

Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 67
The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit

Goodness #11

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren. This now, hopefully, will be the final tape on the subject of goodness—tape number eleven. We've covered many, many aspects of the subject up to this point, but there are certain elements that still need to be covered that we might be complete in our understanding of that marvelous trait or characteristic of God's Holy Spirit.

By way of introduction, let's go back and reflect upon this matter of goodness once again. It's rather interesting, when we think of humanity in general, that all the world—that is, all humankind—really wants to be thought good by others. The only problem is, they don't want to live up to it because of a particular nature with which they were born. And we have to understand that goodness—as defined in the Bible by God Himself as a basic principle, a cardinal principle of the Holy Spirit—is the exact opposite of the natural natures with which we were born. Now, human beings, because they do not have the capability of living that element of goodness in its own right, oftentimes will redefine goodness. Their redefinition may allow certain latitude and a certain liberal approach to the concept of goodness itself. That is, they may allow certain things with respect to their own natures because they live those things normally and naturally, and even though they are in violation of the basic concept of goodness, or the basic nature of God, yet, human beings kid themselves, delude themselves, into believing that they *are* living the good way of life. For instance, divorce and remarriage. You know, if we can justify that and say divorce is acceptable and remarriage is alright in the sight of God, then we can go ahead and live an element of our natural, rebellious, cantankerous natures, and at the same time, kid ourselves that we are good. In other words, we are appropriating a characteristic of God while we continue to live the flamboyant, rebellious, cantankerous, arrogant spirit of humanity itself.

So, goodness, then—the *real* goodness of God—is always in opposition to the natural nature with which we were born. Why? The Bible tells us very clearly that our natures are wrathful, seditious and cannot be trusted. They are deceptive; they are arrogant in spirit and attitude; you just simply cannot trust the natural mind and the natural proclivities of the flesh—you cannot. And the only way, then, that we can ever realize that the nature with which we were born must be mastered and overcome is by a revelation from God. When He reveals to us what we are, and we begin to see it and understand it, then we begin to grasp, by that same revelation, the character and the nature of God—those things which are good and pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God. Then, by contrasting those two, we realize, here is what we are; and here is what God wants; and then by the power of His Holy Spirit we can begin to overcome the natural nature with which we were born and begin to put on the nature of God. But, as I said, humankind—and above all, human minds—are deceptive. Therefore, in order to present a deceptive appearance, what they will do is alter the image of God's goodness—the character of God—and they will make God appear to be more like human beings. God stands awesomely supreme and separated from the nature of man. He is awesome in His character and His power. We have to see ourselves as we *truly* are and see God as He *truly* is. Then we can begin to effect the necessary transition because God has promised us that power. But if we, by the deceptive characteristics of our minds and our hearts, begin to equalize the plane of the two—that is the nature and the character of God—then what we do is elevate ourselves while we pull down God. Therefore, we feel that we do not have to do nearly as much as is required of us in order to put on the character or nature of God. Now, this is the normal proclivity—the normal tendency—of human beings, and they will go through all forms of rationale to justify themselves. I gave you only one example—divorce and remarriage—but what about the Sabbath; what about lying; what about the military; what about all kinds of things that are done in this world that ostensibly are acceptable in the eyes of nominal Christianity? All that has done is to equalize the two planes—making man look better and making God look a whole lot worse. The only thing is, they don't say that. What they do by effecting this is that they make man look more like God without ever performing any element of mastery in their lives. And that is true deception. It comes from Satan, the Devil.

So, we have to understand that what we are is the diametric opposite—one hundred and eighty degrees from the nature of God—and we have to see it in its

true perspective. So, we are, then, in opposition to God; we are in opposition to the way of God; we are in opposition to the character of God; we, by nature, are a one-hundred-and-eighty degree turn from God in every way. We, by nature, are wrathful, seditious, hateful, vengeful, and filled with all of the natural proclivities of man. As Jesus Christ Himself said, "There is none good but one." So we don't have any innate, intrinsic goodness within ourselves whatsoever. God *is good*, and goodness is merely the manifestation of those traits and characteristics which we will call "good"—that's what goodness is. In other words, if man manifests goodness, it is the manifestation, then, of those traits or those characteristics which God calls good.

