

Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 62 The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit

Goodness #6

Raymond C. Cole
Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren. This, now, is tape number six on the subtopic of "The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit: Goodness."

Last time, we completed one of the words used in the Old Testament scriptures concerning the subject of goodness. Today, now, we are going to move into another word: the word *ghehsed*—phonetically spelled g-h-e-h-s-e-d. And when I use the term "phonetically spelled," it is the attempt to sound it out through letters as we would normally pronounce them. Now, that is not the exact spelling of this word in the Hebrew, because if you read any Hebrew—or you know how it is written—many of the vowels are simply points, or certain aspiration indications, and that type of thing. So this is an attempt to put it into English letters that you and I would basically comprehend. And I am sure that it is not absolutely precise because many languages have no correlation with any other language as far as their vowel forms and their consonant forms. So, the anglicized pronunciation, the "gh," is oftentimes an aspiration—kind of like a "ch": *ghehsed*. Okay, we are not entering into a language study, but I just simply want you to have a basic idea of what the word is. And it comes from what I guess is the world's foremost reference work: *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*. And I don't know of one that is superior to that at the present time. Maybe there is—and maybe that is a matter of opinion—but, at least, that is the one we use. The meaning is this: "To be kind, good, merciful," that is, to manifest those traits or characteristics—to manifest loving-kindness, to manifest goodness, to manifest mercy. The word, principally, is translated as "mercy." And since it is translated as both "mercy," and in a certain number of situations, or texts, as "goodness," there must be some kind of correlation, then, between the concepts of "mercy" and "goodness." So, mercy, then, has indigenously within it, goodness, or, goodness has indigenously within it, mercy—whichever way you want to look at it.

Now, obviously, we are not going to cover the entire word *ghehsed*, simply because I would rather use it under the future subject of "mercy," when that particular fruit is covered. It is not necessarily an absolute fruit, but I think it might be interesting at this point to mention to you that there are somewhere between 35 and 50 particular manifestations of God's Holy Spirit that we are going to cover before we complete this subject.

Now, someone may ask, "Well, when will it ever be completed?" Well, you know, when we cover all of the pages of the Bible, then I guess we are finished. So, it doesn't make any difference how long it is. But what we do with the material, that is what counts. And, so, what I am trying to do is give you—through the study of these subtopics (the fruits of God's Holy Spirit)—the necessary working material to implant into your lives the ability to effect the necessary change: the change from that mortal, wrathful, seditious nature, to the divine character of God. That's what we are after. Now, if we want to be like God, then we are going to have to put on these traits and these characteristics. And I want you to understand that it is not going to be an easy matter. It is not going to come—like they say, proverbially, "like falling off of a log." No, it doesn't come that way.

It is interesting that the Apostle Paul, when writing to the churches up in Asia Minor, in the book of Galatians, said, "These are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would." What are the things that we would do? Those things which come to us naturally. You know the old song, "Doin' What Comes Naturally." Well, that's all of the bad, and we had better not be doing that which comes to us naturally because, by nature, we are "such and such," and the Bible well defines that. Yet, the nature of God is the exact opposite, and it is that divine nature that we must begin to put on. That is why I have stressed and re-stressed, over and over and over, that these tapes and this material will be of absolutely limited value to you—or perhaps I should say of no value whatsoever—unless you take the concepts and implant them into your thinking, into your very minds. You live them, you act upon them and you cannot act upon them except you extricate from your very thinking, from your very heart, from your conscience, and from the entire makeup of your own personality, ALL of the characteristics of the flesh and replace them with the valuable traits and characteristics of God.

So, instead of being angry, we have to be kind; we have to be compassionate; we need to be merciful. Instead of, then, the opposite characteristics, we must put on the nature of God—the nature of love, the nature of mercy, the nature of compassion. And, in this case, "for there is none good, but one," as Jesus Christ said (and that's God the Father), if we are going to have the nature of God, we are going to have to put on goodness because "goodness" is the nominative form of "good." It is a characteristic that we must manifest. "Goodness" is an aspect of the nature; it is an aspect of behavior; it is something that we must manifest. A *good* man manifests a certain demeanor—a carriage, a compassion, a merciful understanding, a compassionate consideration.

So, we are not going into the full subject of mercy. Consequently, we are not going to cover this word totally, but we will pick it up in its own right at a later date under the subject of "mercy." But I think there are a couple of things that we need to think about: Why is mercy necessary? If there is an indigenous relationship between goodness and mercy, then we need to ask ourselves why mercy is necessary, because when we understand the answer to that question we know what goodness is. Conversely, how many need mercy? Now, if we implicitly reply that everybody needs mercy from God, then it is obvious that the manifestation of goodness within us is not as replete as we might like to think. Because if it were absolute and we felt ourselves to be absolutely, implicitly good, then why would we need any mercy? But if we need mercy, what we are saying is that we are not as good as we would like to be. It means that we understand our own inherent deficiencies. It means that we have accomplished an initial step in this awesome responsibility of personal mastery. Because you cannot change what you do not first see or recognize. That is conversion. That is what Jesus Christ meant when He said that we must first be converted. Conversion is the ability to recognize our woeful deficiency—ineptness, lack, or whatever—and then to recognize, on the other hand, what we must become. The gap between what we are and what we would like to be is the measure of our growth, and it is an awesome responsibility.

So, we look into our lives and we realize what we are, if we are true and honest as we look at ourselves, as we now truly evaluate through the spiritual eyes, empowered by God's Holy Spirit, empowered by the very presence of Jesus Christ—the awesome power of that Spirit that makes us knowledgeable of spiritual things. Then we can begin to see ourselves for what we are.

You can tell the scope or the extent of the Spirit in the life of an individual by how he reacts to himself. If he manifests vanity and arrogance—if he manifests a certain pat on the back for the self (which means that he thinks himself to be something when he is nothing)—then it is obvious that he doesn't have very much of God's Holy Spirit, if any of it. But the person who absolutely deprecates—who understands himself for what he really is—cannot do that except by the power of God's Holy Spirit. I mean to really, truly, genuinely see man for what he is, requires the help of God's Holy Spirit.

Now we can begin to understand a little of this goodness, then, that God expects of us. We have been going through the last five messages on this subject of goodness so that we can begin to see it—we can realize from a foundational premise what is required and expected of us. And when we realize that, then we can begin to work on ourselves by the power of God's Holy Spirit. So, let's understand, now, the meaning of this term *ghehsed*—g-h-e-h-s-e-d. And I had better not try and pronounce it because I am sure it is very incorrectly pronounced—at least in the ears of any individual who knows how to pronounce true Hebrew. Now, I am not talking about much of the current-day Hebrew language, I mean true Hebrew, and I am not sure how many people really speak that. But, once again, this is not an argumentation about who speaks the Hebrew language properly and who doesn't, nor about those who pronounce it correctly versus those who do not. What we are interested in is not a lot of technical argumentation. But I will say one thing: The fellow who does not pronounce it correctly may be the one who is living it, and the fellow who pronounces it correctly may not be living it at all. Which one will you take? So, let's forget the technicalities, now, and let's see if we can't understand the spiritual implications and apply them in our lives, because technicalities won't get us into God's Kingdom, but mastery and change of character will. That's what God requires of us.

So, as I said, the definition of *ghehsed* is to be kind, to be good, to be merciful, or the manifestations of those traits and characteristics. Here is, now, how it is used: First, I want you to notice that it is an abundant trait or characteristic of God. Now, that is logical, since it is a fruit of God's Holy Spirit. And if it is a fruit of His Holy Spirit, then it has to proceed from God, then, doesn't it? Because that is the long arm of God—that is how the nature of God is given to us; the means by which Christ lives within us; the means by which we effect the

change within our makeup. It is by the powerful influence of God's Holy Spirit. So, obviously, we should expect to find it as a demonstrable trait or characteristic of God Himself, and it is an abundant trait. Let's notice it, now, here in Exodus 34, verses 6 and 7:

"And the LORD passed by before him . . ."—that is, Moses in this case. If you will remember, I think this is when God put Moses in the cleft—a little hollowed out place in a rock—and He put His hand over Moses and He passed by so that Moses could see His hinder parts, but he could not see Him face to face, because no man had ever seen God face to face and lived. The glory of God is awesome. But God did want Moses—not in dark and mysterious ways, but in a real sense—to see God and to be aware of the one with whom he had conversed many times. And God had used Moses as His awesome instrument to give His priceless Way of Life. He was used in ways that, I guess, no human being has ever been used. What a phenomenal responsibility.

