

Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 61 **The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit**

Goodness #5

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren, once again. This, now, is tape number five in the series on the specific fruit of the Spirit, goodness, and the overall series on "The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit." Last time we were dealing with a couple of subtopics that were quite interesting: The first one was, "Why God is so gracious to us." And we saw that there is a particular reason God is extremely kind and benevolent to human beings—all human beings—because He is, by virtue of creation, their Father also. So, on a physical plain, God is the Father of them all. He created them, He has brought humankind into existence, but, specifically, for those whom God has chosen, we find that He is unusually kind and gracious because His graciousness—His kindness—leads us to repentance. And then, secondly, we answered the question, "How do men manifest that goodness of God?" It is through the power of God's Holy Spirit—that Spirit that resides within us when God has called us and given us an opportunity for Life and He fills us with that Holy Spirit when we ask Him to be replenished day by day, because it is not a static commodity whatsoever. It is best illustrated by the flow of electricity. You might have a full flow coming in, but if you don't keep it coming in, you cannot keep it built up. So, it isn't a matter of filling ourselves with God's Holy Spirit and then it is there permanently—not at all. But it is a matter of a consistent flow of His Holy Spirit coming into us. As I said, it is illustrated as being more like this matter of electricity—and electricity is extremely transitory. It's there today—it's a powerful influence if we have a source that continues to feed it into us. But if we cut off that source, there is no more electricity. You don't say, "Well, I was full of it at one time, so, therefore, I maintain it." It is a matter of continuing to tap that source day by day.

Now, let's get into the subject material for today: How do we show regard for the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is that source of power. It is the generating plant; it is the great dynamo. Of course, behind that is the Engineer, the Architect, the Power,

which is God Himself and His Son Jesus Christ. But the instrumentality—that is, the line by which it is conveyed to us, we look at it as we do electricity, you know, and we tap into a particular line of transmission and it leads it into our particular panel box where the distribution is made for the house, for the company, for the factory, or whatever it may be. But the transmission line is only the means by which you get it from point A to point B. And the transmission line is God's Holy Spirit—it is the means by which that power flows into us. And, so, sometimes people merely look at it and they think that the real source is the high line out there—the transmission line. But it isn't. Ultimately it goes back to the point of generation, and God Himself is the one that generates that power—by whatever means (and we certainly do not understand that because He has not revealed it). How He generates it is a matter of His own personal business. There is nothing that I know that is revealed in the Bible as to how that Holy Spirit—that power, that influence—is made. But we know that it exists. It is the magnanimity, the power, the capability, the force, the vitality, sometimes illustrated as the mind, of God. But I think it has to be somewhat isolated from the mind of God because the Holy Spirit cannot be limited to the mind. The mind is the force or the power by which all Creation is conceived and held in order. So, the mind has to go far beyond even the Spirit itself. And I don't believe that we understand the totality of it at all because there isn't that much revealed about it.

But, now, how do we show regard for the Holy Spirit? What is the means by which we receive it? Interestingly, this is a point that has created questions in my mind for a long time because I do not thoroughly understand it and I don't think anybody does thoroughly understand it. God is all in all, yet blasphemy against God can be forgiven. You can blaspheme Jesus Christ and you can be forgiven. But you cannot blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable—or the unforgivable—sin. Now, I think we can generalize to a certain extent and explain the reasons for that, but I certainly would not venture to give you an ultimate explanation because I do not comprehend it and I don't know of anybody that does. Now, I know, and I am readily aware of the fact that many who will hear this tape are ready to instruct me. They really believe that they can get me straightened out on it because, I guess, it's a feather in their cap or whatever. I know I have done a great deal of thinking—as much as most people, I suspect—and I still don't know the ultimate answer with respect to this matter of the Holy Spirit and its relationship to God and so on. I can admit it. I do not know how to explain it fully. But there are those who jump in where

angels fear to tread. I am well aware of that too. But, anyway, there are factors that we can understand. So why don't we limit it to the thing that affects us directly today.

