

## Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 65 The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit

### Goodness #9

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings once again, brethren. This is the continuation, now, of the series on the fruits of God's Holy Spirit, and the specific one that we are covering at the present time is "goodness."

We completed with the last tape, which was tape number eight, the Hebrew word *tohv*. For this present tape, now, which is tape number nine, we are going into the word *toov*. We are going to examine that word, which is a word that comes from *tohv*—which is a basic word. These are foundational words. And so we are going to look at the definition then, and as we evaluate the definition, we will be able to more correctly and precisely evaluate the content of various verses, sections, or portions of the Bible where that word is used.

There are indeed some very, very interesting concepts. So let's look, now, at the definition of the Hebrew word *toov*. As I said earlier, it comes from the word *tohv*, which we had just finished in tape number eight. So if you need to do so, you can recall your notes on that previous word. I believe there were a couple of tapes involved with that word and the definition that was given. And then you will understand the meaning of this word, because the root word is *tohv*. So, *toov*, then, comes from this word *tohv*. And it is a primitive root, meaning "to be, or do, or make well, in the widest sense." It is illustrated as the noun "good," and in the widest sense, especially "goodness." That is, superlatively—in the optimum sense. You know, in our language we have the basic word, then we have a comparative. That is, we can make up our comparisons in two different ways. We can add an *e-r* to it—that is "kinder." Or, we can use an *e-s-t* in the case of "kind"—"kindest," which means it is in the superlative sense. Or, we can use the word "more" or "most." There are two ways by which to go from the basic root word to the comparative or to the superlative—we have two distinct by which we can achieve

that. In the Hebrew, oftentimes—and I won't say it is totally used in that way because I do not read Hebrew to that extent. But the Hebrew has the same basic approach as English. In other words, all languages have to have the capability of transferring a word from its basic usage into comparative analyses, as well as the superlative sense. So, in this case, then, the word *toov* is a superlative word in the sense of "goodness." It is optimum—it is maximum—in its intent or purpose. Concretely, therefore, it means "the best." That is, "beauty, gladness, welfare, fair, good, goodness, joy, or to go well with any one or thing." These are the ways in which it is used.

Now, let's try and get into the actual usage because it is my hope to progress rapidly, if my voice will hold up and I don't get too involved in explanations—and that is a very easy thing to do, and sometimes it gets to be a very, very difficult task to make as much orderly progress as I might like, because the mind reflects rather quickly and I would like to call to your attention various things. So I am going to try to hold myself in check and to keep myself upon the straight and narrow and achieve a certain objective—hopefully within the next two tapes, that is tapes number nine and ten—in order to complete the fruit of "goodness." So if I can achieve that, I'm going to have to move along rather rapidly and cover a significant number of texts in this tape—tape number nine.

The first subtopic, therefore, under the usage of the word *toov*, I have classified in this way: The word denotes "possessions"—both physical and mental. I want you to think about it, because as we go through these and we analyze them, I think you are going to realize why we can use certain words in a more broad and complex sense. Oftentimes, in any language, people who are not accustomed to very broad and comprehensive usage—because they do not force their minds to think more broadly—tend to striate, that is, to "rut" their approach to language or their approach to writing. They hear a word and they use it in a given sense—they never broaden out; they never expand the definition; they never look to what its ultimate end can be. So, when we realize that the word *toov* can be extremely expansive, then we can realize what its confined definition is in the sense of "to be good." But, then, expanding that, it can also mean things that you and I possess. That is, if I have a nice larder of canned goods—that is, properly processed—home-canned goods; and maybe it involves a storehouse of significant vegetables that you can conserve by properly putting them in cellars or whatever; maybe it involves frozen meat or whatever. If I have a larder full of the necessary