Now, what does God call good? I don't care what men call good, I want to know what God calls good. God called His Law good; He called His Way of Life good; all those spiritual things which we must ultimately achieve, He calls those good. Then, goodness is nothing more than the living of those elements of "good"—that's what goodness is. So goodness, as we see it manifested in the lives of human beings, then, will be the living traits and characteristics of God. He is good, and therefore goodness is living the nature of God, and God's nature is a nature of love. He *is* love; therefore, goodness is the full manifestation of love. So, if God is good, the results, then, are the manifestations of the character of God—of God's nature. And that nature is a nature of love, as I said.

So up to this point in our study on this matter of goodness, we have seen a number of Hebrew words and also a couple of Greek words. But we have come at this point to the Hebrew word *toov*. And we have seen the greatness and the scope of God's goodness—very, very beautiful expressions in the Bible of the awesome goodness and character of God. Sometimes when we read those things, it is just an element of inspiration that is impossible for us to contain because God is so good, so righteous, so holy, so just, that He is deserving of the adoration and the worship of humanity. That is the goodness and the character of God.

So we have now come, then, to subtopic number seven on this particular word which is the last one to complete our study on goodness. And that subtopic number seven is, "Who can, then, enjoy the goodness of God?" God permits someone to actually enjoy His goodness. It's like a blanket that covers a certain number of people—whoever they are. Somebody called and chosen by God, then, is permitted to experience the goodness, the greatness, the majesty, all the thrilling

experiences of God's things—and it is exciting. And it is most meaningful in the lives of those that have been permitted to understand and see it, and to be able to master the self and to be able to exhibit the traits and characteristics of the goodness of God. Oh, what a marvelous, marvelous experience it is.

Just who can enjoy the goodness of God? So let's get right on into the subject, then, and see if we cannot complete it in this tape number eleven. Here in Psalm sixty-five and verse four—which answers the question, who can enjoy the goodness of God? Psalm 65 and verse 4:

"Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth." Now, that doesn't mean all of humanity, then. You know, when you have a choice, it means that some are on the outside and some are favored by the choice. Otherwise, the word choice has no meaning. If I line up a group of people or if I have an entire number of people—whatever that may encompass; maybe it's a city, a state or whatever—and I choose somebody out of that, it is only the one chosen that fits the bill, then, isn't that true? Now, notice what he says: "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee." No one, of his own volition, then, can come into a direct relationship with God. It is a matter of choice on the part of God. We do not will to do these things in our own right; we must be chosen, and then, by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, the power of that Spirit itself causes us to approach unto Him.

"[T]hat he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." The holy temple, of course, refers back to the temple in ancient Israel where the presence of God was—where God said He would meet with them. And, if you will remember, in the marvelous prayer of Solomon—when he was still right with God—he said, in referring to this temple, that "even the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. How much less this tabernacle that is right here? Nonetheless," he said, "when we come into its presence, we are coming into your presence. And when we look to it, we are the recipients of all your divine favor." You may read of it back in the book of 1 Kings and of 2 Chronicles—a beautiful prayer that relates to the place where God said that He would appear before His own people. Well, you know, "church" is but the spiritual type of that today. We may not have a literal temple, but it is coming into the presence of God because that is where God meets with His people. And if we truly are God's people—the chosen of God who are faithful and

obedient to that which He has revealed to us—then God is there; God is present; His Spirit is there. Jesus Christ is meeting also with those same people because He is meeting with His own brothers and sisters. You know, I think that when we come into the presence of God, we are sometimes more aware of our human brothers and sisters and somehow forget that we have somebody else there. Or maybe we take it for granted. But God Almighty is there if we are right before Him, and Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, is there with us also. And it is a special and unique place. I don't care if it's a rented building; I don't care where it is; because God Almighty is not concerned at the present time with whether or not we own it, or whether or not it's made out of bricks, or wood, or marble, or something else, God is concerned with the people who are there. That's the holy habitation at the present time. And when their spirit is right, then God is absolutely, extremely happy and satisfied with the nature and the character of those people because they are doing the right thing; because they are manifesting the fruits of God's Holy Spirit.

