

The 21st Century Woman of Grace:

Good: Focusing on a Life of Goodness In a World Focused on Badness Titus 2:5c

Life is full of many cares, struggles, and responsibilities, so God has kept the most important things very simple. There was only one word the Spirit of God inspired Paul to write, to describe all that will last from our entire life on earth.

One word at Christ's Throne is all that sums up anything enduring, eternal, and pleasing to God. What will be the test Christ uses to determine each person's eternal rewards? It is whether their words, actions, thoughts, and motives were good in God's sight.

As we open to Titus 2:5 we find that this is the very same word we saw describing the Judgment Seat of Christ. God says everything is reduced to this word: "good" or the other word: "bad or good for nothing".

Once again God reduces what He is looking for in a Titus 2 woman into a single word¹: "good" (KJV/NKJV) or "kind" (ESV/NIV/NAS) in Titus 2:5.

Good or Good for Nothing

Someday when our journey on earth ends, and we stand before Christ's Throne—the Scriptures use only one word to describe what God eternally rewards.

One day in the not too distant future, we will be watching as Jesus Christ sorts our life into what lasts forever and what doesn't. In other words whether what we did in the small parts of life that make up the vast majority of all our time: was good or not good.

This morning, God says every woman in Christ's church is to be personally mentored by an older and godly woman in how to pursue specific life choices that are good investments of her life, and what is not. Can you think of any ministry more vital than guiding a young person into how to choose what is good and pleasing to God?

Knowing how to make those choices is vital because that is all that God will reward according to His Word.

¹ Greek *agathos* (Strong's # 18) is the word in Romans 12:2 'prove what is good'; 12:9 'cling to good'; 12:21 'overcome evil with good'; also in Eph. 2:10 'created for good works'; also Eph. 4:29 'let no corrupt, only what is good'; and in II Cor. 5:10 this is what our eternal reward Examiner is looking for!

Have you thought about what it is that God has decided is worth rewarding in our lives? Paul reduces God's desire to just one word: **agathos** (Greek), which we will see in our passage this morning means grace-energized goodness in our behavior through life.

This Titus 2 character quality before you in your Bible, the word good is also a well known word from the rest of your Bible study. In Romans 12:2 it is the whole purpose of presenting ourselves back to the Lord: to live out what is "good", and in Ephesians 2:8-10 we who were saved by grace are His workmanship created for "good" works. But most vivid use of this word is at the day we stand before Jesus.

Turn with me to II Corinthians 5:10 and think about that moment when we each stand at Christ's Feet. That scene is well known to us from this verse, as Paul captures the eternal moment we have lived our lives on earth to prepare for.

*2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether **good** [Gk. **agathos**] or bad. NKJV*

Everything we ever lived for that wasn't offered to God the way He desired it done will be incinerated. This word is the adjective that quantifies and describes God's desire for our lives.

Rewarded for Our Motivation

It isn't just **what** we do—it is also **why** we do it that matters so much to the Lord!

Every deed, every word, every motive, every moment lacking this one quality of goodness or kindness will in an instant be reduced to a puff of smoke and then forever be gone.

Remember the fires that examine our works? Paul had already described that event in I Corinthians 3:10-17. There he tells us that--*Lives of Goodness Don't Get Burned*.

The works that remain and get rewarded are "good" Paul says. The bad is burned and gone. The bad are not sin because we will never again face our sins because of Christ's justifying death. All rewards will be based upon that word: "Good". This simple description is a word when used in the Bible of everything but people it means 'good' and when used of people it means 'kindness, generosity, benevolence'.

At the Judgment Seat we are going to stand in front of Jesus Christ and watch him open the *history files* of our lives. Better than any software program God has *logged the keystrokes* of our lives: our actual motivations, our genuine intentions, our literal thoughts will all be exposed as the frames around each action. There at last will be exposed the complete picture of God's servants. And everything done for Jesus that was done in the power of grace-energized goodness will last forever.

Jesus mentioned this word “good” twice in a statement nearly all believers have heard, and most believers long to have spoken over them by the Lord. Here is what Jesus said in *Matthew 25:21,23*:

“... ‘Well done, **good** and faithful servant...” NKJV.

When we stand before Christ's judgment seat, God the Father has already graciously “justified” the only complete recording of our lives. God the Father who sees all, and records every action, thought, deed, and motivation graciously justifies all who come to Christ: removing every sin, erasing the record that they were ever done, and placing the full penalty for every sin upon Jesus Christ.

But now in God’s “history file” of our entire life is everything we have done since salvation. Every moment of prayer, every devotional desire in God's Word, every gathering of Christ's church we obediently came to, every day of work we offered to our employer and a hard working, honest employee, every moment we had to choose to do good or bad in our homes, cars, and personal lives. And that file is placed on the altar, and a fire burns that will consume anything that was not a grace-energized work of goodness.² We know because:

God’s Plan is Clear

Paul says godly women ought to be characterized by being gentle, tender-hearted, and merciful toward others. Just as we all should be if we want to receive eternal rewards.

This morning as we see the description of a woman of goodness, we are looking at what God wants you to be as a woman, as a wife, and as a mother. No matter where you are in the chapters of your life—this is God’s advertisement in His Word for exactly what He is looking for.

As His children, there is nothing we want more than to please Him. And when we think of Heaven, and when we seek to have a crown to cast at Christ's feet—think of living life, doing these kinds of good works prompted by His grace.

What I love about God's Word is that one part of Scripture explains another one.

Titus 2:5 has this one word that is next in this listing of the curriculum that older women are to use to train younger women in the faith. That word is “goodness” and that is all it says in v. 5. Left alone we would wonder and speculate all day long, but maybe miss exactly what the Lord wanted the older godly women to teach the younger godly women.

But, as we have seen before, Paul enlarges the list of qualities to Titus in chapter 2, when he writes about the very same qualities to Timothy. As we open to I Timothy 5:10

² As Vine's Expository dictionary describes it “that which, being good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect.” Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

we are looking at an entire verse that explains some of the elements of goodness when it is displayed in the grace-prompted actions of a godly woman. The context of this verse is actually an advertisement. Paul said the church should actually seek the help of godly older women.

HELP WANTED: Women of Goodness

This verse is actually part of the “job description” of an older woman who has served well in Christ’s church, that Paul says we should always be on the look-out for, in order to “hire” her as a full-time servant for the Lord. This special person is one who has surrendered to the Spirit of God and become a woman characterized by pursuing goodness.

Paul thus enlarges upon this very quality that he also asked Titus to train women in the church in how to display goodness by actions they choose to offer in Christ's Name in their marriage, in their family—and then in their ministry to others in Christ's Name.

Here is the actual description of what God is looking for. The grace that God places in a willing servant prompts these types of actions that God wants from you as a woman, as a wife, and as a mother. No matter where you are in the chapters of your life, God’s advertisement in His Word revealed what He is looking for in a servant: She must be “well reported for good works” (1 Timothy 5:10a), having—

“well reported for **good** works: if she has **brought up children**, if she has **lodged strangers**, if she has **washed the saints’ feet**, if she has **relieved the afflicted**, if she has **diligently followed every good work**” NKJV.

The context of this passage is the care of godly widows who had no family to care for them. In that case, the church was to pick up a widow’s support so that she could continue to be a godly Titus 2 woman ministering in the power of God’s Spirit to the younger ladies in the church. God, however, also expects these same areas of goodness to be pursued daily by every godly woman in Christ's church.

A married woman’s life, surrendered to God seeks these areas that please Him. She will:

1. Women of Goodness—Intentionally put their family first, from the words: “brought up children”.
2. Women of Goodness—Purposefully are hospitality conscious, from the words: “lodged strangers”.
3. Women of Goodness—Prayerfully humble themselves as a servant, from the words: “washed the saints feet”.
4. Women of Goodness—Compassionately act as a Good Samaritan, from the words: “relieved the afflicted”.
5. Women of Goodness—Energetically devote themselves to ministry from the words: “diligently followed every good work”.

Quite different from the world's "Who's Who" directory of those they esteem worthy of honor is this "Who's Valuable in My Church" list written by God Himself. It's like Christ was saying in I Timothy 5:10,

"Here are those women who enrich My church in a strategic way—and help My church to grow in godliness, grow in ministry, and grow in worship. Look for this type and invest in them, for they are the models to follow and the teachers to be revered. These are the women of God who have been useful to Me, and whom I will one day reward!"

I love scriptural passages like this one! So often we are faced with questions of how to interpret and apply some portions of God's Word. But not this one; it is simple, direct, clear, and powerful.

What exactly marks one of these "good" women? What characteristics so impress God that it draws His special interest and attention?

Characteristics of Grace-Energized Goodness

God's advertisement in His Word revealed that He is looking for servants who are "well reported for good works," having manifested grace-energized kindness in the five specific areas described in 1Timothy 5:10:

1. A Woman of Goodness—intentionally puts her family first.

Paul described the first grace-energized "good work" this woman of renown did as having "brought up children." This means that the church would actually have inquired: "What kind of mother was she?"

Based on the plan of God's Word the church leaders would have investigated: "Was she faithful to her home, and was her tongue characterized by being kind to her children?" In fact, this godly woman would have modeled the Proverbs 31 mother who raised her children with "the law of kindness" on her tongue (Proverbs 31:26).

Because of the high calling to be a homemaker in God's plan, the church would also have wanted to find out: "Was her home her priority?"

This reminds every godly woman that part of the assignment God gave her in the home is to watch over both the house and the people within. The meals, the schedule, the clothes, the health, and so much more are to be done as an offering of worship to the God Who has called women to this highest of duties.

2. A Woman of Goodness is—purposefully hospitality conscious for Christ's sake.

Paul described the second grace-energized “good work” as having “lodged strangers.”

This is another way of asking, “How did she use her home? When her God-given priority for caring for her children was done, did she then offer her home to be opened to ministry to others in an unselfish way?” In other words, were sacrifices made to serve others through her home for Christ's sake?

