

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

9 December 2018

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)

Address: 63 Cranwell Road, Singapore 509851

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Sunday School: 10 am

Sunday English / Chinese Worship Service: 10.45 am Sunday Chinese Worship Service: 7.30 pm

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.00 pm

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GOODNESS

What is goodness? How would you define "goodness?" Whenever I conduct a funeral service, I used to hear this phrase "He is a good man." Even a gangster who died a tragic death would have someone step forward and say, "Ah Beng was a good man." Why? Because when I was in need, he stood by me and helped me.

What is goodness? What good is good? According to the American Heritage Dictionary, the word means "the state or quality of being good." For instance, in Acts 6:3 there was a neglect of the care of widows and the apostles suggested to the congregation to choose among themselves seven men of certain qualities to oversee this pressing need. And one of the qualities was "men of honest report" or "men of good reputation." The early church was careful in choosing people to serve. The congregation wanted men who had a good reputation not only from within but also from without (1 Timothy 3:7).

The word "goodness" occurs only four times in the New Testament (Galatians 5:22; Romans 15:14; Ephesians 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11). The meaning is broad and it denotes moral excellence in operation (Galatians 6:10). The word suggests not only a person who desires to abstain from every appearance of evil, but also to do good to others to the utmost of his ability. He would help a person's necessities either by giving, lending or such other means (Acts 2:44, 45; 4:32, 34, 35). And because this "goodness" is one of the aspects of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, it must spring from a good heart — a heart that has been purified by the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:35).

"Goodness" is one of the characteristics of the Christian. Because God is good, we who belong to him must manifest this characteristic of goodness. We who say that we are in the truth must walk as Jesus walked. We should live as Jesus lived (1 John 2:6; Acts 10:38). Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16, 20). Paul said, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14). James said, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (2:17). So, what kind of fruits have we been bearing since conversion? Knowledge of the Bible, orthodox beliefs, creeds, confessions — all of these are nothing if a sincere spirit of doing good is lacking.

In his Epistle, James asked a very pertinent question, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (3:13). Here he was more concerned with how a Christian lives his life than with what he says.

Who is a wise man? The word "wise" in secular thought denotes one who has above average intelligence and education. It was a technical term for a teacher. However, in the New Testament, it denotes one who has spiritual discernment and discretion, who has the ability to see clearly what is right and to act accordingly.

As for the word "knowledge," it was used in classical Greek of one having the knowledge of a specialist. He is an expert endued with special knowledge and training. A person may have the knowledge of a specialist, but does this necessarily qualify him to be a good teacher? James queried.

Though we may possess the "know-how" of the Christian life, it may not prove that we are skilled in applying God's Word in our daily living. A church father aptly said, "Apply thyself wholly to the Scriptures, and apply the Scriptures wholly to thyself." We need not only the knowledge of a specialist but also the wisdom which is from above to live and act on the Word.

Then James challenged the one who claimed to be wise and full of knowledge to show him out of a good conduct his works with meekness of wisdom (3:13b). The word for "good" implies that it must be obvious to others that his way of life is good (1 Peter 2:12). It is not how fluently you talk or how clever and orthodox you are. These alone do not prove wisdom. Years ago, The Strait Times reported an eight year old boy who had an IQ of 221. When interviewed by the press, his father's comment was that his son is intelligent but he has no wisdom.

Anyone who professes to be wise should prove himself by his works. It is by living out a good life that a Christian shows that he is wise. It has to do with the whole of one's way of life, not just mere talk. So the true test of wisdom is works and not only words.

Paul said in Galatians 6:9 and 10: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Knowing the frailty of men, he exhorts them to devote themselves tirelessly in doing good (i.e. to give financial support for those in Christian ministry) because in due time they will reap (i.e. physical and spiritual blessings) if they do not get discouraged. The latter part of this verse promises a harvest of good to those who persist in well-doing, whatever the well-doing may be.

The Greek word for "opportunity" is the same as that rendered "season" in verse 9. Paul assumes that such opportunities will come. And when they do come, he exhorts us to seize them and do good toward all men, especially to those who belong to the family of God.

Dearly beloved, there are ample opportunities to do good both in the Christian community and in the society. Doing good is doing God's will. Doing God's will is doing what God wants. Goodness is kindness. Kindness is doing good to others. Jesus said, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). Jesus has set us a good example. He went about doing good

(Acts 10:38). We who are his followers must do what he did.

In conclusion, let me encourage you to do good to all men. Let this be our church slogan: "Do something good for Jesus every day and even out of the way." Amen.

Pastor Colin Wong

Theme for the Quarter :

**LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE WORLD
(The Study of the Epistle of James)**

Combined Worship Service :

Speaker : Rev Colin Wong

The Endurance of Suffering

(Scripture Text : James 5:7-12; Responsive Reading : Job 1)

Interpreter : Brother Tianqi Chen

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