So He said here that it is the man that He chooses that He causes to approach unto Him. "[T]hat he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house." So the goodness of God, then, is not always manifested in our vegetable gardens; it isn't always manifested in our jobs. Oh, I am not saying that is not a manifestation of the goodness of God, because God knows that we are human and that we have need of those vegetables and that we have need of jobs. But, remember, that is secondary. The first priority is the house of God. And what is in the house of God? Spiritual things. Do we labor first and foremost for the physical? Are our lives oriented around the things that we do—our day-by-day responsibilities, our jobs, our farming, our vegetables, or whatever it is? There is nothing wrong with those if we correctly prioritize our lives. But the first thing is to seek the Kingdom of God. We must put spiritual things first. So it says very clearly that if we are the chosen of God, "we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house." We are going to be imbibing, then, of those spiritual things, the Kingdom of God, first—those things which proceed from the very Spirit of God. And they are going to be awesome and so meaningful to us. Why? Because we have recognized our physical natures for what they are and we have, then, on the other hand, recognized the awesome power, the meaning, the character, the greatness, the benevolence, the goodness of God Himself—those things which are spiritual in nature. We have recognized that and we want to put on that nature and that character. Goodness is a part of God's Holy Spirit and God's Law is Spirit and it is life.

So, then, a part of the manifestation of the very laws and the Way of Life of the Eternal God is goodness. It *is* goodness—that's what it is all about. So if, then, we are the chosen of God, then we are going to satisfy ourselves with the goodness of the house of God—even of His holy temple. We are going to partake of those things; we are going to enjoy them. And, you know, I so often think of what my elder brother—in this case, not Jesus Christ, but one who is older physically than I—David said: "Oh, how love I thy law." And I think, to some degree at least, I can reflect that same thought. You know, there isn't anything in this life that is so meaningful and so rich to me as all the Law of God. I don't mean that I live up to it perfectly, unfortunately. I am not satisfied with my own growth and my own life, and I suspect that none of you are. But that doesn't mean that if we are right with God, and if we are in contact with God, and if the Spirit is dominant in our lives, that we do not just thrill to the truths of God. How great and meaningful are those laws and His Way of Life. Yes, as David said, we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Him—of His house and of the Holy Temple of God. And that temple today is, of course, made up of the members in particular of the Body of Jesus Christ. Yes, that is the Temple that the Apostle Peter wrote about. So today the Temple is made up of human beings called and chosen by God to understand that Truth and to manifest that characteristic or trait of the Holy Spirit, goodness, as well as all the others.

So, who can, then, enjoy the goodness of God? Those that are chosen—those that are caused to approach unto God. It doesn't mean just anybody who wills. You've got to be called. God has to have called you. And when God calls you and He makes it possible and He gives you the Holy Spirit, then you can be thoroughly, abundantly, richly satisfied in the goodness of the Truths of God. And when you are the recipient of all of that blessing from God, how full, how rich, how complete, how marvelous it is to come before God, then, in His Church—in His house—and into contact with other brothers and sisters who are lively stones of that same spiritual Temple. What a marvelous experience.

But, now, if we are going to reflect upon our differences, our animosities; if we are going to reflect upon the nature of man; if we are going to allow these traits and these characteristics to affect us, and we are going to go out before Almighty God in the very House of God carrying these physical traits—these animosities, these natural resentments—then we are going to obscure and throw a blanket over, just to that extent, the joy that we might have otherwise experienced in that

spiritual relationship. Brethren, it means we should lay down all these physical traits and characteristics and come before God with the whole nature crushed out—coming before God with no other purpose than to exhibit the awesome characteristics of God's Holy Spirit: goodness, love, joy and all of these marvelous traits and characteristics.

But, you know, sometimes we are so embroiled in our own natural traits and characteristics, we carry those first, thinking that we are totally justified in it rather than to bury them—to overlook, to give all honor and respect to someone else. You know, there is such great meaning in being able to lay down the self and just say, "My life doesn't count, but I don't want, in any way, to obscure, to hurt, to injure another human being. I just simply don't want to do it. And I am going to leave the door wide open because God is the ultimate judge anyway." And God is going to judge all, and He has already appointed the Judge to do that. Which means that if He has appointed somebody to do it, and the time to do it, then now is not the time and we are not the judges. That's what it means. So, then, let's satisfy ourselves with the goodness of God. Why? Because, brethren, we have been called to understand. And God has given us understanding. God has given us the capability of experiencing all this majesty, this greatness of God—all these marvelous traits and characteristics. Let's enjoy them—let's live that Way of Life. Let's satisfy ourselves with the goodness of God.

Next I want us to turn to Psalm one hundred twenty-eight and let's note verse five and then go back and read verses one through six. Psalm 128 and note verse 5. It says: "The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem." Now, remember, Jerusalem is the apple of the eye of God. Why? Because it was the center of His government; it was the location of His Church; it was the area from whence the Truth went forth. ". . . all the days of thy life." So here it says, "The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion." And when you understand Zion in its correct spiritual context, we are talking about a church today. "[A]nd thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem." The *good* of Jerusalem. The term "the good of" here is exactly the same word, *toov*. "Thou shalt see *the good of* Jerusalem all the days of thy life." If Jerusalem, in this case, reflects, then, the spiritual characteristics of God's church, the Body of Jesus Christ, those who are living the full will of the purpose of God—which it must—then obviously we must see the good of the Body of Jesus Christ all of our days. What it means, therefore, is that we are going to see the intervention of God; we are going to see

all the love of God; we are going to see all the manifestations of the traits and characteristics of God—of His goodness toward His people who love Him, who honor Him, who respect Him, and who are faithful and obedient.

Let's go back and get it in context now: "Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and it's the beginning of knowledge. So blessed is everyone that fears the Eternal. Why? By that fear, we are restrained—we are constrained—we are held in check so that we do not allow ourselves liberty to do the things that *we* will or purpose. We are constrained by our fear and respect for God. Whereas, if we have no fear for God and we fear only the self and physical circumstances, we are going to manifest no faith and we are going to manifest a defiant and rebellious spirit against God. But if we fear God more than we do all physical things and all circumstances and conditions of life, then we are certainly going to obey that which we fear most, are we not? So, "Blessed is everyone that fears the LORD." The reason for that blessing is not the fear in its own right, it's that fear compels us to do that which is right, and by doing that which is right, we become the recipients of all the blessing of God, the good of Jerusalem, or the good of His Body today—where God works today; where God appears today; where God is continuing His favorable, benevolent, awesome work today. Then if we are responsive to that fear, we can be the recipients of all the goodness, the love and the character of God today.

Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.
For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.

What does he mean by that? How many people, my dear brethren, labor and labor and labor, and others consume their productivity—they gain the advantage? Here is a promise and an assurance from God that if we will do the right thing—if we fear God, if we walk in His ways—we are going to eat the labor of our hands. Now, it also means that we are laboring—we are not indolent and indifferent. You know, God is not the author of this indolence and this libertine philosophy that exists today. Brethren, let's never allow ourselves to get caught by that very concept—by which we believe that we can gain great advantage when we don't put anything into it. It just simply is not going to work. There is no free lunch, as we are being told hundreds of times today. There isn't any such thing. Somebody is producing that. But, you know, in order to buy votes, they have been handing out free lunches for a long, long time, but at the expense of somebody. And that

somebody is the limited number of people that are working, and somebody else is taking an advantage from it. Brethren, there are no free lunches. Somebody has to produce it. Now, can you imagine what this world would be like if everyone were producing? I mean production across the board—nobody with his hands or palms up, but all-out producing. Can you imagine what a marvelous, glowing economy we would have? Why, it would be absolutely phenomenal.

But, no, everybody has been looking for a shorter work week; more vacation time; more of this and more of that. You know, they don't find satisfaction in what they are doing. They don't find satisfaction in the endeavors of life. And there are good reasons. It's because both sides, as we know them today, are wrong. They are taking advantage on both sides. There are people who are attempting to take every advantage of the laborer. But, then, conversely, the laborer is striking back, and so he is trying to take every advantage of the one who is producing with his privilege of work. And you cannot possibly have a good, soaring economy and benevolent circumstances, where the two factions and the two forces of life are fighting one another. Well, brethren, that ought also to tell us that we can't have all the abundance of life which God purposes for us if we are fighting internal battles and fights. The only way we are ever going to have it is if we fight ourselves. So why doesn't the man who creates the jobs fight his normal, natural lusts, and his envy, and his hate, and his greed? And why does the laborer not fight his tendency to take every advantage? No, they are not going to do that. The laborer is going to hang on to his greed and he is going to hang on to his philosophy of taking every pound of flesh that he can possibly get. Well, then, we are going to find on the other side that the other party is going to strike back, and so they are going to take every advantage. And so the fight gets more intense and severe as the days go by. And now we, in the end of time, are reaping the whirlwind that has been created because of these natural tendencies—exhibited by humankind from the beginning to our day.

What a marvelous thing it would be, if the man who creates the jobs would look for avenues by which to serve his employees, and the employees would turn around and look for glorious opportunities to serve their employer. But, you know, that is a one-hundred-and-eighty degree turn. Now, we may see it in the field of economics; we may see it in the field of politics; we may see it in the field of employee/employer relationships; but do we see it in families? Do we see it in churches? Do we see it manifested in all of our other relationships in life? Oh, so

infrequently. So, here the Psalmist David said—as inspired by God: "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands." God says that if we labor correctly we will be blessed—I don't care what is going on in the world. Don't look at it and say, "Well, if I don't get my pound of flesh first, somebody else is sure going to take it from me." Remember, you are not serving for what human beings can do. Remember, God said that for whomsoever you work, work as though you were working directly for Jesus Christ. Is Jesus Christ going to take His pound of flesh, or did He give it for you? Which? So, wherever you are, and whatever the circumstances, remember you are doing it as unto Christ. And if you will only do it that way, he said, then, "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands." So if you want to be sure—I mean if you really want "social security", if you want some form of economic security in life—just deliver the goods today, and the promise has already been given to you. God is going to see you through—I don't know how, I don't know by what circumstances. I don't know what God will do, but God is going to see you through. Can we accept the promise and the assurance of God at face value and go forth and labor and put forth all the effort that God requires of us, knowing that He is going to take care of us tomorrow? God has promised. Let's have faith and confidence in Him.

And then he continues, "[H]appy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee." You know, if we will just turn the whole philosophy around and just go out and work and put our all into it and deliver the goods in every sense of the word, rather than to worry about the self constantly, we will be blessed—if we labor diligently with whatever our hands find to do, with a right spirit, laboring as though we were working directly for Christ. And, then, if human beings turn around and take advantage of us, remember, you are also working for tomorrow because God said the laborer shall eat the efforts—the rewards—of his own hands. It is a promise to you.

Now it says, "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine"—of the one that fears God. A very, very marvelous wife that "shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house." Abundant, glorious in beauty, in purpose, benevolence and kindness. And then also, "thy children like olive plants round about thy table." We can have all of these benevolent things; we can have this kind of relationship in life, if we will just do what God expects of us and live up to it. "Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD." *There* is the means by which we can have that blessing.

"The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion." That is, God is going to bless us from His Holy hill, "and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem." You are going to see the good, in this case, of all that Jerusalem represents spiritually, not just physically. Which was true of ancient Israel, but, remember, it is no longer Jerusalem in the physical sense, it is Jerusalem in the spiritual sense, as the Apostle Paul explained in the book of Galatians. And, so, all that Jerusalem represents spiritually today, we are going to see the good of it all the days of our lives—not just today. We don't have to worry about tomorrow. Let's put our hearts into the things—the responsibilities—that are incumbent upon us today, and tomorrow is going to take care of itself. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Let's concern ourselves with the responsibilities that are given to us at this moment and then tomorrow will take care of itself.