So, let's ask the question once again: "How do we show regard for the Holy Spirit?" There is a very interesting series of verses here that were written by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians the fourth chapter. The specific emphasis, of course, is upon verse 32. However, we are going to go all the way back to verse 17 and get it in sequence and see what the setting is and why the Apostle Paul says what he does in verse 32. But let's note verse 32 first so that we understand where that word is used and why it is used:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Now, when we note this particular word—the word "kind" is the one we are referring to in the context of this matter of goodness. And, remember, as I said to you earlier, there is a unique correlation between these words: the word "goodness" is oftentimes translated Biblically as "kind" or "kindness." In this particular case, the word "goodness" is translated "kind." "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Now, what is the premise for the Apostle Paul's statement? He didn't make it out of the blue. He made it on the basis of something that he had been analyzing. And here was a conclusion. But we don't want to get to the conclusion and analyze it right now, we want to go back and find out why. In order to do that, let's go all the way back to verse 17 because I think the real setting begins there: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk."

Now, I don't care how you want to view it, in this particular situation you can look at it physically and say it is Gentiles versus Israelites, or perhaps Jews in this case. The Jews were a part of Israel—not all of Israel. They were part of it. Because there were twelve tribes of Israelites and only two of them were classified as the Kingdom of Judah. Where are the other ten? And anybody who tells you that they were finally amalgamated at any point in time doesn't even know what he is talking about, because it is not substantiated historically nor Biblically—either one. It is an absolute fact that there are ten tribes totally lost out of the entire

picture, if you reduce it to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin themselves, or if you can also include the tribe of Levi. There were two-and-a-half tribes, basically: a half-tribe of Levi, along with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. So the two tribes, basically, would have been Judah and Benjamin. Now, you cannot limit it to that.

But, anyway, at this point, it isn't as important to grasp it in its technical, or letter, sense as it is to understand it in its spiritual sense. Who is a real Gentile? One that is without God and without hope. That means one who is not called of God. The reason they were called Israelites—physically, in the letter application of old—is that they were the chosen people of God. And they illustrated—on the basis of that physical call—what God was going to do *spiritually* in our day. So, today, as the Apostle Paul very clearly demonstrated in many, many places when he was writing to Gentiles all over the place—to those up in Galatia, to those in Ephesus, to those in Rome—Gentiles are the uncalled. That is, whether you are by nature—naturally, or by letter application—an Israelite or a Gentile, if you are not called spiritually today, you are still a Gentile. So a Gentile is one who has not received a spiritual call from God. Then, by contrast, one who is likened unto an Israelite—or, as Paul used the illustration over in the second chapter of the book of Romans, one who is a Jew—is one called of God, not one who is born naturally of the seed. The true Jew—in the sense of a true call of God—is one chosen by God, and it has nothing to do with his past lineage. He might be a Jew by birth, he might be a Japhetic person by birth, or he might be Hamitic by birth. Whomever he may be, he can become a Jew in Jesus Christ if he is called of God and lays down his physical life and becomes the recipient of the power of God's Holy Spirit. So, in that context we read: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk." That is, in defiance, in rebellion, in a cantankerous nature. And what is the nature of a Gentile? It is doing that which comes naturally—that which is of the heart, the natural heart. Walking "in the vanity of their mind." That is, analyzing things for themselves—thinking as human beings. They are not the recipients of the mind and power of Jesus Christ.

So a Gentile, then, is one who walks in the vanity of his own mind; who says, "I'll figure it out for myself"; who is not subject to the instruction of Almighty God; who does not believe in the call of Almighty God; who does not grasp nor understand that God Himself must reveal His Truth, and always by a particular means. He doesn't call people on an individual basis and deal with them

specifically—individually. He has always dealt with them through a ministry, and through His very planned purpose. It's the way God does things and has always done them. If it were any other way, we didn't need Christ. He could have dealt with us directly. But we *did* need Christ, and Christ Himself prefigured that continuation of the ministry—as we read very early in this series concerning Moses: that there would be a time appointed when another would come "like unto me, and Him you shall hear." People don't understand those things because they want to think that God deals with them directly and individually. But I'll tell you, brethren, if we maintain the attitude that God has never used anybody else to help us—that "we'll figure it out for ourselves"—and we do not have confidence in any ministry and the call and purpose of God, we are still walking on very dangerous ground, very dangerous ground. But here are Gentiles who walk "in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened . . ." And here is what Gentiles are now:

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them [that is, their natural ignorance], because of the blindness of their heart.

You see, a Gentile is blind in his heart. Blind in what respect? Not physically—he still may see; he can walk around; he may still grasp physical things, but he is blind to spiritual things. So he is blind in heart; he is ignorant of all Truth; he is alienated from the life of God through that ignorance that is in him; his understanding is darkened; and he walks in the vanity of his own mind. That's a Gentile. How many of us may be still bordering on that separation—Gentiles in our own minds?

But he doesn't end it there: "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto [lawlessness]"—because they have no feelings; they have no remorse; they have no regret; they have no kindness nor affection, nor any manifestation of God's Holy Spirit. They become lascivious—and one of the synonyms of that word can be "lawlessness" even though lasciviousness is not necessarily limited to lawlessness.

So, "Who being past feeling." Now, a Gentile also is insensible. Insensible to what? To spiritual things. "[Having] given themselves over to lasciviousness [or lawlessness], to work all uncleanness with greediness." In other words, the pursuit of that which comes naturally.

Now, here, brethren, is the key: "But [you] . . ." Now, who is the "you"? In contrast to Gentiles, "you" has to be the ones chosen of God, does it not? "But [you] have not so learned Christ." But there was a condition in that, as the Apostle Paul understood: "If so be that [you] have heard him . . ." Now, how did they hear Christ? Through the apostles—through the servants of God. That's why, brethren, I have thundered and stressed and re-stressed the fact that if we do not today recognize the means by which we heard God's Truth—through His instrument of the last days—and we do not recognize it as the Truth we received, we are admitting that we do not even know where we exist: what we think; where we are to go; what we should believe; what needs to transpire. Because in every situation, we refuse to accept the means by which God reveals His Truth. Now, I do not mean following in their footsteps. Human beings can all fail. I'm talking about the Truth which we originally received versus the man. Forget the man; forget the organization, but remember the Truth that you received. What was it to which you responded? What precipitated your interest? Why did you react? Why were you so emotionally filled and so determined to be baptized? Why were you encouraged emotionally—spontaneously, mentally—to do something that you would have never done just a few years earlier? But you did. And you decided that you wanted to lay your life down, and you made a covenant agreement with God. That was the working of God's Holy Spirit. Then, why did it change so that we turned back to our own natural, carnal minds; we lost our sense of direction; we lost our feeling—our spontaneity, our enthusiasm—we became blind and indifferent? Why did these things happen? Because we took our eyes off of that goal and we began to fix them on physical things—we began to see men; we began to see organizations. And because we didn't like the men and we didn't like the organization and we didn't like the physical things that happened to us, then we turned against God. Now, I know people are going to say, "No, I didn't turn against God." Oh, yes, you did. If you turned against that Truth which you received as an original call from Almighty God—if you negatively responded and you began to belittle and turn against that Truth because of what man or organization did—*you turned against God*. Any one of us did if that is what happened. And so they began to judge God on the basis of what men did. Poor God—as though He couldn't stand on His own two feet. So we judge Him on the basis of how men have responded: double standards, hypocrisy, lying, subterfuge, coverups, and all kinds of things. So we try to justify it, then, by saying, "How in the world could it have ever been the Truth? Because a servant of God would never have done that." Oh, yes, they have. The Bible shows it very clearly. But God's Truth cannot be judged on that basis at all. He said very clearly, "[You] have not so learned Christ."

Now, if they turn back to Gentile practices, they begin to rationalize things in their own minds—the vanity of their own minds; their understanding becomes darkened because they have turned away from God; they become alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that now creeps up inside of them; their hearts become blinded; they become past feeling so that they give themselves over to lawlessness, or to work all forms of disobedience, all kinds of greediness and uncleanness; remember, that isn't what we learned—if we truly have learned or heard Christ. And that was the problem in the Apostle Paul's day. They were beginning to judge God's Truth. What he is showing here is exactly what happened in our day. We began to judge the Truth of God on the basis of what men did, how we were treated, and other physical circumstances, and that is not the basis of judgement at all.

If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off . . .

Now, notice what we must do. We have now evaluated our responses to these terrible stimuli that were generated, and we either go back, or revert, to this matter of "gentileism"—which is separation from God—and we become rebellious and cantankerous, disobedient, lawless, we become darkened in our own understanding, we become ignorant of those things that are right and true because we turn against it; or, if we have truly learned Christ, we are going to do this:

That ye put off concerning the former [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.

We recognize ourselves for what we are; we don't trust our own minds; we don't trust our own rationalizations; we recognize our former conduct—or "conversation" as it is translated here—the old man. We recognize that we can't trust that man, we can't trust that nature. It is not trustworthy in any direction. ". . . which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Deceitful—which means it is going to rise right up if we are not careful and we don't safeguard our own minds through the power of God's Holy Spirit and the faith that God gave to us. If we don't do that, it is going to rise right up against us and be so deceptive that we are going to be talked right into it by our own natures—our own minds. That's what Paul is saying here.

That ye put off concerning the former [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Renewal—a renewal means that they were standing in jeopardy, they were troubled by something. What were they troubled by? Let's go back and pick it up in verse 17 and see what it is: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles . . ." You see, what they were doing was being tempted to go back into that Gentile domain. And what is that Gentile domain? Vanity of their own minds, the understanding being darkened; they are alienated from the life of God through ignorance—in other words, they are ignorant—and their hearts are blinded. So they do not see; they do not grasp; they do not understand.

And, then, what about their feelings—their natural emotions? "Who being past feeling have given themselves over . . ." Here they were at one time in God's Truth, but now, because of these alluring temptations—these deceptions of their own natural selves—they were being pulled right back into left field, into defiance and rebellion, ignorance, blindness, and all that transpires to a true Gentile. "[H]ave given themselves over unto [lawlessness], to work all uncleanness with greediness." But we are appealed to on the basis of this instruction—and man is going to live by it, because we are going through exactly the same kind of circumstances today that they did in the Apostle Paul's day, back in the time of the apostles. Because they also departed from God's Truth. What was the allurement? What was the temptation? What was the pull in those terrifying, darkened, gloomy, foreboding days? The same things that you and I have experienced in the last six or seven years—the same things. It was happening in that day—a separation from God's Truth. And people were trying to rationalize, and they began to justify themselves and, wholesale, they were going right back into the same Gentile customs, habits and practices.

But the Apostle Paul appeals to those who would listen—which I do today. I appeal to you: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." How can you be renewed in it unless it was there at one time? A renewal means to let it surface once again; stir it up; bring it to life and vitality and strength in your life, and that, as a result of that, you do something. Here now is what He requires:

And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Now, here is something constructive on the right hand that you must do: you must put on the new man. That is a calculated move—it is a determination on our parts, it is something we must do. So we put on the new man. If we put it on, it means we aggressively work at it. It means that we are going to achieve certain ends. When God said you love somebody, when it is not natural for us to love them, then we put that trait or that characteristic on; we go after it; we make sure that we learn it. If we are supposed to control our tongues, our minds, our hearts, then we constructively control them—we put on the nature of Jesus Christ. "[P]ut on the *new man*, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

But, then, we also have a responsibility on the left-hand side. You know, a bottle that is full is full. Now, if we are filled up with human, carnal nature—which all human beings are—that's the first thing you have to recognize. It is true conversion to recognize that you are full of human vanity and arrogance of heart and mind, and that it must be put down. Now, the only way you can put something else in there is if you get rid of something initially. So now we have a transferral taking place. We are reducing ourselves, but we are putting something else in its place. So, here we are told to put on the new man. But in verse 25, now, we are putting away something else:

. . . lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry [that is, to be stirred up], and sin not.

That means don't let our minds, our hearts, nor our mouths get out of control: Be angry—stirred up with a determination—but don't sin. "[L]et not the sun go down upon your wrath," however. Make sure everything is settled and you live a peaceable, contented life. "Neither give place to the devil." Now, you see, on the right hand, we are to put something on, but on the left hand, we are reducing something.

Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

In other words, God is saying, "Be workers." The Bible very clearly says that if you don't work, neither should you eat. You know, this whole world's economic mess could be solved just in the application of that one principle—which means that even people of great means, if they don't work, they shouldn't eat. God intended for them to labor and not to make money on the labor of somebody else. That is not acceptable in the sight of God. It's a wrong principle. And, yet that is how great wealth has been made. They are using somebody else, and they make it on the basis of his labor.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying [meaning, control of the tongue], that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God.

How many people have grieved God's Holy Spirit, if indeed they possessed it?

. . . whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.

Now, what we see is the illustration of what a Gentile is—that is what we saw clear back in verse 17 on. Then we found out that we had learned something exactly contrary to that—we had learned that we must recognize what we are by nature, and then what we were expected to become. So we then had to be renewed in the spirit of our minds to put on the new man, but to reduce the old. Now let's notice what he said. Verse 32:

And be ye kind [good] one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Why would you do that? Because you have come to recognize what you were by nature. You know what you are, and you know the struggle that it is to fight yourself, which is all that you can handle. No individual can fight two fronts. He just simply cannot do it. You have enough to take care of in just fighting your own enemy—just fighting that self, for which God holds you accountable. You don't have time to worry about somebody else. And here is

what He expects of you—if you truly understand: "[B]e ye kind [that is, good] one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another . . ." Why would you be kind or good to one another? Because you recognize what that individual is up against. How do you recognize it? Because you have been there—you know what it is, you know what you are fighting. The only time that we take an exception with somebody else is when we assume a superior posture. A superior posture is what makes us criticize others. Now, we may not have thought of it like that—we may not have rationalized it, we may not have done it deliberately—but, remember, human nature is awesomely deceptive. It means that we criticize somebody else because of contempt: "I wouldn't do that." But if we see the other party struggling against exactly what we recognize in ourselves, then we can have nothing but empathy for that individual. Therefore, when we criticize, or ridicule, or hold somebody else in contempt, all we are doing is saying we are superior—that we would do a whole lot better.

This is exactly what the whole world does with respect to Adam and Eve. I have scarcely ever read the history of Adam and Eve as written by a minister, or whomever, of this world, who does not have a contemptuous attitude toward them. And I have even read in many cases, "Oh, if we could have only lived then. We would never have done that. How righteous we are." Oh my, oh my. They would have done many times worse—many times worse—and are doing a whole lot worse. But they don't even see themselves for what they are doing—not at all. So, brethren, we cannot judge somebody else if we truly see what they are up against. And we truly see it because we see ourselves. And if we see ourselves for what we are, and we know the struggle that we are up against—we know the battle—we can manifest nothing but empathy for somebody else. When I see—today—and it is difficult, I'll have to admit, but when I see people struggling and fighting, my heart bleeds anymore. They are fighting themselves; they are fighting issues; they are fighting unique problems and circumstances, because of the struggle that is going on within them. And what they need at that moment is a lot of understanding and help, and not to be trampled upon.

So, be kind—be good—one to another. How are you going to be good to another person? It does not come out of you normally and naturally. "For there is none good. No, not one." Then the only way you can manifest any goodness whatsoever is if you have some of it in you. And how do you have it in you? You have it there if you have Christ. And even Christ said—when He was walking in

the human flesh: "Why do you call me good? There is none good but one, and that is God the Father who is in heaven." You know, here Christ walked perfectly, and yet, He said, "I'm not good." Why did He say, "I'm not good"? Because He knew He was flesh. We haven't even learned that yet. None of us have ever walked perfectly in the footsteps of Christ, I will assure you, because He walked perfectly so that He could pay the price for us, and therefore, redeem us from the horrible, wretched bondage of our own natures. Let's come to recognize the need to be kind toward others instead of belittling. We verbally brutalize others; we rip and tear; we come up with our own conceived opinions; we are absolutely exalted in our knowledge; we do all kinds of things, because we have a contemptuous spirit toward someone else. And we have no right to be that way—we have no right to be that way. Brethren, we have to recognize ourselves. But how many of us ever turn around and say, "Well, why should I take an exception with so-and-so? I might be the one that is all wet"? That's right. So, when it comes to evaluating somebody else—and looking at them, and ridiculing them, or ripping them apart, I don't want to be involved in it. I am not called on to judge other people. And it is a mistake that was made all too frequently in times past. And how can you judge them when you yourself see only in part? You don't see as Christ sees. You don't see as God sees. You see only in part, at most, and yet, we tend to judge on the basis of our own human conceptions or ideas. And when we do that, let me tell you, we are principally involved in the philosophy of Satan, the Devil of this world. That's what he does. He has generated this belittling of one another—this carving away at other people. And it must not be done.

But he said rather to be kind—be good—one to another, "tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Brethren, can we live up to these twelve to fifteen verses of Ephesians? You are going to live by them. And if you live by these principles right here, even the same is virtually a perfect man. Oh, what strides we could make if we would live up to that. So, what we find, then, are seven basic, cardinal principles mentioned in this series of texts that I have read:

Number one, we find our normal, natural, carnal response. That's our premise.

Number two, we find out what we know naturally—the vanity of the human mind. That makes us a Gentile. It's only what we derive from a divine revelation

from God that is worth anything whatsoever. The rest is vanity, lasciviousness, lawlessness, and recklessness. We are hateful and contemptuous in every possible way.

Number three, we find this principle: As the Apostle Paul said, how to perform? That is the question. We see ourselves for what we are: called of God. And if we do not keep ourselves in that posture, we are very quickly going to pull the shades down, and gloss over, and allow self-deception to again transpire in our lives. And the only way we can avoid that fate is to stand in the posture of seeing ourselves for what we are—recognizing ourselves for what we are, as James said, standing before the Law of liberty, standing before the Word of God, and seeing ourselves in that distinct relationship. And then we understand.

Then, the fourth principle is to put off the old man. That's the basic requirement.

Then, number five, we understand that there is a new look—a new response, a new outlet—by the power of God's Holy Spirit, that gives us new life, new vitality and new hope. And that, then, gives us the ability for self-control. The battle becomes ours. And it is uniquely a battle. You know, as long as you are doing whatever comes naturally, you are doing the dictates of the mind and the heart. But the minute you try to do, intellectually, something that is contrary to the indigenous traits and characteristics of the flesh, you have entered into a warfare. And I mean it is a critical warfare. And the Apostle Paul wrote of it in Galatians the fifth chapter, and I believe verse 17, when he said, "These are contrary to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would." Yes, they are absolutely opposed to one another. Your nature is going to rise up in defiance against the spiritual things. But the spiritual things are very much opposed to your nature. Then, the only way you are going to achieve it is to recognize yourself for what you are. That is your basic responsibility. And, then, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, you are given the ability to master the old self and to put on the new. Your part is to recognize it and to cry out to God for the strength to master it and to overcome it. You cannot do it on your own. So the major battlefield has been created, and, let me assure you, it's a major battlefield. The minute God calls any mortal, the battle is ready to be waged, because your nature is not going to lie down and say, "I quit." It won't do it. As a matter of fact, it's going to become more self-assertive than ever before. The minute you understand God's Truth, you

are going to have to fight it harder than you ever thought you would have to do because Satan is going to be right there to jab you—to incite you, to goad you, to create mental images, to appeal to the natural mind, to appeal to all of these baser traits and characteristics with which you were born. And the only way you can truly master it is to forgive others. That's the only way.

If you understand the basic principle written right here, the sixth cardinal principle is the ability to overlook, to forgive, others—not to hold them accountable—because you understand.

And, then, finally, if you can do those first six points, the seventh is that there will be fruit borne—the fruit of goodness: all of the love and affection of God. That's what he is talking about here in verse 32. Verse 32 would have no meaning except in that context.

Now, let's quickly move to the seventh subtopic. The last one was point number six: "How do we show regard for the Holy Spirit?"—the first one we covered today. The seventh and final one, now, in covering this word for "goodness" that we are going through at the present time is, "What is our motivation to do good?" There has to be some form of motivation. God is going to reach in and excite us—inspire us. What is that motivation? What precipitates the desire—the will—to wage the ominous warfare that lies in front of us? It has to be something—something that will give us the courage, the conviction, the ability to face the onslaught of battle and never to retreat, never to give up, to look at all the formidable enemy that lies out in front of us.