nutritional requirements for life—or the sustenance of life—*that* is, in a sense, "goodness." Why? Because it brings about good in our lives. When we partake of it, it produces good, vibrant health. Yet, if I have a larder filled with bad things, such as a lot of chips and a lot of this and that, you know, in other words, this fast food and these highly processed and refined foods and so on, many people might call that "goodness," but it isn't at all. It's bad, because it is terribly bad for you. In other words, "goodness," therefore, is not only an act of mental largesse, or mental concern or compassion for somebody else, but it also can be lodged in the things we possess. Because in those possessions is the net result—that is the end result—of that which benefits the possessor. And if it benefits the possessor, it also benefits others. Because we use our vitality, our health—our good health—to the benefit and for serving others. So, in that sense, even when we partake of a good meal, we are doing it vicariously. That is, the meal is not the objective in its own right. The maintenance of good health and vital strength of mind is that we may serve somebody else. It's the purpose of life. Initially, of course, it is in service to God—rendering a beautiful service to God. But then, we manifest that obedience to God by the things we do to one another. So, you see that you can carry a definition of a word on so broadly that it covers almost any given relationship which we might experience. And that is exactly what this word means. So, I want you to notice that it is a word derived from the word which we have just covered—*tohv*—and it does, in this case, denote our possessions, both physically and mentally.

Here in Genesis 24 and verse 10 we read:

And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

Here it is, now, "all the goods," that is the *toov*. That means his possessions. But why would they use this word *toov*, which means "to be good"—to manifest a beautiful spirit and attitude? They turned right around and used the word for something that one possesses. Because these possessions were very beneficent—they were a blessing from God. They were a beautiful blessing from God because they served a right purpose. They brought a desired end. They were a blessing because God saw the worthiness of the individual who became the recipient of them. So, in this particular case, it says, "And the servant took ten

camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master"—that is these possessions. And they *were* good. That is, they brought about the desired results, whereas there are camels that could have been very bad for many, many reasons. In other words, what if they had been camels that were particularly equipped—or had been trained, or whatever they did with camels—for warfare? Then you wouldn't necessarily have dubbed them *toov*. Not at all. Unless it had been in the interest of God's relationship with human beings at that time. Because God did underscore war in the Old Testament period of time because human beings seem to have wanted to go that route. So God said that He would back them up. Yet, that is not true today. In other words, today we are to trust God implicitly and have our faith in Him and, therefore, war is no longer acceptable as a medium by which we achieve our ends. So, in this case, these possessions of Abraham were the blessings that God had given to him, and they were extremely beneficent. That is, they derived the optimum to the possessor.

So, now, carrying that all the way back through, it shows that Abraham had manifested the right spirit and he had been faithful and obedient to God, and by this he became the recipient of the blessings, and as a recipient of blessings, then, he was the possessor of goods. So, you can see the logical, step-by-step process from the infinitive action of "to be good" to the actual possession of the reward for that action or behavior.

I want you to next notice Genesis 45 and verse 18. Genesis 45 and verse 18, and here Moses was inspired to write, once again, of a particular possession: "And take your father, and your households . . ." Here, in this case, is Pharaoh speaking—a very benevolent Pharaoh at this particular time—who is speaking to Joseph with respect to his own father and his brothers: "And take your father and your households and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt." In other words, what was the "good of the land of Egypt" except that which the earth produced—the things that they had derived through mining, through agriculture, through the various processes of human endeavor in the time of ancient Egypt? But, remember, it all belongs to God. And so it was the beneficent kindness of the earth producing at the hands of God. They had become the recipients of these things, and here, now, was a benevolent man on the basis of his love and respect for the people of God, because he had come to sense that God was responsible. And he said, now, "Bring your father and your households down here that you may now partake with us of the blessings of this land." Or in other

