

We come this week to goodness, the sixth of nine fruit of the Spirit. This, as we shall see, is a very big and beautiful concept. Because Christians have been made good, they now bear the fruit of goodness. And so, the fruit of goodness implies three things: a Christian is good (this refers to nature), has goodness (this refers to character), and does goodness (this refers to activity).

I. A Christian Is Good

II. A Christian Has Goodness

III. A Christian Does Goodness

I. A Christian Is Good

1. By this I mean, the first thing the Spirit of God does is change us from being a bad tree to being a good tree.
2. Matt.12:33—"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit."
3. By nature we are all bad trees, and by grace we become good trees—this happens by way of regeneration.
4. Now, you know that Scripture uses a number of imageries to describe regeneration—it's a new birth and a new creation.
5. By nature we are born bad, and we are reborn good—by nature we are made bad, and we are remade good.
6. Thus, we can refer to regeneration as God's good work, or perhaps, His work of making bad men good (the author, purpose, and pattern of regeneration are good).
7. (1) Its author is good—by this of course I refer to God, and in particular to the Holy Spirit, who is described as the "good Spirit" (Neh.9:20; Ps.143:10).
8. Now, let me just say in passing, that as all of the works of God are joint works of the Trinity, there is sense in which the Trinity (God the Father, Son, and Spirit) is the author of regeneration.
9. And yet, there is another sense in which we can attribute a peculiar work to a peculiar person of the Trinity.
10. And the Scriptures everywhere attribute the work of regeneration to the Holy Spirit, Jn.3:5—"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."
11. And so, just as God created all things good in six literal days, so He recreates man good in regeneration.
12. Gen.1:31—"Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day."
13. Everything God made was good—this includes everything He made on days 1-5 and especially man, on day 6.
14. Everything about man was good—his thinking was good, his affections were good, and his actions were good.
15. Because God is good, He can only make good things—everything God is (and thus does), is always good.
16. AW Pink—"All that emanates from God—His decrees, His creation, His laws, His providences—cannot be otherwise than good."
17. And so, what is true in the first creation, is also true in the second or new creation—He remakes man good.
18. He made man good in the original creation; man made himself bad by sin; and in regeneration God remakes man good.
19. (2) Its purpose is good—by this I mean, the purpose of regeneration is to recreate us into the image of God.

20. God is good, and all of those born again by the Holy Spirit, are reborn into the image and likeness of God.
21. We are reborn as sons of God, in that, we now bear the image of God—we are partakers of the divine nature.
22. Col.3:9-10—"You have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" Eph.4:24—"You have put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."
23. We have been recreated in the image and likeness of God, and this image or likeness is righteous and holy.
24. Thus, we are recreated good because God is good—we now bear His image as His spiritual children.
25. This doesn't mean that man is perfectly good, but in regeneration, man is graciously and generally made good.
26. Rom.7:18—"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells"—this refers to that remaining principles of sin within.
27. Perhaps we can say, there's a part of us that remains bad (or as Paul describes it)—evil remains within us.
28. But simply because evil remains within us, it does not deny that because of the new birth, we have been made good.
29. Robert Haldane—"As we ought continually and prominently to maintain that there is naturally nothing good in men, we ought likewise to give equal prominence to the fact that all believers, being born of God and made new creatures, work the works of God, and in their minds possess those dispositions which are produced by the Spirit through the truth. In our flesh there is nothing good; but from the work of the Spirit on our hearts we may be full of goodness."
30. (3) Its pattern is good—by pattern I specifically refer to Christ, into whose image we are being conformed.
31. Rom.8:29—"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."
32. By this I understand, Christ as a glorified and perfected Man—we are being conformed to His image.
33. And thus, in the resurrection, we will possess a perfectly sinless soul, and a glorified deathless body.
34. Mk.10:18—"So Jesus said to him, Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God."
35. (a) Our Savior isn't denying He is God—He's simply stressing the fact that only God is essentially and unchangeably good.
36. The young rich ruler, referred to Christ as "Good Teacher," implying that man isn't as bad as Scripture teaches.
37. That this is what he believed is evident, in that he claims to have kept the law "from his youth" (v20).
38. (b) Our Savior isn't denying we are made good by regeneration, but He's affirming that only God is essentially, perfectly, and unchangeably good.
39. Thus, we can speak of Christ as possessing a twofold goodness: first, His divine nature is good in that it's essentially, perfectly, and unchangeably good.
40. Secondly, His human nature is good in that it's free from all sin, and filled with every grace in perfection.
41. But this goodness is a created goodness, or a goodness of the creature—it's a distinctly human goodness.

