can be applied to money as having a primary meaning with respect to money, but it is not so at all. We are oftentimes more generous with time, with our love and affection, our responses, and all of the other things that surround our lives, far more than we are with our money. So, the matter of goodness involves definite, defined, generosity. It also is a matter of virtuousness. Now, it has very little to do, necessarily, with pandering vs. a self-controlled life where one lives within the lines of demarcation of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable—propriety and decency. It means moral rectitude, all right enough. It means virtuousness, all right enough, in those senses that apply to how we behave with the opposite sex. Yes, there isn't any question about it. But it has a far larger and a more significant meaning in the control of our lives—in virtuousness that involves every conceivable trait and characteristic.

It reminds me that today, the common terminology in explaining the matter of our current economic crisis—the common means of explaining it—is a type of terminology that could be used with respect to the lack of rectitude in life, or immorality. Because the economic picture is called "immoral." Now, what do they mean by "immoral"? Very frequently you will hear the term used, "economic rape," because all of these things do not apply to mere pandering sexually, but they also mean all of the other avenues of life in which we can be lacking in virtuousness, in which we can be lacking in moral fiber, in which we can be lacking in principle in every conceivable way. So, it doesn't mean one single thing. People have a peculiar trait of using a word in one given way and they never see its expansive characteristics. Sometimes words have as many as eight to ten definitions. But if I were to use, let us say, the seventh or eighth definition used in the dictionary, people would wonder what in the world I was talking about. You see, we limit our grasp of the English language.

Well, I want us to think—when we talk about goodness—in all the broad gamut of what goodness is. I don't mean merely in self-control along striated lines—that is rutty lines. I don't mean that whatsoever. I mean in all of its broad characteristic. It is a very expansive word, for if God is good, it doesn't mean that God lives in a rut that is three inches wide. No, because God fills up the entire universe. Even as Solomon when praying for the dedication of the temple, in asking for God to be there, said he knew that "even the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. How much less this house that has been constructed for you?" Well, how much greater is God than the narrow definition of "good"? Much, much greater than what human beings think. God is good in every facet of life.

So we—if we are going to achieve the character of God, if we are going to possess this trait, this characteristic of God—must have far greater control than merely the control that has to do with the sexes. It goes way beyond that. So, it is a matter of moral rectitude. It is morality and decency in every characteristic of our lives. And we can be moral in many, many ways, or we can be immoral in literally dozens of ways. We can be virtuous in myriad ways or we can be lacking in virtuousness in an equal number of ways.

So, we see, then, that the definition is expansive, and it is a definition of the character of God—for God is good. And goodness is merely the adjective form of the infinitive "to be good." So, God is goodness, and we are going to see that. And we must become like God.

But what is the contrast? Once again it is necessary to point out that we are not even honest with ourselves. Here is one of the very areas in which we are totally dishonest and immoral, if you please: When we fail to recognize and confess and admit what we are by nature. In other words, if we are going to be honest with God, we are going to have to finally look to God and say, "Yes, God, I am but a wretched, mortal being; I am a human specimen; I have no goodness within me; I am a weakling; I am absolutely lacking in character; I have no virtue; I have nothing that is worthwhile." That is what God said man's nature is. Man's nature is vanity, it is nothingness, it is the epitome of depravity. And when men go about to establish their own goodness, what they are doing is determining a standard of goodness of their own—not God's. God's goodness is revealed. It is God's Way of Life. It is characterized by the very life of Almighty God, and goodness is something that is totally outside of man. It is achieved only by the

power of Almighty God. God is good but men are wretched and weak and lacking in every one of those traits and characteristics.

But God wants us to be something else, and the means by which we achieve it is through the power of His Holy Spirit. So God wants us, alright enough, to be good—it is His purpose, it is His will. But you cannot possibly begin until you recognize where you are natively, naturally. So, one of the first object lessons of life is the admission of where a man finds himself. In other words, in what station. Where is he at the time he begins to take necessary introspection—when he looks down into his own life, when he begins to evaluate himself? Where is he? Is he honest, or is he immoral? Is he lacking in moral rectitude because he will not admit what he really is? Brethren, God Almighty says that we are the expression of vanity—that we are flesh. And flesh does not have any intrinsic value. It is a manifestation alright enough—something that has come into existence that is tangible (you and I can see it)—but it lacks in everything that is of quality and character. There is nothing there.