words, "I will give you the *toov*," the t-o-o-v, "of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land." The land didn't produce because the Egyptians were pursuing a wrong way of life—or the right way of life, necessarily. Let's say the end result of the abundance of its production is predicated upon what human beings do. In other words, if we do the right thing, both mentally and physically, it will produce. Now, I am not going to say that we can have a right spirit and right attitude and yet don't know how to farm and we are going to get a good product. Not at all. You know, that is utter stupidity. There are many people who believe that all they have to do is read the Bible or look to the Bible, or to manifest some kind of a spiritual attitude which eliminates all secular things. That isn't true at all. You know, it is strange how people will do things like this. In their own professions, they recognize the necessity of keeping current. So what they will do is study all of their documents, their technical jargon, their classified publications—and by "classified" I mean publications that are written for the particular profession itself—and they read these things and they keep current. Or, otherwise, they lose ground very rapidly. We all recognize the necessity of doing that kind of thing. But, as the chosen of God, your limit is not to the Bible alone. Not at all. The Bible is merely the explanation—it is the premise—by which you can understand everything else that has ever been written or undertaken by human beings. That's the purpose behind the Bible. It must form the basis of our comprehension of everything we read, study and do. Now, that in itself tells you that it is essential, then, to read broadly. It's essential to grasp and understand the physical things that human beings can record and do, and then we evaluate them on the basis of the guide. The one guide—the solid guide—is God's Word, and it is the guide, technically, for everything we do, whether we are an educator, an accountant, or in space technology, which is probably one of the biggest today, or whatever we are in. If we are true Christians of God we evaluate those things on the basis of God's Word. That is our guide. Well, the ministry is no different. Then, it is essential for us to read broadly—to grasp, to understand. So I try to read Biblical archaeology, I read Biblical history, I read all kinds of material that relates to the Bible, but I judge it on the basis of what is in God's Word. And that is absolutely essential. It is a need—it is an absolute must—and the Bible itself is ninety-five percent history. That is, it is written from a historical perspective.

Why did God use history, then, as a basis for what He said is the Eternal Word of God? Why? Because history is merely the manifestation of those principles. That is, here are those principles in action—the living, animated,

spiritual concepts of life are now translated into human behavior, or into the actions that we can observe and evaluate, by and through which we can learn many indelible lessons. That's what it's all about. So, therefore, we restrict ourselves greatly if we think, "Well, all we need is the Bible." Brethren, that is not true. What you have done is that you have already limited yourself to a very, very, finite, tremendously striated, concept of life. And that isn't true at all—that isn't true at all. Really, we must be able to evaluate all things, and the basis of that evaluation is the Bible itself. That will tell us because it is cardinal, it is key, to our understanding of everything we read, think, say, do, or whatever may happen.

So, here we see, then, in Genesis 45 and verse 18 once again: "And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt." So we understand that the good of the land of Egypt came, obviously, as a result of certain technical expertise and perhaps added to that, because here is an example of someone who benefitted the people of God, and I'm not going to deny it, I can show you many examples where those who have rendered a kind service to the people of God, in turn, were greatly blessed. God is not partial, and when someone renders a kind service—it may be somebody that has never been called whatsoever by God; he may never have seen nor understood the Truth of God in any way whatsoever—but if he renders a kind act or service to a child of God, he is going to derive a benefit from that. God has always done that. He is certainly impartial. So here, whether it was on the basis of the fact that this Pharaoh was very benevolently inclined toward the people of God, or whether there was a certain technical expertise, or perhaps—which is what I think—it involved both, they reaped great abundance, the fat of the land. That is, it produced because they attempted, at least in part, to live up to the requirements of the natural laws of agriculture. They didn't go contrary to those, so they reaped certain benefits. For every time we go contrary to it, we are going to reap some of the evil—the bad—not the good. In this case, God said—that is, it is quoted as coming from Pharaoh: "I will give you the good"—*toov*—"of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land."

So it is a material blessing; it is something that can be used to benefit others; it has desired results—it doesn't finally turn around and kick us in the teeth, or in the stomach—it has a beneficent result. Well, in this case, it was a matter that they were proffering—that is, offering—to the children of God, some of the finest land known on the face of the earth. Actually, it was right there in the Nile

delta—beautiful land. And so this was the promise, then, of Pharaoh to God's own people.

I want you to notice, now, verse 20: "Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is your's." The good of *all* the land of Egypt. That means whatever, now, is produced in the entire confines of Egypt. And that was back at the time when Egypt, obviously, was a glorious, marvelous domain—prior to the curses that befell it. Oh, let's not look to Egypt today on the basis of what God said existed at the time the children of Israel were down there. That must have been a fabulous place, as also was Palestine—or what we commonly call Israel today—and that whole Sinai peninsula. It must have been absolutely, fabulously beautiful and productive—a good land. Why? Because it had the munificence of God; because it was producing on the basis of God's intent and purpose.

But look what men have done. Curses befell them because of the evil of man—because they were not satisfied with living within the structure and the framework of God's purpose. No, they wanted outside of it, so they forced the land and they have done various things, and they have paid a heavy, heavy price or consequence.

So, here now, again, Pharaoh said, "Don't regard your stuff." That is, don't worry about your children, your wives, your families, or your material possessions. "[F]or the good of all the land of Egypt is your's." Here, laid at the very feet of these children of Israel—the people that God had chosen—was all the greatness, the beauty, the bounty of the land of Egypt.

Now in Genesis 45 and verse 23 we read this also: "And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt . . ." With the good things of Egypt. Now, he didn't send up there strychnine; he didn't send up there the things that have been fabricated and produced by human beings today out of their so-called technology. It was the lushness—the beauty—of the land itself. That was probably the finest possession that could be given.

Now, I'm not sure that some of the wheat and some of the things that we are distributing around the world is the finest gift that can be given to humanity. By the time we get through with it—with our forced manner of production and so

on—I'm not sure whether it is good or bad. In some cases I'm pretty sure it is very, very evil and very bad. We have insecticides; we have germicides; we have fungicides; and we have every other kind of thing that has been used on the land. And there are also fertilizers, and these fertilizers that are used today are commercially or technologically produced and they are worthless. Yes, they may produce a great, giant and abundant crop, but what are they doing to human life? Well, they are going to learn one of these days that those things would not have been classified as good by God. Human beings classify them as good—that's all.

And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

So the goodness, in this case, were from the storehouse of the abundance of this earth—that which had been produced from the earth that God had given to humankind. Vicariously, it was God's goodness to man. He didn't give wheat directly; men had to go out and work to get it. But then as a result of his labors—or as we are told in Genesis, by the sweat of his brow or his face—it was brought forth and he, then, became the possessor of all this bounty and this goodness which resulted in good health and vitality. For what reason? To nurture the self? No, that he might serve others and serve God.

Alright, now, let's notice Deuteronomy the sixth chapter. In Deuteronomy 6 and beginning in verse 10 we see this:

And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things . . .

Houses full of all good things. Well, "things" is italicized here so let's delete that. But "houses full of all good." I wonder what the good was? You know, I am sure that in some of those houses they took over were all these replicas, these idols and these images, and all kinds of strange and bizarre things. Was that classified as good? No, God said, "You get all of those out and you burn them. Get rid of them—every one of them."

What was the good, then, that they had uncovered? ". . . which thou filledst not . . ." In other words, you didn't stockpile these things; it wasn't as a result of your labors—the work of your hands—that these storehouses are now laden with certain things.

". . . and wells digged . . ." Water is classified as something that is extremely beneficent and good. Oh, indeed it is. Try going without it. But, I guess that what's even worse than going without it—because it is a slow and painful process—is drinking this garbage that we call water. "Wells digged." Fresh. Have you ever drunk directly from a little rippling stream in the mountains? Well, I wouldn't suggest you do it today, but back in my early years, that was one of the most marvelous experiences that you could ever have. Just flatten yourself out on your tummy and reach out over a little babbling brook and take a deep gulp. And, I'll tell you, that was the sweetest water you have ever taken hold of. But the stuff today—even in the top of mountains—is tainted.

