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The Fruit of the Ruach is Goodness

5: 22f

The fruit of Ruach is goodness? DIG: What do we mean when we tell our children to “Be good?” Is being “good” enough to get you into heaven? Why? Why not? How is God good? What did ADONAI tell Micah? How does the Bible define goodness? How was the Pharisee doing the right thing, in the wrong way for the wrong reason?

REFLECT: How can you show generosity towards others this week? How are you like God when you show goodness towards others? How can you practice justice this week? How can you love mercy this week? How can you make sure you are doing the right thing in the right way, for the right reason? How can you walk more humbly with your God? What is the only way we can consider ourselves to be good?

When **Paul** spoke of **walking by the Ruach** (**to see link click [By - Walk by the Ruach, and Not the Desires of the Flesh](#)**), **he** was not referring to following after mystical visions and revelations. Instead, **he** provided a list of attributes that describe a **Ruach**-led person. Thus, the evidence of **the fruit of the Ruach** is a changed life. **Paul** now presents the proper path according to which those faithful to **God** in **His Messiah** should **walk**. **The fruit** stands in contrast to **the deeds of the flesh**. **The Ruach’s fruit** simply shows us the qualities which characterize the Kingdom of **God**. **But, in contrast to the deeds of the flesh, the fruit of the Ruach (singular, like a cluster of grapes) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (5:22a). All of these elements should be a part of your life as you allow the Ruach ha-Kodesh to flow through you.**



Goodness (Greek: *agathosune*, Hebrew: *tov*) has to do with moral and spiritual excellence that is known by its sweetness and active **kindness**. In fact, **kindness** and **goodness** are very similar. And another synonym for those two words would be **compassion**. The word **good** or **goodness** is found about 600 times in the Bible – about 350 times in the TaNaKh and about 250 in the B’rit Chadashah. And you don’t have to go very far in the Bible to see this word used. **God saw that the light was good (Genesis 1:4)**. And every time **God** created something in **Genesis**, **He saw that it was good**. In the second chapter of **Genesis** is the first time we see the negative attached to it: **It is not good for the man to be alone (Genesis 2:18)**. We use the word **good** all the time.

We tell our children when we are going to the store, “Be **good**!” Do you know what that means? It really means, “Don’t burn the house down or kill each other while I’m gone.” They really don’t have to do anything, do they? You don’t expect them to clean the house, or wash the car. If they just don’t do any damage then they have fulfilled your expectation to “Be **good**.” But that’s not what the Bible means when it says to “Be **good**.” The Bible says that **the fruit of the Ruach is goodness**. What does that mean?

How is **God good**? You would say, “**God** has given me salvation,” “**God** has forgiven my sins,” “**God** has given me a wonderful family,” “**God** has given me life today.” Everything you said about **the goodness of God** has something to do with what **God** gives to us. **Goodness** is tied to the idea of generosity. On the one hand, **God is good** by virtue of who **He** is, yes. **ADONAI is good to all. He has compassion on all His creatures (Psalm**

145:9), do good, ADONAI, to the good, and to the upright in their hearts (Psalm 125:4). But that is not true of us. For us, **goodness** is not merely an internal virtue, but something we *do*. And one of the ways we express that is through generosity. Thus, we are like **God** when we are generous.

How does the Bible define **goodness**? In the prophets, **Micah** is asking **himself**, “**With what shall I come before ADONAI? With what shall I bow myself before God on high? Shall I present Him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves? Will ADONAI be pleased with a thousand rams, with hordes of rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my belly for the sin of my soul**” (Micah 6:6-7)?

Then **God** answers **Micah** by saying, “You want to know what **goodness** is? Let **Me** tell you.” **I have told you, O humanity, what is good, and what I am seeking from you: Only to practice justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God** (Micah 6:8).

We need to **practice justice**: We need to do what is right. We live in a godless society where it seems that **everyone is doing what seems right in their own eyes** (Judges 21:25b). Right is right even if nobody is doing it. Noah built his ark in the midst of a godless society (see the commentary on **Genesis Ca - The Sons of God Married the Daughters of Men**). A world of injustice and evil. Satan is still the ruler of this world. But wrong is wrong even if everybody is doing it. **Goodness** is when we do what is right, like Noah.

We are not only to do what is right, but we are to do it in the right way and for the right reason. We are to **love mercy** (Hebrew: *chesed*). Used some 248 times in the TaNaKh, the Hebrew word *chesed* has no English equivalent. Being an expression of relationship, the term means *faithfulness, kindness, goodness, mercy, love* and *compassion*, but primarily *loyalty* to a covenant. **YHVH** is **the One** who models *chesed*. It is a characteristic of **Ha'Shem** rather than human beings; it is rooted in the divine nature. **Chesed** precedes the covenant (*b'rit*), which provides additional assurance that **YHVH's** promise will not fail. While the righteous may call for help based on a relationship with **El**, there can also be an appeal for help based not on any human merit, but rather on the faithfulness of **ADONAI** to help the undeserving to bring forgiveness and restoration. Again, **God** models “doing *chesed*” for us. The *chesed* of **the LORD** that is experienced and known by **His** children comes to define what human *chesed* can be, ought to be, and sometimes actually is.¹⁴⁹

In **Messiah's** day, there was **a pharisee who went up to the Temple to pray**. Obviously,

praying is a **good** thing. It is essential that we pray. The problem, however, was not that he was praying, it was *how* he was praying. Standing by **himself**, **he** prayed out loud: **God, I thank you that I am not like other people (Luke 18:11a).** **He** wasn't in contact with **God** at all but merely boasted and justified **himself**. **The Pharisee's** reasons for standing **by himself** are easily understood. **He** considered **himself** righteous, and indeed, **not like other people**, as we see from **his** description of **a tax collector** standing far away from **him**.