How did God define nature—the nature of man? What he is? In Jeremiah 17 and verse 9 it says, "The heart is desperately wicked, who can know it?" It is a wicked entity. It is desperately wicked, who can know it? Men do not know it of themselves. God Himself has to try us, and by His own powerful intervention begin to reveal what we really are. I'll tell you, to really accept man for what he really is takes an intervention from God also, because men just simply are not going to do it. Oh, they think themselves to be—pardon the expression—hot stuff. They are mighty convinced that they are just pretty good, and you will see it manifested time and time again. Well, brethren, I don't like to spend an incredible amount of time on defining what men are—men just don't like to hear it. I know that. But, brethren, we cannot achieve anything as long as we attempt to coalesce—to mix—the goodness of God and the depravity of man. We are not going to achieve anything good, whatsoever, until we learn to root out—root, core (the bottom essence)—what we are. And when we empty that out, then some constructive good can take place. But it will not otherwise.

It's just like when human beings start to attempt to firm up their physical bodies: One of the natural, chemical responses in the body that is an absolute, essential requirement is that you must first rid the body of all of the noxious material before you can ever begin to build something that is concrete, solid, firm,

and gives you substantial health. It cannot be done otherwise. You have to first get rid of that which is bad. Alright, the same thing is true with the character of God. Until we rid ourselves of that which is wretched—and we cannot get rid of it until we recognize it, and confess and admit it before God (because that's what it is all about)—we cannot have the character of God. Then we find in Mark the seventh chapter—Mark 7—a very, very well-known text we have all read so many times, but let's read it again beginning in verse 20:

And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness [or lawlessness], an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

These things are indigenously a part of us—we were made with them. Man was made with a law that operates within his physical body, as Paul was inspired to write in the book of Romans. It is a law that struggles against the Law of God. "It is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be." We have to root that nature out. So, here is man by nature. There isn't anything good about him. No wonder the Apostle Paul said, "There is none good, no not one." God alone is good. Goodness is a characteristic of the Spirit. God is Spirit. Goodness is one of those marvelous traits and characteristics that we can begin to develop by the power of God's Holy Spirit and absolutely, intrinsically, possess when we are born into the glorified spiritual Family of God. Oh, what a marvelous day that is going to be. But look at what the struggle is today. I've never seen a day in my life when I have not had to struggle against this mind and all of the wretchedness of the flesh. You have to fight against it. And every day it is going to happen that way as long as you live in the flesh.

So, what God is evaluating is what you are doing—how you are confessing or admitting what you are. The Apostle Paul said, "I die daily." You know, it just takes that because the more we learn and the better we struggle against the odds of our own nature and so on, the more we begin to see how bad we really are and the depth of our own depravity. So, it is just an incessant round—we work on it and we make good strides, and then we see ourselves more deeply and more intrinsically for what we are, and then we have to work harder and dig a little

deeper. And then the next time we find that, well, we have to go a little deeper. And so it goes on and on and on. That is the digging that is necessary in our lives in order to root out the wretchedness of our own natures before we can ever have the real, sublime nature and character of God.

You will find that the Apostle Paul explained, in writing to the church over at Ephesus—in the book of Ephesians the second chapter and verses 1 through 3—that we are, by nature, the children of wrath. That's the nature with which we were born. Now, those texts tell you that you don't have any goodness within you. Oh, I know, the Bible said that they partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I understand that very well. But I don't want to get into the subject of the division and lines of demarcation of that. Because men have done good things. That is, they don't have any intrinsic value within them—not at all—but they do perform good things. Nobody denies that. But even though they do good things—there are kindnesses and deeds of service and response to humanity that are absolutely unbelievable, I am well aware of that—at the same time, if they do not get their necessary praise, if certain things do not happen, or whatever, then they can be disillusioned and disappointed, and the real nature is still going to manifest itself ultimately. Men do not have within themselves the real element of goodness—they are not born with it, they do not possess it. Well, brethren, goodness is one of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. It is something that we must put on—it is something that must become part of us. It must be a characteristic of our nature and our makeup in due time. We must become like unto God and to our elder brother, Jesus Christ.