But here were "wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full." God classifies a nice larder as a great blessing from Him. Is it any wonder, then, that He said what He did about the ants: "Go to, thou sluggard, and consider the ant"? Why? Because the ant effects a storage—he builds up a supply. And, brethren, I have said all along that we should store up, and I don't mean a great, giant ten-year supply, because even nature itself teaches us that is not what God means by it. But the ant conserves for approximately one year, and anything beyond that, food products begin to deteriorate. So what I am talking about is basically the preservation of a year's supply of good products. But, somehow, human beings have lost the ability to preserve. They don't even know how to do it unless they put it in tin cans, you know, and heat them to sixty pounds of pressure—which is how much they used to do it when they processed them in the canneries here in the state of Oregon years ago. I used to work in those. Sixty pounds of pressure. There isn't anything left in it—or virtually nothing. But we have lost the art of real preservation. I think it would do us a lot of good if we would attempt to uncover some of these things once again and get back to the practices that are acceptable in the sight of God.

So He said, now, in verse 11: "And houses full of all good." In other words, those houses were stored with the plentiful things that God provides from

this most beneficent and benevolent earth. I don't mean supplying ourselves with gadgetry—the things that human technology has produced. I am talking about what God produces. There isn't anything that is superior to it. I'm not sure that God says all of this gadgetry is good. I'm not saying it is all bad. I'm sure, you know, that perhaps none of it can be classed as totally good, but maybe there is some good to all of it. But if it's only *some* good then there must be *some* bad. That's an obvious and foregone conclusion. But, here now, in this case, are houses filled with good.

. . . houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees . . .

So, you see, these houses were containing these things that had been produced by God—that had come as a result of the natural laws which He had constructed and by which all things produce and bring forth abundantly, beneficently, and marvelously for human joy. That's God's gift to man. In other words, the love of God is manifested in these things, but men have never been satisfied with these things. They want to pervert everything. And so they attempt to change the laws. Why, we have all kinds of processes going on in the name of human technology today, by which they are going to change certain laws. What a tragedy. Why can't men be satisfied just with the laws of God and live them and then find out what he should be doing in effecting the necessary mastery in his own life? They don't want to put forth the effort to do that, but they will go endlessly—hour after hour after hour—to pursue their own way. What perversity rests within man. How tragic that he is going to have to learn the bitter, bitter, terrifying, terrible lessons. And they are going to come just as surely as the rising of tomorrow's sun.

So, He said in verse 12: "Then beware lest thou forget the LORD . . ." You know, we get things. We got a super-abundance here in the United States as a result of the blessings that God had promised—not because of what we did, but because of what God promised: a super-abundance. The minute we got those things, we began to forget God. The more they were increased, the more we forgot Him. And in our super-abundance today, we have totally rejected Him—or almost totally rejected Him. Oh, they have a form of godliness; they have appropriated the name; they talk about Him; but they don't do one thing He said. They give no honor or respect to Him; they are defiant and rebellious to the *n*th

degree and they justify themselves in their own whimsical outlook in every sense of the word. True to human nature, they forget every time God blesses them.

You know, after God has seen generation after generation after generation come and go, you would almost think, if it were not for His endless patience, that He would say, "Well, wait a minute, I've seen the track record of human beings. I'm not going to do it anymore. Why in the world would I? Generation after generation, they have only gotten worse. So I'm not going to benefit any one of them. I'm not going to give them anything." Yet, here in the last generation, even, God is still pouring out His love, His mercy, His kindness and His blessings upon all. Even to the just and the unjust comes the rain.

Oh, the mercy of God. And, you know, when I think about it, when we think our patience has been sorely tried, we don't even know what patience is. We don't even begin to grasp or understand. God, for six thousand years—and I mean time after time after time after time—has seen human beings do the same thing. You can't be good to them. Have you ever had that child that when you have said—and I've heard it a number times: "You know, we just can't be good to you. Every time you do something that's acceptable and we would like to give you a benefit or to praise you, or whatever, you turn around and use it wrongly." I've heard the expression used many times by parents. God is our parent. I wonder how He must feel about us at times. Do we take the life that we have; the food we ingest day by day, by which we have relatively good health; and our relationship with God, in which we have faith and confidence, and do we turn around and use these things, then, for our own nefarious and evil purposes? What a human tragedy.

"Then beware lest thou forget the LORD." Maybe it isn't good for us to have too much. That's what the Apostle Paul said. He said, "Give me neither too much nor too little, for if I have too much, there is a tendency to forget and to take things for granted, and if too little, to complain." So I guess, in the final analysis, human beings have to be kept on just about a certain plane; if anything more, he forgets—he becomes arrogant and conceited; anything less, and he is subject to consistent complaining.

[B]eware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

To swear by His name—that is, to pursue life. And, physically, they did swear, but not today, brethren. It is not an acceptable relationship at the present time. But we live in that confidence. We can, in the sense that is implied, swear by God. That means we can act in that faith and that confidence. To swear in times past simply means to have had that kind of confidence and faith in something—to have said that something is an absolute: "I know so." And that is supposed to be what it means in courts today when you put your hand on a Bible. It means that when you do that, you are obligated by principle. But it doesn't mean that at all. Today, brethren, we are not supposed to do that because men are liars. But what we should say is that we are going to do our level best. And even when we do our level best, it's always tainted, unfortunately.

Yes, brethren, houses can also be filled with God's manifested goodness. Next, I want us to notice Second Kings chapter 8. Second Kings the eighth chapter and let's read verse nine. II Kings 8 and reading verse 9:

So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden [in other words, what he took is something that had been produced from the earth that God had given to man], and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Benhadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

So, here, he took a form of God's beneficence to mankind—that which was produced from the earth. And, you know, this goes all the way back to the problem that came up between Cain and Abel. You see, Abel brought that which God produced. Cain wanted that which men produced—that which men had been able to achieve. That was the problem. The beneficence of this earth is that which God produces. It is out of the storehouse of God's goodness. And, you know, when we do something good for someone, I guess from what I read in the Bible, the finest act of kindness that we could perform for any human being is to take one of the blessings of God to mankind. Every example that I have read in the Bible—thus far, anyway—of God's goodness to man always involved that which was produced from what God made for man, not the advances of men technologically. But, you know, we just don't subscribe to those things. Somehow we think, "Oh, well, you know, it isn't all that important." Well, one of these days I think we are going to realize that it was that important. I guess it's just a matter of how long it is going to take us to come to that realization.

Next, I want us to notice Ezra nine and verse twelve. Ezra 9, and let's note verse 12. And here Ezra wrote:

Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land.

Here, now, was a condition that was hammered out. They were going to be partakers of the good of the land if they were faithful to certain innate, absolute responsibilities. And it had to do with marriage in this particular case because he said, "[G]ive not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons." So here was a certain marriage relationship that was going to bring about a unique problem. ". . . nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever." Don't go after the product or the means of their product forever because it is not acceptable in the sight of God. ". . . that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever."

You know, the mind is flooded with ideas right now, but it makes me sorely and seriously wonder, when I think in terms of what is going to be reestablished in the Millennium. I wonder if all of what we call our technological advances today are acceptable in the sight of God? If so, I wonder why they are going back to the vine and the fig tree and to a little plot of ground, and they are going to build their houses in a certain way and they are going to do certain things that are going to be required throughout the Millennium? Brethren, that Millennium follows our day. If all of our advances are acceptable in the sight of God today—if all of our technology is God-oriented and acceptable and right in His sight—then why doesn't it spill over into the Millennium? I think we are going to find out that what we call our great advances, were actually a curse—many of them. Many of them were curses.

And there is coming a day when God is going to set things aright once again; when the houses are going to be restructured and they are going to be set out in the right direction; when cities are no longer going to be giant concrete slabs with great buildings going up, rivaling one another. Not at all. That isn't God's intent or purpose because it is not good for the human race.

