

Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 64
The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit

Goodness #8

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren! Now for tape number eight on the subtopic of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit: "Goodness."

We have spent a lot of time—as you can well understand, now—with seven previous tapes on this matter of goodness, covering that cardinal principle, or trait, or characteristic of God. It is a unique trait. For, when we use the verb form "to be good" in the Greek—and also the Hebrew (at the present time we are dealing with the Hebrew)—it oftentimes transfers, as we do in grammar, into the nominative case and other varying forms of the usage so that "to be good" is a trait and a characteristic of God. It is a verb form that represents a cardinal characteristic of the Eternal God.

And we have found that it is manifested in abundance—in many, many ways within our lives—because God has had a direct influence in the lives of human beings from the time that He created them. Of course, there have been many times in which God has had a hands-off policy. He has not been present, yet people have duped or deceived themselves into believing that they have had a relationship with God. But there have been times in which God has directly intervened in the affairs of human beings. And in those circumstances He manifested awesome goodness. In other words, "to be good" is the manifestation of the trait or the characteristic—an indigenous part of the nature of the individual. "Goodness" is the manifestation of that trait or that characteristic, and it is in abundance in the life of God.

"To be good." How many of us, when we stop to think about it, can honestly and legitimately say we would like to be good? Although when we define that, all too frequently we interpose—or we superimpose, perhaps I should say—what we consider to be "goodness" upon the definition of goodness as God Himself revealed

in His own Holy Word. Very, very few people think, really, that awesome goodness is characterized by the Law of God. Above all, by their very behavior today, there are few people that really believe that to be obedient to God's Ten Commandments—and then expanded into obedience with respect to all the Holy Days and the statutes and judgements of God—could be classified as "good." They will even sometimes define them as "those hateful things; those things that God didn't want anymore; those things that I abhor and hate." Because they will use the various expressions from Isaiah, and so on, where he is talking about the perversions, or the corruptions, of human beings and turn right around and relate them to the very Laws, the Commandments, the statutes and so on, of God. Whereas God said that His Law IS GOOD. So, therefore, what is goodness? Goodness is the fulfillment of that Law. That Law is love—the "law of love"—and God Himself IS love. So, God is that Law—that is the nature, the character of God. And so when we say that God is good, what we are saying is that the very nature of God's Law—that nature of love—is manifested, then, in that Law. That is what we are talking about. So, goodness, therefore, is faithful, sublime, implicit, perfect (if that were possible) obedience to the laws and the statutes and the judgements of God.

So it is a marvelous trait—a marvelous characteristic of the Eternal God. But more particularly, with respect to you and me, it is a trait or a characteristic that we must acquire. It is something that we must put on. That's why we must develop the nature, the mind, the attitude, the character of God. We must put down the nature of wrath and sedition, hate, resentment, animosity, and contempt. And what are those traits and characteristics? Why contempt? Why animosity? Why resentment? They are developed in antagonism against the goodness of God—against any manifestation of the goodness of God—even when you see it in Gentiles who are a law unto themselves when they manifest it, not because they understand the Law of God, but they manifest a trait of goodness, of kindness, of love, of compassion or mercy. People sometimes can be very bitter and cutting—very bitter, hateful and cutting. So, it doesn't make any difference whether they really understand God's Law—or whether they are in the classification of a Gentile who does not know God and who does not know His Truth—if they, by nature, or if they by the tutoring of the Eternal God through a call, through conversion, and through the power of His Holy Spirit, manifest these marvelous traits and characteristics of God, they are going to encounter the wrath of human nature. Why? Because human nature IS in opposition to ALL the traits

and the characteristics of God. We are, by nature, the children of wrath, and the Bible says very clearly that, by nature, we are in opposition to the Law of God. That nature is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.

So there has to be a real conversion that takes place before we can be responsive to the Truth of God, and that conversion comes through the power of God's Holy Spirit. And what is the Spirit? It is manifested in the Law of God. Those laws are Spirit and they are life—the words of God, the laws of God. They are all Spirit and they are life. So, if you want to know what the Spirit is, and if you want to know whether or not you really have the Spirit, you can see it in how willingly, determinedly, you pursue the Law of God. That's the manifestation of it. Now, if you are reluctant—if you are fighting the Law of God—all you are proving is that you are yet carnal, because carnal nature is animosity against the Law of God. It is not subject to it, neither indeed can be. But if we want to be good—if we truly want to be good—if we want to evidence, manifest, this kind of trait, this kind of characteristic, rather than the animosities, the normal resentments, the normal hatefulness that proceeds from the mind and heart of a human being, then we are going to need the power of God's Holy Spirit and we are going to need to call mightily upon God to write within us through the power of His Spirit that trait or characteristic. That's the way we are going to be good. There is no other way to have that trait or characteristic of God.

So, we have covered a number of words up to the present time and I am not going back in a synoptic fashion to review those once again. We never will get through it if we do that. But let's just call your attention to the words that we have already covered in times past and now move very quickly into this next word which I mentioned in tape number seven as being basically translated, in the verb form: "to be good." It is the basic word for good, but occasionally it is used in another grammatical form in the Bible. It means principally, "good." "Goodness," then, is the manifestation of that which is good—that which is pleasing and acceptable to God, that which has His approbation or approval, when God's countenance shines upon us when we walk in that Way of Life. It is the response. It is a willing, effervescent, kind and compassionate, outgoing Spirit of love and concern. It is indeed, "goodness."

Let's notice, now, how this word *tohv*, t-o-h-v, is used because I would like to complete this particular word today. The definition is as follows: It means,

"well-being"; it means "prosperity"; it means "pleasant"; "favor"; "fair"; "that which is good or acceptable." And as I said earlier, it is used principally as "good," and there are a number of texts in the Bible where it is translated, "good." Sometime, on down the road, we are going to cover that because we will go through what the primary, foundational principle is: the subject of "good" itself. So we will see it under that term later on.

Now, today, for its usage in other grammatical forms:

Number one: It's a manifestation of God's goodness. So we are talking about the character of God. We are talking about a certain characteristic of God, the "goodness" of God. So, if it is the goodness of God and we are going to put on the divine nature of God—if we are going to become like unto God—then we are going to have to be good as He is good. Now, that doesn't mean that we can put it on of ourselves, because we don't have that power or that capability. That is, you and I cannot lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps. It is not possible. Then, we have to have an outside force that makes it possible for us to really, truly, become good.

Now, what we are called upon to perform is to crush the self—mortify the self, the Bible says, crucify the self. Let's reduce the old self. Now, how are you going to reduce it unless you see it for what it is? So you are first going to have to recognize what you are, and the natural proclivity of this nature is always in opposition to "goodness." Seeing ourselves for what we are. But you couldn't possibly evaluate yourself for what you are unless you have revealed to you a standard outside of the self. So, then, you have a worthy comparison. You see what you are, but you see what God is, and now you can begin to compare. And the problems that human beings experience are always an inversion of that standard. In other words, they put the self way up here where God should be and they put the Way of God down here. Now, they don't think of it in terms of God, but they put the traits and characteristics that represent God, and that which God is, down in this lower station. That's where they put Him. But they always, then, by their own emotions, by their own driving determinations, by the things that are an emotional involvement in their lives, put themselves up in the high, exalted position. They safeguard the self, in other words. And when we come to abhor and hate the self, that is the first time we can begin to work with those wretched, cunning traits or characteristics so abundantly manifested in our lives.