Let's move, very quickly, then, into the first word defining this matter of goodness. There are only two words used in the Greek language and I would like to cover at least one of them this evening so that we do not take too many tapes on the subject of goodness. Then, after we have covered the principle of goodness from the New Testament—that is the spiritual expansion—then we will go back and get some of the root meanings of it from the Hebrew. The first word is almost one of the first Greek words used in the Bible—that is, one of the earliest in the dictionary. It is the word, *agathosune*. It is the word that means "goodness." It is the word that is used in Galatians 5 and verse 22. Let's turn over there and notice it among the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. Galatians 5 and verse 22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love"—we have covered that; "joy"—we have covered that one; "peace" was the third one; "longsuffering" was the fourth one; the fifth was "gentleness"; and now the sixth is "goodness." I'm not sure whether or not God

implied a rank—a prioritizing of the fruits of His Spirit—by the order in which they are listed. I'm just not sure of that. There is some indication that certain things are placed here in the order of their priority. But there are other times when I am not sure of it at all, because here now, we find number seven is "faith." And, yet, faith is the absolute, essential ingredient for the inheritance of everlasting life. "The just shall live by faith." So, I really don't know what the order is. All I know is that, physically, Paul listed them in this order as he was inspired by God's Holy Spirit, and the sixth one of those fruits of God's Holy Spirit is "goodness." It is this word *agathosune*. It means, "a benefit, a virtue, or a beneficence." It is from the same basic Greek root word *agathos*—which simply means "good." But, as I said, we are going to try and define what "good" is at another time. I want to give you merely the fruit of God's Holy Spirit, which is the manifestation of "goodness."

Now, the second point is, people can manifest this marvelous, spiritual fruit. We don't have to be devoid of it, we can manifest it. If we have God's Holy Spirit, if we will to be like unto God, if we will to live those spiritual fruits and characteristics of life, we can manifest the spiritual fruit of "goodness." It is not because we have it inherently within ourselves—it is not because it is intrinsically a part of us. It is because something from the outside is making us what we are not naturally. There is a power that is outside of us that has called us and has willed it—as long as we allow or permit it to take place, as long as we fulfill what the Bible demands in a number of circumstances: "Let [meaning allow] this mind dwell in you"—allow certain things to happen. We are the workmanship of God. It isn't something that we are going to achieve for ourselves. We are not capable of making ourselves something that we are not. But we cannot be made what God intends that we be made without willingness on our parts. So we have to yield to God—we have to give ourselves over to those things, as I explained in the previous tape dealing with this matter of "gentleness." The natures are contrary one to the other so that you cannot do the things that come to you normally and naturally.

Do you remember what he said? Here in Galatians 5 and let's note verse 17: "For the flesh," that is, the natural nature of man, "lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Yes, the nature is there. It's going to assert itself. It wants to do the various things that come naturally, normally, because we are born with them. But, then, we find that the Spirit, if we have been called of

God, resists that. Every one of you has experienced it: the time when the struggle is going on in your mind and you want so desperately to do something, you would just like to say something—you would like to make a cutting remark—but there is that nagging thing that says, "No, you know better. You shouldn't do it." That's the struggle between the Spirit and the flesh. Now, which one is going to be victorious? It depends upon how strong the Spirit is within us. It depends upon how strong our purpose and will are. Many, many things play a part in it. But, brethren, if we have willed to do the Truth of God, then we are going to close the mouth, we are going to create a circumvallation about our minds, our hearts, our tongues, our lips. We are going to seal them. We are not going to permit them to have free reign or latitude in our lives. We are going to be ruled and reigned by the mind—by the understanding of what God requires of us. And we cannot possibly live the real Truth of God without it—it is going to be absolutely essential.

Now, it isn't that you are not convicted. It isn't that it does not appear in your minds. It isn't that somehow the knowledge of God is not there. Oh, yes, we always think of those things—I have been through it many times and so have you, that's why I know. It's there—we know what we should do. You know, we know when we should get up and pray; we know when we should study; we know when we should keep our mouths shut; we know when we should do certain things. But, then, if the situation is critical and it demands some kind of emotional response on our parts, oh, unless we are very spiritual—and I mean there's a really powerful influence of God's Holy Spirit—we are going to yield to the dictates of the flesh. They may be weaknesses—and they are weaknesses—but they are powerfully strong within human beings. They dictate, they tyrannize, and they will do all kinds of things because they feel they have been robbed of their rights. Yes, if you think you are free as long as you are subject to your own nature, you have another guess coming. You are an absolute slave to your nature: It dictates; it will whip you about; it will abuse you; it will take every advantage; it will do all kinds of things to you, until you finally learn to whip it and not give it any freedom. Put a close rein on it. Get an absolute control upon it just like they do with farm animals. They put rings in their noses, you know, so they can control them, or they put reins on horses so that they can control them, or they put a little helm—as the Bible says—so that they can control the ship. Well, brethren, we have to put little controls around and all over so that we can control our whole makeup. And we must absolutely gain that control. When we do that, we begin to manifest the trait of goodness. That's when we begin to manifest it. So, we must become good.

We must recognize our natures—we must struggle against them, we must fight with everything that is within us. And by so doing, we can begin to put on—or allow, let's say—Christ and God the Father to work within us. We can allow the Spirit the free opportunity of working within us and achieving the ultimate spiritual objective—that is, the formation of the true character of God within each of us who are called of Him.

So, people can begin to manifest the marvelous spiritual fruit of "goodness." And when you see it, it means that that individual has effected some form of control in his or her life. It means that somebody has resisted the normal, natural impulse of the flesh, and it has taken a struggle. You know, people feel that they get by, or that they have gotten away with certain things that they have said, or that they have made their mark—or whatever they may feel. But it could be that somebody else was merely trying to live the Truth. I wonder if that ever dawned on them? You know, if all of us gave free reign to all of our feelings and we did everything that came to our minds, what a world this would be. We would absolutely censure one another; we would rip one another apart; we would take advantage; we would brutalize; we would misuse. Oh, the things that course the human mind and that come from the evil wretchedness of human hearts. It's a good thing that we do have a little control. It is little, but it is a good thing that we have at least some. And the more people become selfishly oriented, the less control they have. But, brethren, we should be going the other way so that we become absolutely marked as the people of God who love, honor, and respect God; who control our lives; who have willed to live the real Truth—the spiritual Way of Life.

So, here in Romans 15 and verse 14. Romans 15 and noting verse 14, we read that men can really manifest the spiritual fruit of goodness. Paul said: "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness." So, Paul was convinced that those in Rome were "filled with goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." Now, how in the world could they be filled with goodness when he had just said back in the first chapter that there is none good—no, not one that doeth good? Not a one. And, yet, here now, all of a sudden, those called of God, he was persuaded, were full of goodness and filled with knowledge. That knowledge is Spiritual knowledge—it isn't trivia. It isn't the knowledge of physical things on the face of this earth. Spiritual knowledge is a matter of control; it is a matter of life; it is how one lives. Physical knowledge can be involved in all of the technicalities that go on in life, but it does

not teach us and tell us how to live. We can have all knowledge with respect to science; we can have all knowledge with respect to math; we can have all knowledge with respect to almost any of the physical functions of life, and yet still be a wretched, human, mortal—and oftentimes we are. Because the more knowledge we have, the more arrogant we become—which only substantiates the nature that we originally possess. And, yet, brethren, those called of God—with that kind of knowledge—are self-effacing; they are meek; they are kind; they are responsive; they are filled with love and affection; they are filled with understanding; they have mercy; they manifest the traits and characteristics of life; they manifest the fruits of something that effects necessary control in their lives so that they live and respond differently. They don't cut with their tongues. They don't hurt and injure other people. They have control—they have emotional control in their lives.

So, those, then, that were called of God, the Apostle Paul said, concerning those in Rome, he was persuaded were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. You know, we should be able to do that because we should be completely objective about it. But one of our greatest problems is our negative response to the instruction that anybody else gives to us. Now, there are some people who will deign to take it from somebody that they deeply love and respect—and they may bite the lip and not say anything—but with other people who might say exactly the same thing to them, would get chewed into little pieces and spit back out. That shows you how partial we are. And, yet, the Truth is one and the same—the Truth is one and the same. What does that tell you? We are absolutely partial. It means we are not worrying about what the Truth is, it's a matter of whom we want to impress and whom we don't. We don't care about the one, and toward the other one we try to modulate our lives and our responses in such a way that we don't lose any favor—we don't want to come into disfavor.

But, brethren, let's be good. If we are going to be good like God is good, you know, He pours the rain out upon both the just and the unjust. But do you know how human beings respond? "Well, if he's my close and dear friend, I would do anything for him, but if he is somebody else—especially if he is somebody who has trampled on my toes—I wouldn't give him the time of the day." That's the human response. What if God did that? We have all walked on His feet—we have all taken advantage of Him. God is not partial at all, and remember, He has no favorites. Therefore, with our basic response, if we expected

exactly the same thing from God, not a one of us would receive anything. He would just say, "Well, I'm just finished with every one of you. Why should I give myself for a single one of you? You are not deserving of it. You are not worthy of it." But, as human beings, we definitely are partial. When we want to respond, we respond in different ways for the same reasons. If it is a good, close friend, we give our love and affection—we may absorb it and accept it—but if it is somebody else, we are going to negatively respond. Now, God is not going to accept that. What God wants to see within us is the development of impartiality. Do we do it because we have control? Do we want to be good? If we are going to be good, we are going to respond in exactly the same way, regardless of who the man is. Let's be good; let's learn to be good; let's develop that fine art—that trait, that characteristic—and then we can be like our God who pours out rain upon the just and the unjust; who gives to both the righteous and the wicked at one and the same time; who gives bread; who continues to allow all of the beneficence of life to be reaped by all of the people.

You know, there are many people in life, when I look at them, I wonder how in the world they can continue to draw breath. I wonder how in the world God ever tolerates them and permits them to go on. But, you know, once again, I realize that the minute I think that, I am judging—I am not living the Law of God. Because God did not call me to judge somebody else, and what I am doing is becoming a partial individual with respect to the Law. In other words, I am determining that that individual is much more sinful than I. He doesn't deserve God's goodness, but of course I do—or so I think. You know, we are going to have to learn that God judges perfectly and He does not make a difference between sins. If there is any real categorization of sins, it was given by Jesus Christ when He said the greatest commandment involves the first four—our relationship to God. And the second—and He didn't differentiate between the last six at all, they are all lumped together in equal relationship—involves the last six and our relationship to men. That is the only categorization of Law that I can find—and Jesus Christ Himself did that. And, yet, the vast majority of people will still condemn far more critically somebody who is involved in immoral, sexual types of things than they will somebody who breaks the Sabbath. It shows you how far short of the real character of God we yet are.

Am I justifying immorality? Oh, indeed I am not. Not at all. But, brethren, what I am saying is that we are still too much subject to the influence of another spirit—a spirit that wants us to think that human relationships are more important

by far than our relationship with God. And I tell you, it makes a difference to God—it makes a deep difference to God. So we shouldn't sin in any way—we shouldn't sin in the first four or the last six. But if we break one we have broken them all. We are guilty of breaking the totality of the Law of God when we break a single one because they form a concrete whole. And when you break one, you have broken everything. So it simply means we are guilty. If we are sinners at any given time—and there is no man that sinneth not, the Bible says—if we sin, and we must repent every single day, then we have been guilty of violating and breaking every single law of God on a daily basis. That is strong, brethren, but that is exactly what it is, and we are going to have to face the fact of how deep our sins really are, and we must absolutely root them out—root, branch and core—and get them out of our lives so that we can become good, so that we can be filled with goodness. That is a matter of tolerance; that is a matter of forbearance—I did not say condonation. When I am tolerant and kind to somebody and try to be responsive, it doesn't mean that I agree with what they are doing. Not at all. Did Jesus Christ agree with the world when He died for them when they were yet sinners? No, He came that they might come out of it. Then, is it possible that the goodness of man might—as it did in the case of God Almighty—lead us to repentance? Might it, in that sense, then, lead somebody else to a better way of life—to be more responsive? You know, fire kindles fire; wrath brings about wrath; hate brings about hate; but kindness might just still a troubled sea. So we need to be very, very conscious of our responses, because when we are filled with the goodness of God, we can put down all of these traits and characteristics that constantly agitate—that can constantly trouble and perplex people; that can constantly create situations when we have an edge to almost everything we say and do. We must struggle against those; we have to struggle against this mind; we have to struggle against this tongue; we have to struggle against these lips. We must not continue to agitate and to produce the type of circumstances and conditions that bring about the wrath, and the hate, and the contempt, and all the manifestations of that nature with which we were born. Let's be good. Let's put on the nature and the character of God. Now, I am almost defining this matter of good—for God is good; God is kind; God is merciful; God does not make a difference between us. Every human being lives with a hope—I mean a real hope—that he is going to be heard by God, that he hasn't lost his way, that he isn't eternally finished. And, yet, they can't all be right. So, therefore, some of them are still exercising a false hope—but they still hope—and they are going to experience the mercy of God at some appointed time. So let's be good, for people can manifest that kind of goodness—the marvelous spiritual fruit of goodness.

Next, now, let us not deceive ourselves. Let's not deceive ourselves with respect to this matter of goodness. What of our words and our actions? I've said a great deal about that, so now I want to read some things right directly from the Bible. First, I want you to notice in the *King James* translation here—which is taken from the *Stephens* text—what is said in Ephesians 5 and verse 9: "(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.)" In what context? This is even a parenthetical statement. So, it simply means that Paul is explaining something—for every parenthetical statement is always explanatory. And we need to find out what the context is. In order to do that, I am going to turn to the *Living Bible*—paraphrased translation. Ephesians 5 and beginning here in verse 1:

Follow God's example in everything you do just as a much loved child imitates his father.

Follow God in everything you do. Now, if you are going to follow God—and God is merciful to everybody—then you are going to have to be merciful to everybody, are you not? God is kind and He gives of His abundance, and of His greatness, and of His majesty, and of His love. Doesn't He allow the sun to shine upon them? Then we are going to have to do exactly the same thing. What gives us a right to be belligerent and hateful toward anybody? God isn't so, and I rather suspect that God is more righteous than we are. So, if God is very good to them and is kind and benevolent and concerned with them, surely we ought to be.

Be full of love for others, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins.

Then what we should do is give ourselves in service and kindness. We owe no man anything but to love—just give ourselves wholeheartedly to love and to absorb the marks and the sufferings of Jesus Christ. He was abused terribly—not for anything He did, but because of the wretchedness of humanity. So, therefore, we are sometimes going to take it upon the chin—we are going to suffer real abuse, real anxiety, much, much, much tribulation and difficulty because of the response of other people. But, remember, if we respond favorably only because everything goes well with us, we are not one whit different than every other human being walking upon the face of this earth. We haven't proven anything. All human beings can do that. The only time we prove our value, our character, is

when we live that Way in the cauldron of adversity—then and then only. So, here is the example of Jesus Christ who gave Himself to God as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Let's give ourselves over to being kind to all. Let's be exemplary toward all people. Let's live the act of goodness. You are going to see that is exactly what he is talking about.

"And God was pleased, for Christ's love for you was like sweet perfume to him." That's the nature of God. God is good. And, you know, we must manifest that sort of kindness for everyone. Now, I don't mean to subject ourselves to circumstances that we may rue. No, I'm not talking about that at all. Use wisdom. Indeed, use wisdom, especially in times like these. But, there are times and circumstances in which we can do good and we are not subjecting ourselves to threats or to unsavory circumstances.

Let there be no sex sin, impurity or greed among you. Let no one be able to accuse you of any such things. Dirty stories, foul talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, remind each other of God's goodness, and be thankful.

God is not involved in these things. Those proceed from human hearts—those proceed from human minds. God is good; God is pure; God is virtuous; God is marvelous. Now, I know it is ridiculed: "Oh my, he's a sissy, and he's this or he's that." You know the reason they ridicule? It's a form of impudence because they cannot live up to it. Let me tell you, it takes a whole lot more than a big specimen of humanity to live it. Any wretched, mortal individual can live the wretchedness of his own nature. Anyone can do that—that's like a dead fish floating downstream. But let me tell you, it takes a live one to go upstream and to live the Truth of God. Even great, mortal human beings—of great physical stature and stamina—cannot do it. They are as mere babes in the presence of their own natures—they cannot do it.

Instead, remind each other of God's goodness, and be thankful. You can be sure of this: The Kingdom of Christ and of God will never belong to anyone who is impure or greedy, for a greedy person is really an idol worshiper—he loves and worships the good things of this life more than God. Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible wrath of God is upon all those who do them.

Don't try to fool yourselves. Let's not deceive ourselves. Remember the subject? Let us not deceive ourselves. Our actions are going to belie our words. Do our actions speak the same thing that our words do, or do our words bespeak the same things that our actions convey? We had better be careful that we are not deluding and kidding anyone—especially ourselves.

"Don't even associate with such people." And this involves both classes of people: those people that once knew God's Truth, as well as those who live on the outside—who behave in this manner. Now, did he say not to do good to them? No, he said do not associate with them. In other words, I'm not talking about a circumstance in which somebody is in need of help—that you should not be responsive, or do some kind turn, or help them out in some way. We should always do that for anyone, but don't make them your companions of life because, usually, the good succumbs to the bad. As Paul said in the book of Romans, "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." We must, ourselves, effect that necessary mastery in our lives, and where the need arises, don't ever put yourself in the position of losing ground. But, above all, live up to the principles that you profess to believe, which means you live the kind principles—you live goodness, you respond to the needs of others—but do not put yourself in the position to be influenced adversely thereby.

Don't even associate with such people. For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! Because of this light within you, you should do only what is good and right and true.

So what is Paul saying? Let us live those truths. Let's not allow ourselves to be sucked under by the adversity of the flesh manifested in the lives of others. So, therefore, we should not associate with it. We should not make them life's companions—we should not have anything to do with them, in that sense, whatsoever. But we should always render kind deeds; we should be a benefit to society; we should be ready and available to help when that need presents itself. It doesn't say go out looking for them, it says when the need should arise. You have neighbors, you have circumstances that you encounter time and time again in which you can manifest that goodness. It doesn't mean to go out and hunt for them. Not at all.

Learn as you go along what pleases the Lord. Take no part in the worthless pleasures of evil and darkness, but instead, rebuke and expose them.

Now, does that mean in those cases that you rebuke the individuals that are involved? It did not say that. You had better read it again. It said to rebuke and expose those circumstances. How do you do that? It means to live the principle, even when you are confronted with the opposite influence. You know, I "expose", to anyone who talks with me, their own personal guilt and liability every time I refuse to enter into conversations and circumstances that are less than reflective of good character. Do you think they don't notice it? Oh, I can give you example after example in which people have come back and said, "I noticed you didn't do so and so." Sure, they know it. And people begin to feel uncomfortable in those circumstances. But I am not going to yield in those areas. That is a matter of their own conviction. I am not indicting them. I didn't say one word. I am merely living it. I am being an example, and we all should be examples. And let me assure you, it does rebuke and expose—deeply.

