

**Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 66**  
**The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit**

**Goodness #10**

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Once again, greetings, my dear brethren. This will be the continuation of the specific fruit of God's Holy Spirit: goodness. As you will remember, in the last tape, we had begun to dissect and to attempt to thoroughly understand the technicalities of the specific Hebrew word, *toov*. As you will remember, this particular word derives from a primitive root which we covered earlier: *tohv*. The word *toov* means "good in the widest sense." And we spent quite a little time evaluating that last time. It is used particularly in its superlative sense—and we did describe that rather exhaustively last time. That is, its upper limits, not as a comparison, but in its ultimate apex intent or purpose. Concretely, it means "the very best." It is oftentimes translated as "beauty," in some cases as "gladness," or "welfare," or "fair," or "goodness," or "joy," or to "go well with." So it is translated in a number of ways, but always implying the ultimate objectivity of man—his ultimate welfare, the superlative sense of his life. And we find, in a number of cases, it is used with reference to God's relationship to humankind. The goodness of God—"goodness" as not being an inherent thing that reflects back to His own benefit and to His own good because God is an outgoing individual; His goodness is in relationship to His creation, people who are objects of His concern and His compassion.

It is human beings, and human beings alone, apparently, that manifest, out of intellectual, personal intent—that is, that which accrues to his own benefit—a certain animosity, hate, or lack of this trait or this characteristic of goodness. They are not good at all because they are personally oriented. Everything revolves around that which they build up, or they hope for, as a return to themselves. Whereas, God is outgoing in His compassion. God's mercy and His goodness are not intrinsic values in the sense that they reflect back to His own personal benefit, or to His own advantage. God Himself is outgoing—He is deeply concerned and filled with compassion for other entities of life. He is concerned with humankind, of course.

And He is also concerned with the totality of His creation which includes angels and other beings. We don't even know the broad diversification—the total limits of the number of beings that may exist. We do know that there are seraphim; we know there are cherubim; we know there are angels; and we know there are arch-angels. And how those interface with one another, I don't know that any human being can be very specific. We do know the four classifications of angels are mentioned, but are they four distinct classes, or maybe there is an interface somehow? I am not sure. But we know that there are angelic beings; we know that there are sub-human species ("sub" in the sense that they are created below human beings and are not less in worth or value in the sense of fulfillment of purpose at all). Human beings are of greater value only in the fact that they have been created for a greater purpose, and that purpose is manifested in the gift of the Son—the sacrifice of the life of Jesus Christ.

So, here we have, then, the total Creation as a recipient of the goodness, the mercy, the affection, the regard, the outgoing concern of the Eternal God.

Now, very quickly, then, we translated this into its subtitles—that is, sub-topics—under the overall consideration of the Hebrew word itself. The first sub-topic we covered is that the word denotes possessions. "Goodness," of course, is translated into something which is tangible. It is not an inanimate object. It isn't something that has no physical manifestation whatsoever. So the goodness of God is translated into something that you and I can touch—we can realize some intrinsic benefit therefrom. So the word as expressed in the character of God is manifested in certain beneficent returns that you and I can realize or experience—such as material possessions, health, well-being, certitude in life and all of these physical characteristics. So we found that it denotes both physical and mental well-being, blessings, or active intervention on the part of God.

Then, also, we saw that the word denotes an appreciation, translated frequently as a joyful response when certain things happen to us. And it doesn't always have to be a material possession that one receives. It may be some circumstance of life that works out beautifully. And when that works out, it is very difficult to keep one's feet on the earth. In other words, it is an enormous satisfaction—a fulfillment. And a fulfillment is not always physical. It could be mental. And to the ones called of God, it more particularly, probably, is spiritual. That is, if we truly see it.