Well, let me just say, it is going to be one fabulous thing to meet that personality one of these days and to be able to talk with him of things of mutual or common interest. I don't look at Moses like many people do when they spit the name out: "Mosaic." Well, what do they mean "Mosaic"? Moses wasn't any different than any other human being. What came through Moses was of God. So when they spit that name out, what they are doing is actually spitting out the name of God. Because what came through Moses was not of Moses at all. It was of God. God gave to Moses *His* ways of life. And when they spit it out, it is an absolute, oblique way of castigating—contemptuously ridiculing—God Himself.

So here was this glorious, magnificent opportunity that Moses had to actually see God, even though it had to be from the rear.

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD,
The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant
in goodness and truth.

Abundant in goodness and truth. Abundant in all that this word *ghehsed* manifests—which means the word "goodness" here is the word we are talking about. And God is abundant in that goodness—His affectionate regard, His concern, His compassion, His mercy for human beings. It is an act of kindness.

"Keeping mercy for thousands." Keeping mercy for thousands, "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin . . ." God is willing to do that when we turn to Him and cry out from our very hearts—yes, the very depth of our beings—when we come to abhor ourselves. I don't mean in a hypocritical sense at all—like some people do when it is a lifestyle and they go before God and they cry out because they don't like the consequences—that which they are suffering, or whatever they are experiencing in life. So they call out to God, hoping, I guess, that they are going to pull the wool over His eyes and that He is going to forgive them so that they can receive the abundance while they continue in the way of curses and sin. Oh, the wretchedness of man. How hypocritical he is. But God forgives iniquity and transgression only when we truly repent of our sins—when we are filled with remorse—not because of the consequences we are experiencing, but because we have violated fundamental, cardinal, spiritual principles of life; because we have trampled upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ; because we have ridiculed the name of God; because we have besmirched the character of God. It is for those reasons, brethren, that we come—because of the goodness of God, because of the abundance of His mercy and of His kindness. We come in hate and contempt for the self. Oh, the wretchedness that resides within us. Oh that we can master it, that God will forgive us and wipe out all of that, not because of what we have suffered. What we have suffered has only been an indication—it forced us into recognition. It's a trial or an experience that forces us to recognize the consequence of the thing that we did. And that very knowledge, then, should force us to change our lives—to get rid of that which precipitates such consequential suffering. And when we lay those things aside, then God will abundantly forgive and pardon. That's what God wants to do.

And so God was manifesting this great, awesome abundance to His servant Moses. "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and that will by no means clear the guilty." Well, they are all guilty, initially. Then what is the difference between those whom He forgives sin and transgression and those whom He will not clear for any reason whatsoever? There has to be a difference. The difference is written in the secrets of the hearts of the people involved. It is an unseen trait and characteristic until the fruits are manifested: the fruits of contempt, the fruits of hateful disregard for God's Way of Life—His holy, righteous, perfect Way—versus those that have come to abhor the self and desire with all that is resident within them, with the help and aid of God's Holy Spirit, to master those traits, to overcome them and to live the mighty, awesome traits and characteristics of God; who try to manifest that nature, these traits of goodness and

kindness and affection. That's the difference, my dear brethren. That's the thing that is first written down deep inside of hearts and minds, and will manifest itself by subsequent action. It will be seen. And by their fruits you know them. You can read it.

Now, it doesn't mean we have a right to judge them, because not a one of us does have that right. But at least we can see what they are doing and we should not follow in their footsteps when they pursue those nefarious courses. But what we should do is to be honest and recognize ourselves for what we are—our contemptuous spirit, our weaknesses, our ineptness, our deficiencies. And we come to abhor ourselves for what we are and we turn away from it with utter contempt for self. And then we can begin to really put on the traits—the character—of God. That's the thing that shines most brilliantly and beautifully as the divine nature of God in those who love and honor Him, who respect Him, and who want that Way of Life written into their hearts and their minds.

So He said here, then: "[A]bundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression . . ." He forgives it because those people have gone and asked for that forgiveness. And you cannot get it unless you go with a right spirit and a right attitude—when you really abhor the self.

