

Lesson 37 - The Character of Goodness

1. What is the sixth item listed when one has the fruit of the Spirit? **Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:9**

EGW: Human inventions please the carnal mind, and pacify the conscience as it clings to sin. It was not palatable to men to see and practice the faith that works by love and sanctifies the soul. Sin was not forsaken and despised, and in order to excuse it a means had to be devised by which the edge of the sword of truth might be blunted; so men brought in human reasonings and assertions. If men had permitted the word of God to do its work upon the heart and intellect, they would have distinguished and separated the spurious from the true. If they had received the Scriptures in their simplicity, they would not have given themselves up to worldly pursuits, to fulfilling their temporal hopes. But they made of none effect the word of God through their traditions, and wrested the Scripture from its true meaning. The Lord says that the word of truth is able to make men wise unto salvation. It is a safeguard and shield, and protects men from the delusions of the enemy. "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be ye not therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light; for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." {ST, June 4, 1894 par. 4}

2. Where do we get the goodness from? **Psalms 144:1-2**

EGW: (no comment)

3. What type of soul develops the character of goodness? **Psalms 107:9**

EGW: True humility means working for God, trusting entirely to his guidance. God looks down from heaven with pleasure on the trusting, believing ones who have a full sense of their dependence on him. To such he delights to give when they ask him. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with good things." "The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him." "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain." Through good and bad report, through darkness, through all the antagonism of the agencies of Satan, the Sun of Righteousness calmly shines on, searching out evil, repressing sin, and reviving the spirit of the humble and contrite ones. {ST, October 21, 1897 par. 9}

4. What type of heart is developed from goodness? **2 Chronicles 7:10**

EGW: Then king and people offered sacrifices before the Lord. "So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God." 2 Chronicles 7:1-5. For seven days the multitudes from every part of the kingdom, from the borders "of Hamath unto the river of Egypt," "a very great congregation," kept a joyous feast. The week following was spent by the happy throng in observing the Feast of Tabernacles. At the close of the season of reconsecration and rejoicing the people returned to their homes, "glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the Lord had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel His people." Verses 8, 10. {PK 45.2}

The king had done everything within his power to encourage the people to give themselves wholly to God and His service, and to magnify His holy name. And now once more, as at Gibeon early in his reign, Israel's ruler was given evidence of divine acceptance and blessing. {PK 45.3}

5. What are we clothed with that shows that the word goodness, though it may appear as something like a blessing outside of character, actually includes the character? **2 Chronicles 6:41**

EGW: I was shown that the time that is consumed in so much reading and study is often worse than thrown away. A large portion of the time spent over books and in studying should be spent before God imploring Him for heavenly wisdom and for strength and power to let the truth which they do fully understand shine out before the people in its clearness and harmonious beauty. There is too little time spent in secret prayer and in sacred meditation. The cry of God's servants should be for the holy unction and to be clothed with salvation, that what they preach may reach hearts. Time is so short and ministers of these last days are so few that they should throw all their energies into the work, and should be in close connection with God and holy angels, that a tremendous power may be in their preaching--a compelling power, to draw every soul who is honest and loves the truth right along to embrace it. {9MR 207.2}

6. What must we do towards God to form the character of goodness? **Psalms 37:3**

EGW: The psalmist says, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Psalm 37:3. "Trust in the Lord." Each day has its burdens, its cares and perplexities; and when we meet how ready we are to talk of our difficulties and trials. So many borrowed troubles intrude, so many fears are indulged, such a weight of anxiety is expressed, that one might suppose we had no pitying, loving Saviour ready to hear all our requests and to be to us a present help in every time of need. {SC 121.2}

7. What must we leave off to form the character of goodness? **Psalms 36:3**

EGW: I saw that since Jesus had left the Holy place of the heavenly Sanctuary, and had entered within the second veil, the churches were left as were the Jews; and they have been filling up with every unclean and hateful bird. I saw great iniquity and vileness in the churches; yet they profess to be christians. Their profession, their prayers and their exhortations, are an abomination in the sight of God. Said the angel, God will not smell in their assemblies. Selfishness, fraud and deceit are practiced by them without the reprovings of conscience. And over all these evil traits they throw the cloak of religion. I was shown the pride of the nominal churches. God was not in their thoughts; but their carnal minds dwell upon themselves. They decorate their poor mortal bodies, and then look upon themselves with satisfaction and pleasure. Jesus and the angels looked upon them in anger. Said the angel, Their sins and pride have reached unto heaven. Their portion is prepared. Justice and judgment have slumbered long, but will soon awake. Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord. The fearful threatenings of the third angel are to be realized, and they will drink the wrath of God. An innumerable host of evil angels are spreading themselves over the whole land. The churches and religious bodies are crowded with them. And they look upon the religious bodies with exultation; for the cloak of religion covers the greatest crimes and iniquity. {1SG 190.1}

8. What does goodness not prevent happening towards one another revealing how the world has "goodness" and especially "kindness" all mixed up? **Romans 15:14**

EGW: The apostle continues, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" [verse 14]. {1SAT 367.1}

We may make mistakes, and we may have to "admonish one another." {1SAT 367.2}

9. What happens if we do not continue in God's goodness? **Romans 11:22**

EGW: Again Paul writes, "If the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Romans 11:16-22. Very plainly these words show that there is

to be no disparaging of the agencies which God has placed in the church. {KC 17.6}

10. What does God's goodness lead us to do? **Romans 2:4**

EGW: The Spirit of inspiration addresses those who refuse to be drawn to Christ, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" How is this? Divine agencies are constantly at work to bring men into harmony with God. Every means in heaven and in earth is employed to draw men to the great Center of the world's hope. And as they fasten their eyes upon the dying Man of Calvary, they are led to exclaim, "Why, oh why, is all this suffering?" And the answer comes, "It is the revelation of the goodness of God, to lead thee to repentance." {ST, November 16, 1891 par. 1}