And how in the world are you going to grasp what that enemy is unless you see it? Your enemy is not the people who surround you. It isn't your children, your husband, your wife, your parents, the friends that are around you, your community, your state, your country, or the world. Sure, those are enemies to a certain extent, but those enemies are insignificant by comparison. Do you know where your real enemy is? You. He's standing right there in the camp. He has infiltrated the ranks. He is a subversive and he lies like mad. You cannot trust him. He has put on a uniform. He looks just like one of my friends and he is extremely intelligent and smart when it comes to doing wrong. I mean he is a past master at deception. If we have deceivers within our own military ranks that are equal to ourselves, oh, we would really be outfitted. Yes, brethren, he is not to be

trusted. "He" is you. That's the one you have to watch. When you whip that battle, all of the rest of them fall into alignment—they are insignificant by comparison. So your real battlefield is within the sphere of your own domain: you—that mortal self. You—your mind, your heart, your eyes, your emotions, your tongue, your ears, everything (and probably our noses too, if we only understood the scope of it).

Then, what is our motivation to do good? Let's turn, now, very quickly, to First Peter the second chapter and first noting verse three, and then we are going to read in context the first eight verses. 1 Peter 2:3: "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious"—that is, that He is good. Now, what does he mean, "if"? It's a condition. "If you have so tasted that the Lord is gracious." Something is entirely conditional, and it is conditioned upon the question of whether or not we have really tasted it—we really know the depth of God's goodness, the depth of God's gravity, and kindness, and love, and affection, and understanding. "If so be ye have tasted . . ."—that is, if we have ingested it, if we have actually lived it, if it has been a part of our response in life. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is [good]."

Have we seen God's goodness, or do we view it as we so often find it spoken of in jokes and the almost sneering, jeering comments about the requirements of God? How many times have you seen jokes that are written on the basis of Biblical principles? Oh, there are all kinds of them. Do you know why? Because people know what they should do, but they know they don't live up to it, and so they make a joke out of it. And if they make a joke out of it, then, somehow, they feel they got around it. How we delude and kid ourselves.

Now let's notice it in context beginning in verse 1:

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings . . .

What do we mean, "lay them aside"? Aren't we more perfect than that? No, I'm afraid not. When we see ourselves for what we are, even today, oh, how disillusioned we are—when we see ourselves in relationship to the responses of yesterday. How did we respond? Perfectly? Or, did we make the same old wretched mistakes again? And we get so disgusted with the self that sometimes we are just brutal and ruthless in our evaluation of self.

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings . . ." You cannot lay them aside if you do not realize them. So you are going to have to admit them first, and to admit them you must recognize them—which means you have to come to see them. Now, how do you come to see them? By believing the Word that you read. How many of us recognize ourselves as totally untrustworthy? We don't trust our minds; we don't trust our hearts; we don't trust our mouths; we don't trust our feelings. How many of us have come to really, really have that attitude toward the self? You are not going to whip what you do not abhor. You are never going to master that which you do not hate. You are going to have to come to hate it. Maybe you need to pray a whole lot more to God in order to see yourself truly for what you are. Maybe you need to wash the film of deception off of that mirror so that it is very clear what you are when you look into it.

Then, once you have done this, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word"—not hypocrisy, not these clever argumentations and debates, but just to be saturated with God's Word. Why can't we learn to be that simple in our trust and our faith in God?

. . . that ye may grow thereby." I know of no one that is not afforded the marvelous privilege of overcoming and of mastery, if he will just listen to the things that have been said. I've spent hours and hours and hours trying to go through these and give specific things that affect our lives—the things that are either going to make you or break you. Knowledge isn't going to do it—knowledge can absolutely destroy you. And, yet, we want to argue about things. Let's overcome and master our own personal lives. That's what we are going to have to do.