But God said there were certain laws that were absolute—necessary in the fulfillment of all the acceptable goodness that God has promised to us. So we must live up to those laws—and those laws sometimes even involve our marriage relationships. It's strange, now, that God would have said that the partaking of the good of the land was entirely dependent upon how well they adhered to proper marital relationships—marriage itself and those whom they married.

Alright, next I want us to notice Nehemiah nine. Nehemiah the ninth chapter and let's note verse twenty-five. Nehemiah 9:25. You read verses 23 through 27, but let me quickly move on. Here in verse 25, he said: "And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods . . ." Here, once again, the goods that He—God Himself—is talking about are not the technological advances and the progress of the heathen peoples, or the Gentiles, of that day, but the good which the land produced; that which came out of the earth.

And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged [water], vineyards [wines, various alcoholic beverages, grapes and even grape juice and whatever], and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.

The word is used twice here in verse twenty-five: the "goods" back up here in "houses full of all goods"—that is *toov*. It came from the goodness of God. God is all in all and what we see produced out of this earth, which is also a production of God, is, through the natural laws that God established, but a means by which we become the recipients of some of the awesome goodness of God, the goodness which He possesses. God has taken some of His goodness and built it into the natural laws of agriculture so that we become the recipients of those things, provided we don't pervert them. But human beings can pervert those natural laws just as much as they pervert every other law. Look at how they have perverted the laws of God—the spiritual laws of God. They have warped and twisted them and perverted everything. Well, they also pervert the human relationships; they pervert agricultural laws; they pervert all the laws that God Himself instituted. And if we had been obedient to those laws, we could have been the recipients of all the blessings and the goodness of God—right out of this earth, as well as out of our own minds, as well as out of the atmosphere, as well as

our personal relationship with God, which is a spiritual one. That's how we can have the blessings and the goodness of God. If we can just get ourselves back in tune with it—and that is what it is going to take—in tune with it with respect to the earth itself; to our environment; to our minds; and our relationship with God. And then we can have a beautiful existence. That is the means of receiving all the great goodness of God.

Now I want us to move very quickly down to verse thirty-five:

For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works.

You know, here was an example of God's people, physically. But, brethren, have we done any better? Are we turning from our own wicked ways? You know, so many things have been spoken; so many things have been said. We are not going to legislate faith, but I am not going to be restricted in the proclamation of God's Almighty Truth—never. But so many times it is interesting that I can make certain statements coming directly from God's Word, and I will hear people come back and say, "Well, that's only his opinion." It has happened many, many, many times, brethren. What I would like to see, sometime, brethren, is that if somebody disagrees, I want you to bring the textual material. At least, when I make a statement, brethren, I have tried to support it with God's Word—and I don't mean just a single text. Oftentimes it's so many that I can't even get them in. But, you know, I just simply do not respect—in any way—statements made out of whole cloth. I want you to tailor that cloth by God's Word.

How many of us are still imbibing of the customs of the Gentiles—which are abominable in the sight of God—and are producing injury to ourselves mentally, physically and in every other way, and we are not coming out of it? Notice what Nehemiah was inspired to write—because it had happened in ancient Israel. Is it strange that we—as merely the children of ancient Israel—should be doing exactly the same thing? The only difference, brethren, is that we should have received God's Holy Spirit by which we are empowered to do better and to effect the necessary mastery. Now, brethren, I know how many are struggling with everything that is within them and really are improving. I am well aware of it. But, brethren, that doesn't mean that we can stop, now, and lay down our

responsibilities because we have made it. No, we have a long ways to go—every one of us.

So let's listen once again—because this is an historical lesson, brethren, that is written for your admonition and mine: "For they have not served thee in their kingdom . . ." Have we been serving God in our confined relationship? ". . . and in thy great goodness." All the goodness and the benevolence that God has poured out upon us—have we been serving Him in that respect? ". . . that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them . . ." And, brethren, we may not have been given a physical land as ancient Israel was, but I'll tell you, we have been given a spiritual domain that few people—if any—have ever experienced. And have we grown fat and indifferent? Have we truly tended to forget what God gave to us? ". . . neither turned they from their wicked works." When God has blessed us and has been so good to us, are we turning from those things that we are doing? Are we astutely studying to understand how *we* should change our lives? I don't mean somebody else—I don't mean to criticize someone else—I mean to change *our* lives. That is our individual responsibility.