[A]nd that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

God set it up—it's just a way of life. And, you know, people are doing all kinds of things today with CARE programs, or whatever they call them. They are not an attempt to ask the forgiveness of God, to master the self, or to recognize the reasons for which these people are suffering around the world, but what they are doing, under the influence of Satan, is attempting to nullify the fruits borne for disobedience and rebellion. In other words, God said that if they do such and such, that they are not going to have food; that their children are going to suffer indescribable anguish and pain. And, yet, we now have strong pressures laid upon the hearts and the minds of people in America and around the world, and especially upon most of the Occidental world (because they have the money), to subscribe to these programs to relieve these situations around the world.

I tell you, brethren—and I do not say it out of a heart of contempt or anything else (I feel sorry for those people)—that the best care I could give to them is God's Truth. They won't listen, however, because they are going to fall down before *their* idols and before *their* gods. When are they going to finally learn the Truth? When they finally have to pay perhaps ultimately with their lives. Maybe all of their children are going to have to die, but it's the consequence that God Almighty put in motion, and they are paying the price for disobedience. It isn't for me, then, to go out and circumvent the will and the purpose of God, is it? Not at all. And, yet, that is what human beings are attempting to do because they have been goaded by a mysterious force that they do not see nor understand—by Satanic influence. All these programs, brethren, stem from that very influence.

And you can find psychologists, or psychiatrists, or many people, that deal in this sphere of activity, that will tell you it is an attempt to absolve personal guilt. So, when people give CARE packages or do these various things, do you know what they are doing? They are trying to salve their own consciences, because they are guilty. Now, if somebody broke one of God's laws, will a CARE package cancel the guilt? Of course not. Then, the whole thing is a deception.

Now, I am not saying we should not help people. I've never said that. But that is a subject in its own right and it takes a lot of thought—let me assure you. It isn't just a simple matter of "if someone is suffering, go give him some food." You know, if that were the moral responsibility upon every one of us, then I wonder why we don't have every human being within America making up packages of one type or another, taking care of his own neighbor, or whoever it may be? You know, they give to certain people, but they always require something in return.

So that is a subject in its own right and it is something that needs to be covered at some time from top to bottom. Maybe we will have a time to do that, but that is not the point at the present time. Our intent is to recognize the awesome mercy of God. If God is that awesomely merciful, and He has the whole world at His disposal, all the elements of nature, so that He can change all of the adverse conditions that bring to pass drought and the loss of food, if you please, He could stop the med fly; He could stop *ALL* these things; He could instantaneously set up a utopia right now so that no mortal on the face of this earth would suffer any consequence. But would they learn anything? Would they learn any lessons? No. Then, if God is so awesomely merciful and kind, and it is necessary for us—through CARE packages and these other programs that have been

established—to give and to do for the Third World, and for people of Appalachia, and for the people of this or that area who are suffering want, if that is the intent, then I ask you why God Himself is not doing it, who manifests a lot more mercy and kindness than you and I do?

Then why is God allowing these things to continue? Because, I tell you, human beings are not going to learn until they are brought to the bottom. They are operating under absolute Satanic influence. That's the program that is going on at the present time. It is achieving absolutely nothing because every time you give to people who never learn the lessons, you only create a bigger situation. It is exactly the same type of thing that happens when you help out a brother, a sister, a neighbor, or whomever it is, with a great largesse—maybe it's money—and you give, but they didn't learn the lessons. All you did was to circumvent something that God set in motion. God set these patterns in motion and He said, "If you don't live up to these principles, you are going to suffer the consequences." Then human beings come along and say, "Oh, no, it's our responsibility. We are going to circumvent that guilt." I want to tell you, brethren, that is not acceptable in the sight of God. What is acceptable is to give them the Truth—and that is what God is doing through all of these bitter, human experiences—these lessons they are undergoing right now. They will learn. It's going to take a long time. They have had to write many, many generations of experience, and yet, subsequent generations today are doing worse than their fathers did. So they haven't gone far enough yet, then have they? Then why should you and I circumvent the will and the purpose of God? And I am not talking about the god that is basically worshiped today—which is Satan the Devil, who is deceiving and is himself an absolute hypocrite. No, that is not the will of God. God Himself set this program up. Notice it again:

The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering,
and abundant in goodness and truth.

Abundant in goodness and truth. You cannot find that trait in human beings in all the pages of the Bible, yet, it is of God. Look what this abundant, merciful God is doing now: "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity . . ."—which means that they have asked to be forgiven, which means that they have come to recognize why they are suffering, that's why. You don't go and ask to be forgiven if you don't see it. Why would you ask for forgiveness for that which you think is right? You simply don't do it. So if they go and ask for forgiveness, they

have recognized their problem, then, haven't they? And they are asking to be forgiven for their iniquity, their transgression, or their sin.

" . . . and that will by no means clear the guilty." That is, those who are still doing exactly the same thing but do not yet recognize it. "[V]isiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Do you know why children have hereditary diseases? Do you know why these things are happening? Somebody is sinning. And, yet, how many scientists are telling you that your problems can only be relieved by turning back to God? A very simple statement.

I guess the closest that a politician ever came—maybe I shouldn't call him a politician because he never got involved in politics—was General Douglas MacArthur, who made that very, very famous speech before the combined houses of Congress at the return from his glorious heyday over in the Pacific Theater, when he said it is going to take a "recrudescence of the spirit." And indeed he was right. Now, I don't think he understood what he said, but that is exactly what it is going to take, and people do not recognize it.

But, brethren, I am not so much concerned with the people of this world who are still living in absolute blackness—in darkness, or ignorance of times and circumstances. My concern is for those who have been called, who know and understand, and yet are not putting forth sufficient effort—who are not manifesting the necessary drive, the power of God's Holy Spirit, and mastery in their own personal lives, who are not overcoming as they must. Are we, brethren, as diligent, as persevering, as driving, as purposeful as we must be? Are we putting on the traits and the character of God as we must? Or are we still manifesting, far too frequently and abundantly, the weaknesses of our own human natures? We must weigh ourselves.

If we want to put on the abundance of the goodness of God, we need to have an abundance of His Spirit, then. We are going to have to have more and more of it, and you can have that Spirit only as you use it. So if we use the amount that God has given to us, fully, completely, and absolutely, then God will give more to us. But if we are faltering and stumbling with whatever He has given to us at the present time, it would be useless to give any more to us, wouldn't it? How can we become more spiritual by adding onto the confused state in which we already exist? No, God does not build such dilapidated and insecure, confused, and

troubled buildings. God doesn't do that. Human beings may add onto that which is not stable—human beings may attempt to modify it—but God will not do that. God is only going to build on solid absolutes. And when we master on the basis of what God has given to us at the present time, then God will give us a whole lot more because God is the author of our calling—God is the one who has made these things possible. And when we come to recognize ourselves for what we are and the weaknesses that are manifested in our lives, and we cry out to God mightily to have His goodness and the character of God, then God is going to give more and more of that Spirit to us because we are growing with it—not just in understanding, but in mastery. The real growth that God expects in your lives is change in your own physical conditions—your minds and your hearts. And when you change, then God will give you more with which to accomplish even more changing. God is abundant in these things, but we can receive it only as we come to recognize ourselves for what we are—our transgressions, our iniquities. And we begin, then, to use those powers that God gives to us in definite, positive construction—the building of the nature and the character of God.

I want you to notice, now, also Psalm 144. Psalm 144, and let's note the first two verses. Verse 2 has this unique word in it. Psalm 144 and beginning in verse 1:

Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war,
and my fingers to fight: My goodness, and my fortress; my high
tower . . .

Here is what the Psalmist David is saying. He is blessing God because he said, "He is my goodness." Whatever goodness we have comes from God. But He also is our fortress. David said, "He is my fortress," which means He is our circumvallation. He is the great fort that is going to protect us from all of the darts of the enemy—from all the ammunition of the enemy. And I want to assure you that this fort is capable of withstanding arrows, cannon, nuclear warheads. I don't care what the instrument of war is, God can stop cold nuclear warheads, cruise missiles, or anything else. You had better put your life in the protection of *that* fort. It's the only one that is worthwhile because nuclear warheads can devastate this physical existence, but God can stop them cold, because God has all authority and all power.

"[W]hich teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," said David. He is "My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower." In other words, if He is his "goodness," that's his character. His "fortress" is his means of protection—his circumvallation. A "high tower" was for the purpose of observation. Then what is God? Through God is the knowledge of all things that are going on—the ability to know what the enemy is doing. I don't mean to be able to grasp what Russia is doing—or Germany, or some other country on the face of the earth—because that is not your real enemy. That is not the real problem. You must come to recognize what is your real, true enemy and then you are not going to have any problem because God is your high tower. In God is the knowledge of all that is going on. He is also your fortress—that is, your protection against everything. And, then, He is your abundant goodness. That is God. ". . . and my deliverer." There are four things that God is to the Christian: his goodness, his fortress, his high tower and his deliverer. What else could you ask? ". . . my shield, and he in whom I trust." So, there are five things, actually. I thought it was interesting that we had only four. I didn't go far enough. There are five things here: my goodness, my fortress, my high tower, my deliverer and my shield. That is everything one needs. He is the one in whom I trust; "who subdueth my people under me." He is the one in whom you can place all trust. So God, then, is abundant in His mercy, His protection, His concern, His compassion, His wisdom—in everything. And He is your goodness—He is your protector; He is everything that you need.

Let's hasten on so that we can complete this word this morning. The goodness of men merits recognition. Yes, even goodness, as manifested in the lives of human beings merits recognition. That is, that it may be understood by others. In Second Chronicles 32 and verse 32, we read this. Second Chronicles 32 and noting verse 32:

Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

The word "goodness" here in verse 32 is this same word *ghehsed*. In other words, Hezekiah had learned what God was all about—He had learned some very marvelous lessons—and God had dealt with him indirectly through His servant Isaiah. For you will remember that Isaiah was the one that took him the knowledge that he was going to die. And, then, because Hezekiah turned to the

wall and bitterly repented before God, Isaiah didn't even get outside the court of the home, or maybe he was in a sick room of the palace, I'm not sure. But at least he didn't get outside of the court, the Bible says—wherever that was—before God met him and said, "Go back and tell Hezekiah that he is going to have fifteen more years." You know, that must have been one awesome experience—one awesome experience. Fifteen added years. How many people who are right at the throes of death—and they know it is inevitable—would just be thrilled to be told they were going to be given fifteen more years? Fifteen more years. And, then, I wonder how many of them would use those years wisely and judiciously? But here was the marvelous thing with Hezekiah. He was told, now, that he was going to be given those fifteen extra years and now, at the conclusion of his life—when he finally died—the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his goodness are spoken of. You see, he was recognized—he was even given the recognition right here in God's own Word. And from where could you ask for a better commendation than from the very lips of God Himself? And to be written for thousands—millions—of people to read, even written as an example for you and me. Hezekiah—one that in all likelihood will be in that Kingdom.

"Goodness." I want you to notice it also in Second Chronicles 35 and verse 26. Second Chronicles 35 and verse 26, we read:

Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness, according to that which was written in the law of the LORD . . .

What was the goodness of Josiah? Well, you know what goodness is, don't you? God's Law is good; His Way of Life is good; so if it were written in the Law of the Lord, it meant, then, that Josiah was living the principles found in the Laws of God. How can you have goodness unless you have within you that which is defined as "good"? What is good? For "goodness" is the manifestation of that which is good. And that which is "good" is the Law of God. It is the entirety of that which was given—or written—by the people chosen of God. That was "good." And Josiah was "good" because he lived it. He set a marvelous example and he, too, then, had his name written for all future generations, and his acts of goodness—the manifestation of that character—was written down for our example and our observation.

What a marvelous thing it is. Even though these men are dead, yet, now, for hundreds and hundreds of years, their deeds—their acts of goodness—have been recorded for humankind. How about yours and mine? If we are to be the true servants of God in the leadership responsibilities of tomorrow, will our examples *now* be left as marks of goodness? Will we be exemplary for human beings for hundreds of years through the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgement? We've been given a glorious and marvelous opportunity, but I'll tell you, it is a terrible thing to have been given an opportunity and then to miserably fail. And how many people have done that? Look, the Bible is full of them. They started out alright, and they turned evil—they turned bad. And the Bible is replete with those examples. Let's not falter, brethren, let's come to grips with ourselves. Let's come to recognize what the responsibilities are in life and let's put on the goodness and the character of God; let's absolutely subjugate the self; let's get rid of these animosities, these heretical tendencies, the spirit of self-justification and strife, bitterness and contempt. Let's get rid of all of these things and let's put on the nature of God—the real character of God. Let's go on to perfection.

And you can never be given another opportunity. It is a matter of the Faith which was given to you, and every one of us had that faith. We had that trust and that confidence. Why has it become shattered? Because we began to look to human beings—because we trusted them. Let's not put our confidence in men. No man is worthy of it. Let's put it in the Truth which God gave to us and let's keep ourselves tall, firm, and resolved in that Way of Life. And that will truly be a manifestation of the abundant goodness of God. It's the goodness of God because we can trust Him—the unchanging, the immutable God, who never alters, who never changes, who gave us a promise and we have the assurance of it, who set an example and we can walk in that way with confidence.