Hospitality to strangers is a quality that God esteems highly. For that reason, He made hospitality one of the clear qualifications for elders in Christ's church (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). God's Word also states that hospitality is often one of the marks of spiritual maturity (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1–2; 1 Peter 4:9).

Older women in the faith are to therefore train the younger women in how to *use their home in a godly, hospitable way for “strangers”—those not yet connected and nurtured in Christ's church.*

3. A Woman of Goodness—**prayerfully humbles herself as a servant** in Christ's ministry.

Paul described the third grace-energized “good work” as having “washed the saint's feet.” The New Testament gospel was spread as God's saints traveled the dirty and dusty roads of the ancient world. Consequently, in those times the care of feet was a daily chore. For example, at the Last Supper Passover Seder (John 13), do you remember how Jesus used this common and menial task to demonstrate the servant-hearted humility He desired to see in all of His children?

A grace-energized servant of Christ's church would share her humble heart by lovingly serving others. This woman was Christlike because she followed Paul's admonition to “imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1) Who came not to be served, but to serve. *She was therefore not above humble ministry—she was characterized by it!*

4. A Woman of Goodness is—**compassionately a Good Samaritan.**

Paul described the fourth grace-energized “good work” as having “relieved the afflicted.” This woman watched for opportunities to do selfless and sacrificial deeds.

Such a grace-energized woman surrendered her life to being on the lookout for selfless ways to serve others. She knew that Jesus said even a cup of cold water held out to a child in the Name of the Lord would not lose a reward (Matthew 10:42). Her Good Samaritan heart continually reached out to those stricken with need. For all the centuries of Christ's church, and in all the cultures of this world, the Spirit of God finds such willing servants and gives

them strength to spend their lives doing selfless deeds of kindness and sacrificial service for others.

5. A Woman of Goodness—**energetically devotes her life to ministry** in order to produce “good works” that please God.

Finally, Paul told Timothy that a grace-energized woman was characterized as having “devoted herself to every good work.” The word he used is a very strong verb (Greek *epakolutho*—meaning “devoted herself to”), and it captures the idea that this widow, like Dorcas (Acts 9:36–43), energetically and diligently dedicated her life to the pursuit of good deeds in her harsh world.

Since Paul stated that this was the kind of woman who should be sought after to be a paid servant of Christ's church, that makes this life-choice the standard that should be recognized and sought out by every woman in Christ's church. Each woman who wants to please God by her life should pursue this quality *now*, so that at the end of her life she, too, will be sought out as a qualified servant to Christ's church.

These five characteristics of a grace-energized woman are the plan of God for every woman who wants to be highly useful for God.

Any woman who pursues these priorities will accomplish a profound and eternal impact through the ministry of her life!

But when we step back and think about “goodness” we are reminded that this very word is also a description of what happens in a life surrendered to God's Spirit. This word “goodness” is also the sixth of the nine words that describe the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives. So:

Grace-Energized Women Walk in the Spirit

For a moment turn back to Galatians 5, one of the key, foundational chapters of the Bible. At any point in time, we are either walking in the flesh or in the Spirit. There are fifteen manifestations of the flesh in Galatians 5:19–21:

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Of these “bad works,” eight deal with interpersonal problems. It is not enough to say that we have always struggled in these areas, or to say “I sinned” and go on. Instead, the Scriptures show us that a truly spiritual person will be growing in a visible way in

each of the nine areas described as “the fruit of the Spirit”—all of which will greatly impact our relational lives:

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, **goodness**, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22–23).

Life is full of many cares, struggles, and responsibilities, so God has kept the most important things very simple. There was only one word the Spirit of God inspired Paul to write, to describe all that will last from our entire life on earth.

One word at Christ’s Throne is all that sums up anything enduring, eternal, and pleasing to God. What will be the test Christ uses to determine each person’s eternal rewards? It is whether their words, actions, thoughts, and motives were good in God’s sight.

Good or Good for Nothing

Someday when our journey on earth ends, and we stand before Christ's Throne—the Scriptures use only one word to describe what God eternally rewards.

One day in the not too distant future, we will be watching as Jesus Christ sorts our life into what lasts forever and what doesn’t.

This morning, God says every woman in Christ's church is to be personally mentored by an older and godly woman in how to pursue specific life choices that are good investments of her life, and what is not.

Can you think of any ministry more vital than guiding a young person into how to choose what is good and pleasing to God?

Walking in The Spirit

Walking in the Spirit means living in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ by letting His mind, through His Word, dominate everything that is thought and done. Being filled with the Spirit is the same as walking *like* Jesus did on earth. Galatians 5:22–23 gives us three ways to measure our spiritual progress—three tests of growth in the Spirit’s fruit-bearing.

The nine visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit yielded to in our lives are easily divided into three areas of life.

First, we will see the “fruit of the Spirit” in our personal relationship with God.

1. LOVE (agape # 26) is the absence of selfishness. It is the product of the Holy Spirit present in our lives, so it remains even in the harshest and most difficult times because we don’t produce love—the Holy Spirit does! The word *agape* refers not to an emotional affection, physical attraction, or a familial bond, but to respect, devotion, and affection that leads to willing, self-sacrificial service (John 15:13; