



Summer Fruit-Part 6
Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness
Pastor Mike Fabarez

I want you to think of popcorn for a minute. Buttery, warm, freshly popped popcorn. It smells really good. Gas station restrooms on the interstate. Texaco, abandoned or barely functioning. That doesn't smell so good. You'll smell something really good if you step up to the storefront and walk through the doors into a bakery, an active working bakery. You're going to get a tremendously good smell. If you were to remove a manhole cover and walk down into a sewer pipe, you're going to have a completely different experience. There's obviously a connection, an obvious and organic connection between what you experience with the wafting aroma in your nose to the source of that smell. I mean, it's just an obvious connection. And it's a good thing for us to see that connection and to understand it, because our hands are not calloused from farming this week and the perspective and illustration of fruit may not be quite as common in our weekly experience as your nose that works overtime to give your brain a sense of what is good and what is not good, what is repulsive and what is attractive. I mean God's given you a whole palette of smells. You know, mint and sweet and woody and all these floral smells, all these things that your body, your brain, your mind goes, "that smells good."

There are a lot of smells that don't smell so good. And I say smell sometimes is a good analogy because it's not foreign to the Bible, it's used in the Bible in Second Corinthians Chapter 2 verses 14 through 16. It says that we are to be in this world "a fragrance of Christ." We are to spread the "aroma of Christ" everywhere. Well, there's the picture of a connection to Christ that is supposed to somehow give people that encounter us an experience, much like we would have an experience walking into a bakery and having the pleasant smells of a loaf of bread that's cooking, baking.

The connection there is helpful because if you ally yourself with the Spirit of God, as we've been learning in Galatians Chapter 5, there are some necessary things that come from that. And of course, we've said when you ally with Christ, you ally with the triune God, if you have the Spirit in relationship in your life in a way that there's harmony, you are in step with the Spirit, as it says in Galatians 5, there's going to be an outgrowth of that. There's going to be, if you will, an aroma, a fragrance. Much like there might be when you bring your sacrifice in the Old Testament to the worship service and you put that animal there with the assistance and mediatorial work of the priest, there's going to be this big barbecue smell. It's like driving past a steakhouse or a barbecue place. It will smell really good. It smells good in a symbolic way, as the Bible says, before God. It's a pleasing aroma to God. Of course, God doesn't have a nose and he doesn't have, you know, olfactory senses. Right? He knows all of that, of course, but he doesn't have a body. But it's a symbolic sense of that person is coming and showing his worship and his sacrifice and his devotion to me, and it smells good. But then there's the real smell that everyone around gets to experience.

I mean, if you were there and you might be a part of the fellowship sacrifice that day or whatever, and you're actually going to eat, you're going to participate in eating this. It's going to be lunch for

you. And that worship experience of smelling that and eating, that's a great positive experience you have even though that sacrifice has been lifted up symbolically to God. We're called in Romans 12 to be ourselves, as our lives, as living sacrifices. And of course, the direction is I want to, as we said initially, bear fruit to God in this series. I want the Fruit of the Spirit to be something God looks at, who takes joy, as the psalm says, in good works. Right? Psalm 11:7. He loves good works, "He loves righteous deeds." But we know those righteous deeds, they affect the people around us. And that's what Galatians Chapter 5 verse 22 helps us understand when we think about the Fruit of the Spirit being love, joy, peace, patience and kindness, the five that we've studied so far, we know if we're actively engaged in seeing that wafting from our lives because of our close relational alliance with God, well then people are going to have much different experiences with us than if we practice the evidence of the flesh that's filled with all the opposites.

Now, that's important for us to define, because we've said love, joy, peace, patience and kindness, all of those have artificial substitutes that the world is presenting to us. What the world might call love the Bible might not call love. What the world might call kindness the Bible might not call kindness. Well, we've reached number six on the list. Number six, as I said earlier, is the word "goodness." Which is interesting. If you read systematic theologians on this concept of God's goodness, you recognize it's almost a catchall for all of the moral qualities of God. The excellencies of God. The things that we would say that makes God righteous. There are words in the Bible we're used to saying in association with God. We think of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6 crying out, "holy, holy, holy." Now that concept of holy in its basic form is the fact that he is different from us. It really means separate. God is separate. He's holy. He's not like everything else. He's in a category by himself. We use words like glory, "the whole earth," in that same passage it says, "is full of his glory," his greatness, his bigness, everything reflects on him. But if you want to add the moral quality to it, you need a different word. You need the word that we're going to talk about today, the word goodness. He is separate and different from us. He is big and great and impactful in all that he makes. But the thing that makes him the God that we know of is the fact that he is a good God. He's a God who does certain things in a certain way that he defines as right, as good. Just like with all of these: love, joy, peace, patience and kindness, when we talk about goodness, we'd better define it by God's definition. Because in this world, like Isaiah Chapter 5, there are a lot of people saying what you say is good, I think is evil. And what you think is evil, I think is good. The Bible says be careful as you live in a culture that calls evil, good and good, evil that you define good the way I define it. This holy God who is completely separate. Sometimes people disconnected from him in their sin can start to value things that God does not value. They can start to exalt and prioritize and say, "this is good," when God says, "no, that's not good."

