

Goodness and Faithfulness

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Date: 08 November 2020

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Elliot. As he just said, my name is Alan. I am one of the pastors here at One Harbor Church, and it is a great honor and privilege to bring the good news or gospel of Jesus Christ to you today.

Before we begin, he referenced baptisms coming up on the 29th. For those of you that were here at our last baptismal service, we were not only publicly proclaiming people's lives being changed, we were testing their heat tolerance in the water.

So if that is a holdup for you of like, maybe I'll go to another church to be baptized, we're going to regulate that temperature next time. So I do apologize for that.

I tried to burn the feet off my son and daughter and a few other young people. So anyway. And also, we are celebrating and remembering a very important time and event this week in the life of our church, especially to the life of this community with the birthday of the Marine Corps this week.

Yeah. And also, Veterans Day. So if you are currently serving or have served in our armed forces, I'd like to say thank you so much for your service to our country and to our church and to this community.

[1 : 08] So thank you so much for that. Yeah. Yeah. So typically here at One Harbor, we work through books of the Bible.

And then on occasion, you know, during different times of the year, we'll split off and hit specific topics or themes as we see pertinent or helpful to where we are. We are working through the book of Galatians and have spent the last few weeks working through a particular couple of verses focusing on the fruit of the Spirit.

And we're going to continue with that today, focusing on goodness and faithfulness. So just a little background for those of you that may not know about what this book or letter is. It was written by a guy named Paul to a group of churches in a region known at that time as Galatia, which is now present-day Turkey.

Paul was kind of like the first missionary to travel outside of the Jewish territory and teach the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ to non-Jewish people like you and I named Gentiles.

He made several trips to this area of Asia Minor, spending months and years teaching the gospel and helping to establish churches all over. Once he left the area, outsiders would come in and dispute his teaching, saying that these churches needed the Jewish law and the gospel to be right with God, basically a works form of gospel or earning one's way to righteousness instead of just faith in Jesus Christ.

[2 : 30] This book or letter is Paul's response to these outsiders' teachings, trying to redirect these churches back to faith in Jesus only. In chapter 5, Paul lays out two lists or virtues of virtues that are stark contrast to one another.

One is the desires of the flesh, which is basically every behavior that is not of God. And second, the fruit of the Spirit contrasts the other with a list of godly character traits that only he, God himself, can produce in us.

We have been working through the fruit of the Spirit for a few weeks, and today, like I said, we're going to focus on goodness and faithfulness. So if you'll turn your Bible to Galatians 5, verses 22 through 23, or the words will be up on the screen behind me.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

This is the Word of God. So to start off with, we see that goodness and faithfulness are things we all want, things we all desire. These are both attributes we want to possess and be known for.

[3 : 38] All of us want to be considered good and faithful. None of us want to be known as being evil, immoral, or a traitor. I mean, to be honest, you may have wanted to be known as bad in school, but even that was probably just a front.

Unless your name is Michael Jackson, and you had a hit song proclaiming how bad you are. Because I'm bad, I'm bad, I'm really, really bad. Serious?

I mean, the man can sing and dance with some mad skills, but bad? Nah. Not really. Even big, bad bullies in school were really just insecure peeps trying to make up for something, and were good at hiding it.

I mean, that's the truth. Why do you think people check out Christianity or church, especially after New Year's Eve? It's a new year. I'm going to have a new start.

I'm starting over. They want to be better. They want to change. They want to be known as good and faithful. Those attributes are attractive in many aspects of our lives, both personally and professionally.

[4 : 48] Guess how long your friends will hang out with you if you are consistently bad or betray them. You will be alone real quick or are constantly making new friends. And then on the professional side, if you have those same attributes towards your boss or employer, you may wonder why you get passed over for a promotion or bounce from one job to the next.

I assure you, as a former boss and owner of a company, I and they are listening and checking out your social media posts. Or also remember, remember, people love to talk about each other, especially if it makes themselves look better.

That's a side note. Here's another side note. Please stop posting pictures and writing your opinion about everything known to man, especially if it's controversial.

But if you must write it out as some form of therapy, and I know a lot of people that like to do that. I'm one of those. Get it out of your system and then delete before posting.