Our problem with human beings is that we walked in a way of life and then the way was changed and we were shattered. Why? Because we began to look to men—we began to look to organizations. We had better quit that. You had better look to God. Now, how are you going to look to God? The only way you are ever going to know is not by what you can figure out for yourselves, but by the Faith once delivered. That's the confidence. For that faith and that confidence when you were first called was in the Truth which you heard—and you responded to it. Now God is going to hold you accountable for it.

So, let's write the examples for people tomorrow as these people in the Bible wrote examples for you and me. Our hope of everlasting life is predicated upon every word which is written in this book. "For man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"—by every word that is written in this book we call the Bible, God's own Holy Word. And we find written in here the good examples of Hezekiah and Josiah. How about our writing some lessons that are going to be beneficial to people tomorrow? Yes, there will be many of them. I don't know that they are going to form any part of the Bible at all, but I want to assure you that their example is going to be there because they are going to be leading and guiding, if they fulfill the purpose and the will of God.

In Nehemiah the thirteenth chapter. Nehemiah 13 and I want us to notice verse 14. Let's read, however, verses 10–14. Nehemiah 13 and let's begin in verse 10:

And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field.

In other words, they were fearful and apprehensive because the people had taken advantage of them. They were the servants of God. But the servants of God had been killed time and time and time again by the people because they had turned away from God's Truth and they had bitterly denounced the very servants whom God had chosen. The Levites encountered exactly the same thing.

Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren. Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.

Here is the appeal of Nehemiah in a prayer—a petition to God—when He said, "O God, don't forget the things that I have done." What were the good deeds of Nehemiah? Reestablishing that relationship that God Himself had established.

Now, Nehemiah could have said: "Now, wait a minute. I am going to take it and usurp it for myself." No, he didn't do that. He knew what God had ordained and he stepped back and he said, "I want it as God ordained it." So he said, in this situation: "God, remember my good deeds." And God did. They are written right here in the book of Nehemiah. They form a part of the Bible. What a recognition. I wonder if any one of us will be worthy of that kind of recognition in the future? Will we be somehow exemplary for people in the Millennium or the Great White Throne Judgement? Will we have been so tenacious and so purposeful in God's Truth that we can gain mention? Well, be sure that if we do it for that purpose, we will never gain it. The only way it is ever going to happen is if we completely negate the self, and we do it objectively with a right spirit and a right purpose. Then God might use the example because God has used many examples throughout the pages of this Book. And I don't know that God is going to refuse to use any examples of His people in this time. They may not form a part of the Bible—I do not say that at all—but that does not mean that they cannot be examples. They can be examples, and many of them may be used for their good deeds also.

Next, brethren, how long does God's kindness endure? In Psalm 52 and verse 1, Psalm 52 and verse 1, we read this: "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually." It lasts on and on and on. And, you know, that is why we come before God. Because we have confidence in that. Yet, it is amazing to me that there are thousands of people who profess Christianity, but the interesting thing is, they deny the continuity of God. They will turn right around and tell you that He abolished the very thing that He gave. Oh, they have all kinds of clever ways of doing it. They ascribe it to Moses or somebody else, or they call it that which came through the hands of angels or by whatever means. But God says, "These are mine," no matter what instrument He may have used. And so they get rid of them by reassigning responsibility and they think they got around it. But it isn't going to help at all, for there is a day of recognition coming—and a day of judgement.

God's goodness is continual. It is ours. Goodness is defined as obedience to the Truths of God. Are we going to be continually, incessantly obedient? Or will there be circumstances in our lives, sometime, that are going to cause us to stumble—some unique situation that transpires and we are going to say, "I've had enough. I'm going to give up"? Or, can we always master and remain faithful all the way to the end, despite the things that we may encounter and experience, understanding that those very conditions and circumstances are to try our faith, not to destroy it?

Let's remember it, brethren, because God is the author of that major operation that is taking place today—the construction of divine character, the divine nature. And there is no way of developing that except by God subjecting us to such tests that we have to give up everything that is meaningful to this physical life in anticipation of something we have not even seen, but which we accept on the basis of faith. That's why the just shall live by faith. "If in this life only we have hope," as the Apostle Paul said, then we had better go out and eat, drink and be merry—do the things that we want to do. But if we recognize that this life is only the proving ground for something coming tomorrow, then, don't eat, drink and be merry, but you had better set about the responsibility of personal mastery—effecting it in your lives. Putting on the divine nature—the goodness of God—in super-abundance, and absolutely squashing our own wretched, carnal spirits and attitudes which are called iniquity, or transgression, or evil, or wickedness, or whatever term may be used. That's what wickedness is. Wickedness is described as that which comes naturally to you—it's evil, it's wrong. All those terms mean *that which you are by your own natures*. Then we have to overcome that and put on the goodness of God which is defined as the exact opposite of that nature: love, joy, peace and all of the other marvelous things which are obedience to the laws of God—that Way is called the way of goodness.

I'd like to ask that you read for your own benefit and your own good, the first seven verses of Psalm 52 from the *Living* (paraphrased) *Bible*. I think you will find it extremely interesting. I won't take the time.

Now, point number four: "How incomprehensible is the goodness of God?" In Psalm 33 and verse 5—Psalm 33, and let's note verse 5:

He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Now, if we can see the purposes of God, then we can understand why things are happening in India; we can understand why things are happening down in the dark, deep recesses of Africa and South America; we can understand what is happening politically, economically—and in every other way—around this world. For the earth is *full* of the goodness of God. How? Well, you may not see it on the surface, but once God has opened, or stripped the scales from, your eyes and allowed you to see and to understand, then you can begin to understand why these things are happening: because God is allowing mankind to experience all kinds of adversity for his own good. Yes, the whole thing is for the benefit of man.

And, you know, I think one of the most interesting things in all the Bible—when you evaluate it—is to realize that the very thing that is our cardinal enemy has always been used to subjugate us when we become disobedient or rebellious: in every circumstance that I know, it's even like Babylon—let me use that as an illustration. Babylon is the one that God is going to use to punish His own people, and yet, the epitome of wrong is Babylonianism. You had better weigh and think about that. As a matter of fact, in the historical example of it, when referring to Babylon of old, God said, "It is my instrument," or "my servant Babylon." You see, God can use whom He pleases. Then, I ask you why these things are going on in the world today? Somebody is, as they say in the old adage, "cruising for a bruising," because God is allowing it. These things are going on for specific reasons, and they are awesome. Oh, I know, people can turn to these texts about His wrath and His anger and so on, but I can turn to just about as many and show you that He is using it on the other side. Yes, because God uses all of them for His own purpose: And that is to bring people, ultimately, to an understanding of what they have been doing to themselves. And He will use one against the other to achieve those ends.

So, sometimes, God has been known to use deceptive angels, you know, when even an evil angel came before God Himself—I can give you several examples of that—and said, "Send me. I'll go." And God said, "Go." You know, you can read those things and if you don't understand the purpose of God, you could ask many a time, "Well, why is God using a fallen angel?" God can use whom He pleases. You have to understand what God's purpose is. Somehow, we

just simply try to build the character of God after our image. And I'll tell you, we make mistakes when we do that. We had better step back and try to be a little bit objective and find out what God is doing. Now, God does these things and, you know, God has not removed Satan yet—not at all. God even allows Satan to come before His very throne, unless we are in that time in which He has thrown him out. But up until that time, at the very end, God allows him to come right into the very confines of that court—before the very throne. Guess who it is that is up there accusing the brethren?

I tell you, we as human beings, are so defective in our rationale and our ability to think an issue through, that we make many mistakes in trying to force God into a certain configuration—and He will not be forced into one. We are down here to learn, not to make Him over. That's what happens in too many marriages. Each one is going to make the other one over. And that is what happens with most Christians, you know. They begin to make God over into their own image. They don't learn. Of course they know what God is—that's exactly how they think. Just like I have said so many times: We all know what perfection is. It's what we do. What a tragedy.

Well, brethren, point number five is, "Men must praise God for His goodness." In Psalm 107, verses 8, 15, 21 and 31, we are told repeatedly that "praise belongs to God." I won't take time to read it.

There are a couple of other points that I want to cover, but I am going to have to wait on points six and seven. And so we will pick those up next time and then go into the next word that covers this subject of "goodness."