But "goodness" is a trait of God. God has always poured out that goodness—every time He has dealt with human beings. And they have to come to learn that. In other words, as Jesus Christ explained over in the book of Matthew—and elsewhere in the Bible also—God poured out His rain upon the just and the unjust. So God is good to all humankind. You know, they have been receiving rain, they have been eating food. Even Al Capones and other criminals still ate, didn't they? And some of them ate reasonably well because they took the wherewithal from everybody else. And, yet, God did not strike them down immediately. Not at all. And, yet, many people have taken the goodness and the affection and regard of God for humankind as a form of weakness, and they have attempted to capitalize on it. That's what all people are doing today because God doesn't strike them down immediately. They think they are getting by with it. But, no, God gives space for repentance for all people. God has appointed times, and God is allowing a set of circumstances to play their role in the lives of all human beings. A part of those circumstances is a policy of "hands off." God is just allowing time, chance, and circumstance to dictate. In other cases, He actively intervenes because He has called and He has willed to do something. In other cases, He actively, aggressively intervenes because they have done things that are worthy of punishment. And so God actively intervenes. So, God Himself can move when He wills and when He purposes. But, for the most part, God has had a "hands off" policy. He is allowing human beings to live their lives out by time and chance and circumstance: the awesome goodness of God. But they are taking advantage of it. They are using life and breath, and the vitality that they are given, in an attempt to achieve their own objectives and their own purposes. They don't look at it and say, "Well, wait a minute. Where did my life come from? You know, I owe this to Somebody. I owe for this food—the bill for the things that I have. Somebody caused it to grow. Somebody is sustaining the powers that generate seed and bring forth the fruit and food of one type or another that I partake of." But people don't even stop to think about that. They think they have put the seed in the ground. And the ground has just automatically evolved and come into existence on its own. And all these laws of reproduction, you know, are just spontaneous and innate. Nobody is upholding them, they just exist there. And, so, they partake of all this abundance that God is giving to them out of His goodness, and take it for granted. How many of us do exactly the same, brethren? How many of us take God's goodness? We go down to town—down to the store, let's say—and we come back because we didn't have an accident. How many of us think to really thank God for those things? You know, if we thank God every day

for all of His intervention on our behalf, we would be on our knees twenty-four hours a day. Our problem is that we just don't think of it often enough. We take too many things for granted. When we eat, and when we maintain basically good health, and we are permitted to go to work, and we come home and enjoy our families, and we enjoy this and that, or whatever it is, how many times do we pause to thank God for it? Because God is still sustaining it. Now, God is sustaining it so far as all of these other people out here are concerned. They are not thanking Him at all, but they are going to pay the ultimate price. What about you and me, however? What about us? We've been called to see. We've been called to understand and to realize how much honor and glory and credit we really owe to God. Yes, goodness is a manifested trait and characteristic of God. God is good. He has been good to so many people for so many years. And, yet, so few people will pause for one moment to give Him the credit He deserves.

I want us to turn to Exodus the eighteenth chapter. Exodus 18, and let's note verse 8:

"And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done." So Moses was aware of what God had done, so he is now telling him of all the things that had transpired. They had come out of Egypt and here they were back in the wilderness land where Moses had made acquaintance with a certain family and had married one of the daughters. And so he had come back, and Moses was now telling his father-in-law:

. . . all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the LORD delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel.

Now, how many of us have done exactly what Moses did? He sat down and figured out what God had done. How many of us have taken the time to sit down and apprise ourselves—that is, to become mentally cognizant of—all the avenues; all the miracles that have transpired; all of the major interventions that have occurred in God's leading us out of spiritual iniquity—or Egypt? How many of us have thought about it? How many of us realize all of the awesome ways that God has intervened in our lives—when we have been fed and God has made provision when we could have gone without; when God has set up angels to protect us when we could have been killed; when God has seen us through thick and thin? Or, do we think that we made it on our own?

You know, we need to very seriously and very soberly weigh how many times that all of the circumstances of this life—the negative circumstances of this life—could have happened to us. You know, and I've mentioned this to you, so this is not a new thought at all: I have flown literally millions of miles. I have driven also millions of miles on the highway. To this day, I have never had an accident, nor have I ever had a close call in an airplane. To whom do you think I owe that thanks? And I don't fail to thank God for it because my chances of being involved in some accident, either on the highway or in the air, were absolutely phenomenal. One time, on the basis of insurance computations—and they have all the stats on that—I attempted to figure it out, and really, my life should have been snuffed out some three or four different times, maybe five or six by now. Yet, I've not even come close. For all of this, the credit belongs to God. God is amazingly good to us. How good God is.

Well, Moses was recalling all of this goodness: that God had delivered them out of Egypt; that God had opened up doors for them to see the way out; that God had been extremely merciful and kind to them. And he was rehearsing all of this before his father-in-law, Jethro. Now, this is not just a story that is put in here because human beings like to read stories. This is instruction unto life, which means, brethren, that we had better take cognizance of this very fact and we had better open up our lives and evaluate and see how many miraculous and marvelous ways God has intervened in our lives up to this very present time. God has been so good, so gracious, and so kind if we would only stop to think about it.

And, you know, if we would stop to realize the goodness of God and be extremely, blissfully happy about it, we wouldn't have time to be as negative as we sometimes are. We just need to spend more time reflecting upon the goodness of God—the provisions that God has given to us, the things that we have.

You know, I think of our little fledgling operation and I know we have our problems. Oh yes, how well I know we have our problems. But, you know, one of the things that still amazes me is that we have realized the beginning evidence of some form of stability and oneness once again even in the midst of the chaos that we experience today—the terrible, terrible hurts that people sustained in times past because they were abused by those that they at one time trusted. I mean verbal abuse and even physical abuse in many ways—terrible, terrible things that happened. When ministers stood in the pulpits and ridiculed other human beings.

Never acceptable in the sight of God. What a wretched, terrible thing. When family members have been turned against family members and they use some kind of scriptural text to substantiate it. People have been subjected to all kinds of things—terrible, terrible circumstances that are not of God at all. Yet, I am extremely well pleased, and I know God is, for that stability. I know that we have a long ways to go. I know that we may never have that deep trust and respect again. I know that it may be extremely difficult for us to ever let down our guard and to really be one with someone else—laity with the ministry and the ministry with the laity and so on. I know how difficult some of those circumstances are. Because we are going to keep one guard up.

So many people say, "You know, I'm never going to get caught again like that." Well, brethren, what we need to do is to realize that we got caught because we made some mistakes—because we began to look to human beings. You know, God never authorized the looking to a human being in the first place—ever. When we came into God's Truth we weren't looking to a man or an organization. What called us was the Truth—it's what we heard. But, then, when we got in, we let down the guard. Now, because *we* made the mistake and *we* let down our guards, and because *we* abdicated responsibility—spiritual responsibility that God had given to us—then we want to hold somebody else accountable for what happened. No, brethren, let's not do that. Let's remember that we got caught because we made some mistakes—each one of us individually. God is not the cause of our mistake. The Truth of God must never become the door mat that people are using to wipe their feet of contempt because of what happened to them. Not at all. God's Truth is still God's Truth. We were called to that Truth. It is the priceless revelation of God. It is the goodness of God that was given to us, but that very goodness, now, is being turned around by a lot of people who have been hurt and who have been injured and whose spirit and attitude are wrong and who are being influenced by somebody that does not know nor understand. And so they are manifesting a wretched spirit and a wretched attitude toward the very Truth of God—because the Truth of God became equated with their bad experiences in times past. But, brethren, it wasn't that at all. Our bad experiences were *our* mistakes because we got to looking to man. There is nothing in the Bible that says any human being cannot fail. There is nothing in the Bible that says an organization cannot also capitulate—none. On the contrary, the Bible says that day cannot come except it does happen. But when it came, people didn't believe it.

Alright, the goodness of God remains absolute. All the thrilling experiences and the fine things that we encountered in times past are still just as viable and meaningful today as they have ever been if we can separate them out from our relationship with human beings and with organizations. Now, that doesn't mean we should be independent. God said we must become one. Now, how are you going to become one by doing your own thing or by being sifted around—individualized and separated from one another? You cannot do it. God said there is but one Way of Life and we must become one. Therefore, we are creating a very, very tenuous circumstance when we step aside and say, "Well, I'm going to do it on my own." I don't say that such people will never have any opportunity and that God will have nothing to do with them because I am not the judge. I only say that they are stepping much closer to the line of demarcation and I know it is going to be extremely difficult for them to finally resolve in their minds the negative things that have generated that spirit and that attitude. Yes, it's going to be extremely difficult.

So, here is Moses, now, rehearsing all these great and marvelous things. And all I have to say, spiritually, brethren, is, why don't we sit down and attempt some time—really attempt—going all the way back to the beginning like Moses did when God began to deal with Pharaoh and when God started dealing with His own people and all the miraculous circumstances they went through to lead them up to that point in time? Why don't we go back to the time when God began to deal with us and see all the miracles that God did in our lives, so that we can rehearse them? Our problem is, brethren, we have lost recognition—we have forgotten—so that there is no longer any remembrance of those things. Therefore, we cannot even thank God for them because we have never recalled them—because we don't even remember what happened to us. Let's go back like Moses did and recall the goodness of God. Let's annotate our lives right from the beginning and write them down and then thank God for them. Then we can remember the beautiful and the marvelous things that God did for us. Oh, how many things God has done for me, and I know that He has done them for you too. But let's take the time to do what Moses did.

So, "Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the LORD delivered them." So we are going to talk about the travail that comes upon us also and how that we have been delivered out of

certain circumstances. "And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness . . ." And so will you. And so will anybody that you tell about the things that you have gone through. And they are going to be absolutely dumbfounded at how magnificent and how good God has been to you also.

Moses wasn't the only one. Israel were not the only people. God has called His own people today. We've been called out of spiritual Egypt. We've been fighting a Pharaoh spiritually who is Satan the Devil. Now, as we encounter all of these battles, we have become victorious through Jesus Christ. Can we recall them?

And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

Now I want us to notice Numbers 10. Numbers the tenth chapter and let's note verse 32, however I'm going to read verses 29 through 32:

"And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel . . ." Now, interestingly, *Raguel*—and I just looked this up just this morning and it threw me for a loop—is another anglicized spelling for *Reuel*. So they are one and the same and, as a matter of fact, *Reuel* is the better spelling and you will find it back in Exodus the second chapter, I believe it is. So, we are still talking about one and the same person here. And also the term *Jethro* is used. In the eighteenth chapter of Exodus *Jethro* is used and also in a number of other areas. But it is all one and the same person, so don't let that throw you.

And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of [Jethro, if you please] the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness [this is Moses speaking now], and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.

So, as the commentary said, the question has been asked about this situation, "Well, now, if they had the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day, why did they need the eyes of Hobab and Jethro, either one?" Well, in the overall sense, they were guided by God—by these two miraculous means—but the common conception is that, apparently, in a generalized area, it was an excellent thing. And God has always done that. I can give you a number of examples where God has chosen to use human beings for that kind of circumstance. So, here is a man that knew that desert well. And the interesting thing is, most of the commentators believe that Hobab and Jethro did actually follow them, even though they initially declined.

And so it says, "And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the LORD shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." It is an interesting thing—and there are many, many, many of the Psalms that show that even unconverted relatives are blessed. Remember, Peter said this of an unconverted husband or an unconverted mate: that when God does good to that converted mate, the unconverted one who shows a right spirit and a right attitude is also a recipient of those blessings.

So, it doesn't make any difference. One who responds favorably, or who has a distinct relationship with one of God's servants and does good to that servant of God is going to be greatly benefitted by God. He is going to become the recipient of God's goodness also.

Next, I want us to notice Second Samuel 7. There is a lot I could say there, but it is so easy to get into all of the illustrations and we never make enough progress. So here in Second Samuel 7, and let's note verse 28. Actually, we would read verses 18 through 29 if we wanted to get the whole story, but I won't take the time. Let's read, now, verse 28:

And now, O LORD God, thou art that God, and thy words be true,
and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant.

So here is a prayer of David—David's prayer of thanksgiving. And you go back to verse 18 and read all the way through verse 29 and you will notice that David is rehearsing before God the promises that had been given to him. He is calling them to God's attention once again, and that's not wrong. God expects us

to do that. Sure, the Holy Spirit knows every need that we have, yet He still expects us to come and ask Him. For, sometimes, we do not *have* because we don't ask. Remember, that is one of the conditions. So we have to ask, yet, at the same time, God knows, Christ knows and the Holy Spirit knows. And I'm not talking about a Trinity either.