Let's note, now, brethren, verse thirty-six:

Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it.

So we are servants, chosen of God, to eat this time both the physical as well as the spiritual goodness of the domain into which *we* have been called—the land of God's spiritual province. And we have been called upon, as the servants of God, to partake of *both* the goodness of God spiritually and physically. That's the promise that God gave to us.

Now I want us to notice Job twenty and verse eighteen. Job 20 and beginning in verse 18. I need to hurry here so that I can complete this today up to the point we can complete the subject next time. Here in chapter twenty we are talking about those that place great emphasis upon the achievement of wealth and so on:

That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down: according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein. Because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor; because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not; Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly [or his alimentary system], he shall not save of that which he desired. There shall none of his meat be left; therefore shall no man look for his goods.

You see, if we don't do the right thing, we are going to lose all of the physical benefits that we could have derived. "[T]herefore shall no man look for his goods." They are not going to be concerned with any of the abundance that he has set aside, because they are going to be lost—he is going to lose them. So if we do not properly use the things that God gives to us, we can lose every one of them.

Job twenty-one and beginning in verse sixteen, now, from the *Living Bible*. Job 21 and noting verse 16: "Look, everything the wicked touch has turned to gold! But I refuse even to deal with people like that."

Now, notice what he said back here in verse sixteen according to the *King James*: "Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me." So the *Living Bible* translates that:

. . . everything the wicked touch has turned to gold! But I refuse even to deal with people like that. Yet the wicked get away with it every time.

Here is what Job is lamenting. He said, I won't have anything like that, but the wicked seem to get by with it. "They never have trouble, and God skips them when he distributes his sorrows and anger." Doesn't it seem like that sometimes? But wait until tomorrow.

Are they driven before the wind like straw? Are they carried away by the storm? Not at all! 'Well,' you say, 'at least God will punish their children!' But I say that God should punish the man who sins, not his children! Let him feel the penalty himself. Yes, let him be destroyed for his iniquity. Let him drink deeply of the anger of the Almighty.

For when he is dead, then he will never again be able to enjoy his family. But who can rebuke God, the supreme Judge?

You see, what we want to do is judge things that are happening to us by what is happening to a Gentile out here. But God isn't dealing with them. That's the point we have to learn. So they may accumulate all of these good things; they fill their larders; they build palatial mansions; they do all sorts of things. Let them live their transitory lives. Let's not ask for either too much or too little, but just enough to see us through in the fulfillment of the real purpose for which God called us. That's what, really, is being said.

In Isaiah one and verse nineteen we find the expression "the good of." Isaiah 1 and notice verse 19: "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land". If we, now, *are* willing and obedient—if we have a right spirit and a right attitude—we are going to be blessed of God. We are always going to have the necessary provision of life.

Now, secondly, "the word denotes appreciation and joyful response." In Deuteronomy the twenty-eighth chapter—just a couple of texts here very quickly. Deuteronomy 28 and let's note verse 47: "Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things . . ." Notice the expression here is "and with gladness." Because you served not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and *toov*—gladness of heart. Then, the word here for "goodness" is a matter of the condition of the heart. "The word denotes appreciation and joyful response"—gladness of heart. So it means an exuberance, an excitement, an enthusiasm.

And then, thirdly—the third point is: "acts of kindness or response to the love of God." In Psalm twenty-seven and verse thirteen—the final text. Psalm 27 and let's note verse 13. And here we read: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." It's by the goodness of God, then, that we are able to comprehend. Thank God that the scales have been stripped from our eyes, that we can truly see the goodness of God and we are not ourselves oriented to what men call, technologically, "good." But let's accept the beneficence, the love, of God—all of the goodness of God—which comes from the earth that God gave to us.