Once you send it, it's gone. Know what I mean? All right. Enough of that. But what do these words actually mean? Firstly, let's focus on goodness. Goodness sounds simple, but it's actually complex.

[6 : 02] In fact, there are at least four ways we use that word today. The first is the worst way we use it. It's an adjective to express mediocrity. I ask my kids, how was your day?

Good. How was school? Good. My wife can tell you that's a pretty standard answer we get, and I just shake my hand. So now my reply to that answer is, well, what was so good about it?

And that's when I start getting the details about what they actually did in school or dance or baseball or whatever we're talking about. Secondly, it can mean usefulness. A good tool is one that works well for that particular task.

Third, it can refer to that which is pleasing. Good food tastes delicious. Mmm. That was magnifique. It can refer to virtue.

A good man is one who behaves virtuously. That last one is probably the one we think about most in church. But in Scripture, we see all of the last three examples.

[7 : 04] Goodness means something well made, attractive, and useful. Think about it. Think about Genesis. What is the adjective used throughout the creation narrative? And God saw that it was good.

Twelve times we read that. Just imagine this. The angel comes up to God and says, hey, God, how's it going? God says, meh, it's good. No, that's not.

The earth was formed out of nothing, and life was exploding for the first time. Animals everywhere. Vast oceans and mountain ranges. Huge prairies and immense forests.

It was good. The last thing we could use to describe it is so-so. Right? It was immense, beautiful, and incredibly useful to all. One more way we can see goodness expressed in the Bible also means moral excellence.

The word Paul uses here is translated as moral excellence. That's what we mean when we talk about people acting out of the goodness of their heart. They did more than what was required.

[8 : 06] More than they had to. They went above and beyond the norm to help change someone's life. We do meal trainings around here for people who have new babies, have surgery, loss of a loved one, those kind of things.

That's going above and beyond. That's the goodness of your heart kind of thing. All right. That's goodness. That's goodness by itself. What about faithfulness? What does that word mean? Faithfulness is what makes goodness so amazing.

Faithfulness is a word. It's kind of straightforward. It means utterly reliable. One person puts it as living in such a way that people can rely on you, being known for keeping promises.

Simply put, let your yes be yes and your no be no. Be a man or woman of your word. But what I think we can so often miss is how valuable faithfulness is to any other virtue.

Faithfulness is the secret in the sauce. It's the foundation for all the other virtues to stand upon. Think about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control.

[9 : 10] Without being faithful and consistent in demonstrating these virtues in various scenarios, do you think others would describe you with these qualities? Goodness and faithfulness are particularly important together.

Don't get me wrong.

They probably do all things that seem to show that they love you, but faithfulness is where it's at. The physical stuff will pass and get old, but being faithful is the proof in the pudding.

Faithfulness, in other words, is like the color black. It makes all the other colors pop off the page because of how it shows the contrast. Look at all these ultra HDTVs now.

Their black range of color is the blackest of the black. Not in gray, it's the blackest of the black. Because the other colors seem to pop or leap out of the screen when contrasted to that deep black color.

[10 : 38] Lots of guys say they love you. Lots of girls say they love you. Faithfulness exposes the contrast between all of them and this one particular guy or girl.

And faithfulness does this to goodness. What good is goodness without faithfulness? This is why we talk about them together. Goodness is meant to be married to faithfulness.

Take, for example, this charge to the Galatians. In chapter 6, verse 9, it says, And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up.

So, what's going on here? Do good, but don't grow weary. Don't give up. Remember that there are seasons. We go through hardships. We go through ups and downs.

The key is faithfulness. That's the key. How do you all think Shelly and my kids would react if I packed a suitcase and just left for a couple months?

[11 : 42] Adios, I'll see you when I get back. When I got back, I threw her the keys to a new Cadillac Escalade. And brought the kids some awesome toys, four-wheelers, clothes, those kind of things, etc.

And then a few days later, I would repeat. See you in a couple months. As my dad says when he leaves our home, he would say, Toodles! He might say that I was good, in a sense, but I wasn't faithful.

I wasn't faithful. I wouldn't be married. I wouldn't be known as a dad. And that faithlessness would completely nullify my goodness.

We aren't just to be good every so often. But in faithfulness, someone that is only sometimes good is inconsistent at best and deceitful at worst. Well, who's like that?

Who is faithfully good all the time? Who? There's only one. Only God. Jesus Christ. If goodness must be married to faithfulness, then Mark 10, 18 says, No one is good except God alone.

[13 : 00] God alone is abundantly full of goodness and faithfulness. Most, if not all of us, have heard the following. I want you to repeat, okay?

God is good? All the time. And all the time? God is good. Very good. Psalm 23, 6 says, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

However, the psalmist, the writer of this psalm, isn't worried about God running out of goodness. He's not worried about being evicted from the house of the Lord. He's trusting in God's goodness because of God's faithfulness.

What makes God so wonderful is that he's good and faithful. If he was just good every now and again, we would perish. Again and again, worship flows to God because of this combo.

Lamentations 3 is fantastic. 22 through 24 says, The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.

[14 : 10] They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore, I will hope in him.

That is one of those verses that we should consistently look in the mirror and read to ourselves. That is a great way to train our minds to have the mindset of Christ.

My soul will hope in him because his goodness never ceases. I love that it says new every morning. Not just there every morning. It is every morning in a new way.

God is pouring out mercy and steadfast love on us. The goodness and faithfulness of God are so helpful to us when we sin, which is when we're most likely to doubt his goodness.

What happens when we sin? What is our mindset? Where do our thoughts immediately go to? We get overwhelmed by guilt and shame and are convinced that he no longer will love us.

[15 : 14] I always go back, I got to earn it. I have to be good a certain number of days to earn it back, to earn the favor of God back. We're concerned that he will cut off goodness to us because we have let him down.

God is good and faithful even when we are not. In fact, this is how God encouraged the hearts of his people. In Malachi 3, 6 and 7 it says, For I, the Lord, do not change.

Therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. But he is faithful.

Just think if he wasn't faithful. You sin. Boom! Boom! That's kind of scary. Thank you for your faithfulness.

Just because we are good and faithful doesn't stop him. God doesn't react to our failures. He doesn't get surprised and caught off guard. 2 Timothy 2, 13 says, If we are faithless, he remains faithful.

[16 : 21] For he cannot deny himself. What does this combo of goodness and faithfulness lead us to? God's goodness and faithfulness lead us to worship him.

We recognize that even when we fail, even when we fall on our faith, he is steadfast. He is loving. He is kind. He is gracious to us. And it causes us to fall on our knees and thank God.

The first and right response to this is, You are God and I am not. Psalm 136.1 says, Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

Psalm 119.68 says, You are good and what you do is good. Think of how many songs are revolving around greatness of God's faithfulness.

Lastly, we just don't respond heavenward because of this. God's goodness and faithfulness lead us to imitate him.

[17 : 20] Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Mom and dads, I can relate to this. My children try and mimic me almost all the time. Right?

How flattering is that? And humbling. I'm like, please don't mimic me in some things, okay? Just forget about those things. As we behold his goodness and faithfulness, as we worship him for being so incredible, we begin to desire to be more like him.

Okay, back to this fruit of the spirit. We won't produce fruit if we don't want them. The desire is what must come first. Like our kids that try and imitate us, we should desire to do the same thing to our heavenly father.

Because of his goodness, because of his faithfulness, his steadfast love, we should try and imitate that and reflect that to others around us. That's why this sermon you're hearing today is mostly about how good God is.

It's the character of God that draws us to want to lay down our sinful works of the flesh that we naturally want to do and be more like him. We don't run away from sin because sin is bad, although that should be a motivation, and we are told to flee from sin.

[18 : 40] We primarily run away from sin and to God because God is so good and faithful. The more you see how amazing he is, the more you want nothing to do with sin that you previously held on to.

It's not worth it. It lets you down. It makes your life more complicated. It causes you burden. You say, I don't want that anymore.

I want to turn to God. I want to be like God. I want to be like Christ. Come to me, all who are weary.

I'll give you rest. Bask in his goodness and faithfulness. Be overwhelmed by it. Be undone by it, and you will find that it changes you from the inside. Don't start with trying to be good and faithful.

Look to the only one. Let the roots of your heart be saturated and nourished by him. Matthew 7, 17 says, So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

[19 : 49] True healthy trees and plants have strong root systems first. If the roots are bad, then the tree cannot produce good fruit. And our state tree is the longleaf pine.

The first year of its life is all about root development. You have a little tuft of the longleaf pines coming out of the ground, but that tap root is going two, three, four feet, five feet in the ground before that tree can actually grow.

And then the next year, it shoots up six, seven feet. Why? Because it has that foundation. It has that good root system to support it. Well, what does that mean?

What does that mean? It means that you and I will be stuck in unhealthy patterns of life, producing the desires of the flesh. Sure, we may have brief episodes of being good and faithful, but they will be short-lived, and we will be no different than the rest of the world.

We are called to be different. The city on a hill, a shining light in a dark world, showing them, the world, what godly goodness and faithfulness truly look like.

[20 : 56] As we look to respond this morning, Jesus tells a story of servants who are rewarded for their obedience. He says, well done, good and faithful servant.

I don't know about you, but my reaction is always to look away. When I hear those words, I tend to have a little, I'm not so good. I'm really not so faithful.

I know deep down, if this is the standard, I don't line up. I don't meet that. Only one man ever really deserved that, and it was Jesus.

In fact, at Jesus' baptism, the Father audibly says, this is my son in whom I am well pleased. Is this story there to make us all feel insecure?

I believe yes and no. Yes, it's meant to make us insecure about our own chances, but no, it's meant to make us trust in the cross for our validation. On the cross, Jesus cries out to the Father, and God is silent.

[22 : 02] For the first time in all of eternity, God is silent to his son. I thought this was the son you were well pleased in. He was, but in this moment in history, he is bearing our sin.

He is receiving the silence and condemnation that we deserve. Not the welcome of the Father, but the sentence of death. Jesus, the only good and faithful son, gets what we all deserve so that we could get what only he deserved.

When you become a Christian, you are joined to him, and all your badness becomes his. But all his goodness becomes yours. So when you show up before the throne, he will see you united to his son and say, well done, good and faithful servant.

As the band comes up, if you are here or listening and not yet following Jesus, many a God proclaims his steadfast love, but a faithful God, who can find?

We have in Jesus a good and faithful God we can trust. His faithfulness stands out and makes his goodness pop. And if Jesus isn't in you, he can be.

[23 : 26] All your sin, your shame, your guilt, your regret, your failure, embarrassment, all your emptiness, loneliness, doubt, anxiety, and fear can all be his.

You can say, here God, you take all of this. I can't carry it. And he'll take it. And because of him, you'll slowly become the person you want to be.

More often than not, it's not like that. It's a slow transition. It's growing those roots down. It takes time. It takes effort. It takes desire. You'll become the person you were actually designed to be.

Let the goodness and faithfulness of God draw you to him today. If you're here or listening and already a follower of Jesus, can't you look back? Can't you see a history of the Holy Spirit slowly transforming you into the goodness and faithfulness of Christ?

I'm so thankful I can. I am certainly not perfect in this area by a long shot, but I am much better than I was by the grace and kindness of God.

[24 : 36] The more I focus, the more you focus on trying to be good, the more proud or full of despair you become, I become. Don't walk out of here today focusing on you.

The more I focus on how only he is good, the more I am humbled that he loves me and is committed to me. The more I want to be someone who is good and faithful to imitate him.

I referenced Galatians 6, 9 earlier and I'm going to finish with this too. Galatians 6, 9 and 10 goes, and let us not grow weary of doing good for in due season we will reap if we do not give up.

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Let us pray.

God, I'm just so thankful for this opportunity to be with friends and family members casting aside the cares and worries of this world and focusing on you. God, I pray that this sermon today would find a good soil in our hearts, Lord, that we would be changed, that we would be known as good and faithful people, that we would be proclaiming the good news to those who would listen, even to those who would not listen.

[26 : 00] Let's proclaim the good news or gospel of Jesus Christ and be faithful in doing so. Give us opportunities to speak to people's lives, to change them, to give them hope when there is so much despair and hopelessness in this world today.

Help us to be that city on the hill, a light in the darkness. God, if there is someone here today or somebody listening that does not know you as Lord and Savior, I pray that you would speak to their lives, you would speak to their heart, draw them close to you, they would bow their knee and call you Lord and Savior today.

I'm thankful for this time, God. In your name we pray. Amen.