Now, that doesn't mean that we should never plan—that we should not fulfill any specific responsibilities. "Go to, thou sluggard, and consider the ant." The ant does store for the year. So, there is nothing wrong with it, then. And I assume that on the basis of that very instruction, God intends for us to give serious consideration to a year's responsibilities in the matter of our laying aside and our fulfilling of certain responsibilities that God has given to us. I think God expects us to consider those distinct responsibilities because things don't grow through the wintertime. So, therefore, in the spring, summer and fall, we should give attention to the yearly responsibility there. That is a yearly responsibility, but most things involve a conduct of our lives on a day-by-day basis. That's what He is referring to. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Let's take care of the duties and responsibilities of today. Whatever is set before us, let's do that today; let us not be worrying about tomorrow, and by worrying about tomorrow, next week, and next month, we defectively perform the responsibility of this day. So, let's give our all—our total responsibility—then, to the charges that are incumbent upon us today.

"Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel"—verse six. Thou shalt see thy children's children. It means that you are going to live to be old—that's a long physical life, longevity of life. You are going to live to see your children's children, but then, you are also going to see peace upon Israel. What is the type of Israel today? You are going to see peace upon the Church of God—upon the very people of God. Now, we can have that—it's a promise and an assurance that God has given to us.

These are the promises of God. But what if we turn out to be rebellious? Israel did. Then what happens to them? I want you to notice what he said over here in Hosea the tenth chapter. Hosea ten and I'm going to read from the *Living Bible*. But first I want to read verse eleven from the *King James* translation. Hosea 10:11. And here he said: "And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck." The word "fair"—f-a-i-r—is exactly the same word, *toov*. It means the goodness that was showered upon Israel. ". . . upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods."

I want us to turn, now, to the *Living Bible*—and I always, of course, read the *King James* first so that I make sure that the translators of the *Living Bible* did not go way out into left field. I want to make sure that it is basically accurate. Because where they did get the sense of what the *King James* is saying, they do beautifully translate it. Now, let's notice it here in Hosea 10 and beginning in verse 8: "And the idol altars of Aven . . ." Remember, Aven is one of the gods of ancient Israel, and we have spent a lot of time covering those gods in the services in Eugene—and many of you have picked up those tapes. "And the idol altars of Aven at Bethel . . ." *Bethel* meaning "house of God"—*Beth* is "house" and *el* is "God." So, the house of God, "where Israel sinned will crumble." That is, the idols are going to fall down. But where did they set up those idols? Right in the very house of God. It was not that Israel left and went into the Gentile domain. No, they brought the Gentile religion into the very house of God. Now, I say, brethren, if the history of ancient Israel is written for you and me upon whom the ends of the world are come, what does that do with the house of God in the last days? You figure it out. And it says:

And the idol altars of Aven at Bethel where Israel sinned will crumble. Thorns and thistles will grow up to surround them. And the people will cry to the mountains and hills to fall upon them and crush them.

Look at the very people of God who are going to cry to be extinguished from the very presence of God. They are going to cry to the mountains and hills to fall upon them and crush them.

"O Israel, ever since that awful night in Gibeah . . ." This was a night when apparently—and I did not check out the history—they turned in defiant rebellion against God.

. . . there has been only sin, sin, sin! You have made no progress whatever. Was it not right that the men of Gibeah were wiped out?

So, apparently some very horrendous thing happened in Israel and God wiped out all of Gibeah. And now there is great remorse for the loss of those people.

I will come against you for your disobedience; I will gather the armies of the nations against you to punish you for your heaped-up sins. Ephraim is accustomed to treading out the grain—an easy job she loves. I have never put her under a heavy yoke before; I have spared her tender neck.

In other words, it is talking about the beauty that God had given to her. It was the reflected glory of God because the very expression here, "I have spared her tender neck," is the translation of the one back here in Hosea ten and verse eleven in the *King James* where it said, "But I passed over upon her fair [that is, *toov*, 'good'] neck." God passed over because of all the beauty and because of His purpose for Israel—for Ephraim specifically. "I have spared her tender neck. But now I will harness her to the plow and harrow." Which means that God is going to put her through horrendous tribulation—difficult times and horrible circumstances.

