

Series: "The Fruit of the Spirit"
"Kindness" "Goodness"

In this series of messages we're looking at the fruit of the Spirit – virtues, character traits, that will be seen in our life if the Holy Spirit is in us and in control. So far we've looked at love, joy, peace and patience. We're going to take the next *two* fruit of the Spirit together today, because they are very closely connected words. They are *kindness*, and *goodness*.

In order to understand these qualities better we need to take a few minutes to examine the Greek words that are used for *kindness* and *goodness*. The word for "kindness" is the Greek word *craystotase* (χρηστοτης). It can be translated "goodness", "uprightness", "kindness", "generosity". In most English Bible translations it is rendered *kindness*. It describes a goodness that's *kind*. Christ's yoke is described this way, "My yoke is *easy* and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28). It's a goodness and kindness that doesn't offend or irritate or irk people.

The next fruit of the Spirit is a Greek word translated "goodness". It's the word *hagathosoonay* (αγαθωσυνη). It also can be translated "goodness", "uprightness", "generosity". So you see why these words are closely related. But this word is most often translated, not kindness, but *goodness*. This word is not found in secular Greek, only in the Bible. It's a broad-based word for goodness. But it describes a goodness that can rebuke and correct and discipline. It's not quite as tender and soft a word as the word for kindness.

One Bible scholar suggests that Jesus showed this goodness when He went into the temple and drove out the moneychangers. This was an act of goodness on Jesus' part – because He was upset that the religious leaders were taking advantage of the people – but it was a harsh act on His part. However, Jesus showed *kindness* (the other word) when He was gentle and merciful to the sinful woman who poured perfume over His feet out of love for Christ.

I know this can be a bit confusing, but I hope it helps us understand how these two fruit of the Spirit are similar, but in some ways different. So let's look first of all at *kindness*.

The fruit of the Spirit is....kindness. Kindness has been defined as: "the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate." *The Bible says that God treats us with kindness.* Titus 3:4-5 says, "But when the goodness and loving *kindness* of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy." We can only be saved because of God's kindness! In Ephesians it says we are saved by God's grace (His mercy that we can't earn and don't deserve), "so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in *kindness* toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). The Bible is not the story of how good we are, but how kind God is to offer us mercy and salvation through Christ!

Romans 2:4 says, "Do you despise the riches of (God's) *kindness* and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's *kindness* is meant to lead you to repentance?" God has reached out to us in kindness so that we will turn from our self-centered way of living and follow God's ways.

God's kindness toward us illustrates how we should treat others with kindness. Colossians 3:12 tells us, "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, *kindness*, humility, meekness, and patience." Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit. When God's Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, lives in us and is controlling our life, we will be a kind person!

The Scripture reading from Acts 28 gives a beautiful example of kindness. The Apostle Paul was on a ship that was caught in a terrible storm at sea that just went on and on and on. Eventually they drifted close to an island, but the ship hit a reef and broke apart. Everyone made it safely ashore. The narrative continues: "After we had reached safety, we then learned that the island was called Malta. The natives showed us unusual kindness" (Acts 28:1-2).

When people go out of their way to be kind to us it can brighten our day, encourage us, even heal us! You can probably remember times when someone showed you unusual kindness. Think of how that blessed your life!

Do you think the world could use more kindness? Think what a difference it would make if we were more kind to our husband or wife, to our children or parents. Think how it would change the atmosphere at work, in school, in our neighborhoods, our churches, our government offices!

We hear of "random acts of kindness", and it's a beautiful thing. I've heard of people who will pay the fare of the car behind them at a tollgate. We hear stories of people in restaurants who ask for the bill of an elderly couple, and pay it, or people on a plane who will switch seats with a serviceman or woman so they can have a better seat. I saw something on Facebook the other day, where an elderly man was at a gas station and filling a can with gasoline, and a teenaged boy said he would pay for it. The older man fussed about it, but the teenager insisted.

Are you known for your kindness. If we are followers of Jesus, we should be. I love that song, "Try a Little Kindness". The chorus goes like this:

"You gotta try a little kindness, yes show a little kindness,
Shine your light for everyone to see.
And if you try a little kindness, then you'll overlook the blindness
Of narrow-minded people on their narrow-minded streets."

"But the fruit of the Spirit is....*kindness*" Galatians 5:22. Then the list of the fruit of the Spirit goes on...the fruit of the Spirit is *goodness*. As I said earlier, this Greek word is a word that describes a broad-based, overall goodness. It's used elsewhere in the New Testament. Christians in Rome are commended for their goodness: The Apostle Paul writes: "I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of *goodness*, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another" (Romans 15:14).

There is a beautiful example of an early Christian leader who is described as a *good* man. The man is Barnabas, and it says of him, "For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith" (Acts 11:24). Note the connection: he was a *good* man, and filled with the Spirit!

Normally, I hesitate to make too much of a fuss about calling people "good". I think of when the rich young ruler came up to Jesus and said, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus' first words in response were, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone?" (Mark 10:17-18). I mean Jesus was perfect, and yet He says, don't call me good, only God is good!

Psalms 14:3 says "there is none who does good, not even one." We're all sinners. But, you know, sometimes you just look at someone and want to say, "She's really a good person," or "He's really a good person at heart." I remember in my first year of theological seminary, one of our classmates (who had been in the military) was sharing how a friend of his, a young man, had died. I don't recall the details – I think he was killed in action. And in the midst of that seminary atmosphere, where we were all into academics and theology, our classmate spoke of his friend with great emotion: "He was a good man." Sometimes you just kind of have to say of someone, "He's a bad person." (I'm sure some law enforcement officers have no problem saying that!). Or sometimes you just want to say of someone, "She's really a good woman."

There's an interesting verse of Scripture relating to this. 2 Peter 1:5 says, "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith *goodness*." Peter says we should *make every effort to add to our faith* goodness. If you believe in Jesus, if you say you're a Christian, shouldn't goodness just come naturally? Aren't all Christians good people? Aren't all church people nice, decent human beings? *No!*

Goodness is a fruit of the Spirit. It follows when the Spirit fills us and controls us. But if we're a Christian and the sinful nature that's still a part of us is in control, all sorts of ugly behaviors can follow (as we see in Galatians 5:19-21). Maybe we've had an experience where someone we looked up to, someone we respected – perhaps a teacher, a youth director, a pastor, a relative - someone we thought was a "good person", we found out, they weren't as good as we thought. And on the other hand, maybe someone we didn't think that much of, we discovered there was a good and noble side to them we never knew.

I said earlier that this word for goodness isn't quite as soft a word as the word for kindness. It can have a bite, a tough side to it. Jesus went into the temple and overturned the moneychangers' tables. The religious leaders seethed with resentment against Jesus. But He cared about the common people who were being cheated by these religious leaders.

Sometimes, if we're a good person, we have to challenge what's wrong, confront people. When I was growing up, my dad a few times had to come down hard on me. He didn't exactly do it in a nice, gentle, diplomatic way! Did that make him a bad dad. No. He was a good dad. Good people sometimes have to get angry at what's evil or wrong, and try to do something about it! Just like Jesus.

Would you say we need more good people in the world? More people filled with goodness because they're filled with the Spirit? I would! Not perfect people – nobody's perfect – but good. People who are honest, and considerate, and thoughtful, and generous, and unselfish.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is....kindness, goodness" (Galatians 5:22).