So we need to step back and this is a hard sermon to preach because the idea of the goodness of God could take you after this sermon is over in a lot of different directions. I mean, most sermons should have a very clear purpose in what is this passage leading us to do? Goodness is a category. Goodness means we are reflecting God's moral excellence. That might look one way for you and a different way for you over here. It's just all combined and confined within the definition of who God is, because God becomes the standard. So if you're taking notes, every time we get to one of these virtues that the Spirit of God is wanting to produce in our lives, we have to stop and make



this clear exhortation. That is, as I put it on my notes, when it comes to our goal here it is, number one, "To Ponder the Goodness of God," to study the goodness of God, to think about and consider and reconsider what it means that God is good.

When a rich young attorney came up to Jesus, you might remember, he called him "good teacher." Now, that would be like, I don't know, an honorific title, a thing you might say that you would expect Jesus to say, "Oh, thanks." But instead, if you know that passage, do you remember what Jesus said when the rich young attorney comes to him and says, "good teacher?" He responds with something out of left field you wouldn't think he'd say. Especially because there are a lot of people in the Bible who are called good. But Jesus says, let's think about the word you just used. Good. He said, "No one is good except God alone." That's a huge statement. No one is good but God alone. Well, wait a minute. You're calling people good. You're calling Noah good, Daniel good, Job good. I mean, there are a lot of good people who are described as good in the Bible. But Jesus is making very clear, whatever you define as good in people's lives, it is a derivative, reflective kind of good. It's an imperfect kind of good. If you really want to talk about what the standard of goodness is, there's only one good standard, and that is God himself.

Matter of fact, everything that God is becomes good. So if you're going to be good, a lesser, reflective, derivative good in this world, you need to really take a good look at what does it mean that God is good? What are his moral perfections? You want to say he's holy, that's one thing. You may think about good, but really, that just means he's in his own category. Well, then Peter's quick to say in First Peter 1, I know you say he's holy. Now you try to be like him in all your behavior. "Be holy yourself also in all of your behavior." Well, then, if you really want to describe what that behavior looks like, you've got to use the word "good." It's something that is good.

I'd like you to turn in your Bibles to an interesting passage of Scripture. All really for one phrase but the whole context is helpful. It's in the book of Exodus. Please turn to Exodus 33. In Exodus 33, if I were to ask you, when did Moses go up to the mountain on Sinai and get the Ten Commandments, you would say, well, I would hope as a Sunday school grad or a Compass Bible Institute grad, you would say Exodus Chapter 20. So he goes up on the mountain in Exodus 19 and he gets the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. But that wasn't going to be the only time he goes up there because they've got a lot going on between Exodus 20 and Exodus 33.

But that experience on the mountain, you might remember, lightning flashes, a pillar, the glory of God, all these weird visual representations of the greatness of God. Moses here in Chapter 33 wants that experience again. He's going to ask for that experience again. You might remember some of the things that are describing Moses as a great prophet, a great man. How great is he? Look at verse 11, Exodus 33:11. It says, "Thus, the Lord used to speak to Moses face-to-face as a man speaks to his friend." Now, I already told you God doesn't have a nose because the Bible's very clear he's spirit. He perceives everything, of course, but he didn't have to perceive it through physical senses because God is not physical. God did not have any physical expression until the incarnation of Christ when his Son took on human flesh. But as a spirit, he doesn't have a face. So what are we talking about here? Face-to-face.



Well, we know what it means because when we look at what happened, he goes up onto a mountain and he has this experience with God that's like an unmitigated presence of God. Everyone else is saying, "I don't want to go up that mountain. That seems scary up there. Matter of fact, if God wants to talk to us, Moses, why don't you tell us what he said?" But Moses marches into that circle of God's unmitigated presence, it's not fully unmitigated, but it certainly unmuted, and into that presence he has this experience with God and he starts to be known as this prophet who is like the friend of God. You want to talk about being allied with Christ. I mean, that alliance with Christ is so close that even when he comes out of that mountain the second time, like the first, there's a visible expression.

Matter of fact, let's look at that. Look at verse 29. Drop all the way down to Exodus Chapter 34 verse 29. It says, "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God." Here again in a photonic sense, like an olfactory sense, like an agrarian sense, you have the connection between your alliance with God having an effect, a fruit effect, agrarian, like an aroma or fragrance of Christ. This olfactory sense. You smell up your office, you smell up your home. You bring the fragrance of Christ into your neighborhood. Here is a picture, a visible picture, a photonic picture of Moses' face glowing because he'd been with God. If you're around Moses, you get a reflection of God.

Go back up now, if you would, to verse 18. Moses has had the experience on the mountain and he wants it again. In Exodus 33 verse 18, he says, "Please, Moses said, show me your glory." And again, the words glory, the greatness. I want to see your greatness. I want to see the unmuted power and majesty of God. Just like when Christ, the second person of the Godhead, took Peter, James and John up on to a mountain, we call it the Mountain of Transfiguration. when he was transfigured before them and his face was glowing, his greatness, his visual presentation of the majesty and greatness of God. And he says, Moses says, "I want that, show me that." And he said, God said, I will make all of my, here's the phrase I'm getting to in Exodus 33, when he wants to summarize the totality of what Moses is going to experience, if you're going to ally with me on that mountain and have a real close, intimate, "face-to-face experience" with me, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to come by, "I'm going to make all my," here's the word, "goodness pass before you."

If you want to summarize God, here's a good way. It is the goodness of God. It is the good of God. It is the moral excellence of God. And everything that he is becomes the standard. And everything else is measured by that standard. If he is merciful, well, then that's right and you should be merciful. If he's patient, well, then that's right and you should be patient. If he's loving, well, then that's right, you should be loving. He becomes the objective standard. If something that you want to do and you might think is good is not in keeping with his moral attributes, then guess what? You may be calling it good but if God calls it evil, it's not good. That's why much like kindness, this is not some kind of perpetual agreeability that we just want to go around saying, well, whatever people think is good in the office, I'm going to be good this week to them. Whatever people think in my neighborhood I'm just going to try to be a good neighbor to them. Well, you need to define that goodness by the standard, the measure of all goodness, which is the intrinsic nature of God. How does God function?



Now, there are certain things we cannot reflect. We call them the incommunicable attributes of God. Theologians say those are the things that we can't reflect, in any perfect way at least, that he's a creator. Well, that's a category. I'm not the creator of the world. I can't be that. I can't try to be that. He is absolutely powerful, omnipotent we say. Well, I can have some power, but I can't be absolutely omnipotent. I'm not even going to try to be omnipotent. He's omnipresent. I'm finite. I'm going to be present in one place at one time. So I can't reflect that. So there are certain things that are incommunicable. Well, then there's the communicable attributes of God, and all of those become the moral standard that now I'm saying I want to be so allied with him, like Moses in that rock, in that cleft, when God's goodness passes by. Now when he's out of that situation, out of that cleft, he comes down and the goodness of God in a symbolic way by even his glowing skin, that goodness of God should be reflected. He should smell up. He should light up. He should bring fruit, the fruit of God, into every relationship, every conversation.

People should see the reflection of God in what Moses does. "He said, I will make my goodness pass before you and I will proclaim before you my name," and then he gives the name, Yahweh, Yahweh. It's translated there L-O-R-D, capital O-R-D, Yahweh. Yahweh comes from the verb "to be." He says it way back in the beginning of Exodus when he says, "Who do I tell Pharaoh is going to say, 'Let all these slaves go.'" Tell him "I AM" has sent you." Tell him the one who always exists. This independently existing one who is the measure of all that is good, is the great, glorious God, the holy God, the separate God and the thing that describes him is good. And I'm going to tell you about who I am and I'm going to summarize it with one word, "goodness." Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. Those are all part of what you could put under the umbrella of the goodness of God. We need to spend our lives, much like I said last week and the week before that, studying these virtues in light of how God exercises them, so you don't go around ever saying that evil is good or good is evil in this case.

God has been good. He's expressed it in creation. The beginning of creation Genesis 1 Chapter 1 verse 4, verse 8, verse 10. He keeps creating things, standing back and saying it is good. Then it says in the New Testament, even after the fall, First Timothy 4:4, the things that he's created, though they're not untarnished by sin, they're still good, the things that God created. So we see his beauty. We see his majesty. We see his goodness in the symmetry of creation. We see it in the fact that he is giving us a good shepherd. If you're a Christian, you have Christ as your king, not Buddha, not Mohammed, not Gandhi, not Confucius. Your king, your director is not some philosopher. It's Christ and he's the Good Shepherd and he's going to guide you. So much so that the need that you have, it says and John 10, is that he would lay down his life, the Good Shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep. So he's redeemed you, your sin problem solved in the death of Christ and he says, now follow me. I'm the shepherd. You're the sheep. Follow me. What I say is good is good. "In the paths of righteousness," to quote the Old Testament Good Shepherd psalm. I'm going to guide "you in paths of righteousness."

Which, by the way, we can add that not only is he good to us in creation and we learned last week in Psalm 145, in Common Grace, but he's also good to us in redemption in the Good Shepherd. It says at the end of that Good Shepherd Old Testament chapter, Chapter 23 of Psalms, it says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me," which is a much more active Hebrew verb than is



translated into English. He's going to chase me down. It's going to catch me. When? "When I dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, when there's unmitigated, unmuted goodness and mercy given to me.

So the consummation of God's goodness is what we look forward to. The experience of the goodness of God's leadership in our life, the goodness of redemption of the shepherd laying down his life for us, the goodness of Common Grace. As I said last week, the kindness of God to give us good meals, good experiences, a good night's sleep, whatever it might be, and the goodness of creation. All these things we start to study these little intricate parts of God's goodness in this world. We say, "OK, now I know what goodness is." Then we say, "Well I'm going to try to be that." Well, we might have a problem.

Talk about a bakery smelling good. Talk about popcorn smelling good. Here's one thing that doesn't smell good. Your armpits. Your armpits don't smell good. Well, they might smell okay right now, but you know why they smell OK? You sprayed something on them this morning, you rolled something on them, you slathered something on them this morning. You're hoping in this sweaty courtyard of Compass Bible Church that you're not going to stink the place up. Because inherently the way they're designed, these little exhaust pipes of our upper torso, they're going to start smelling bad.

As a matter of fact, we had the hygiene of the old days. It might be that it might take you seven, 10 days to get a bath. So I know this. Even if we had modern deodorants and antiperspirants, you could spray that on day after day, morning and evening, by the time we get to your bath day on Friday night, all we're doing is doing our best to mask it and it won't be doing a very good job. What we really need to do is dunk you in that tank, pull your arm up by your wrist, take a washrag and really scrub those armpits. That would help. But what would be better is if I had some kind of surgical process where I could take your armpit so no more did it collect that bodily bacteria and have all that sweat coming out and make this kind of exhaust pipe of your torso. If I could change all that, then maybe it would inherently not stink.

Church for many people is the deodorant of their lives. We're bringing you to church, you're hearing messages, your kids come to church, they kind of steer their way through problems. Your marriage gets a little better because you're listening to the podcast at Compass, and you get all this stuff slathered on, sprayed on your Christian life. And guess what? You're doing better now than you were a year ago.

But all we're doing is masking the problem that exists because still there's something inherently wrong with who you are. There will always be something wrong with who we are as Christians, but not at the core of who we are because the Bible says this. The problem with non-Christians is they have a heart that is wicked and evil and deceptive and illogical. That's how it's put in Jeremiah 17. There's something desperately wrong with your heart. Well, the plea in the beginning of Jeremiah Chapter 4 was I want to wash your heart. I want to "wash it clean from all the evil." There's the first picture, that would be great, that would be a lot better. But then by the



time the prophets start talking about what's really needed Ezekiel says what you really need... Matter of fact, I'd like you to turn there, Ezekiel 33. What you really need is a new heart.

I want you to look at this passage, because I think it is helpful for us to know, if we're taking notes, you can already put that down. Number two. Not only do we need to study and ponder the goodness of God. We need to "Ask God For a Good Heart." If you know what God's goodness is and you say my job is to do it, you can't do it, at least not successfully for very long, just like trying to keep your armpit smelling good for a couple of months, you're not going to do it unless there's something different about who you are. We need a good heart.

So I want you to look at this passage in Ezekiel. Actually, let's look at the Ezekiel 36 version of it. A couple of times we see this in the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel 36. In Ezekiel 36 you see two components that are important to this. If you're going to go and bear the fruit of goodness in your life this week that falls within the parameters of God's moral excellence, whatever those things might be for you, you need to know that unless there's something radically different about the interior of your life, then you'll probably have the life like I had before I became a genuine Christian. And that was I had a lot of church deodorant thrown on my life, which allowed me to conform to the expectations of people as long as they only looked at the outside of my life. But they didn't know what was going on in the inside of my life, which was not changed. If it's not changed from the inside then here's the thing. I can only, so long as I have the deodorant slathered on my life, the moral teaching of the church, maybe I can stay out of trouble. But what I really need is a heart that's going to beat in sync with God. I need a new heart.

Look at the passage. Verse 26. God says, "I will give you a new heart." I'm going to wash it, but I just need to replace it. "Let me give you a new heart and a new spirit, put that within you. I will remove the heart of stone." That's the real problem. It's dead to me, it doesn't really beat in sync with my will. I'm going to remove that from your flesh and I'm going to "give you a heart of flesh." I'm going to give you an interior that beats in sync with me. Now, that's a huge start. We're talking about you producing the fruit of goodness. We're talking about you smelling the fragrant aroma of goodness in the people that you will contact and talk with this week. When you are becoming a real Christian, you're not only just conformed to the exterior advantages of going to church, maybe reading the Bible, hearing sermons, kind of working hard to be better. But you have something inside that's different.

It would be like you being a paraplegic. Let's say you're like Joni Eareckson Tada. A friend of our church, a friend of ours. You know her, right? She loves the Lord, but she's in a body that doesn't work. Her limbs don't work. Quadriplegic. Not a paraplegic. Arms don't work. Legs don't work. Sits in a wheelchair. She has to steer around with her mouth. You've seen people like that if you don't know Joni. And if I said, Joni, let's go out and play golf this afternoon. I mean, you'd say that's really mean and cruel of you to ask her to go play golf. Well, it's really mean and cruel of me to say to you, let's live the Christian life of goodness and if you're not really saved. I could try to pull her out of her chair and hold her up and try and put her fingers around the club and I can try and swing her arms. We're not really playing golf. I'm just exteriorly... I'm just trying to change her.



But if I was able to, like Christ, speak complete, perfect health to her, and she now is no longer a quadriplegic. She's walking, strong muscles, strong calf muscles. She's got forearms and she's just a healthy woman who's able to grab that club, stand and address the ball and swing that club hard. I'd say, well, now I can take you out golfing.

Have you ever tried to play golf, by the way, healthy people? You can be as healthy as you want. It is a hard sport, really hard. Someone gets a hole-in-one, I've said this before, and I say, well, finally. Right? I mean, you've been trying the whole time. Haven't you? Every shot you try to get it in the hole and finally you got in the hole and we're all celebrating that. Well, if I could hit the golf ball perfectly, well then that would be great. But if you're a brand-new golfer, that's going to take a long time. Half of you it's going to take 20 swings to you actually make connection with the ball. It's a hard sport.

So if I could say to Joni, "Joni, now you're healed. Stand up. Let's play golf." She is able to play golf, but what she really needs is verse 27. She needs a coach. She needs someone other than herself standing there in the tee box to hit this ball. She needs direction, verse 27. Not only will I give you a new spirit, verse 27, "I will put my Spirit within you and cause you..." I'm going to be there. I'm going to be your coach, your guide, your power. I'm going to "cause you to walk in my statutes and to be careful to obey my rules." If I were the best golfer in the world and every time I swung the club, the ball went exactly where I wanted it to go, every par three, a hole-in-one. I mean every hole on the course, I hit it way down the fairway and then every approach shot goes right in the hole. And I said, now, Joni, I'm going to go with you on every hole and it will be hard at first. You're healthy now, you're able to do it. You weren't before, you were dead, your limbs were dead, but now they're alive. You're capable. I'm going to be your coach. I'm going to move you to do this.

Now we're at the place really that Jesus said we can be at when he said the problem with a bad tree bearing good fruit is it's incapable. You don't, here's how he put it, you don't collect figs off of some kind of tumbleweed, some bramble bush. You don't take grapes from thistles. You don't pull it out of a dry piece of weed, a tumbleweed. So, you've got to have a good tree that can bear good fruit. But that's not all that he put in that equation. When he talks about good fruit coming from a good tree, he then gets very specific and he says, you know, "It's the good man out of the good treasure," of his heart, "who brings forth good." There's our word. Well, you've got the good person who's got a good heart. It's relative goodness. It's derived goodness. It's a reflection of the goodness of God. But it's a creation of God. And now he's going to do good. But there's a word in between. There's this thing called the treasure, "out of his good treasure." See, here's the problem. You can have all the ability to live a Christian life as God has made you new. That's called the gift of regeneration. What we need now is for you to cooperate with the best golfer in the world who has promised to walk you through every shot, line you up in every putt. Help you with every part of it.

