

7. The Fruit of the Spirit is Goodness (1Q 2010—The Fruit of the Spirit)

Biblical material: Eph. 2:10, Ps. 51:10, 11; John 14:9; Rom. 3:12–20; 7:7–12; Titus 2:14; Heb. 1:2, 3.

Quotes

- The greatest of all perplexities in theology has been to reconcile the infinite goodness of God with his omnipotence. *Walter Lippmann*
- Know the place of your religion, turn inwards, listen to the voice of grace, the instinct of God, and let your heart pray to God that all that is good and holy in him may touch, and stir, and revive all that is capable of goodness in you. *William Law*
- True religion is real living; living with all one's soul, with all one's goodness and righteousness. *Albert Einstein*
- Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, as long as ever you can. *John Wesley*
- Goodness is the only investment that never fails. *Henry David Thoreau*

Questions

How do we define “goodness”? Can we be mistaken over what is true goodness? If God is truly all good, why is there evil? How does the Spirit change us from evil to good? How does God demonstrate he is truly God, and how are we involved? How do we reveal our true character—whether for good or evil?

Bible discussion

We are created to do good (Eph. 2:10). In Ps. 51:10, 11, David prays for God to “make him good,” and to be with him. “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,” Jesus tells Philip (John 14:9 TEV), revealing the identity between the goodness of God and Jesus, the exact likeness of God's own being” (Heb. 1:3 TEV). The depth of our fallen state is described by Paul in Rom. 3:12–20, that no one is righteous. God wants us to “be eager to do good” (Titus 2:14). God is inherently good, and wishes us to be remade in his image, wishing always to be good and do good.

Comment

“The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation. Its distribution and degree appear to be entirely random and therefore, unfair. Sensitive spirits ask if it can possibly be reconciled with God's justice and love.” (John Stott).

Why is there evil and suffering? Because the Devil chose this way, which is the opposite of God. How can we say that God is uncaring, that he willingly allows sin and suffering? So often we or the Devil cause evil, and then all of us blame God!

We have bought into the Devil's way, and experience the consequences of trying to go our own way. Not under the punitive hostility of God, but because choosing wrong instead of right has its own natural results. Tragically, such a viewpoint does lead to

death, just as God said it would. Not as some imposed penalty by a divine dictator, but the inevitable result foreseen by a loving Creator.

Think for a moment. What is the alternative? For God to intervene in every situation? To stop the car crashing, to prevent the earthquake, to defuse the terrorist's bomb? The result would be a world in which evil is never seen for what it truly is, for it never has its diabolical consequences. A world where God by his intervening power takes care of every problem; a world of eternal evil that can have no end.

Only as the conflict is resolved through the unmasking of evil's real face, only as God is demonstrated to be the loving, compassionate Being he says he is, only as all his creation agrees with him that he was right all along—only then can God bring this rebellion to a close. Those who have chosen the Devil's way will be allowed their choice of final non-existence in the end-time destruction. And then, and only then, can God create a new heaven and a new earth, a place where righteousness dwells and the goodness of God reigns supreme (see 2 Peter 3:13).

The most convincing proof of truth is demonstration. What is true is most clearly seen in action—in the way what is good and right are revealed in each changing situation.

Remember the man who came to Jesus and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" To which Jesus replied, "Why do you call me good? Only God is truly good." Mark 10:17, 18 NLT. What was Jesus trying to say? That God is the only one who is good, and so if Jesus is identified as "good," then Jesus is divine? That the very definition of God is good (in fact in English, that is what the word God means).

Ellen White Comments

We are called to represent to the world the character of God as it was revealed to Moses. In answer to the prayer of Moses, "Show me Thy glory," the Lord promised, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee." "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Exodus 33:18, 19; 34:6, 7. This is the fruit that God desires from His people. {CH 203-4}

The Saviour's entire life was characterized by disinterested benevolence and the beauty of holiness. He is our pattern of goodness. From the beginning of His ministry, men began to comprehend more clearly the character of God. He carried out His teachings in His own life. He showed consistency without obstinacy, benevolence without weakness, tenderness and sympathy without sentimentalism. He was highly social, yet He possessed a reserve that discouraged any familiarity. His temperance never led to bigotry or austerity. He was not conformed to the world, yet He was attentive to the wants of the least among men. {CT 262}

From a worldly point of view, money is power; but from the Christian standpoint, love is power. Intellectual and spiritual strength are involved in this principle. Pure love has special efficacy to do good, and can do nothing but good. It prevents discord and misery and brings the truest happiness. Wealth is often an influence to corrupt and destroy; force is strong to do hurt; but truth and goodness are the properties of pure love. {AH 195}

What is show and appearance merely? What are good looks alone without moral worth or true goodness of heart and nobleness of mind? {DG 122.3}

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