"Her days of ease are gone. Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will reap a crop of my love." What did he say? Plant the good seeds of righteousness. Brethren, if we are going to learn out of the historical examples of ancient Israel, it means that we had better plant the good seeds, then, of obedience to *all* the laws, statutes, and judgements of God—the total way of the Eternal God.

"Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will reap a crop of my love; plow the hard ground of your hearts." He didn't say to worry about somebody else, He said why don't you start working on stony, hard hearts—hearts of defiance, hearts of rebellion? Brethren, my dear brethren—the people of

God—why did God write these things in His Bible? If man is to live, not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, then we ourselves need not worry about others, but we had better start working on our own stony hearts and minds. We had better start plowing the hard ground of our own hearts, "for now is the time to seek the Lord." He didn't say to worry about somebody else. I can't change the life of another human being; I can't change the lives of anyone—a group, a city, a nation, or whomever it is—I can only change my own life. And so God says to start working on it. Plow that fertile soil; plow that heart and that mind; begin to work on the self.

"[F]or now is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and shower salvation upon you. But you have cultivated wickedness . . ."—which means that we have certified ourselves in our own wicked ways, our defiance and our rebellion. Wickedness is not what somebody else does, it is what we do with respect to our own lives. I can't worry about somebody else, I can only pray for them. I can concern myself in that way, but I cannot compel them to change. But I can change my own life.

We too often cultivate our own wickedness. Israel did it, and Israel is a type for us today. "But you have cultivated wickedness and raised a thriving crop of sins. You have earned the full reward of trusting in a lie." Oh, if I could only tell you what all of that means. How many of the people of God today—the people God chose—are out there trusting in lies today? It's because they won't listen—no one can tell them anything. They think everything is glorious, marvelous and beautiful with our former association—our former religious body—because they won't listen. I can't tell them anything, and no one else can either. No matter how many changes they make; no matter how much gloss they use; no matter how much they whitewash; no matter how much they change back and forth, no one ever puts two and two together. They have been trusting in lies.

But let's not worry about that, brethren. Are we trusting in lies ourselves? ". . . believing that military might and great armies can make a nation safe!" Now, this was with respect to ancient Israel. It was an historical example for us. So, as a physical nation—a nation that God had chosen and with whom He was dealing—they began to trust in military might. But in what are they trusting today? Well, the very counterpart of that: they are trusting in their own force; they are trusting in legal battles; they are trusting in all forms of physical manipulation.

That's all Israel was doing with her military might. So they began to believe in their military might, or they began to believe in their legal battles—their physical machinations. ". . . believing that military might and great armies can make a nation safe!" No, brethren, the only thing that is going to make us safe is the Truth of God, and we had better come to face that.

"Therefore, the terrors of war shall rise among your people, and all your forts will fall." What are the forts, spiritually, of human beings today? Second Corinthians five will tell you: the circumvallations of mind. We must crush and bring all the fortifications of mind down and bring them into captivity to Christ—to the mind of Christ.

[A]nd all your forts will fall, just as at Beth-arbel, which Shalman destroyed; even mothers and children were dashed to death there. That will be your fate, too, you people of Israel, because of your great wickedness. In one morning the king of Israel shall be destroyed.

And I want to tell you that there is an appointed day coming and it is going to be a major revelation. But, you know, when that day comes, it is already too late. It's only tribulation that will save. My dear brethren, why cannot we use good intelligence right now—the spiritual conversion of the past, the intelligence of minds and hearts today—and look, and realize and understand, and make decisions without being compelled to make them through the trials, difficulties and tribulations of the future? That's coming, and most assuredly, the vast majority of the people of God will not make good decisions, but will remain faithful, not to God, but to an organization or to human beings until that fateful day. Then they are going to turn in wrath and contempt.

Now, quickly, brethren, point number eight: "Men need always to be cognizant of God's goodness." Let's see if we can't remember the goodness of God always. Here in Isaiah sixty-three. Isaiah sixty-three and verses seven through nine. Isaiah 63 and beginning in verse 7:

I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel.

Yes, the great goodness of God toward the house of Israel—and the house of Israel today is spiritual Israel, His Body of people.