The Jewish practice is **to pray** out loud. This adds high definition to the scene. In essence, **the Pharisee** is therefore preaching to "the less fortunate unwashed" around him. It's as if **he** were thinking to **himself**, "They have little chance to get a good look at a truly righteous man like **myself**, so **I** will graciously offer them a few words of judgment along with some instruction in righteousness." But **his prayer** reveals more of **himself** than **he** probably intended. **Prayer** in Jewish piety primarily involves offering praise and thanks to **ADONAI** for all **He** has done, and petitions for the worshiper's needs. This **Pharisee** does neither. **He** brags about **his** own self-righteousness and has no requests. Thus, **his** "prayer" degenerates into mere self-aggrandizement. As **he** proceeds it goes from bad to worse.¹⁵⁰

For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector. The Pharisees usually displayed a self-conscious pride and superiority toward virtually everyone else. **They** were offensively contemptible, outspoken, lacking decency and charity, but always with much pious self-assertion. Here, **his** words were selected because **he** felt they specifically applied to **the tax collector**, who is already spotted **standing at** some **distance** away from the other worshipers. **I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. And I pay tithes on my entire income. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven (Luke 18:11-13a CJB).** The image of **the tax collector** in the mind of **the Pharisee** is in sharp contrast to the reality of the broken, humble **man standing** some **distance** away from the assembled worshipers. **He** does not stand aloof, but **at a distance** because **he** doesn't feel worthy to stand in the midst of **God's** people.

But he beat upon his chest. And said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13b). Grace is getting what you don't deserve (forgiveness) and **mercy** is *not* getting what you *do* deserve (punishment). **The tax collector** is not offering a generalized **prayer** for **God's mercy**. **He** specifically longs for the benefits of atonement, or a substitute. Those coming to **pray** at the time of the evening sacrifice would first see the slaughtering and cutting up of the sacrificial lamb. Then they would notice the priest going into the Holy Place to burn incense.

Both of these were acts that the Israelite was not merely an onlooker, for they were performed in the name of the people (of which the priest was a representative) in order to affirm daily Isra'el's relationship to **ADONAI**. After the incense had been burned, the priest announced the blessing with outstretched hands and put the name of **YHVH** upon the people. It was for the reception of the blessing that the people "bowed themselves" to the ground on hearing **the Name**. This was followed, in the awareness that **God** would graciously accept the gift, by the bringing of the sacrificial lamb to the bronze altar.

You can almost smell the pungent incense, hear the sounds of the liturgy, the loud clash of the cymbals, the blast of the shofars, the reading of **the Psalms**, the singing of the Levitical choir on the steps of the Nicanor Gate, see the great cloud of dense smoke rising from the burnt offering on the bronze altar, and the final prostration of the people. The **tax collector** is there. **He stood at a distance**, anxious not to be seen, sensing **his** unworthiness to stand with the other worshipers. In brokenness **he** longs to be a part of it all. **He** desperately wants to stand with "the righteous." In deep remorse **he beats on his chest** and cries out in repentance and hope: **Oh God! Let it be for me! Make a substitute for me, a sinner!** There in the Temple this humble **man**, acutely aware of **his** own **sin** and unworthiness with no merit of **his** own, longed that the sacrificial lamb on the bronze altar might apply to **him**. As a result, **God had mercy upon him** and forgave **him**.¹⁵¹ And like **ADONAI**, we are to **love mercy**.

And finally, **ADONAI** told **Micah** to **walk humbly with your God**. **He** didn't merely say **walk with God**, **he** said **walk humbly with your God**. In the Bible **humility** stands in opposition to pride like that of **the Pharisee**. We live in a proud arrogant society. People look down on other people. People are narcissistic, thinking that the world revolves around them. But in contrast to the world, we are to **walk humbly with our God**, knowing that if it wasn't for **God's** grace and **mercy** we would not be where we are. Everything we have comes from **Him**.

Practicing justice is a way of **loving mercy**, which in turn is a manifestation of **walking humbly with our God**. **He** is **good** for us, **He** is **good** to us, **He** is **good** in us, and **He** is **good** through us. The typical unbeliever today believes that going to heaven involves something about being a **good** person. But the only way we can be **good**, is because **Yeshua** lives through us. Saying it another way, no one can be "good" without a relationship with **Messiah**. It is **God** living through us that brings about **His goodness**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Help us to remember the example **You** set for us – for though **You** are perfect, **You** are also humble. **You** left your holy heaven, emptied **Yourself** to come to*

live in the likeness of man (**Philippians 2:6-14**), willing to be betrayed (**Matthew 26:14-16, 45-48**), mocked, spat upon, insulted (**Matthew 26:29-30,44**), denied and crucified (**Matthew 26:69-75, 27:34-50**).

You gave so much for us, we desire to give **love** back to **You** by bearing much **fruit** including the **fruit** of **goodness**. When we stand before **You** in Heaven, we long for **You** to say to us “**well done**” as the master said to his faithful servant in the parable you told. **His** owner said to him, “**You have done well. You are a good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. I will put many things in your care. Come and share my joy**” (**Matthew 25:23**). We delight in serving **You** out of **love**. In the name of **Your** holy **Son** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen