

## Goodness and Faithfulness

### Galatians 5:22

Goodness = agathōsunē, signifies that moral quality which is described by the adjective agathos", i.e., "that which, being good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect" (W. E. Vines).

The fruit of the Spirit, described by Paul, consists of the characteristics developed in the being of one regenerated by the word of God. Those who are thus regenerated (brought back to their original state before God) "Walk by the Spirit" as opposed to walking according to the flesh. The characteristics thus developed are those of the mind. They are characteristics that result from teaching and application rather than some action procured by the emotions. In this sense we can better understand the characteristic of goodness.

In the English language, goodness is defined as "moral excellence; virtue. 2. kindly feeling; kindness: generosity" (American College Dictionary). When considering goodness or "generosity" one may get the idea of a benevolent act. An act generated by an emotional response of one's love for mankind and expressed by the bestowing of a gift upon another. Although the characteristics are so exhibited, our concept of the term may not fully express its true definition.

"Trench, following Jerome, distinguishes between chrēstotēs (kindness, ret) and agathōsunē (goodness, ret) in that the former describes the kindlier aspects of goodness, the latter includes also the sterner qualities by which doing good to others is not necessarily by gentle means" (W. E. Vines).

To exemplify the aforementioned application, Trench applies agathōsunē to two events, in the Lord's dealings with the people of His day: 1) When the Lord" entered into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he saith unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye make it a den of robbers" (Matt. 21:12,13). 2) When he denounced

the scribes and the Pharisees, and said unto them, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" (Matt. 23:13, 3-29). In both instances what may appear to be harsh was actually "a kindly activity on their behalf" (W.E. Vines)

The term "faith" has led some to the conclusion that it refers to a "belief in the gospel", thus, "there is no reason for interpreting it otherwise than as faith in God and his gospel" (Pulpit Commentary, Galatians 5, pg. 262). It has, on the other hand, been affirmed, "The word here may be used in the sense of fidelity, and may denote that the Christian will be a faithful man, a man faithful to his word and promises; a man who can be trusted or confided in. It is probable that the word is used in this sense because the object of the apostle is not to speak of the feelings which we have towards God so much as to illustrate the influences of the Spirit in directing and controlling our feelings toward men. True religion makes a man faithful. The Christian is faithful as a man; faithful as a neighbor, friend, father, husband, son. He is faithful to his contracts; faithful to his promises. No man can be a Christian who is not thus faithful, and all pretensions to being under the influence of the Spirit when such fidelity does not exist, are deceitful and vain" (Barnes Notes, Galatians, pg. 388).

Many conclusions and thoughts may arise as one considers these various characteristics. Man knows that God said, "thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). And, that Paul said, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners" (1 Cor. 6:9-11), and those "who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21). Now, there are people in the world that do not "walk by the Spirit" yet, they do not practice one or more of the aforementioned works of the flesh. But the Christian, because he "Walks by the Spirit" will not practice them: a person can be an infidel and not practice them but a person cannot be a Christian if he does. In the same sense, a person may be "faithful" as a neighbor, friend, father, husband, and son, faithful to his contracts and his promises and not be Christian. But no man who practices the works of the flesh can be a Christian.

Paul affirms that an individual who is led by the Spirit will develop the fruit, which the Spirit produces, and no amount of "lip service" will hide the facts.