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word." And, you know, children don't come out fighting and saying, "I don't believe it. I'm not going to accept this and I'm not going to do that, and I'm not going to do something else." Defensive—fighting critical issues. It is amazing that newborn babes don't have to be very old before they begin fighting, but why did he use the term "newborn babes"? Their mouths are wide open—they can be told things and instructed in almost any direction. That is going to have to be our attitude—directly from God's Word. The simple things are not a problem. Let's grow by the simple things and the other things will take their proper place in due time. "If so be . . ." Now, we are going to do that—we are going to grow thereby—conditionally: "If we have

tasted that the Lord is good"—if we have really tasted it. If we have come to recognize the enormous value of that which we are being fed—the marvelous things that are coming—we are going to grow. But if we get into the heretical areas—we get into debate and argumentation, and strife, and confrontation—we are only backwatering. We are only creating troubles for ourselves. We've tasted it, let's just take in the simple things. The other things will come in due time if we do not post ourselves in objection to anything. It will come in due time. Isn't that what the Apostle Paul said? If there is anything that yet needs to be made apparent, it will come in due time. But take the simple things. Let's take the things that really count and go on to perfection and achieve the purpose for which God has called us.

To whom [that is, speaking of Christ] coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood . . .

That is how we are going to do it. Not on the complex; not on the difficult; not on the heretical things; not on the things subject to debate and so on; not on strife and all the manifestations of the flesh; but on the simple things of life—the simplicity which is in Christ.

". . . built up a spiritual house . . ." Not only are we unitedly built up, but also individually built into a solid temple of God's Holy Spirit. So we will be united together in the simple things; we will be united individually in our own lives because we are not fighting issues—we are happy; we are satisfied; we are contented; we are moving progressively.

. . . as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Now, the only way we are going to be acceptable to Christ collectively is by being built up in those spiritual things, or, individually, having a settled existence—a marvelous outlook, a right spirit dominating heart and mind.

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be confounded.

But I want you to notice that the major problem is that very cornerstone—the Rock of Truth that is also the Rock of offense. People are fighting and bickering over it and they are constantly debating, but they won't accept the simple issues of life and go on.

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious . . ." If you will accept Him in His simplicity, He is priceless and precious. "[B]ut unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner . . ." Whether we accept it or whether we do not, it is still there in all of its simplicity.

And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

What a tragedy it is going to be to learn that we have been appointed to that if we allow ourselves to be dissuaded, upset, perplexed and troubled by issues of debate, of contention or of strife. Let's accept the simple issues of life. Let's master ourselves and thereby exhibit the goodness of God.

God is united in His character. The goodness of God is the solidarity, the image that is presented. What kind of image do we present individually? Collectively? Are we solid? Are we stable? Or do we manifest the exact opposite of goodness: confusion, bewilderment, debate, rancor, contempt, hate and other issues? We must accept our responsibility. Are we gracious? Have we imbibed of the graciousness of God? Are we replete with the awesome character, the benevolence of God: His kindness, His goodness, His mercy, all the greatness of God Himself? How do we know? I have written down seven points that will tell us. I'm not going to substantiate them by textual material, but I want you to think on them and then apply them as you think of texts for yourself. How do we know which route we are going?

First is in the confidence with which we live. Are we fighting? Are we plagued? Are we troubled? Are we perplexed? Or do we live confident lives? These are the lives, brethren, that I have been talking about for five long years. Confidence, faith, assurance.

Second, can we step back and rest—the rest that God promised? A cessation from frustration. We are not anxious and worried about the issues that other people are constantly troubled or perplexed with. We are at rest—we are at peace.

Third, are we worrying? Do we live anxious and concerned lives—worrying about the times in which we live, about health, about the promises of God, the hope of tomorrow? Or, have we accepted Him in all confidence and assurance?

Number four, what about our hope? Do we live with the glorious hope of tomorrow—the full expectation of the promise of God?

Number five, do we live deeply, profoundly saturated lives of love and respect? Do we have empathy and feeling for others—deep and profound love? A feeling—a keen feeling? Knowing what other people are because we see ourselves for what we are. And because of that we have deep and abiding love and affection for them.

Point number six, are we willingly spent for others? Or, do we look at it and say, "Well, they are not worthy of it"? Or, "I don't like this," or "I don't like that," or "Too much is required of me." Do we begin to compare, in other words? Or do we just say, "I've been given one life to spend—to fulfill the purposes of God—and I am grateful to be spent for that purpose. And I do not use any form of comparisons."

Number seven, do we joyously take wrong and we don't worry or frustrate ourselves about it?

Check your whole outlook on the basis of these seven points and you can decide whether the goodness of God is lived in you or whether you have a little ways to go yet. You must make the comparison.