

**Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 60**  
**The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit**

**Goodness #4**

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren. This now is tape number four of the specific fruit of God's Holy Spirit: goodness. By way of synopsis or review, let us consider these points: Last time, we covered Luke 6 and specifically verse 35, but beginning in verse 27 and going all the way through verse 38. In that particular text we saw a manifestation of the goodness—or the character—of God that is used as a basis of that which is expected of those called and chosen of God. In other words, the character which you and I must develop. Now, what we saw in Luke the sixth chapter, of course, is the inherent character of God—it is His nature, the divine nature, the very makeup of God. But when we are called, it becomes, then, a spiritual obligation upon human beings. And we understand that human beings have been created with a different nature altogether—a nature of wrath, of sedition, of hate and of all the various bad characteristics, or evil things. Then, when we read—as we do in Luke the sixth chapter—that we must put on, or manifest, these characteristics of God and so on, it makes us very cognizant of one fact alone: The character that God possesses must be acquired by men. It is something that is not innate—it is not intrinsic, it is not inherent within man. It must be acquired. So, the character, then, that God is requiring of us, is something that we must voluntarily, with will and determination, achieve. It means that we have to come to recognize it intellectually—that we have to recognize it by mental power—and then we have to set about the task or responsibility of effecting the necessary mastery of the self, and then exhibiting the characteristics, the traits, the beautiful responses of the nature of God.

So, in this regard, it is a matter of growth, of overcoming (all the words mean basically the same thing; in other words, "growth" with respect to human beings simply means a mastery of the self and the acquiring of that nature—or the traits and characteristics—of God). So, the manifestation of growth, then, is not, in any sense

of the word, made obvious by our doing those things which come to us naturally. Now, when we understand that, then we understand that the manifestation of love, affection and regard for the people that we love is a natural one—those that we automatically love, that somehow provide a dimension in our lives, perhaps an emotional dimension in our lives. For example, it is always nice to receive letters or to be noted or to receive calls, or whatever it is. So, those people who do that, we like, we love them, we respond to them. That's a very natural stimuli on the part of human beings, not because of what we have willfully or purposefully done for somebody else, but because we received recognition—because we got a pat on the back, because we received something. If we will only be honest, we do it because of what we receive in response. So, therefore, the real character of God is not manifested singularly by what we receive from our friends. No, it is manifested when we do those things that are contrary to the natural stimuli of mind and heart. Therefore, the love of our enemies is the real manifestation of spiritual growth.

Now, who is an enemy? Well, it can be almost anybody on the face of the earth, just like the neighbor to whom Jesus Christ referred. Who is my neighbor? It is anybody on the face of this earth with whom I come into contact—with whom I have some relationship, or with whom there is somehow a personal need of response. But who, then, is an enemy? All people who are contrary to the natural thrusts of our own expectations. So, even friends sometimes can become enemies. Why? Because a friend does not always do what we want him to do. Therefore, we begin to criticize, or we will complain. Now, that is the beginning of, let's say, an enemy relationship. Even though it is a very close and a very dear friend, we may overlook, but then the second time, it makes a little deeper mark. And, you know, many times, very dear friends have become enemies. Why? Because the change began someplace—the change in heart and mind transpired someplace. Now, if we are going to be true and genuine friends, it means that there can never be wedges driven, that we will never separate. Otherwise, whatever the traits and characteristics that keep us at arm's length from somebody else is the extent to which that individual is yet an enemy. And then it progressively grows unless we continually master and overcome it and reduce those proclivities.

So, we must, then, love our enemies, which in this regard let us include the entire world. Because every mortal on the face of this earth is an enemy at some time or in some way—even our closest friends do, at times, agitate. And, you

know, above all, husbands and wives agitate one another. In that regard, they are enemies, then. Friendship means the avoidance of all adverse stimuli. Now, that is a real, real task—a problem that all of us must face and that we must overcome on a progressive basis. Because we have to eliminate the traits and characteristics that create these wedges between individuals. So, we must love our enemies—not just our friends, not even those that we classify as friends, but I mean those we classify as enemies. And then we can scale it all the way down even to those who are our closest friends, based upon those emotional characteristics that I mentioned earlier.

Now, real growth—real growth is what we found in Luke 6—is made manifest by action taken with respect to those we class as enemies. We must learn to manifest total respect—total love and concern and compassion even for our enemies. All people will manifest certain characteristics toward friends that they classify as friends. You see, that is the reason that example is given. So, therefore, whoever we class as an enemy—wherever we have these animosities, these barbs that have created barriers between the emotional responses of human beings—to that extent, then, we are enemies one of another. Wherever those exist, then there exists, at the same time, the potential for perfection and mastery and overcoming, and it can be achieved only when we take foot in hand and we get up and do it. For, as James said in the first chapter, according to the *Moffatt* translation, "Act on the word." It doesn't mean to merely read it and to think about it. It means to act upon it—it means to do something about it. Therefore, when we hear these things, we must put them into daily practice.

Now, we are going to falter every single day, as long as we are human beings, there isn't any question about it. That is the reason we die daily—that is the reason we have to go back and ask God to forgive us again and again and again and again and again. And we come to loathe and hate the self because, too frequently, we find ourselves doing exactly the same things today that we did yesterday, and we get disgusted with it because we see ourselves for what we really are. But, then, if we are still spiritually oriented, the more times this happens—the more contempt we have for ourselves—there is every likelihood, if we keep ourselves in that posture, as James said, we will do something about it. Because you cannot go on forever in that posture of hate toward the self. You are going to do something. Now, you will do one of two things: What you are going to do is either pull down the shade of God's Truth so that you no longer look at the

Truth of God—you will not accept yourself for what you are, so you go and say, "Well, I'm not as bad as I thought I was," which is precisely what most people do. Or, otherwise, you will take foot in hand and you will do something about it. So, the love of enemies means that action is required—not thought only. As James said, "Love in deed, not in word only." We must love in deed, not in word only. So, therefore, our prayers, as the Bible clearly illustrates, must be for all—even for our enemies. Doesn't it say, "Pray for those that spitefully use you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake"? They are going to say all kinds of things, and yet, you are supposed to be there praying for them. How? "Oh God, I pray that you will absolutely take a big club out and beat them over the head." No, I'm afraid God isn't going to hear that kind of a prayer. That is not what God is asking us to pray about. God is saying that we should pray that somehow they will come to their senses—that they will recognize what they are doing to themselves, because our concern, the manifestation of our love, is for what is going to happen to those people. And we become deeply concerned because they are hurting and injuring themselves.

Brethren, that is exactly the reason I cannot manifest contempt, and will not say all manner of evil, and all kinds of things, about the former affiliation—any of the ministers in times past, or any of those circumstances. Because God Almighty does not authorize it—it is not acceptable in His sight. We must be praying about it. You know, I have a deep feeling—and I mean a very deep feeling—for those men whom I knew, with whom I once worked. I have a very deep regard for them, and it hurts me to realize what is going to happen to them. I am not standing up and being vindictive and hateful because "they took an ounce of my flesh, therefore, I am going to get back at them." We cannot and must not do that. So, let's be praying about it, and let's be deeply concerned because those poor people are confused. They are bewildered. They are absolutely held by fear—chained by fear—and they are going to have to be liberated by the power of God. The best thing we can do is pray about it.

So, truly, what God says here in Luke the sixth chapter is that whomever we class as an enemy—whether from the vantage point of God's Truth or from personal things in our lives—let's pray about it, let's manifest a real concern for it, and then we will manifest the nature and the character of God.

Yes, indeed, the manifestation of real goodness—this spiritual trait or characteristic about which we are speaking at the present time—is going to leave the door of ridicule wide open. People are going to say, "He's an old softy." People are going to say, "I wonder what else he will take." They are going to attempt to take advantage, not realizing that they are only injuring themselves. You see, they can't hurt you, because your relationship with God becomes more firm and more absolute. But if we are going to worry about human relationships and what human beings say, then we are going to have to forget about what God says.