There's a lot of people who are genuine Christian, but they're playing lousy golf because they're not, as it says in Galatians 5, walking in step with the Spirit. They're not taking direction. The Fruit of the Spirit is that he has made your heart good as a new Christian, but now he is going to, as this passage says, the Spirit is going to move you, cause you to be careful to keep his rules. I



want you to know that many of us have to work really hard now that we have a new heart, I'll put it this way, number three, at "Purposing To Do Good." A purposing to do good is a directive to follow the good promptings of God's Spirit. And you know what the Spirit did to make sure you follow his promptings? He gave you a book that has all of the good shots in it, and here's how you do it. You have to build the treasure up to make those good shots.

Let's put it this way. If I'm saying to you, get out there this week and bear the fruit of the goodness of the Spirit, which is all this sermon's trying to do. And I said, OK, now I want you on Wednesday. Yeah, Wednesday. Think through your Wednesday. Whatever you got on Wednesday. You're going to go and you're going to bear the good Fruit of the Spirit of goodness. To do that, I just want to show you how important your morning time with the Lord is. You need to understand what the good book says from the good Holy Spirit who is going to now try to prompt you to do good. You have to spend time purposefully planning and thinking, purposing to do the good that the Spirit wants to accomplish. You have a healthy interior. Now you're trying to play in an overcoat. That's the problem with the flesh. Right? It's hard to play good golf. But you've got the best golfer in the world. He's the perfect golfer who's going to guide you with every shot. But you have to consult with him. You have to read what the next shot is. He's like your caddy and your coach and he's going to help every part of your Christian life. Think that through.

The problem with us not having time in the Word building the good treasure, we don't get good at bringing forth the good. It's that good heart and it has a good treasure that is built and then the good comes forth. If you do not spend time in the Word, if I said to you, how is your time in the Word every morning this week? I mean, did you have a good, healthy ingesting of the good Word of God? Did you spend time pouring out your heart and thinking through that Word and looking at the things you studied and thinking about God? See if there's any wicked evil way in me. Correct me. Lead me in paths of righteousness. If you didn't plan, what are the good shots I need to make today in my Wednesday schedule? What is the good you want me to accomplish? Well, then we're going to have trouble. You might have a good heart. You might have a God who wants you to make good shots, but you're not consulting with, you're not directing your life according to, you're not even spending time in the book that he wrote about how to bear fruit, good fruit, this Wednesday. You need good time in the Word. How important is that quiet time we call it? Critically important, essentially important. Because when you have those times, you can come out of that time and now say, I know what I'm to do. I'm purposing to do this good.

If you wrote it down, the third point here about purposing to do good, it's something that our culture is not big on anymore. We don't like resolving. We don't like committing. We don't like purposing. We like kind of to think that it's going to naturally happen. Our culture's not big on commitment, just any survey of marriage will show you that. The marriage rates for Boomers was 91%, for Gen Xers, 82%, for Millennials, 70%. And this is an old study. It's even worse. But even in that three demographic shifts we got in these successive sequential demographics, a 21% drop in people saying, "Hey, I'll marry you and I'll state that I'll stay with you, I promise." We don't have much of that going on. Matter of fact, the Atlantic, this article, lengthy, I didn't read it all, was about, you know, why we should just stop with all this trying to commit to each other anyway. Marriage - passé. Now again is not a sermon about marriage, but it certainly reflects that



we don't like to make these kinds of commitments. And I'm saying on a Wednesday morning, you should spend time in the Word and say, here's what it said, here are the principles. Now, here's what I should commit to do as a result of my study, memorization and meditation of the Word today.

That's a commitment we need to make. I'm going to go into my Wednesday and do these good works. That is critically important. But it isn't going to happen without you getting used to, as Jonathan Edwards proved in his teenage years, to make resolutions about doing what is right. Part of his resolution was to continue to make resolutions. That's the flavor, a lot of what he's saying. I need to get up and commit myself to the right thing and doing the right thing, not just once when I'm 18, but for the rest of the daily Christian life that I live.

Do you want some biblical support for that? Jot this one down. Second Thessalonians Chapter 1 verse 11. Second Thessalonians Chapter 1 verse 11 says, "To this end," Paul is praying for the Thessalonians, "we pray for you that our God may make you worthy of his calling." There are some good golf shots right there that you are one of the students of the great good Holy Spirit. "And fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power." Well, here's the assumption: you're making resolves to do good. I think we make those resolves to do good when we spend thoughtful time discerning what the will of God is for our lives and that means you're spending time in the Word. And again, I hate to sound so pedantic, so fundamental, so basic. I'm not trying to talk down or be condescending, but you need daily time, spending it with God in his Word and in prayer. You've got to do that.

Want a little support for that? How about this passage, Ephesians Chapter 5 verse 8? Ephesians 5:8 says, "We were once darkness, but now we're light." We were once... our heart was evil, but God has replaced our heart. So we have a heart now that wants to do right. Now it says purposely walk, walk. That's a second person plural imperative, do it. Here is the command. "Walk," make decisions, "as children of light." What does that look like? These are all analogies. The fruit of light is found in all that is good, all that is right, and all that is true.

Then the next verse is what I'm trying to get at in your daily time in the Word, verse 10. "And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord." Think about it. Wednesday, how do I please God and do the good thing today? In the morning, midday, afternoon, evening. What good does God have for me to accomplish? Purpose to do good starts with ingesting more of that good treasure with time in the Word. It's lived out and you being very specific about trying to plan more good every single day, reflecting God's goodness, not as some kind of passive, I just hope it happens to me today. But purposefully thinking about it, planning it, strategically committing to it.

Maybe God has you here today on this warm Sunday morning to hear the fourth point and the final point. When we learn about good in the Scripture, here's what we find. It's easy for us, particularly in a culture where people call evil, good and good, evil, for you to get discouraged and grow weary of doing good.

I going to close with this, Number 4. Jot it down, if you would. I want you to "Never Give Up On What Is Good." Never give up on what's good. I want you to look at a passage of Scripture that I

just quoted the essence of, but it's good for us to look at and to see it in Scripture. It's Galatians Chapter 6 verses 9 and 10. And then if you're taking notes, jot down next to that Psalm 73. You want an unpacked expression of Galatians Chapter 6 verse 9, which is "Do not grow weary in doing good?" We're going to read it really carefully and thoughtfully in a second. Then you need to spend time this afternoon or this week in Psalm 73. Asaph, the chief musician of David, writes this psalm, starting with the fact that I know God is good and I know he's good to his people and he ends with his commitment of good. It's a good thing for me to follow what God says. That's the paraphrase. But good, good. Both starting verse and closing verse. In between, it's a bunch of, "Yeah, but it's really hard." "Yeah, but I'm tired of doing it." "Yeah, but I'm getting a lot of pushback." "Yeah, but it doesn't look like it's paying off."

Well, here's the summation of what Asaph needed. It's found here in Galatians Chapter 6 verse 9. It says, "Let us not grow weary of doing good." Asaph was tempted, you might be tempted, you might be in situations like a marriage or your parenting or your work or whatever it might be, where the right thing is not being applauded, where the good thing is not bearing immediate fruit. It says, listen, keep at it. Look at this last section now, "For in due season we will reap." You want to talk about fruit? The fruit of the fruit of goodness, the fruit of the fruit of goodness sometimes takes a lot of time. Bear the fruit of good and say, well, you know what, if it takes time to have any good come from the good that I'm deciding to do, well then so what? I'm not going to give up. "We will reap in due season if we do not give up."

"So," verse 10, "So then let us, as we have opportunity, do good to everyone," everyone, "especially to those who are of the household of faith." I hope every morning you spend time in the Word and if you haven't been then this week, you'll be faithful every morning to do that, and to think about the good that you come out of your quiet time thinking about. I want you to prioritize as this verse says, verse 10, I want you to prioritize the people of God, always, always. First and foremost to God's people. You may not work with God's people, but make sure you don't have a day in the Word where you're not thinking about, I want the good Fruit of the Spirit to be exercised in the lives of the people, my brothers and sisters in Christ. And don't grow weary. You'll feel like you're swimming upstream. I get that and it can be hard. There's a lot of pushback, but don't grow weary of doing good.

And remember, good doesn't always mean whatever my friends think is good. In other words, it may be hard. I think of one passage in Romans 15 where Paul says, "I know you all are full of goodness and able to," here's a word back to our conference we had, "to 'noutheteo' one another." Remember what that word means? "Noutheteo" - "to exhort" or to, as it says in the English Standard Version, "to instruct. That's a hard word. That's a word to correct the wrong of other people. I know you're full of goodness. And the expression of good is sometimes things like even sitting down and saying what you're doing is wrong. A lot of times, it's helping someone move their furniture into the new condo. I mean, there's a lot of expressions of good that they're going to go, "Oh, thank you so much." Other times it's going to be like Nathan sitting down with David. It's going to be hard. But it's the expression of good. In your morning times with God, say, "God, what is the good you have for me?"



Matter of fact, let me wrap it all up with a verse that I think we often overlook. Let me just leave you with this haunting, mind-boggling, mind-blowing verse. Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 10. If you grew up in church, you certainly learned verses 8 and 9, talking about the fact that we are saved by grace, through faith. I mean, it's all about God's grace. It's not as the result of works. Did you memorize that? Smile at me if you memorized that passage. You did, right? Verse 10, we often don't allow or make our little children memorize, but we ought to. It says in the last verse, OK, we're not saved by our works. We don't try to climb a moral ladder of goodness to get to God. But once God saves us, it says that "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus." Do you know the next words? "For good works." And again, good works is a phrase we kind of maybe gloss over because we hear it all the time. Just think of what it is. Good, good things. Doing good. Good. "He's created us in Christ Jesus for good works."

Now, here's the mind-boggling part, "which he prepared beforehand" for us. Think about that. God has, speaking of your Wednesday, he has prepared on that Wednesday, if we make it to Wednesday, on that Wednesday, he's got a set of good works he's prepared for you to do. It says, here it is, the whole thing, "We are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which he's prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." There's the commitment part. I got to choose today to walk in them. I've got to figure out what they are and then I got to do them. Here's a mind-boggling verse. God has all kinds of good works he wants you to accomplish this week as an expression, like Moses' face shining, like the aroma and fragrance of the good Christ in this world, the Good Shepherd, he wants you to reflect all that. The Fruit of the Spirit of goodness.

But you're never going to get there if you don't, first of all, have a good heart, if not, you can try and just put some coat of lacquer on a non-Christian heart. No, you need a good heart. Repentance and faith. Trusting in Christ. A new regenerate heart. And now you need to purpose to do it. You do not grow weary of doing it. And I just want to end with this. You need to know that they're out there for you to do. You just got to decide. You've got to do it.

I going to encourage you this week, even the feedback I've gotten from last night and this morning from the first service, I think a lot of us needed a reminder on this crazy season we're in to just be more consistent in our time in the Word. I'm telling you, carve out... I mean, we got time for a lot of junk in our lives. Make time every morning this week for time in the Word, time in prayer, and make sure you don't get out of that time without asking God, what are the good works prepared beforehand that you have designed and sovereignly chosen for me to carry out today? Let me start right now by leading you in prayer, because the day ain't over. I don't know what you have planned for the rest of the day, but I know this: God has planned for you to do good. Matter of fact, he has redeemed you, the Bible says, by the blood and death of Christ, that you would become zealous to do that good, for those good works, Paul wrote to Titus. So let us pray that maybe even right now, we might practice what I'm asking you to practice after studying the Bible in the mornings to say to God, show me what those good things are.

Let's pray. Let me guide you in that. God, as a pattern of what I hope becomes a practice in our lives this week and more than this week for the rest of our Christian life. We would ask you, please, to give us a sense after we've just studied your Word to get specific, though we didn't get into any specific texts about specific acts. I mean, we referenced a couple. But God, give us a sense



of what those specific things are you'd have us to do. And not the kind of Christian that says, "Well, I got to involve all these people and they'd have to cooperate with me to pull it off."

No, just the things that I can do that you have provided and ordained and sovereignly chosen for me today before my head hits that pillow tonight, to say, here are some of the good things God I'm going to purpose to do, because I believe these are the good things you want me to do. Don't need to call a committee meeting. Don't need to have someone pony up any money. I don't have to have any issues or prerequisites. But here are the good things I should do on this Sunday. God help us to understand what those are. Even if it's a simple thing.

And to say I'm going to do those things for your glory today, because I want to be zealous for those, because I know Christ died to change my heart, to forgive me of my sin, to put his Spirit within me that he might guide me like a golf pro with a person who needs to learn to hit them straight, to be able to guide me to do the right thing. So God, make us zealous for good works in a world that's full of calling evil things good and good things evil, to be consistently going back to define that good by your character as good students of your Word.

In Jesus name. Amen.