11. What are some people's inconsistent goodness like? **Hosea 6:4**

EGW: From generation to generation the Lord bore with his wayward children, until he could do no more for them. "O Ephraim," he cried, "what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Hosea 6:4. {RH, February 5, 1914 par. 13}

12. To keep God's goodness, though it is referring to land in the verse, what must we be careful not to do on a spiritual sense? **Jeremiah 2:7**

EGW: You have not preserved a vital connection with God. You have not had even a legal religion. "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." "I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye had entered ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination." This is a description to the life of what presents itself to us at the present time. "The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and they prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit, Wherefore I will yet plead with you saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead. . . .Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." {1888 1674.1}

13. What ought we not do regarding our goodness? **Proverbs 20:6**

EGW: Many who claim to be sanctified become boisterous, passionate, and wholly unlike Christ in words and deportment, if their will is crossed. These show that they are not what they claim to be. The more closely one views Christ, the less disposed will he be to make high claims to holiness. He will have a humble opinion of himself and of his own goodness, but Christ will be revealed in his character. {RH, April 28, 1891 par. 5}

14. Whose character are we to become like? **Exodus 34:6**

EGW: There is a work for them to do. They are to bring the atmosphere of heaven into their families, and into their association with their fellow men. They are to represent the character of God, even as it was revealed to Moses. "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" [Exodus 34:5-7]. {5MR 32.2}

15. What is part of goodness that helps develop goodness? **Proverbs 11:17, Psalms 23:6**

EGW: When we have a deeper appreciation of the mercy and loving-kindness of God, we shall praise him, instead of complaining. We shall talk of the loving watchcare of the Lord, of the tender compassion of the Good Shepherd. The language of the heart will not be selfish murmuring and repining. Praise, like a clear, flowing stream, will come from God's truly believing ones. They will say, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." {RH, May 5, 1910 par. 3}

16. What is doing goodness like, especially as we express it to others? **Proverbs 17:22**

EGW: The influence of the mind on the body, as well as of the body on the mind, should be emphasized. The electric power of the brain, promoted by mental activity, vitalizes the whole system, and is thus an invaluable aid in resisting disease. This should be made plain. The power of the will and the importance of self-control, both in the preservation and in the recovery of health, the depressing and even ruinous effect of anger, discontent, selfishness, or impurity, and, on the other hand, the marvelous life-giving power to be found in cheerfulness, unselfishness, gratitude,

should also be shown. {Ed 197.2}

There is a physiological truth--truth that we need to consider--in the scripture, "A merry [rejoicing] heart doeth good like a medicine." Proverbs 17:22. {Ed 197.3}

17. Who are we to include in showing forth goodness towards? **Luke 6:27, 35**

EGW: Just before making this requirement, the Saviour said to His disciples: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you." We are to love our enemies with the same love that Christ manifested toward His enemies by giving His life to save them. Many may say, "This is a hard commandment; for I want to keep just as far as I can from my enemies." But acting in accordance with your own inclination would not be carrying out the principles that our Saviour has given. "Do good," He says, "to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." This scripture illustrates one phase of Christian perfection. While we were yet enemies of God, Christ gave His life for us. We are to follow His example. {MM 253.3}

18. When we do good, whose are we, showing that there is duty beyond simply obeying the commandments and keeping to ourselves? **3 John 1:11**

EGW: "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true. {Lt330-1906}

"I had many things to write, but I will not with pen and ink write unto thee: but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face." {Lt330-1906}

In the providence of God, some have been blessed with means and with conveniences, that they may act as benefactors, working together with God. Some of these are so attached to their homes that they cannot be induced to leave to engage in service that takes them away. Let an effort be made to persuade them to help in the support of a substitute. There should be with all a hearty willingness to support the cause of God. Let all be careful in the expenditure of means in every line, that they may save as much as possible to help in the advancement of the work of God. All may give donations, and some may help by exercising hospitality to those who are strangers and pilgrims. The time has come when God will call men from the plow, and from humble positions, to teach Bible truth. Large donations are needed to aid in the carrying forward of the work of preaching the gospel at home and also among the heathen in foreign countries. {Lt330-1906}

19. When we do not express goodness when we ought to, what is it considered? **James 4:17**

EGW: When you truly repent of sin, you will not be satisfied to acknowledge simply that you are sinful, and let the matter rest there. Do you intend to remain sinful while life shall last? Do you mean to violate your conscience? Do you mean to do evil always? What does the Lord say to those who have had light, and yet have failed to live in accordance with it? "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." There is a repentance of sin that needeth not to be repented of. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." {YI, February 15, 1894 par. 4}

20. What is goodness connected with? **1 Timothy 6:18-19** [Hint: answer at the end of 19]

EGW: The world's Redeemer was the son of poor parents, and when in his infancy he was presented in the temple, his mother could bring only the offering appointed for the poor,—a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. He was the most precious gift of heaven to our world, a gift above all computation, yet it could be acknowledged only by the smallest offering. Our Saviour, during all his sojourn on earth, shared the lot of the poor and lowly. Self-denial and sacrifice characterized his life. All the favors and blessings we enjoy are alone from him; we are stewards of his grace and of his temporal gifts; the smallest talent and the humblest service may be offered to Jesus as a consecrated gift, and with the fragrance of his own merits he will present it to the Father. If the best we have is presented with a sincere heart, in love to God, from a longing desire to do service to Jesus, the gift is wholly acceptable. Every one can lay up a treasure in the heavens. All can be "rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." {RH, June 20, 1893 par. 10}