You know, our problem is that we don't really grasp the awesome blessing of God in the call that He gave to us and in the fact that we see and understand God's Truth. If we really comprehended the magnanimity of that gift—if we really comprehended its true value—you couldn't hold the feet of those people down to this earth if you wanted to. Our problem is that, even though it's a matter of faith, it is pretty dim. And only by intervention on the part of God; the stirring up of the Spirit within is; the circumstances and the experiences of life; by those very means, we are oftentimes brought to a better perspective—we see more clearly. There is a certain elucidation in our lives and we more mentally and spiritually comprehend the significance of the things which have happened to us by reason of the call of God. And so, as those things go on, and the more particularly, pointedly and specifically we realize that God is uniquely working with us, then we are the recipients of this mental, spiritual response. So the word denotes an appreciation and a joyful response.

Thirdly, then, it is translated into acts of kindness as a response to the real, manifested love of God. So, we are seeing it at various levels as it translates itself into the things that are manifested in our lives—the things we see, experience, and thereby comprehend.

Now, let's notice it in its more basic form because before we can ever experience any aspect of it, it has to stem from some place. That is, it has to have a basis—a foundation. Where is the source of such incomprehensible joy, satisfaction and purpose to be found? It is an inherent glory of God. That is, intrinsically, within the life of God, are these very traits and characteristics that now can be manifested in the physical things that you and I can experience—the beneficent things of life, the tangible things that we can lay our hands on. That is, food and sustenance of life. That's physical; we can see it; we can take hold of it; it's cooked and prepared and the various things are done to it. Yet, it is a manifested gratuity of God to humankind. But, before you can be the recipient of that, there has to be somebody behind the scenes that has already desired above all things to benefit those who are responsive and obedient to God.

So there has to be a source. It is not just a spontaneous thing. It is not a matter of somebody having done certain favorable and acceptable things with respect to the care of the land, or whatever—and, indeed, I do not minimize the necessity of the care that God gave as a responsibility to humankind. For He said

to Adam, "Prune it and keep it." Therefore, that is essential. But you can prune and keep something that is under the curse of God forever, and you are not going to derive any benefit out of it. So, therefore, man's responsibility accrues a benefit only because there is a foundational gratuity initially. It goes all the way back to somebody who is taking care of the natural laws that are built into that soil, into the environment—the rising and setting of the sun and all of the other physical features that produce that food that so many human beings take for granted. And God is not going to take for granted anything that we take for granted. We may have to pay a price for it unless we remember to be extremely thankful and filled with gratitude and appreciation.

How many of us have very favorable things that work out in our lives? Let me just remind you of what happened this year at the Feast of Tabernacles—the most fantastic, phenomenal intervention of God that I think I have ever seen. And God just gave us some of the most beautiful circumstances. And I wonder if we are going to take any of those things for granted, thinking, "Oh well, you know, fluke things do happen." Well, if they do, they have happened seven years in a row. And I mean strange, strange intervention on the part of God. Maybe I shouldn't use the term "strange" because people tend to apply a wrong connotation to that—but I mean very interesting and very exciting and meaningful intervention that we have seen.

So, brethren, let's not take things for granted. If we say seven years in a row is just a fluke consideration and next year could be different, and we don't have any faith and confidence in God, I ask you, when will we ever believe? Is it going to take fourteen years? And then when the fourteen years are up we look back and say, "Well, you know, it could have happened for fourteen years and the fifteenth could be different." Yes, that's right, it could, unless we have faith in God and we really believe it and we know that such events are not a matter of chance, but due to the fact that there is a precipitator behind the scenes. That's what I am saying, brethren. All the beneficent things that happen in our lives—the strange and the interesting things that happen—that accrue to very warm and responsive feelings and joy and satisfaction, come from some source. They are not happenchance. Sure, I understand that time and chance happen to all men, but, brethren, we had better not classify ourselves in the same category as the average, run-of-the-mill human being. Now, if God has called us, it doesn't mean that we are unique or peculiar in the sense that we are different from anybody else. We are only peculiar

in the fact that God is not allowing time and chance to happen in our lives, but He is actively, aggressively, beneficently intervening—that's the difference. And we had better have that faith and that confidence because God *is* looking out for His people and He is intensely concerned for those who manifest this kind of love, affection and regard for the Truth. But, above all, we had better manifest it in our love and affection for one another—when we would rather take wrong than to exercise what we call a "right." No, we would rather take wrong because we are creators of peace and we are truly—in every sense of the word—trying to fulfill the purpose for which God has called us. We trample on the self. We are reducing the self. But we build everybody else. That's our purpose.

Now, brethren, as I said, the next circumstance—the next sub-topic—is that this glory, this obvious, manifested beneficence, love, and affection of which we are the recipients in their manifested forms; the food that we eat; the marvelous circumstances of life; the marvelous things that happen to us from time to time; the feelings of well-being and satisfaction, joy, enthusiasm and excitement in life; all these things have to have a source. Unless we think we precipitated it in our own right. Or maybe all of us are subscribers to this idea of "the power of positive thinking." I don't believe in it at all. I do believe, however, that if you don't have any relationship with God, I guess it's a whole lot better to talk yourself into a positive outlook than it is to face reality for what it really is. Maybe you are better off. But I would rather have the real thing than such a second-rate objective that human beings are able to create. So let's think in terms, then, of the *real* inherent glory of God that you and I have been made the recipients of if we are faithful and loyal to Him. That's how we can have this excitement; that's how we can have a sense of welfare; that's how we can have a sense of enthusiasm in life; that's the real source of it. It isn't the fact that we have talked ourselves into it. It is not a vicarious principle. It is the *real* love, the affection, the power, the might of God. This is the thing, brethren, that we want to experience.

So here now He said in Exodus thirty-three and verse nineteen. Let's notice it. God was speaking to Moses, and this is the one who became the Christ Himself. He was that great pillar of light that went before them. Exodus 33:19: "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee . . ." What did He mean by that? Now, let's not just take it for granted. What did He mean when He said, "I am going to make all my goodness pass before you"? If men were created in the image, the form and the shape of God, and all the goodness of God was

merely the form and the shape that passed by Moses, then human beings also have all that goodness too. Yet, I highly doubt that there is any human being that possesses the goodness of God. Then, what was this that passed before him? Indeed it was a form and it was a shape, but inherent within that is the nature and the character of the Being—the divine nature as it is called. Passing there before Moses at that split instant was the personal manifestation of everything that is good and right. The opposite of that is human nature—a nature that is totally defiant; it's rebellious, it's degenerative; it is hateful; it is despicable; it is all the bad, and evil, and wicked, and iniquitous things. Whereas, here, now, manifested in this very form and shape, was all that is good.

What is good? God's Law is called good. It is Spirit; it is good. And we also find that Jesus Christ became that very Way—the Truth manifested. So, then, God Himself, when He gave the Word of God—that is, the cardinal, spiritual principles; His Laws, His statutes; His judgements; His ways of life—actually had written into verbal form His own nature. Does not the Bible say that the very foundational principle of the Law is love? And, yet, we turn right around and find that God is love. Okay, if we just use a mathematical equation we will find first God, then love—which is a cardinal, spiritual trait or characteristic—but next you find the Law. So the Law, then, *is* God. The Law *is*, then, love. That's just the way it is. God Himself, in all of His nature, is the totality of the laws, the statutes, the judgements that He gave to mankind. In other words, it is the nature and the character of God put into verbal form that you and I can read. And it became a constitution to the ancient nation of Israel, but today it is being written into our minds and hearts. Which means it is becoming, within us, a part of the very character that God intends that we possess before we can ever inherit everlasting life.

So, passing, then, before Moses was all that glory. Now, ancient Israel experienced, vicariously, some of that glory. If you will remember, they were told that if they were faithful and obedient to God, that all of this glory and all of this greatness would get out and go before all the nations of the world, who would begin to say, "What nation is there that hath God so nigh unto them; that hath laws that are so right, so just and so good?" So, in this sense, ancient Israel, then, could have experienced the vicarious element of the greatness, the beauty, the goodness of God. They would have seen it because they would have been technically, legally, obedient. Therefore, they would have reaped the letter rewards for that

form of obedience. But God said that was inadequate and insufficient because God wants the nature changed. Then what God is doing within the called and chosen at the present time is not merely giving them a vicarious reward for letter obedience to the Law of God, but He is writing His own divine nature within humankind today, so that we might not be the mere recipients of vicarious results, but that this time it might be inherent within us—that is, the very nature and the very character of God.

So, we find, then, that this goodness is the innate, intrinsic characteristics of God—His divine nature. That's what Moses saw. There it was. And that very glory is what God in a vicarious manner—that is, in a secondhand manner, or a legal, technical manner—gave to Moses, who in turn gave it to Israel. What did He give to Israel? His Laws, His statutes, His judgements, a Way of Life. That's what He gave to them. Now, they couldn't obey it. That's what Moses was inspired to write under the auspices of God's Holy Spirit, because we find in the New Testament that all of those who were the authors of the Old Testament wrote under the influence of God's Holy Spirit. So when Moses was inspired to write that, he said, speaking on behalf of God, "Oh, that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments that it might be well with them and their children forever"—Deuteronomy 5:29. So, here, then, passing before Moses at that moment was the intrinsic glory of God. "All my goodness," He said, was to pass before him. It's the inherent glory—the glory that He took and translated into a legal constitution which He gave to Israel and they would have been the recipients of every marvelous blessing from God. As we have already seen, the word denotes physical possessions: food; that our cattle would do well; that we would be prosperous in our homes; and that we would have fine children without ill-health; and all of these fine physical traits and characteristics which come from a primary source—a source of that benevolence and concern. So here, then, Moses was allowed to see the very source of that glory which they had been promised.

Next, I want us to notice Psalms the twenty-fifth chapter. Psalm twenty-five and let's begin in verse six. Psalm 25:6: "Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old." Yes, they have never changed because God doesn't change. So His mercies and His loving-kindnesses never change because those loving-kindnesses do not arise as different from the laws, the ways, the statutes which God gave. They *are* His loving-kindnesses and His mercies.

You know, God was extremely merciful to them in giving them a way that would produce all of these blessings. And so he said:

Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old [indeed they have]. Remember not the sins . . .

You see, David understood this. What is sin but going contrary to that benevolent Way of Life? So he said, "Remember not the sins"—that is, his iniquities, the transgression of that benevolence and that loving-kindness of God. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake . . ." Inherent within God is that very manifested goodness which He, as I said earlier, vicariously gave to ancient Israel. And they could have been the recipients of the letter plane—all that goodness of God—if they had been faithful and if they had been obedient. But David is now praying that even when he sinned, that God would not turn His back on him—that God would remember His own innate, intrinsic, goodness, and that He would be beneficent and kind toward David. "Don't remember my transgressions—the sins of my youth," David is praying. "[A]ccording to thy mercy remember me for thy goodness' sake"—the real purpose, the intent, that God had in dealing with him in the first place.

That purpose, my dear brethren, is spiritual. And so David, here, underneath, is implying a correction in his own life—a change. He recognized it. How could he ask God to remember him according to His great loving-kindness and not according to his sins and transgressions if he didn't know what they were? So David obviously knew because he was recognizing and confessing them, and then he asked God to remember His awesome purpose, His love, His innate good, His mercy, His kindness, His goodness—His goodness as manifested in the nature, the trait, the character of Jesus Christ who was the Son of God. He was that Word made flesh. Not yet—they were only looking forward to it at this particular time. So, at this time, David called upon the mercy of this One who was ultimately to be made in that fashion, who became a sacrifice for us in the achievement of that purpose—that is, the purpose of neutralizing, nullifying, and destroying our sins, our transgressions and the wretchednesses which separate us from all the benevolence of God, and for the reinstatement, the reconciliation, if you please, of our very lives into that favorable posture with God. And that's what it's all about.

So, then, the glory—that is, the goodness—of God is an inherent glory. It is manifested in the Law; it is manifested in the beneficence, the love and the greatness of God toward His people whom He loves; but it cannot be derived apart from the source of that love. If God *is* love, and mercy and kindness are parts of that very expression of love—because love is all-encompassing—then we know that goodness is an integral part of it.

We know also that goodness does reflect obedience to the Law of God—His statutes and His judgements. And it is for this reason, brethren, that I have said so many times: the one factor that became key in precipitating my change from non-observance of God's Holy Days to implicit observance is that God does not change. It is a manifestation of the character of God; it is a manifestation of the goodness of God; and if we are going to do away with them, what we are doing is minimizing—carving away at—the very totality of the goodness of God. But my Bible clearly shows me that *all* the goodness of God is manifested in *all* His statutes and His judgements, His ways of life. And when we begin to carve away, reduce and to restructure the goodness of God on the basis of our own thinking, that is not acceptable in the sight of God at all.

So, therefore, the inherent glory of God *is* goodness. It is faithful obedience to all the statutes and judgements of God, and we may not, in any way, redefine, carve away at, or restructure God's definition of His love and of His goodness. We have no such right. But human beings have appropriated every conceivable right unto themselves and they are going to have to pay the price ultimately. I say, brethren, we had better totally obey the full definition of the goodness of God; of the love of God; of the expression of the character of God, for it is written in the totality of His laws, His statutes and His judgements.

Alright, point number five. The goodness of God is boundless—it knows no end. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you and I could manifest that kind of trait and characteristic? Our patience wears thin; our intent to overcome, to master, and to resist the natural lusts and appetites of the flesh weakens; we have all kinds of unique problems. We weaken, we give in, and then we pay the price again. And the minute we have whatever we have weakened and done, we find out it has a very transitory benefit. The transitory benefit is in the fact that you yielded to the dictate of a lust or an appetite—a physical appetite—and once you have satisfied it, it will turn around and kick you right in the teeth. It does it every time, and

then, ultimately, you pay the price anyway—because somewhere down the road you are going to pay that price. And, you know, if we can stand tall and firm in what our minds tell us, and we have that kind of character, when the temptation evaporates—it departs—we feel so victorious. What a thrilling, exciting experience. But the very next time the test comes along—the lust or the appetite, or whatever it is—then the pull is there once again. And you are going to struggle against that as long as you exist in the flesh. The difference, brethren, is that we should have grown in the spiritual character or ability to resist it—which means mentally. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." That is the ability to prove all things, which means to live it in opposition to the lust—the pull of flesh or the influence of Satan, the Devil. In God's case, such goodness is boundless because He is not tempted by any of these things. He is absolutely unlimited. We are limited by our own weaknesses and we are oftentimes short-circuited by those same weaknesses.

So here, now, in Psalm thirty-one and let's note verse nineteen. Psalm 31 and verse 19, we read: "Oh how great is thy goodness." Now, we have already defined it. We are talking about *toov*. "How great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee." Have we really come to genuinely appreciate that goodness? Have we come to the point that we have really experienced it and we know its worth—its value—in our lives? Or are we, to a very large extent, still operating on the periphery—unable to really see its full manifestation and value in our lives? Have we come to the point that we can speak with joy unspeakable because we sense it and we know its value in our lives because we know its inherent worth?

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

Analyze it, brethren, and what you will see is that it is absolutely limitless, but it is limitless because of the unique weaknesses we experience with ourselves and in relationship to others. That's what David is saying.

Alright, next I want us to notice Psalm one hundred and forty-five—I must move along here because I was hoping to complete this. Psalm 145 and let's begin in verse one, however noting specifically verse seven. Psalm 145 and beginning

in verse 1: "I will extol thee, my God, O king." In other words, this is the relationship—the mental configuration—of David. When he looked to God, he was talking to his King—his ruler supreme. And he said, "I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever." That was a real purpose on the part of David because he had willed never to depart. How could he say "forever and ever" if he had not willed it? "Every day will I bless thee." In other words, he wasn't going to do as many of us do when we falter and fail and we have to pick ourselves up and get over our unique problems time and time again. "Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever." He spoke most beneficently of the name of his God. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable." His greatness is unsearchable. No matter how far we go; no matter how deep we dig; no matter where we go, we see only the expansive trait and characteristic of the greatness, the majesty of God. "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." I wonder, brethren, if we see the things that God has done and we talk about them as much as we should? I wonder if we have taken too many of the acts of God for granted, or are we somewhat ashamed and think that we might appear to be overmuch righteous if we really extol and praise our God? Now, I'm not talking about doing what the rebellious and the defiant of this world do when they appropriate the name of God. I'm not talking about that. It must come from the heart. But that which is legitimate and comes from the heart rings true like a true silver dollar. It doesn't have the thud that goes with these sandwich things.

One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

We are the recipients of many of those works. Let's not always look to the past, except to gain a footing—a foundation, a premise—for the things that *we* are experiencing today. You know, it's very easy for us to look back and say, "Oh, yes, I know what He did for David; I know what He did for Ezekiel; I know what He did for Jeremiah; I know what He did for Abraham, but, then, this is a different generation." Yes, I agree, it's a different generation, but it's the same God. And He said He's "the same, yesterday, today and forever." I think the problem is that we oftentimes don't see what God has done for us and we don't praise Him for His wonderful works in our lives as much as we should. Oh, that we might be oriented to this kind of expression—to the outgoing expression of the love and mercy of

God. "And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts." You see, God also intervenes and, yes, even in discriminatory ways.

And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

This is men of all generations. What have been the abundant memories of the greatness of God in our lives? What has God done? Are we aware of them? If we are His people, God has been intervening. God has been doing many, many marvelous things. I'll tell you for sure, brethren, one of those things for which I'm most appreciative is the fact that I still have courage and conviction with respect to the Truth that God gave. To me, I don't know of a greater blessing. You know, I could still be in the same blindness; I could be absolutely held in bondage and servitude through the fear of an organization or a man just as much as anybody else, but I am so thrilled and so happy that God allowed me to intelligently evaluate and to use the revealed doctrine as a premise, rather than a relationship with a man or an organization. "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness." There is nothing wrong, brethren, with a relationship with a man or an organization if they continue in the way revealed. I'm not denigrating an individual or an organization, but I am saying that they are second, third, fourth, fifth or whatever. They are not primary, and they must never be primary. The only primary consideration that God ever gave is the divinely revealed Truth—the faith once delivered. And I am going to hammer that as long as God gives me breath because that is the undergirding principle. If we do not have that, then we have no hope, and we certainly have no faith.

The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. All thy works shall praise thee . . . [Psalm 145:8–10].

The works are going to praise God, but what about the human beings who are the recipients of those works? "O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee." Yes, the true saints of God will bless God, and it is going to come from the heart—a heart that is absolutely overcharged with joy, satisfaction and the

realization of what God has done. Do you know that there are children in life that derive enormous satisfaction from the smallest gifts? And, yet, there are people who can't be satisfied with mountains, with castles or with anything. They take everything for granted. I wonder, brethren, if we still have that humble spirit with which we can be grateful for the most minute things? That's what God wants to see in us. The boundless goodness of God.

Next, I want us to notice Zechariah nine. Zechariah the ninth chapter and let's notice verses sixteen and seventeen, and you will find the word in verse seventeen. Zechariah 9:16–17:

And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!

You see, the things that are going to happen prophetically—as they happened historically—are all acts of intervention on the part of God, all conspiring to one common end: the realization and the fulfillment of the plan and purpose of God which He has planned for all this earth. There is nothing happening that is not according to the will and purpose of God, or by His express permission. And even that, of course, is on the basis of the will of God. So all things are as God has willed and purposed—whatever they may be. And we need to operate within the purpose that God has designated for us. God has called us; God has revealed His Truth to us and the saints know who they are. Let's act on that, brethren, in faith and in confidence. Let's be the recipients of all the goodness of God. And that goodness of God cannot be held down. It is going to surface in the aggressive pursuit of that Way of Life—that faith once delivered—and in the solidarity and firmness with which we have our feet down. We are not constantly questioning; we are not always plagued and troubled; we are confident; we live those confident, purposeful, energetic, enthusiastic spiritual lives; we *know* where we are headed. We are the servants of God if, truly, the Spirit of God is filling our lives and motivating, guiding and directing us. We cannot stop that kind of motivation and power if it is there, brethren. And it will be there if we allow it to dominate in our lives. You can't take it from a child. When that child is living in anticipation of something and has confidence in his parents, you can see that child absolutely just surfeited with all the anticipation,

the excitement and enthusiasm possible. Brethren, God Almighty says that we must be children in our simplicity, love and affection. Is that our relationship with God—the goodness, the awesome kindness and mercy of God? These are so meaningful and they are the manifested traits and characteristics of our faith—if we truly believe. The goodness of God, indeed, is boundless. May we be the recipients of that boundless gratuity.

The sixth point: Men need to be taught the goodness of God. You see, it isn't born within us normally and naturally. It isn't something that we have inherent within us. It is something that must be acquired by the long history of lessons that God is precipitating in our lives when He allows us to go through various things and we are subjected, in essence, to the college of hard knocks. There is no other way of acquiring it. We can't use what we call our photographic memories and our great capabilities so that we bypass all the normal, natural experiences of life like some people do in formal college classrooms. There is no way of it. Every human being—no matter how brilliant, not matter how smart—is going to have to learn through the college of hard knocks. There is no other way. That is how we are taught—through the experiences of life.

And, so, God says, then, that men must be taught the goodness of God. Let's notice it back here in Psalm one hundred nineteen. Psalm one hundred nineteen and let's begin in verse sixty-five, with emphasis upon verse sixty-six. Psalm 119 and beginning in verse 65: "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word." So here David knew that whatever God had done in David's life was for a purpose. And stop and think about the experiences of David—the transgressions that occurred in his life, the iniquities that manifested themselves and the terrible things that he did. Yet, despite all of that, he was a man after God's own heart. Why? Because David never justified himself. He came back and apologized profusely—he begged God's forgiveness.

Now, it's a known factor that all human beings sin. They just do. But God doesn't categorize sin, it's only human beings that do. In the eyes of men, one sin is worse than another. Oh, they just get terribly upset about certain sins—I guess because they don't have that particular lustful appetite or whatever it is. But they manifest other ones, and to them, well, that's altogether different. "That's not a unique problem. After all, that's difficult to overcome." Well, what about the other fellow who may have had a strong pull in some other direction, whatever it

may have been? God Almighty does not categorize sin, but all human beings do not have all the same pulls. Wouldn't it be terrible if there was a man who had every one of them? Poor fellow. But you usually find that he has certain strength of character in one way but awful weaknesses in another way. And I can see and understand the reason for that, brethren. Because it compels us—despite our own strengths—to have compassion and mercy for somebody who has a weakness in a certain area. But the other party, then, has to have equal compassion and mercy for somebody else who has a weakness in an area for which he has a strength. That's why we have to be tolerant and forbearing.

Now here was David, and in the final analysis, when David wrote this under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit he said, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word." You know, I'm not sure that if many people today had gone through what David went through, they could have written verse sixty-five—or would have written it, maybe I should say. And, yet, he said, "You've been extremely good to me. You have dealt well with your servant, O Lord." And, yet, he was afflicted; he was chased all of his life; his whole house rose up against him time and time again; his own wives turned on him at times. Look at all of the terrible things that happened to him, yet, he knew there was a purpose of God involved.

How many of us, when we see our troubles and our difficulties, fall on our knees and say, "Thank you, O God, because you have dealt very well with me, and by that very means I have learned." You see, it is all in the perspective of mind. If we see God's purpose in those things that happen in our lives, we can be grateful and appreciative because they indelibly punctuate—underscore—our problems. But if we see only the tragedy in our lives, then we are going to be miserable because we are not going to see the purpose of God and we are not going to act on any purpose of God. And this is the problem with too many people in the world today.

"Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. Teach me good judgment . . ." Teach me good judgement. What is this judgement that David is talking about? It is judgement with respect to issues of life—whether I am going to do this or I am not going to do it; whether I should make this move, this decision, or effect this particular purpose or not, whichever the case may be. "Teach me good judgment and knowledge." How was he to

acquire this judgement and knowledge? By the things which he experienced. You know, when you go through a bizarre trial and you get burned real good, you are not likely to go through it again. ". . . for I have believed thy commandments." The word here is "good"—"teach me good judgment." It's the word *toov*.

You know what that tells me? That an awful lot of the judgement of mankind is not good—it's bad. And they are not going to learn because they have not exercised the initial responsibilities of judgement. Maybe the judgement occurred as the result of emotion—hate or contempt. Maybe it came because of the arrogance of mind on the part of that individual who never stepped back and said, "You know, the other party must have had a reason for what he did," and give him the benefit of that reason. No, what we will do is always, always—almost invariably—when we come up against an issue, is to be absolutely convinced that we were in a proper relationship with God when we arrived at our opinions, whatever they might have been. We are always convinced on the basis of the idea that we know we are right but the other person was subtle; insidious; had some devious plot or plan; was motivated by Satan, the Devil; or whatever we use as a rationale. It very infrequently occurs to us that the other party might have had a reason for the decision or the action he took. When will we finally look at the circumstances and say, "Well, wait a minute, why am I reacting? Why am I questioning? Why am I doing this or that?" The other party may have had just as legitimate a reason. And, then, we can set about intelligent evaluation.

You know, it reminds me—and I want to use this as an illustration: We have had two or three major issues arise within our little fledgling operation. Two or three major issues. Now, I wanted to give the benefit, and I've even gone before you nationally, or internationally, stating that if you—providing you disagree with us—can support your idea with texts, I will gladly look at it. You know, to this day, I have never seen one single text on any one of the issues. What does that say, brethren? You know, if they knew they were right and they had the basis from God's Word, why weren't they willing to present it? I haven't seen it—not once. But, brethren, I still say that I am most willing to look, but I want some Biblical support, not merely an emotional response. Brethren, I go through page after page, after page, after page of notes before I arrive at certain convictions or decisions concerning various things. And I have done my level best to use the totality of God's Word before arriving at it. Now, that isn't to say that I cannot make mistakes. I understand that, and I have appealed to anybody—if you are

convinced that I have made a mistake—to present the evidence. Gladly. I don't want to be wrong either. So, above all, do it, brethren, if there is ever a question. Have your texts and present them. I will gladly read them and study them. But until then, I'm going to give all people this freedom that David was talking about here in Psalm 119. And let's notice it once again: "Teach me good judgment . . ." Good judgement—not unwise; not emotional; not clouded; not confused judgement; but good judgement. Based on the definition of that word, it means that which is salutary; that which creates peace; that which does favorable things—that's what that word means. "Teach me *toov*"—goodness or judgement.

. . . and knowledge [in other words, it will also accrue in knowledge]:  
for I have believed thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went  
astray.

How many of us have ever stopped to ask why things are happening in our lives? There's a reason. David said, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray." Then, what he is saying is that by those afflictions, because he learned *toov* judgement, he evaluated what was going on; he turned around; and he gained good—*toov*—knowledge. Then let's take the experiences of our lives—and we all go through them—and learn. Are we favorably accepted? Is there a keen spontaneity that exists among ourselves? Are we the creators of peace? Do we have a very favorable response in every way? Because it is only that kind of circumstance that manifests the perfect harmony—the restful spirit and attitude—that exists within the true Body of Jesus Christ. That's what we must have.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray." That affliction can be a physical condition or it can be a mental condition. Let's not always look for a chopped-off arm or something else. It might be something that is happening to us mentally—when we are troubled; we are perplexed, or whatever. These things teach us valuable lessons and we must evaluate and judge. And all of us, brethren, are going through these things every single day of our lives. I want to be responsive to these stimuli in my life. ". . . but now have I kept thy word." So when David learned good judgement and knowledge, he could respond favorably, in faithful obedience to the Word of Life. And, after all, "Man shall live, not by bread alone, but by every Word . . ." The Word of Life.