It would be shameful even to mention here those pleasures of darkness that the ungodly do. But when you expose them [that is, live them], the light shines in upon their sin and shows it up.

Now, light doesn't speak, it reveals. It is an example. Take it as an example.

. . . and when they see how wrong they really are [by contrast. They are going to recognize it.], some of them may even become children of light! That is why God says in the Scriptures, "Awake, O sleeper, and rise up from the dead; and Christ shall give you light."

Next, I want you to notice, brethren, the rewards of spiritual control. Over here in II Thessalonians 1 and verse 11, and then we are going to turn once again to the same text in the *Living Bible* and read it in context. II Thessalonians 1 and let us note verse 11 in the *King James*:

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power.

So notice, there are rewards, then, for spiritual control. Notice he said, ". . . worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness . . ." It is something God is working in our lives. Remember, as we are told in Philippians 1 and verse 6, we are His workmanship. We find it also in Ephesians 2 and verse 10: We are the workmanship of God. Christ is doing the work within us. He is going to continue that as long as we don't resist—as long as we are not struggling against it. Now, let's see it in context in the *Living Bible*, beginning in verse 7 of II Thessalonians 1:

And so I would say to you who are suffering, God will give you rest along with us when the Lord Jesus appears suddenly from heaven in flaming fire with his mighty angels . . .

Yes, do you know what that rest is? It's a cessation from the struggle that is going on in our minds and hearts every day, when we know what we should do, but our natures are absolutely attempting to pull us down the path of immorality, indecency, and all of the other problems that come along—whatever the whole broad scope or gamut of that may be. We are finally going to be given rest. That rest is going to come at the appearing of Jesus Christ and let me assure you, brethren, I am looking for that day, because it is getting to be an old and a difficult struggle—it's a real arduous fight. But I haven't come this far to give it up now. Oh, God, that all of us would make our resolve that we are going to endure to the end; that we are going to fight the fight of faith all the way to the end; that we are going to resist the pulls and temptations of our carnal minds and natures; and that we are going to stand before Christ at that day—not in our might and our integrity but in His mercy, His love, His goodness, and His kindness. So we find, then, that He is coming in "flaming fire with his mighty angels":

. . . bringing judgment on those who do not wish to know God and who refuse to accept his plan to save them through our Lord Jesus Christ. They will be punished in everlasting hell [well, we know what he means, but we know what that hell is in truth], forever separated from the Lord [that is right, they are going to be separated,

but they are going to be burned up], never to see the glory of his power when he comes to receive praise and admiration because of all he has done for his people, his saints. And you will be among those praising him because you have believed what we told you about him.

Do you know what Paul is saying there? They would be among those praising Him because these people in Thessalonica believed the faith once delivered and refused to give it up. The real pressure was on them. I tell you, there were many, many people appearing at that time who were attempting to lead them away, and the real, basic spiritual message of many, many of the later epistles was to remain faithful to the Truth that had been given—that is the basic appeal you find in them.

And so we keep on praying for you, that our God will make you the kind of children he wants to have—will make you as good as you wish you could be!—rewarding your faith with his power. Then everyone will be praising the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because of the results they see in you [They are going to see it. They are going to praise it. There is a day coming when they are going to recognize it and they are going to see those results in you.]; and your greatest glory will be that you belong to him. The tender mercy of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ has made all this possible for you.

It isn't something that we can do for ourselves. That kind of goodness is not a creation of our own. God is creating within us His own goodness. It is an awesome thing that God is working on. It is His power that is being manifested. So when we see that kind of goodness—that kind of determination, that kind of character—we are seeing the operation, the work, of God. So in due time, brethren, as I said, I am going to explain the meaning of this word "good." What is "good?" God is good, men are not, but there is a goodness that is to be generated within us, and then we can see what actually is transpiring in our lives and we can have the standard by which we can evaluate ourselves. Next time, brethren, I want to get into the second word, which is the word *chrestos*—which also means "goodness," the fruit of God's Holy Spirit.