So, let's accept what God says, and let's manifest the power of God, because, after all, consider the reaction against God. God has not smitten them down overnight because of what they are doing. Look, they even say He doesn't exist; they change His unchangeable Way; they argue about God and set up and establish idols; they do all kinds of things, and yet God has not smitten them down. God is extremely gracious and kind. God has not instantaneously intervened. So, therefore, brethren, let us walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ; let us accept some of the marks and sufferings of Jesus Christ; let us manifest the same nature and the same traits. That is a nature of power; it is not a nature of weakness. It is only Satan that perverts and corrupts. And so he tries to kid people into believing that if you don't behave like some bully walking up and down the street, that you are a softy. No, it takes a lot more character to hold oneself in reservation and in dignity than it does to act like an absolute idiot and fool. That comes naturally. So, these people are only manifesting a weakness—they are not manifesting any strength of character. Anybody can do that. But it takes character, it takes purpose, to withstand all of these carnal, natural forces. So don't worry about those things. Sure, the door of ridicule is left wide open. People are going to say all kinds of things. They're going to try to explain why you do the things that you do. They're going to rationalize your gifts, your love, your mercy, your kindness, your compassion. They are going to do all kinds of things. But don't worry about that. Turn right around and do it again, because that is a matter of character. And the individual who is doing that kind of thing is only manifesting a weakness—the weakness of the flesh—and he or she is ultimately going to have to overcome that weakness and exhibit the real power of God. And that is going to require the awesome power of God's Holy Spirit. It cannot be achieved by the mere will of men. So, don't worry, then, about the back door of ridicule. It takes real character to live the Truth of God. Let's live it; let's walk in it; let's will ourselves to walk

in that Way of Life—love and affection for everybody, faith in God, joy in the salvation of the Eternal God, all the brilliant abundance of the manifestations of God's Holy Spirit. What joy, what brilliance, what excitement, what enthusiasm, if we will stir ourselves up to that end.

So, God, as we have come to see through the sixth chapter, is abundantly good—oh how abundantly good. And we have confidence in that goodness. We know that we are not going to get clobbered over the head immediately when we make a mistake. We can go back and ask God for His forgiveness, and we can have an assurance that we are going to get that forgiveness, and most of us live with that confidence and that faith. But how many of us, in turn, reciprocate to others? That's where the question lies, and that's the big issue.

So, God is very good. Yes, just how great is that goodness of God? In John 3:16 it says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Now, He allowed His Son to die to pay the supreme price because of His love for you and me. And because of that love, He exhibited genuine kindness toward man—the ultimate in kindness. And if we are going to have the nature of God, then we are going to have to bury the self—which is our nature of death. And what is the self? Wrath, sedition, hate, animosity, resentment, revenge, and all of these evil, terrible characteristics. And we are going to have to crucify those, and we've been given the power to do it—we've been given the ability to crucify it. So, any time the temptation comes along to manifest resentment, or the temptation comes along to complain about something, to chide about something, to manifest contempt, or to use viciously the mind and the tongue, let's remember we have been given the power to crucify self and that God Almighty has already set the example of love, compassion, kindness and mercy for humankind in that He gave His only begotten Son, and all we are required to do is crush those traits or tendencies so that we do not have to pay that ultimate or supreme price. Now we can do it through the power of Jesus Christ, and stamp out the wretchedness of the flesh.

Then, in John 1:29 it says that His love was so great that He died for the entire world—for the sins of the entire world: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Now, He didn't die for a few, select friends. He died for Al Capones.

Who is the epitome of evil in your sight? Somebody that you know? Who is the worst creature walking on the face of this earth—historically, presently, whomever? God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for that man or woman. He died for the sins of this world. Now, will we die for all of those whom God has ordained for our human relationships? You know, we don't know ninety-nine and ninety-nine one hundredths percent of the people on the face of this earth—in fact, a whole lot less than that even. We don't even know them. So, obviously, how can I manifest any real, genuine love for the people in the deep recesses of India, or China, or Africa, or some other place? Well, there is one way by which I can: that is to fulfill the spiritual purpose for which I have been called. And that way, then, I can be a qualified and trained leader for tomorrow when those people are going to be given the same opportunity. Now, that is real love.

You know, when people come along and ask, well, will you contribute to CARE and so on? You know, really, CARE packages are not "care" packages at all. All those people are doing is supporting people in their evil, nefarious ways. That isn't the manifestation of real and genuine love. Why don't we really overcome? Why don't we really master and fulfill the purpose for which we are called right now? Yes, do good for those where it is possible to do good for them on an individual basis. But, how in the world can you do good for somebody that you do not even know? Then, the point is, what you need to do is serve and help those that you know, because there must be an emotional stimuli involved in it. It is Satan's perversion that somehow acquits these people mentally. You know, if they give to CARE or United Way or this and that and so on, they can go out and do whatever they blank please after that, and they feel they have discharged their responsibility before God. And that isn't it at all. How tragic are the deceptions of Satan, the Devil. Brethren, if we really want to help them, and in very short order, let's learn now; let's overcome now; let's fulfill the purposes for which we are called at the present time and become equipped, then, to do the will of God tomorrow.

So, God is extremely good. You know, if God wanted all of these people taken care of in that way today, He could intervene and He could do all sorts of things—God has the power and the ability. But those people are paying the price for their sins. Now, we can't, necessarily, intercept and interfere with God's plan and purpose, can we? Obviously not. That's not our purpose or our mission. Then, how do we really manifest love? Let's live it in the overall, broad, generalized sense. Let's live it and be prepared to help them tomorrow. In other

ways, let's do it when the possibility presents itself before us. And then we can serve and help somebody very directly.

So, our death, then, brethren, is to die to wrong—to our own sins, to our own weaknesses, to our own failures. Crush our natural natures. It is a negative response if we complain. If we are upset about the various things that transpire, if we are upset about conditions that prevail, if we are upset about circumstances that seem to trouble and perplex us, then what we need to do is remember Cain. Remember Cain. What was the example of Cain? And I am going to read from the *Revised Standard Version* here in Genesis the fourth chapter and verses 6 and 7. Genesis 4, verses 6–7:

The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Yes, brethren, the natural tendencies of human beings will always assert themselves. We want to get angry when people trample on our feet—we want to retaliate; we want to be vindictive; we want to manifest contempt for those who have manifested any contempt for us. But when we do, all we are doing is responding in like kind—human flesh for human flesh, human nature for human nature. But what we must do is not complain about what they are doing—regardless of what they do. We must manifest the positive side of the nature that God has called us to live: the spiritual nature—the characteristics of Jesus Christ, of God the Father—the very nature of the Spirit of God.

So, when we find that our natures are responding negatively—we find ourselves welling up with resentment, troubles, perplexities, doubts, fears, and misgivings—let us not complain about them, let's recognize that God Almighty put those natures in us. And having put those natures within us, He said to Cain: "I know it. I gave you that nature, but I gave it to you to overcome."

So let's look at the natures that manifest themselves when we want to get angry; when we want to get upset; when we want to manifest a vindictive and hateful spirit and attitude; when we want to retaliate; when we want to say something; or when we want to do any of these things. All we know at that moment is, "There is the nature that God gave to me to master and to overcome."

There it is showing all of its ugly features and characteristics. Thank you. Now I see you. Here now is my glorious opportunity—through the power of God's Holy Spirit—to manifest the nature of God." Fall on your knees, pray about it, do whatever you need to do—instantaneously, if need be—to master it. But don't give in to it—don't give in to the negative aspect of it. Don't become a Cain; be an Abel. Do what God said to Cain. Live up to the Truth of God and don't allow yourself to justify the self because of the strength of those weaknesses within you—the very nature with which you were born.

Now, brethren, let's get on with the subject itself. That was a pretty substantial review. Remember, in point number three, we went through this matter of the goodness of God and I entitled point number three, "The nature and character of God."

Now point number four—or sub-topic number four—in this matter of goodness, and in this particular word, is, "Why is God so gracious and good to us?" And when we can understand why He is that good and why He is that gracious, then we can understand why we need to be kind, affectionate, and concerned for others. Those are manifestations of an individual responsibility and it is not because of our worthiness. Let's understand that at the outset or from the beginning. I want to read, now, from the *Living Bible* because it is abundantly clear in this case. I always first check this Bible, of course, against the *King James* to be sure He hasn't gone clear out into left field. But if it is basically according to the intent and purpose as reflected in the *King James Version*—which is from the Stephens text—sometimes I like to read it from the *Living Bible* because it is current, everyday language. So, here is what is written in Romans the second chapter, and let's begin in verse one. I'm going to read through the first eleven verses with emphasis upon verse four. Romans 2, verses 1 through 11:

"Well," you may be saying, "what terrible people you have been talking about!"

Now, remember, back in the first chapter of Romans where he is talking about all the evil, damnable, horrible traits and characteristics of human beings? Perhaps we just need to rehearse that so that you have it all in your mind. Let's go back and let's pick it up here from the *Living Bible* in chapter 1 and about verse 28:

So it was that when they gave God up and would not even acknowledge him, God gave them up to doing everything their evil minds could think of. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness and sin, of greed and hate, envy, murder, fighting, lying, bitterness, and gossip. They were backbiters, haters of God, insolent, proud, braggarts, always thinking of new ways of sinning and continually being disobedient to their parents. They tried to misunderstand, broke their promises, and were heartless—without pity. They were fully aware of God's death penalty [in other words, it is somebody who knew and understood] for these crimes, yet they went right ahead and did them anyway and encouraged others to do them, too.

*Now, let's notice what he says back in Romans 2:*

"Well," you may be saying, "what terrible people you have been talking about!" But wait a minute! You are just as bad.

What we must remember, brethren, is that when those people are doing those things, all they are doing is manifesting human nature, and you were born with the same nature. And anytime we become vindictive, or we negatively respond to these terrible traits and characteristics of the world, what we are doing is manifesting some of the same traits and characteristics. What God wants out of us, brethren, is to live a higher standard. Anybody can become contemptuous; anybody can retaliate; anybody can be vindictive; anybody can manifest hate and disregard; anybody can manifest any of the terrible, evil traits and characteristics. But, brethren, it takes a man of power and of character—by the power of God's Holy Spirit—to manifest the spiritual nature. And that is what God has called us to perform. So, if we negatively respond—if we come around and say, "What terrible people," and we turn our noses up, or thumb our noses at such people, all we are doing is manifesting the same nature. Oh, it may manifest itself slightly differently—in a different avenue—but, after all, God does not differentiate between nor categorize sins. One sin is as bad as the other. Well, there is a slight differentiation: those that are against God and those that are against human beings, but that is the only categorization I can find in all the Bible. And, yet, you know, human beings have a tendency to classify sins according to how they view sin. But that is not acceptable in the sight of God.

So, he said, regardless of how we may view what the Al Capones or Jesse James are doing—or any of the other evil individuals on the face of this earth who are committing murder, or who are doing this or that (whatever we hate or abhor)—remember, brethren, unless we really manifest the traits and the character of God, we are manifesting the same nature. We are in the same pool—the same cesspool—with them. That is a very hard thing for a lot of people to accept. It's called self-righteousness. We must manifest the nature and the character of God for which we have been called—and the power has even been given to us to overcome the nature of self and to exhibit or manifest the nature of God. Yes, that power is ours. But until we manifest that, we are exhibiting the same nature; and the same traits; and the same characteristics as all other human beings. Oh yes, we are just as bad as any man whom we may hold in contempt or consider an evil entity in this world, said the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul.

When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are talking about yourselves, for you do these very same things.

Now, brethren, we may not go out and murder—oh, I grant you that. We possibly wouldn't pick up a gun or a lethal weapon of some type—or a club for bludgeoning purposes—and go out and murder or kill somebody. Many, many, many people have sufficient restraint that they would not do that, yet they do not live the character and the nature of God, because if we hate somebody (and what is hate? It means to take exception with somebody, to manifest contempt for somebody; we hate them.) do you know what that is? That is murder. That is the beginning stages of murder.

That nature has to be changed so that we do not hold others in contempt. And how many glorious opportunities have we had when people have said all kinds of evil against us because of the terrible confusion that exists within the church today? Yet, let me assure you, brethren, that doesn't mean that all of us—even the ministry—has necessarily avoided it perfectly. But, we had better recognize it, because we still must master it.

And sometimes it takes time, so we must be tolerant and forbearing and manifest kindness toward even enemies. Remember, we started out with that. So, it takes time, brethren, but you had better not point a finger back at us or somebody else, because if you do, the Bible says you are guilty of the same thing. Maybe at a different level—maybe in a different way—but it is the same nature.

We don't have a right to censure one another. We have a right only to accept the surface intent of one another. The true intent—the heart—will be manifested in due time, and then it shall be known.

So, he said that if we take exception with these things and we point a finger or accuse, then we are talking about ourselves because we do these very same things.

And we know that God, in justice, will punish anyone who does such things as these.

Now, when we know that, brethren, why don't we pray for them? Why don't we pray for one another? Why don't we look at it and say, "You know, what I am seeing there is precisely what I am like. And can you imagine how somebody else must view me? And if somebody else sees me in the same light that I see this other individual, Oh, woe is me. I feel terrible." Then why don't we get on our knees and say, "Almighty God, please, by the power of your Spirit, clean up that terrible nature that is within me? Give me the capability of truly manifesting kindness, love, affection and understanding." Let's be kind. That's a tall order—to be kind, to be considerate, to be compassionate.

Do you think that God will judge and condemn others for doing them and overlook you when you do them, too?

You know, when people indict, censure, accuse, or ridicule somebody else, it says one thing: they think they are above the Law—that they are not going to be accused. They are not doing it because they think they are just as bad and, therefore, God is going to censure them just as critically. Oh, human beings are not like that yet. Not at all. They are doing it because in their own minds—and because of self-righteousness—they think they are superior and that they are not worthy of any indictment; that "God Almighty couldn't be just in censuring me—why, it is an impossibility. But these so-and-so's are definitely evil and bad." But, remember, when we do it, we are equally guilty.

"Don't you realize how patient he is being with you?" Now, here, brethren, is why God is so gracious with us; here is why we are being blessed; here is why we are the recipients of every conceivable blessing on the face of this earth; here is why we enjoy health; here is why we enjoy the abundance—the thrills of the Truth

which God has given to us: because God is patient with us. Not because He looks down and says, "You know, they have already made it. There's not a thing I can do for them. Why, their natures and their characters are absolutely unblemished, superlative, and without defect. There's not a thing in the world that I can do for them. About the only thing I can do, I guess, is bring them on into the Kingdom." No, my Bible tells me that even the very righteous are going to scarcely be saved. You know, by that old, proverbial expression, "by the skin of a hen's teeth"? I've never seen any skin on them, so if it's only that deep, let me assure you that you are standing in serious jeopardy. So, brethren, do you think, then, when we judge and ridicule and censure others, that we are going to get by, when we are equally guilty?

"Don't you realize how patient he is being with you?" So, let's understand, the very fact that we are being blessed; the very fact that we are the recipients of the graciousness and the kindness of God in so many ways is not because of our worthiness, but because of the patience of God. Then, if it is the patience of God toward us, as the Bible clearly explains, then we must be just as patient toward everyone else, because we have trampled upon God; we have abused God; we have taken advantage of Him; we have assumed our relationship with God; we have assumed all kinds of relationships with God, and God, as a loving, compassionate, kind, merciful Father, understands, because He knows our frame—He knows our natural minds. Then, brethren, let us understand others also. If we have the intelligence—the capacity—let's understand that others are doing the things they are doing, not to be vindictive and hateful, not to do this or that for some specific, evil and nefarious purposes, but because of the natures with which they were born, which equal to the nature with which you were born. And then it makes us tolerant.

Now, God does it because He made us, and because He understands, not because He has the same nature we have. Jesus Christ, of course, came down—as I explained in the last message—that He might experience this nature so that He can wisely and judiciously succor, or aid and help us. It is because He has experienced the weaknesses of this flesh. He understands when we pray to Him and we call out and say, "Oh, God, please understand the nature—please understand the pulls in this very mind and heart—these things that I loathe and hate." Jesus Christ understands because He went through it and He is able, then, to succor us in our time of need.

Don't you realize how patient he is being with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see that he has been waiting all this time without punishing you, to give you time to turn from your sin?

You see, that is what Paul is explaining to the Romans, and it is a part of the Bible by which we are to live. "For man shall live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." And here is a part of it that applies to you and me. So, let's understand that He is merely giving us time to turn from our sins. He is patient. So, then, why don't we give time—space—to other people?

"His kindness is meant to lead you to repentance." Now, if we want to be beneficent, kind and helpful to other people, let's control our tongues; let's control our natures; let's control the things that we say and do; and let's manifest optimum love; but, yet, let's live the faith that God originally delivered to us. Let's be kind; let's understand the needs of other people. They are deeply troubled. Oh, I know, we may sometimes look at them and think it is utterly contemptuous and ridiculous the way they are living and the things that they speak and the things that they do, and their behavioral patterns and so on. But, why are they doing it? Even back in Romans chapter 1, we found that they were encouraged to do those things. Now, people are not arbitrarily doing it, they have been encouraged to do it. They think it is acceptable; they believe that it is right. I don't know how they can, but they have lost that faith; they have lost that sense of direction; they have lost that purpose. But thank God—and each one of us should—that we have not lost that purpose; that we realize that we must master the self; that what really counts is overcoming. It isn't a relationship with a man; it isn't a relationship within a specific body; it is overcoming. Oh, yes, brethren, I do not minimize the necessity of being a member of the Body of Jesus Christ, I am talking about the tangible element here on this earth. What really counts, brethren, is personal mastery; what really counts is our relationship with God Almighty and His Son Jesus Christ, and that *does* make an awesome difference.

So, God wants us to overcome. God wants us to put down our natural natures—whether we manifest them on the basis of our own inherent weaknesses, or our contempt for somebody else. It doesn't make any difference. He wants us to overcome and to exhibit the nature of God—the nature of the graciousness and superlative kindness and compassion of God. That's the true and genuine kindness that the Bible speaks of; that's the sort of kindness that we are to exhibit to one

another. Oh, what love and affection there would be if we could just learn that principle.

Continuing now in verse 5: "But no," the Apostle Paul writes to the Romans, "you won't listen." Brethren, I don't think that is true of us today. I think that we have come to the point that many of us sincerely believe in the faith once delivered and we really want to overcome. I'm counting on that and I see the kind of stability developing where we are not worrying about other people. Oh, yes, when we exhibit optimum love, forbearance and kindness, what we are really doing is effecting mastery in our own personal lives, and we are listening to the real intent and purpose of these fruits of God's Holy Spirit, and we are putting them on. You know, nobody can exhibit a bad trait or characteristic if he will just live the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. If we would all live those fruits, wholly, completely and absolutely, I want to assure you that there would never be a ripple, a wrinkle, or an unclean blemish or spot in the character of any meeting, any association, or a relationship of any type—none whatsoever.

But he said to the Romans, "[N]o, you won't listen; and so you are saving up terrible punishment for yourselves because of your stubbornness in refusing to turn from your sin." And sometimes people who exhibit this exalted superiority—which manifests itself in the form of judgement of others, where we censure, ridicule and criticize others and refuse to work on ourselves because we feel our personal obligation is to get somebody else into alignment. And that will not work. The only person you can change is yourself when you finally accept circumstances for what they are; when you finally learn what it is to manifest patience and forbearance. And, remember, there would never be any need for patience and forbearance if everybody else would just live up to your expectation, would there? Of course not. So the need for patience and forbearance and kindness is always in relationship to those nettling circumstances which go contrary to your natural grain. And when they do, you now have a glorious opportunity to exhibit the character of God. You bite the tongue and you turn right around and you say good things, and if you have to work personally to cover up the defect—or whatever it is—do it. Don't worry about it. But the minute you open your mouth and you criticize and say something, physically, you are just as guilty. You are just as guilty.

Would you be perfect? Do you want to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ? Then take the problems of others—whatever they may say, their ridicule

and so on—and walk in perfection the powerful fruits of God's Holy Spirit. Don't retaliate; don't say anything; even if somebody within the group says something or behaves in a way that is unseemly or that you find offensive. Turn right around and say some good things. And I don't mean on just one occasion, but consistently. Do it and then you are going to make somebody else feel badly because, as the Apostle Paul explained, that heaps coals of fire upon their heads.

So the Bible says, "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." Evil can be manifested on the outside or the inside. Anything that is contrary to the will of God is evil—whether it is within the framework of God's people or outside of it. God said, do not be overcome with evil—don't respond negatively—but overcome evil with good. And, thereby, some have heaped coals of fire upon the heads of others. So let's live it; let's manifest that; and let's be insensitive to the ridicule, the censure, the judgement of others.

Continuing in Romans 1: "[A]nd so you are saving up terrible punishment for yourselves because of your stubbornness in refusing to turn from your sin." Let's turn from our sin. You know, sometimes if we are really trying to overcome, when people say things, there just might be a morsel of truth there. If we will listen—no matter how it hurts us physically, no matter how it cuts emotionally—we might learn something and say, "Well, you know, I thank you very, very much. You pointed out something I hadn't realized." I want to tell you that is hard, brethren. Don't ever think for one moment that it is an easy thing and you are just going to decide, "Okay, today I'm going to live that way." Oh, you can decide it ten million times, and then the ten-million-and-first time you are still going to have to struggle just as hard. This nature is residual, and it is powerful within us, even though the traits and characteristics are called weaknesses.

"[F]or there is going to come a day of wrath when God will be the just Judge of all the world." Let's remember that. And when we remember it, if we have tendered only mercy, then mercy is going to be given to us. And I'll tell you, there is not a one of us who is not going to need mercy in that day—I mean a truckload of it. Then, if we are going to need a truckload of the mercy of God in that appointed day of judgement, then let's manifest it today to everyone else.

"He will give each one whatever his deeds deserve." There isn't going to be any argumentation in that day; self-justifications are going to be worthless. It isn't going to be a time when we can come and say, "Oh, but God, don't you remember

what I did here and there?" No, that isn't going to work; for the truly converted of God—those who have come to recognize themselves for what they are—are going to say, "God, I know what I deserve. But if you can just find it in your heart to give me everlasting life, and to give me the power to achieve the things I found so difficult in this life, I'll use it to your honor and glory. Please be merciful to me—a mighty, a terrible sinner." God is going to honor and respect that person.

"He will give each one whatever his deeds deserve. He will give eternal life to those who patiently do the will of God." Who patiently do the will of God. What is the will of God? To overcome our natures and to put on the nature of God. There are two things: We have to absolutely master this nature, which means we have to absolutely subdue the natural traits and characteristics—and we are going to cover those in due time—and then we have to deliberately and purposefully put on the nature of God.

He will give eternal life to those who patiently do the will of God, seeking for the unseen glory and honor and eternal life that he offers. But he will terribly punish those who fight against the truth of God.

So, if we resist; if we don't listen; if we are not responsive to this positive stimuli; and we don't overcome all the negative thrusts and intents, then we are going to find God fighting against us at that appointed day.

But he will terribly punish those who fight against the truth of God and walk in evil ways—God's anger will be poured out upon them. There will be sorrow and suffering for Jews and Gentiles alike who keep on sinning. But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who obey him, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. For God treats everyone the same.

So, why is God gracious to us? Not because we deserve it. It isn't because of any intrinsic value. Why? Because intrinsically—inherently—we are evil. We know what our natures are, let's quit kidding ourselves. We know what our natures are. But, if we have achieved anything positive, it is because of the power and will of God within us, and because we have set about with all that is within us to master the self and to exhibit the traits and the characteristics of God.

Now, with respect to kindness, it simply means one thing: God is gracious and kind to all. Then, if we are going to exhibit the nature and the character of God—and after all, we have to put on the nature of God—we are going to have to be good, kind, compassionate, tolerant, understanding and forbearing toward everyone. I mean everyone. That's what God requires of us.

Now, being kind—manifesting optimum kindness as God did for this world—does not mean condonation. And I am going to stress that and re-stress it, because I, just like the Apostle Paul in his day, have heard too many times: "So, you are justifying sin." I was even accused of that. *NO*, brethren, I am not condoning sin. I am condoning the operation of God's Holy Spirit and the intent and purpose of God that we put on the nature of God. Now, we can leave the rest up to God, can we not? God is going to judge in due time. It isn't a matter of my judging; it isn't a matter of my determining whether or not one man is evil and another man is bad. Not at all. So, it isn't a matter of condonation, it is a matter of kindness; it is a matter of scrupulously avoiding a responsibility that is not mine.

But, people, please understand that it is all a matter of personal change. We have to change our own minds; we have to change our own hearts by the power of God's Holy Spirit. Let's become kind; let's pray mightily for that kindness; let's pray for the overall characteristic of love manifested in such awesome kindness. Ministers are held accountable for preaching. It is not their responsibility to personally judge. Jesus Christ would not do it. There may come a day when God is going to send certain ones to indict and to condemn, yes, but that will be by a responsibility received directly from God. No man may assume that whatsoever. So ministers today must teach and then, as God Himself does, they must step back and give time for change—personal change. They must tender forbearance and patience.

Why is God gracious and good to us? He is patiently waiting for that change—that personal change. Why are we gracious and good to somebody else? We are waiting for the same reason.

Then, brethren, our next point—point number five—is, "How do men manifest the goodness of God that He puts within them by the power of His Holy Spirit?" It is something we must manifest—a trait or characteristic. So, we want to see how that is manifested.

In First Corinthians 15 and verse 33—one text here very quickly and we will conclude with this point number five. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." The word "good" here is this same word that means kindness—kind manners, a benevolent spirit. But it says, now, "Be not deceived, evil communication . . ." What is communication? Talking—telephone, personal conversation, whatever—evil communication. In other words, we are talking about rumor, gossip, personality conflicts, discussion of others in any way whatsoever. It is a matter of evil communication, and it corrupts goodness. Let's not corrupt goodness; let's not become involved in that; let's be true and faithful to the purpose of God; let's honor and respect other people. It doesn't mean we are condoning them. We are neither condoning or condemning—we are leaving them the latitude of personal change, as we expect within our own personal lives, and as God Himself manifests toward us. So, let's, in turn, be like-minded toward everyone else—just and unjust alike.

Next time, brethren, how do we show regard for the Holy Spirit and those traits and characteristics of God—specifically the trait of goodness?