

The fruit of the Spirit is: Goodness

These are some rules Issued to Female Teachers in 1915

1. You will not marry during the term of your contract.
2. You are not to keep company with men.
3. You must be home between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. unless attending a school function.
4. You may not loiter downtown in... ice cream stores.
5. You may not travel beyond the city limits unless you have the permission of the chairman of the board.
6. You may not ride in a carriage or automobile with any man unless he is your father or brother.
7. You may not smoke cigarettes.
8. You may not dress in bright colours.
9. You may under no circumstances dye your hair.
10. You must wear at least two petticoats.
11. Your dresses must *not* be any shorter than two inches above... the ankle.
12. To keep the school room neat and clean, you must:
 - sweep the floor at least once daily;
 - scrub the floor at least once a week
 - with hot, soapy water;
 - clean the blackboards at least once a day;
 - and start the fire at 7 a.m. so the room will be warm by 8 a.m.

Apparently that's what it takes to be a good teacher!

We're thinking today about Goodness – the fruit of the Spirit is goodness.

And we can all laugh at that list, and just how dated it is, but I wonder, are you expecting a sermon on goodness to be a bit like that, except with the 10 commandments?

God says be good – do this, and this and this....

Well that's not what I'm going to do at all.

But I do just want to start by facing up to a problem – Jesus says that none of us are good.

A young man comes up to Jesus one day, he wants to ask Jesus about how to get to heaven, and he starts by saying to Jesus “good teacher”

And Jesus stops him, and says, “why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone” Jesus wants to get the man to think about the fact that he *is* God.

But the guy who came to Jesus thinks of himself as a good guy, and what's more he **has** kept lots of the 10 commandments, but what Jesus says to him is, no one is good except God.

And actually, with God, everything he does is good, it's there right from the beginning in Genesis 1 – God made things and over and over it says that what he did was good, it was good, it was good, and finally it was very good!

And that gives us a problem, we are not God, and Jesus says we are not good, so how can we show this fruit of the Spirit of goodness in our lives?

Actually, the answer is in the question.

Goodness is the fruit of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, God, at work in us. So just like all rest of the fruit (can you remember them?) we depend on God to bring them out within us.

He works inside us, and he can make us good.

And just to encourage you that it's possible, let me read how the bible describes Barnabas in Acts 11.

“Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith”

What a glorious way to describe someone, and it's my prayer that God would have that view of each of us too, and I pray he might use my words now to begin to work that in us.

So, the bible uses the word good in two ways.

You see, goodness in the bible, speaks of God's perfect purity and rightness as part of its meaning. God only ever does and thinks true, pure, right and excellent things. He is good!

But the word is used in another way too. It's used in a really practical way.

Doing good to all.

Think of that phrase, being a do-gooder. If someone's a do-gooder, is that a good thing?

No, it usually means they're well-meaning but in reality they're interfering or difficult.

If you're a do-gooder, usually people wish you'd leave them alone, and actually they'd be better off if you did! So we don't want to be a do-gooder!!!

But we must be good-doers, if you like.

Look at v9 at the end of our passage in Galatians, open your bibles up again:

⁹ Let us not become weary in **doing good**, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us **do good** to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Can you see how practical this is? We are to be good-doers!

So, just as Dave explained last week (at St. Nicks) kindness is the more the emotional intension to do good. And goodness here is the practical *actual doing* of good. It's the action. As I try to explain this passage, I'm going to talk us through a **new way to see people, and then give 3 pointers to help motivate you to do good.**

So, to begin with, I want us to really draw out an image from the passage here. This is what you are to imagine. Everyone here in church is wearing a rucksack. We each came into church with one on, there're all different sizes, and they've all got different sizes and shapes and weights of stuff in them.

These are our burdens.

People outside the church have them too – everyone has a rucksack. (the manufacturers are delighted!)

You get the idea, everyone has their burdens, and they carry them around with them. Some might be really big, some smaller.

Some have bigger burdens but they're strong, some less so. Some have small ones which are particularly heavy. They're all different. But everyone has them.

And when I talk about *burdens*, these might be big things like health problems or the death of someone we love. They might be things like being short of money, or not having enough time to do everything you need to. They might be small things like your oven broke or a flat tyre on the car, which can be sorted out easily enough.

Our burdens could be all sorts of things, the things we carry through life, our responsibilities, our tests, our limitations.

They can linger and weigh us down for a long time or just short.

So clearly for all of us they will change over time, even from one week to the next!

Have you got the picture? So we're all different, we all have different burdens.

I wonder if you can think what yours might be?

And in v5 our passage says, "everyone *should* carry their own load"

That's the ideal, that's how it should work, that's what you should strive for. You should carry your own load. Except, sometimes our burdens are too much for us to bear alone. And God knows that, and he's designed it so that...

We are commanded v2 "carry each other's burdens, in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ" do you see?

That's Jesus' way.

Actually *he's* in charge of all the rucksacks and weight.

And v3 warns us, if you're pleased you're carrying your own burdens so well – take a moment to think, think of others, because you ought to be helping others around you too.

Can you see how this way of thinking is all about *doing* good?

You should be *doing* good to those around you! Helping to carry their burdens!!

Now, I want to say just a couple of things to try to help motivate you, and support you in doing good.

1st I want you to see how **important** doing good it is in your Christian life. And show you 2 verses.

1st this verse describes the *start* of your Christian life.

Ephesians 2:9 ⁹For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—it's not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—you were not saved by works, so that no one can boast.

¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

That passage says that, you don't earn your own forgiveness, it's a gift from God.

And once you're forgiven (or saved) – God wants you to do good, to be a good-doer, and he wants it so much that every single day of your life he's prepared lots of good works for you to do.

All sorts of different things, specially prepared for us as very different people.

Can you see, doing good is important, God plans it for us.

Then there's the *end* of your Christian life:

(Matt 25:21) The master will say to him

“Well done **good** and faithful servant”

That's the welcome we will get into heaven.

And in the same chapter...

³⁴ “Then the King will say to the righteous, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

Now, remember forgiveness is a gift, we saw that – but also this shows just how important the good we do is – at the end of our lives when we stand before Jesus, this suggests that he'll pick out the good things we do, as good-doers, and say “well done” for them! He wants us to do them. They're important!

So how are you doing? Is this how you're wired? Do you see the burdens of others, do you help? Or do you do nothing? You may be struggling with your own!! I hope you'll let others help you.

Now these kinds of doing-good can be anything...

Arranging to visit, talking a problem through with someone, giving up your time to help with something – even something as simple as praying for someone and caring how they are, is doing good.

But, we can find doing any of those things hard... And this passage picks out our problem: **Weariness**. “v9 Let us not become **weary** in doing good.”

And that's realistic isn't it? don't you get weary?

That's the danger.

You know, especially when you're not being thanked, and you're doing the same thing *over* and *over* ... Or, if (as Jesus says) you're trying to “**Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you(!)**” Well they're not going to give you a thank you card!

Our problem is weariness, and the solution is faith.

v9 carries on, Let us not become **weary** in doing good “for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” and what it means is that one day you'll stand before God, and he'll say *well done* for all the good you've done.

If you're a Christian, remember, you'll be rewarded!!

No matter how much good you do, no matter how much giving you give, even receiving nothing back(!!!) immediately – God sees it, and you will one day get your reward from him.

Like waiting for the harvest to come, the crops grow gradually, and suddenly it all comes at once!

Now at Graveley fruit farm it's loads and loads and loads of strawberries! And we went on Friday, and they're wonderful!

The harvest or the fruit for us isn't that. If we don't grow weary, one day we'll get a *well done* from God, it could be more than that, I'm not exactly sure, but what is clear, is you'll get your reward.

If you're weary, faith in God, will keep you going. We need *faith* to help us to do good. So we've seen a new way to view people, we've seen that us doing good is really important to God, we've seen that faith helps us *not* to grow weary. Now I have two more things to help you.

The first is good news: **God has given you something to help.**

God has given us the bible.

You might say, (sigh) really, does the bible help me to **do** good? I thought it was just all stories and stuff.

We'll listen to this verse:

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the one who serves God may be **thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

Actually the verse which explains the importance of the bible, also in the same verse says – and the point is to equip you for **every good work!**

You might wish God gave us a DVD, or someone to chat things through with, but God has given us the bible, his very words, to help us to be ready for every good work.

And we saw didn't we that God plans out good works for us.

So, if you want to grow in goodness, study the bible – God's words.

If you find it really hard, then read a Christian book designed to explain it, or meet with other people and talk about it together – Christians have been doing this for centuries!

We have home groups who meet during the week, and look at the bible together, and it's great fun, and really helpful! God gives us help, his Spirit works in us, and his Spirit works through the words in the bible. That's why the bible is great!

The second thing, and what I want to finish on, is that the good God has prepared to you, is not outlandish stuff you've never thought of before, but it starts (at least) close to home, and is often very simple.

You probably noticed that verse at the end of our passage, I wonder if you thought it was strange. **“do [literally work good] good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”**

You might ask: is it actually saying you have a greater responsibility to help a Christian person? What's going on there?

And the answer to that is yes.

Just like if you went to a nursing home to visit, there may be lots of people who'd want you to sit down and talk with them and keep you company, but if your Dad was there you'd sit with him – you have a responsibility to him.

So, Christians as family have a responsibility first to each other.

So at St. Nicks we give to international aid charities, and we give to a Christian one!

So if we're Christians, that's just part of the idea that we can't ourselves do every good work that needs doing, God prepares some in advance for us, each of us, and we have a first responsibility to those he has put close to us.

But I want to add just a bit more, in terms of how normal these things are.

1 Timothy 5 speaks about

A widow who is "well known for her good deeds"

But it gives examples: "well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord's people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds"

Think about some of those – bringing up children. That's her job.

If you do your job, and do it well, then trimming that hedge, minding those children, running those spreadsheets – and doing a good job, is part of what we're talking about here as good deed.

I guess many of us will find it easy to see those things as some of our burdens!!

It also says 'showing hospitality'. And how normal is that. It's not just taking meals down to the local leprosy colony and so on. Normal things.

So I'm not going to reel off a list of **do** this and don't do that...

In fact I *can't* tell you what *your* good works are, though I pray you will think about it, and that you would do them. What I can tell you is that God has prepared some for you, they're important, and the bible will help you, and God will by his Spirit. When you're feeling weary, remember the lord, he loves you, and he sees all your efforts! He will reward you!