

Goodness

Fruit of the Spirit--part 6

May 17, 2015

DAY 1: Secular man's view of "goodness"

Galatians 5:22 but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

1. Our secular culture's *real* definition of "good" is heard or seen in four different ways:

a. "I know I'm not perfect, far from it, but I'm basically a good guy."

Think of this as "self- (approved) righteousness". The irony is that secular man jumps all over Christians as being "self-righteous."

b. " What's good for you is 'good' for you. What's 'good' for me is 'good' for me. Don't impose your standard of what is good on me."

Think of this as "self-approved" morality.

c. This kind of goodness is reflected in the belief that "My definition of goodness is all that matters."

d. Goodness is thought of in relative terms: good, better, best.

2. All four of these reflect the philosophy of relativism. It is the belief that there is no *objective standard* of what is good.

3. But "good" not only is dismissed in its essential nature, but it is laughed at in our secular culture. Have you ever done something good and someone calls you a "goody-goody" or a "goody two shoes." It comes with a sneer of "He thinks he's better than everybody else." Here is implied a hypocrisy which elevates himself up above others while everyone else can see right through the sham.

4. What strikes you most about secular man's notions of "good"?

DAY 2: Biblical vs. secular thinking of God's "goodness"

1. Tell a secular man that God is good and get ready to hear the following:

"Well, if God is so good, why is there evil in the world? Why is there suffering?"

2. What is the person implying about God in those questions?

3. What are they implying about themselves. ("If I was God I'd _____.")

*Micah 6:8 He has showed you, O man, **what is good**; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

4. Good (beneficial), involves people doing three things. Under each, jot down how you might or might not be doing these things:

a. Act justly

(be fair in their dealings with others),

b. Love kindness

(mercy, from the Hebrew word "*hesed*", meaning "loyal love");

c. Walk humbly with God

(the opposite of our natural pride and arrogance).

5. Remember, these three traits are representative of what "goodness" means. What's your biggest take away from today's study?

(For further study: Lots of people in Micah's day were *not* being just (Micah 2:1-2; 3:1-3; 6:11). They were not showing kindness/mercy/loyal love to those to whom they related (Micah 2:8-9; 3:10-11; 6:12). They were not walking humbly with God (2:3).)

DAY 3: New Testament meaning of "goodness."

1. "Goodness" in Gal. 5:22 is the Greek word, "agathosune."

2. It is built on the root word: "agathos," which means good in its essential character.

It is used:

- a. of God: absolutely and consummately good. (Mt. 19:17; Mk 10:18; Lk 18:19;
- b. of some people: Matt. 25:23; Lk 19:17; 23:40; Jn. 7:12; Ac 11:24; Titus 2:5.
- c. generally: Luke 6:35; Rom. 5:7; Matt. 5:45; 12:35.

*2 Thessalonians 1:11 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill **every resolve for good** and every work of faith by his power,*

3. Paul prays three things for the Thessalonians. What are they?

4. His prayer includes that God may fulfill every resolve for good.

- a. "Resolve" means desire, purpose, objective for good.
- b. The Greek language may also include a translation that reads, "every resolve to BE good..."

5. What is the essence of Paul's prayer in 2 Thess. 1:11?

6. Below are a few other verses on the N.T. concept of goodness. Underneath each verse jot down what strikes you about it.

Romans 12:9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

Galatians 6:9- And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Romans 12:20 No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head."

²¹ *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

DAY 4: The God who brings about good.

Romans 8:28 We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his good purpose.

1. Our culture loses sight of the goodness of God most easily when tragedy or suffering occurs. "How can a good God allow suffering?" How things does this belief assume about:

a. Life?

b. Human nature?

c. God?

2. As fallen human beings, we often ask the wrong questions and expect answers to those lesser questions. Instead of this world being a "good" world where everything is "supposed" to be "good," we live in a fallen world where sin happens, suffering happens, and tragedy happens. The central question is **not HOW** a good God could allow suffering. The central question is **WHAT** does a good God do through suffering?!

3. How does that question change how you think about:

a. Life?

b. Human nature?

c. God?

4. Re-read Romans 8:28.

a. What does God promise to do "in everything" that we experience?

b. God doing "good" for others may not always look like "good" to human eyes. Doing good can also mean what we call "tough love." Tough love is not pleasant for anyone, but it is done with a good future in mind! When Jesus cleansed the temple it wasn't done "gently," but it was good!

c. This promise in Romans 8:28 is conditional. It is given to one group of people. Who are they? And what are the connections between the promise and the recipients?

DAY 5: The rich young ruler

1. There is a belief in our secular society that if you're "basically a good person" you'll end up in heaven. Hardly anyone assumes otherwise. Today's story is a slap in the face to that proud belief!

Mark 10:17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

2. What did the young man believe about how someone gains eternal life?

3. Why do you think he asked this question? What do you think was motivating him?

Mark 10:18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone."

4. I'm sure the young man never saw this answer coming! He was looking for an answer to a question about eternal life, and what he could do to merit receiving it. Instead, he was questioned as to why he called Jesus "good." What do you think Jesus was up to here?

5. Why would this questioning of what was "good" matter to how someone gains eternal life?

6. If one needs to be saved from sin (doing bad), yet has a view of himself as good, what chance does he have of even seeing his need to be saved?

7. What standard of goodness do you think the man was using?

8. When Jesus asked, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone" what do you think happened in the man?

9. If the real standard of what is "good" is the character of God, and, NO ONE is good what options are there for eternal life?

10. Did Jesus answer the man's question?