

DATE: August 3, 2008

TEXT: Galatians 5:22ff

TITLE: Fruits of the Spirit VI: Goodness and Faithfulness



As we continue our look at the fruits of the Spirit, I have decided to look at two together this week. We are looking at what it means to have a full life in Christ. The sad truth is many, many people settle for an incomplete, half empty life. The fruits of the Spirit are a description of a person who is mature in Christ. Their life is marked with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. That is a description of a person mature in Christ. The sad truth is that is not the description of many, many people who are Christians. So many people have settled for a life that is not Christian maturity. They settle for immaturity. They settle for small steps of faith. They settle for a faith of obligation and duty and not a faith of abundant joy and love. Throughout this sermon series we have looked at what it means to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit are discovered when we are surrendered to Jesus Christ. This morning we are looking at goodness and faithfulness.

Allow me to first define these two words. **Goodness is the standing up for right and acting in obedience to God no matter what the situation is or the pressures are.**

**Faithfulness is reliance upon the power of God in all situations regardless of the pressures that we face. Faithfulness and Goodness I believe can be summed up in the word integrity.** Those who would close to the Lord receive from the Holy Spirit.... Integrity. I want to first look at an example of integrity found in the Old Testament. I want us to look at the life of Daniel.

In the early 600's B.C. Judah formed an alliance with Egypt in order to defend itself from the Babylonians. In 605 there was a great battle between the Egyptians and the Babylonians and the Babylonians crushed the Egyptian Army. Judah came under control of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Babylon attempted to absorb all their conquered nations by absorbing them into their society. They demanded that the sons of the families who had wealth and power be deported to Babylon. The first great deportation took place in 605 B.C. This included Daniel and his 3 friends Shadrach, Mishach and Abednego. Daniel was to

be trained to serve in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. This was an honor and a privilege. He could have been made a slave in the mines. He could have been put to death. Because of his intelligence and skill he was to be trained for the court. The problem was this.... Daniel was a strong man of God. He obeyed the dietary laws found in the book of Leviticus. To break these laws was to disobey his God. Daniel was placed in this training school and offered a great menu of food. Again, remember what an honor and privileged this was. While many of the Israelites were thrown into prison... or sold as slaves and were starving to death.... Daniel was offered a daily feast... food from the very table of the King. However... the food had been prayed over in the name of idols... it was unclean.

Daniel had a choice.... did he compromise his beliefs. I can just see him thinking to himself... “This is a small thing. God understands that I am a captive and have no choice. Think of the good I could do for my people if I become an official of the court. What’s a little food anyway... I’ll pray over it again and rededicate it to the Lord.” Sounds good....but, not a choice of goodness or faithfulness. Daniel chose a path of integrity. He told his trainer that

he would not eat the food. The chief of the court officials threatened him. He could be sold as a slave... he could be put to death. Daniel again asked to eat only vegetables and not the meat that had been defiled. Finally the official agreed to a 10 day test... *Daniel 1: 15* states

**At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.**

Daniel stood up for his faith. Daniel chose a path of integrity even in the face of threat and pressure. It could have cost him his life. But the opportunity to choose integrity did not end there. In 539 B.C. a new leader had ascended to the throne in Babylon. This was Darius. Daniel was a very high official in the court of Darius and others were very jealous of Daniel. They convinced Darius to pass a law stating that for the next 30 days only Darius himself could be prayed to. To disobey this edict meant being cast into the lions den.

Again think of Daniel and his choices. He could have said to himself... the edict is only for 30 days... I could go 30 days without praying... God knows of my love and devotion... 30 days is a short time". Or he could have said to himself... "I could pray in private and no one

would know who I was praying to... after all praying in private is normal and no one will know the difference.” What did Daniel do? *Daniel 6:10 tells us...*

**Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.**

Daniel continued his normal practice of prayer... not in private...not even silently... but in front of the window... proclaiming the love of his Lord. Daniel chose a path of obedience.

Daniel chose a life of integrity. We know how the story ended. Daniel was thrown in the

Lion's Den. Darius said these words..... **“May you God, whom you serve continually,**

**rescue you”.** In the morning Darius went to the den and yelled down... **Daniel are you**

**alive... has your God rescued you.”** And a voice comes back up... **Good morning King....**

**yes an angel shut the mouths of the lions... because I was found innocent in his sight.”**

These are the key words to integrity. Daniel was found innocent in the sight of God, in a world of compromise. In a world of half faith and weak commitments this statement often can not be said. Integrity is refusing to compromise the truth of Christ. Integrity is choosing a

path of innocence.

I want to share with you 3 lessons on why integrity is so critically important.

**Lesson # 1** Integrity pleases God. *1 Thess. 2:4 states*

**For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.**

We live in a day and age of compromise. Daniel did not choose to compromise. It would have been so easy. Dietary laws were not crucial to a faith walk..... praying in private was not a large compromise.... but for integrity compromise was wrong.

We live in a day and age of compromise. “God doesn’t really care if we are married as long as we love each other” “God understands that I work hard all week and need Sunday to sleep and spent time with my family” “God understands that finances are tight and could not really expect me to tithe” God understands that my friends are important to me and a small compromise is no big thing”. I could go on and on and on. I had to decide how many statements to make because compromise is the norm in our society... and compromise is a

norm in our churches. Integrity is sacrificed for peace and harmony. Integrity is sacrificed for friendship, for success, for pleasure, for money, for leisure, for almost everything. That is the state of our society....unfortunately far too often that is the state of the Christian church in our country.

**Lesson # 2** Integrity is a witness to others. *1 Peter 2:14 states....*

**Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**

Daniel prayed in the window of his house... Why? As a witness to his community. In a world of compromise integrity in darkness.

I remember when I worked in a car dealership for 5 years during high school and college. The other mechanics and body shop workers knew of my faith. I did not preach... I did not pound them with my faith. I just talked about my life and that includes by faith. I remember they were amazed by some of my decisions. They offered me marijuana and I turned them down. They looked at some of the beautiful women and said... wouldn't you like to.... and I said no. As they would complain about our bosses I choose to not complain. After

about 3 years there, these men... some 20 years older than me.. were asking questions about faith.

Integrity is a witness for Christ. In all situations, regardless of the pressures to compromise stand up for Christ and be a witness to those who have chosen a path of compromise.

**Finally, lesson # 3** Integrity is the path of Christian maturity. *2 Samuel 22:21 states*

**"The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God. All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees. I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin. The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight.**

We receive the reward of Christ. Christian maturity. Joy. The presence of God. I am not saying the path of integrity is always the easy path. It is not. Often there are costs for standing up for what is right. But the joy of the Lord and the presence of the Lord are promised to us who stand firm in his Word.

Let us chose a path of Integrity. Look at your life and see the areas of compromise.

Chose to give up the compromises and stand on the truth of Christ. Chose Integrity....

goodness and faithfulness.

AMEN