But here is David, now, saying, "And now, O LORD God, thou art that God . . ." So He is calling for the attention of a specific God. ". . . and thy words be true." That is, "Please remember that you have inexorably bound yourself by those words." ". . . and thou hast promised." "You've given me an assurance—you've given me a promise." ". . . this goodness unto thy servant." So He was to pour out that great abundance and all the marvelous things that David was to experience in that land; in dealing with the people; in the building of the house, and so on. David is rehearsing all of this and he is calling it to the attention of God.

Now, God has given us endless promises. How gracious and how good God is. He has inexorably bound Himself to make provision for us—to answer our prayers, to give us the abundance of life. What was the one promise that Jesus Christ made which was a generalized promise, but was all-encompassing? An abundance. He wanted us to be the recipients of His great abundance—that abundant life, as He said in John the tenth chapter, I believe it is, and verse 29.

Yes, God wanted us to experience abundance. Now, sometimes we have to have those things taken from us because we do not exercise *our* responsibility as we should. We may begin to take things for granted. We may not have effected the necessary mastery in our natures as we should—putting on the divine nature, the character of God. So, sometimes God gets our attention by taking things away from us. Not permanently—not at all. Because God is working with us as children. And, you know, if you punish your children, you don't take everything away from them until they die, do you? No, you want to get their attention, and then you, once again, want to give the abundance of the family to your children, don't you? So why are you punishing? To get their attention—to correct them, to cause them to begin to see, to understand and to correctly respond. You take from your own personal children—young though they may be—to bring them up with an appreciation of the things that they have. That's why you are doing it. Not because of innate animosity. So, God's punishment upon us is not because He hates us but because He wants us to learn. Our problem is that, like most children,

we don't see why we deserve any punishment. That's our real problem. But, you know, when we really come to understand it, we wonder why God ever puts up with us in the first place.

You know, one of the key expressions of mine on a daily basis before my God, I guess, is, "I know I don't deserve it. I wonder why in the world you put up with me. But I am so grateful and so appreciative." Yes, I know that I am not deserving. I have no right to be here as a human being—none whatsoever. But out of the goodness of God, I am privileged to be able to hold on to that Truth and to be faithful to it, and my heart is absolutely enlarged when I consider it. I just cannot believe that I should have been kept faithful to God when so many have thrown everything overboard. It's almost incomprehensible, but there are some who have been permitted to see it and have yet thrown that very thing overboard. I don't know how to weigh those people. I'm glad I'm not the one called to judge them.

So let's remember—as David here was reminding God of His great goodness, His promises and His assurances—that we can also come before God, that we can become the recipients of God's great and awesome goodness. God has promised. God has inexorably bound Himself. If I were to give you the promises of God, it would take I don't know how many tapes just to go through them. He has promised you life; He has promised you health; He has promised you protection; He has promised you absolutely everything. They are all in the Bible, if we only believed them, and if we only understood the conditions that are involved and were responsive. That's all God asks of us.

Now, I know that God pours out His blessings upon both the just and the unjust—the unjust because they don't know any better. But I'll tell you one thing, when we have been called to know God's Truth and to become the recipients of the awesome, awesome goodness of God, we had better not take it for granted or we will no longer be the recipients of the goodness of God—no longer. Troubles are going to follow us—they are going to dog us, they are going to be at our heels constantly, and they are going to be a major problem. The only thing is—and I see many people doing this, and they are only going to get progressively worse—many people begin to say, "Oh, time and chance to every man." That's the way they get around it initially, but there is a day coming when it is going to go far beyond that. Then what are they going to say? Brethren, with every little thing

that happens in our lives—just a little punishment— isn't it a whole lot better to get one swat than thirty-nine? A whole lot better. And sometimes God just gives us one swat if we will only take the time to ask the necessary questions. How good God is if we would only stop—if we would just say, "Well, that's all I need, dear Father. I'm thankful for it and appreciative. Thank you. You have gotten my attention. You don't have to use the two-by-four. I am very grateful—I am very appreciative." But, no, we can turn around and say, "time and chance," and then go heedlessly on down the road until we have to get two swats, then five, then ten. Finally we may get the full forty—or thirty-nine. Well, let's say we might get the full forty, which, in this case, might represent the loss of life itself.

But let's remember God's goodness. God is extremely good and kind, even in His punishment. Now, how do we know whether or not God is punishing us? Unless we are living absolutely perfect lives—unless the manifestations of our lives are without parallel. I mean there is no thing that is contrary—there is no evidence of any animosity or resentment or anything that is contrary, there is no problem of any nature whatsoever. Unless we are experiencing that kind of life, then there is some evidence that we are encountering difficulties. So any time we encounter anxiety, frustration, misgiving, animosity, resentment, hate, diatribe, words that cut, or whatever, it means that there is something wrong. And what we need to do is say, "I will not allow this to continue. I will sit down and consider it. I can't change other people but I can change my own life." I can change my own life. Then, aggressively move forward in achieving that goal. That's what we must do.

Now, God, through David, then, gave us the marvelous illustration of how we are to look at all the blessings of God and we are to thank Him and praise Him for those great goodnesses—all the promises that God has given to us. Now, we can have them, but we need to write those promises down and we need to understand that when negative circumstances transpire in our lives, it is because we are not living up to the spiritual expectation. You cannot change somebody else, but God does not punish you for what somebody else is doing. That's right. God does not punish you because of what somebody else is doing. Let's assume that organization, men, family members, are against you, yet, you can still have a perfect relationship with God, provided you will it. Then you just simply take the abuse—you absorb it. Blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake. I haven't found too many men that thank God for that nor call it a blessing.

"Blessed are you," said Jesus Christ, "when men shall revile you and say all manner of evil against you for my sake." How many of us count that a privilege, a joy and a satisfaction? Oh, no, we like the approbation and approval of men. "But woe be unto you when men speak well of you." Why? Men do not like God's Truth, and if that Truth and the goodness of God—which is the Truth of God reflected in you—is manifested in your lives, then men are going to hate you and they are going to say evil things about you. They are going to be upset. It's going to trouble them for all kinds of reasons that we will not enumerate now. But that doesn't make any difference. God is still the island of safety—He's the one you look to. And if you will do it and still find great satisfaction in the super-abundance of the goodness of God, you can still live the Christian life, regardless of these things. It doesn't make any difference. So it is entirely up to you. You can't look to somebody else, you cannot weigh your future on the basis of what somebody else does. You cannot make your decisions on the basis of what some other human being does. If you do, you are going to make colossal mistakes—colossal mistakes. You had better make it on the basis of what God said, and go on from there.

Now, brethren, if we will just live up to these things, we can be in the Kingdom of God. But, I'll tell you, if we do not live up to them—no matter how we kid ourselves—we are not going to be there, because God said that only the overcomers are going to be there. Not the ones filled with good intentions. It's the overcomers. That means, brethren, let's set about the task. Let's get about it and let's get it accomplished because we are called to that purpose.

In First Chronicles 17, we find basically the same thing. First Chronicles 17 and noting verse 26, we read this: "And now, LORD, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant." So here is still the prayer of David.

Now, what about Second Chronicles 7 and verse 10? I just want to get these in because these are the same word—the word *tohv*, t-o-h-v—and it is a word that means "good" or "goodness." Second Chronicles 7 and verse 10:

And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the LORD had shewed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people.

Now, we can sometimes read historically of all these marvelous things, but how about taking the time to uncover them in our lives? You see, God had these recorded and written to become our admonition and for our learning in the last days. But, in order to be objective, and to achieve the purposes for which God called us, we are going to have to evaluate *our* lives and we are going to have to see the goodness that God has performed in our lives. It's absolutely essential.

Then, point number two: People forget God's goodness. And when they do it, they do injury to others. That's why people do these terrible things one to the other—because they forget the goodness of God. Let's turn to Judges the eighth chapter. Judges 8 and let's read verses 34 and 35:

And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side.

They remembered not what God had done. Okay, what are we talking about, brethren? Exactly the same thing I mentioned earlier: How many of us remember the goodness of God in our lives? This is the historical example of a nation with whom God was dealing, but what about our individual lives—called and chosen of God to become members in particular, because God deals individually, now, on a spiritual plane, not a national plane whatsoever, and unites them individually in what is called the "Israel of God"? What about those people—you as a particular individual? Have *you* forgotten the goodness of God in your life?

"And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side." God, who has so abundantly, mercifully, and kindly intervened in our lives time and time and time again. "Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel." You see, what they had forgotten is how God had dealt with them, and because they had forgotten, they turned around in animosity against a servant of God and they took exception with him. Well, this tells you many, many things. When people begin to utter diatribes—that is, their mouths speak all forms of evil—it means they have forgotten their entire purpose. It means they have forgotten how God was willing to use the shed blood of Jesus Christ to wipe clean all their past guilt. It means that they have forgotten what they really are. For, if they remembered what they

were and they remembered what God had done, they would certainly, then, have remembered the chosen servant of God. But, no, when people forget about God—when they forget His goodness, when they forget all of the love and affection that God has manifested in their lives—they respond negatively and they take their feelings, their emotions, out on people who *are* doing good. Now, they didn't injure the servant of the Eternal God, even if they had taken his life, because God can pick that life up in His appointed time. But what did they do to themselves? That's the serious question.

Next, what should our attitudes be toward the blessings of others? First Kings eight and verse sixty-six. First Kings 8 and let's note verse 66:

On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

Now, here is the exact opposite of what happened back here in Judges 8 where they forgot God and they began to rip other people apart. But when they remembered God and they remembered their blessings and how good God had been to them—and that goodness is always in relationship to how undeserving they really are—they glorified God. They went away joyful. And I can tell you from firsthand experience that is always true. It is *always* true. The minute you begin to censure—the minute you carve up other people, you are indicted inside. But when you go away, having an understanding of what others are going through—a compassion for them, a sympathy, because you understand the nature with which they were born, you understand the struggle and the battle they are encountering—rather than ripping them apart, you feel a real strong empathy for them. Then you are joyful at God's intervention and the blessings that God pours out upon them. That's how we can have the awesome, awesome goodness of God.

Alright, let's notice a little concerning the promise of God's goodness: gladness and joy. In Second Chronicles six and verse forty-one. Second Chronicles 6 and let's note verse 41:

Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.

So the promise, then, of gladness and the promise of joy is found in goodness. "[R]ejoice in [the knowledge of] goodness." That is, how do you know what good is? By reading and understanding the Truth of God. How do you recognize it? By taking time to weigh it and to isolate those good responses—the favorable interventions of God. So he said, "Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness." So, they can rejoice in goodness. It is that freedom—that relaxation—that God has promised: when we are not troubled; when we are not clouded; when we are not filled with venom, animosity and resentment. We are free—we are not shackled. Yes, true freedom is found in God's Law—in God's Way of Life—not in the bondage and the servitude of the wretchedness of this self. We are slaves to our own natures—our own minds—until we can recognize and break down those arbitrary circumvallations, or the fortresses, of our minds and our lustful appetites.

In Psalm sixteen and verse two. Psalm 16 and verse 2—I want to complete this, so let's move right along—he said: "O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee." That is, "I have no good beyond thee"—which is a better translation of this. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: [I have no good beyond thee]." In other words, the only goodness we have is in God—nothing outside of God. We just have to remember what our natures are and then we know that we have no goodness outside of that. Yes, "you are my Lord, I have no goodness." None of us. There is none good but One and that is God. There is *NO* goodness outside of God. David recognized that. That is what we are going to have to recognize. And then, in that, we can have all the joy, the thrills, and the excitement possible.

To understand many of these things, and another very interesting text, let me conclude by saying, why don't you read Psalm 21, verses 1 through 7 in the *Living Bible*. You are going to find it very, very interesting.

Next time, brethren, we are going to pick up another one of the words that is translated as "goodness" in the Old Testament.