. . . which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

But then He found defects in them. Notice what you find beginning in verse 10 and reading from there on down through several verses; He finds that they rebelled:

But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?

God said in Hebrews the tenth chapter and verse thirty-two that *we* should remember the days of old. Why can't we think back and remember our former days—all the goodness of God? Did that goodness of God come because we were in error? No, that goodness came because God had given us a Way of Life and because the people were faithful and obedient to Him. But because of circumstances and because of the natures of men and of the minds of men, they turned from that Way of Life and began to worship a body—an organization and human beings—and they are going to have to pay the price in due time. But, brethren, there are some who are faithful to God. Will you be a part of that faithful group?

Then, point number nine: "The response of the righteous to God's goodness." Here in Isaiah the sixty-fifth chapter and I want you to notice verse fourteen. Isaiah 65 and verse 14: "Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." It says, "My servants shall sing *for joy of . . .*"—that is, *for goodness of heart*; "my servants shall sing" for that abundance. So what I have asked here is, "What is the

response of the righteous to God's goodness?" They are going to sing—that is, they are going to sing the praises of God. They are filled with the awesome love and the character of God. You just can't keep the tongue quiet of somebody that has been filled and saturated with that goodness and the love of God. They are going to sing about it and they are going to exhibit that awesome praise.

In Jeremiah the thirty-first chapter. Jeremiah thirty-one and let's note verses twelve and fourteen. Jeremiah 31, verses 12 and 14: "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD." It's the word "goodness" here. That is, they are going to flow together to the *goodness* of the Lord; those that have the same common Spirit are not going to be divisive; they are not going to be separated; they are going to be one in Spirit, in mind and in heart—they are going to flow together. How in the world can you separate people who have the same affinity, the same affection, the same love and the same regard? This wretched concept and idea that we can go out and do our own thing and stand individually is absolutely contrary to the will of God. God said they are going to meet together; they are going to be together; they want to be together to share in the goodness and the awesome character of God.

And then you find also verse 14—Jeremiah 31:14: "And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness." God is going to satiate the faithful—the obedient, the responsive, chosen people of His own—and they are going to be satisfied with all of the awesome goodness of God.

Then in Hosea three and verse five. Hosea three and let's note verse five—remembering that we are talking about the response of the righteous to the goodness of God. Hosea 3 and verse 5:

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

You know, people are going to go through tribulation. Read all of the earlier part of Hosea chapter three where it says that God's people are going to go through terrible times and trials, but they are going to learn their lessons and they are going to come back in the fear of the Eternal and in His goodness. They are

then going to abide within the center of His will and in the greatness and the goodness of God in these latter days. It means they are going to return. I've said so many times that, yes, these people are going to come back, but we had better be praying about it—that they might not become a part of the incorrigible before God begins to intervene and to bring them back. They are going to come to see and understand, and they are going to satisfy themselves with the goodness of God in that appointed time.

Point number ten, then: "When goodness is experienced by the righteous, life's circumstances are at rest." That is, everything about us is going to be at rest. Let's notice Proverbs the eleventh chapter and verse ten. Here, the preacher—that is, Solomon—had something to say about the conditions of life. Proverbs 11 and noting verse 10: "When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting." The expression, when "it goes well" is the exact same word: *toov*—goodness. Goodness is with the righteous. When there is goodness, then the city rejoices—that is, there is a day of recognition. It is going to pay dividends if we can just look beyond today—if we can see tomorrow, spiritually, but labor for the day. If we can see tomorrow—where there is no vision, the people perish.

And, then, in conclusion, point number eleven: "Israel, as an example, turned from the goodness of God." And if it's an historical example, it means that the church also turned in the last days—except for a rare handful that have kept the faith once delivered. Let's notice Jeremiah two and verse seven in conclusion now. Jeremiah 2 and verse 7: "And I brought you into a plentiful country . . ." God did so for His own people. Look what He has given to us, if we could only remember our past. ". . . to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof." God has given us all this abundant goodness. "[B]ut when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination." They did it in ancient Israel—and Israel is a type—and it has happened again, prophetically, in our day.

Next time, brethren, the fruit of "kindness."