II. A Christian Has Goodness

1. That is, because a Christian has been made good, he/she now has good desires, thoughts, and longings.
2. We can say, there's now goodness within—or there's the longings and desires to love and do goodness.
3. Here we come closer to what goodness is—it's a disposition of goodness within the soul of a Christian.
4. The easiest way to describe this goodness is by goodwill—an attitude of benevolence or goodness toward others.
5. Fundamentally—by goodness is meant—that disposition of saints, that possesses goodwill for others.
6. This of course relates to the previous point—because we've made good, there's now goodness within.
7. For example—think of two very different fields—the first is a field in the spring that smells like manure.
8. The second field is filled with beautiful flowers that give off a pleasant scent—let's say a field of roses.
9. By nature our hearts are like fields of manure—which necessarily give off a scent of badness or evil.
10. By grace our hearts become like a field of roses—which necessarily give off a sent of goodness or good.
11. Perhaps, another way of saying this would be—by goodness is meant the desire and longing for good.
12. Thus, Christians are not only made good (in regeneration), but they possess goodness within their hearts.
13. Rom.15:14—"Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."
14. His confidence that they were able to admonish one another was built on two facts—they were full of goodness and filled with all knowledge.
15. (a) Full of goodness—that is, they were filled with goodwill toward each other; a brotherly love or kindness.
16. William Hendriksen—"[FULL OF GOODNESS]—that is, of kindness, generosity of heart and action."
17. Again, it includes moral character, but it goes further—it entails a desire to do good, a generous spirit.
18. (b) Filled with all knowledge—that is, they were filled with a knowledge of Scripture sufficient to help others.
19. They had sufficient knowledge of God, man, sin, Christ and salvation—they were practical theologians.
20. "They were—"able to admonish one another"—the GK is *noutheteo*, from which we get *nuethetic counselling*.
21. This was something Jay Adams coined in the 70s and refers to—counselling done within the body of Christ.
22. Ultimately Adams applied it to ministers but it's here applied to all Christians, providing these two things were true of them.
23. What is necessary for a person to be an effective counsellor—do you have to have a degree in counselling (maybe a PH. D)?
24. No, you need two things—to be full of goodness (that is a desire to do good), and have a knowledge of Scripture.
25. Thus, I want to suggest that a Christian now has goodness (within), as the result of two closely related facts.

26. (1) The good Spirit takes up residency within our hearts—that is, works in us, causing us to desire goodness.
27. Perhaps we can say—the good Spirit breathes upon our spirit, enabling us to love and/or desire goodness.
28. Gal.5:17—"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."
29. The desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are opposed to one another—the flesh desires evil and the Spirit desires good.
30. Thus, every Christian has the Holy Spirit within them, who moves and nudges our spirit to desire good.
31. Perhaps we can say, the Spirit not only plants sweet-smelling flowers in our soul, but He also blows upon them.
32. (2) The good Spirit writes the good law upon our hearts, Heb.8:10—"I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts."
33. This of course, is in contrast to the OC, wherein every member merely had the law written on stone tablets.
34. Within the NC, every covenant member, will have the law of God, written, not on tablets of stone, but flesh.
35. This means two things—we know and/or understand the law, and we love and desire to obey the law.
36. And remember, this law that He writes upon our hearts is called—"holy, and just and good" (Rom.7:12).
37. Rom.7:22—"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man"—he delighted in it, because it was written in his heart.
38. This is why a Christian has goodness within him—because He's indwelt by the Spirit and has God's law in His heart.
39. This is why a Christian is full of goodness—this is why he desires to love God and his neighbor, as he loves himself.

III. A Christian Does Goodness

1. Here we learn that the Spirit not only recreates us, indwells us, but He also enables us to do good works.
2. Because a Christian's heart has been made good, and there now dwells goodness within, it erupts in good deeds.
3. Good deeds (works) are the expression of goodness—the inevitable outworking of goodwill for others, Ps.119:68—"You are good and do good" Matt.12:33—"Make the tree good and its fruit good."
4. Thus, by good works I mean, works that come from a good heart, conform to a good standard, and are done for a good purpose.
5. (1) It must come from a good heart—as I've said before, the tree must be made good if the fruit is good.
6. Nothing native man does is good—it's all glorified sin—his best deed, his best righteousness is filthy rags.
7. Rom.3:12—"They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one."
8. That is, by nature, strictly speaking, no person does a single good thing, until they are born again by the Spirit.
9. Again, this doesn't deny that unregenerate people can do things that may be called "good" in a qualified say.

10. Everything a non-Christian does is sin, albeit some things they do are less sinful or heinous than others.
11. It's a good thing for a man to provide for his wife, and for a mother to care for and provide for her child.
12. It's a good thing for a citizen to obey the laws of the land, and for him to be helpful and kind to others.
13. But while these actions may be "good" in some sense, because they are not done by faith, they are glorified sins.
14. Prov.21:4—"The plowing of the wicked is sin"—that is, everything they do, is in some sense sin—why—because a bad tree can only produce bad fruit.
15. (2) It must conform to a good standard—not everything a Christian does is good, it must align with God's holy law.
16. Rom.7:12—"Therefore the law is holy (as a whole), and the commandment holy and just and good (in particular)."
17. For example, even if a professing Christian sought to justify abortion, no reason can make it a good work.
18. Christians still sin, and whatever they do contrary to God's law is sin—only what aligns to the law is good.
19. Thus—it makes little difference who does it and why—if it violates God's holy law—it's not a good work.
20. (3) It must be done for a good purpose—for a work to be good, it must be done for the good of others and glory of God.
21. Even if a Christian did something that's good, if they did it for a bad reason, then it's not a good work.
22. John Colquhoun—"Works cannot be accounted good, except our chief or ultimate end in doing them, be the glory of God in Christ, as our God."
23. Thus, the Spirit enables us to bear the fruit of goodness—we are able to do works that are truly good.
24. It's for this reason, Scripture says that God delights in good works, and He rewards them in a number of ways.
25. LBC—"Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, nor make a man meet to receive grace from God, and yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God."

IV. Observations

1. Here I want to close by suggesting five broad and brief observations or responses to all that we've seen.
2. (1) Let us lament our present culture, which calls good evil and evil good, Isa.5:20—"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil."
3. If there was ever an accurate description of our present age, especially in this country, it would be this—they call evil good, and good evil.
4. The reason why people hate evil and rejoice in evil, is because they God and His law, that define good.
5. In fact, there's a sense in which, we live in a culture that despises anything that even resembles good.
6. And, not only that, it praises everything that resembles evil—it's actually turned morality on its head.

7. (2) Let us cherish those who by nature were bad but by grace are now good—there's a lot of evil in this world and there's a lot of good.
8. And as I've said before, there a lot of what we might call "civil good"—that is, "good" done by unbelievers.
9. But the good I am here referring to, is the goodness associated with those indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
10. We sometimes may speak of someone as a "good person" or "good people"—he or she is a good person.
11. But in the strict sense of that phrase, it can only be applied to a certain person, and that is a Christian person.
12. You know, there are a number of ways we can refer to a Christian—they are believers, God-fearers, and God's people.
13. But you know, there's another way we can refer to them, and that is as good people, in the fullest sense of that phrase.
14. Yes, it's true, by nature they were very bad, but by grace they've been made very good—bad by nature and good by grace.
15. When we were recently on vacation, I was reminded how many beautiful sights there are in this world (the Caribbean Sea and Virgin Islands, to name but a few).
16. But you know what—what are these in comparison to the moral beautiful that resides within the heart of Christian people.
17. And this isn't to flatter ourselves, because remember brethren, making bad sinners good, is the work of God and not man.
18. (3) Let us come to Christ by faith to be remade or recreated as good—we all are natively in need of regeneration.
19. We sometimes say to our children that they must be good, and it's true they should, but you know what, the first step in them becoming actually good, is knowing they are natively bad.
20. Again, this was in part the purpose of our Savior, when he told the young rich ruler—"No one is good but One, that is, God."
21. Yes it's true, you may not be as bad as others, but don't let this fool you in thinking you're good enough.
22. My young friend, you will never be good enough to become a Christian, and this is something you need to own.
23. What you need to do is come to Christ as a bad person, He will make you good, and then you will be good.
24. But you may ask—How do I know whether or not I've been made good, and thus my works are good?
25. Well, remember what I've said—in order for a work to be good, it must come from a good heart, conform to a good standard, and be done for a good purpose.
26. (4) Let us imitate our Savior whose life was characterized by doing good, Acts 10:38—"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."
27. As I've said before, because Christ had the Spirit without measure in His human nature, He bore the fruit of the Spirit in perfection.
28. Everything I've said this morning is true of Christ in perfection—He is good, He has goodness, and He does goodness.
29. (5) Let us praise God for His unchanging goodness—not only in giving us a Savior but in keeping His promises.
30. People and cultures change, but not God—He is good—and nothing can ever change that blessed fact (Ps.34:8 – 'Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good').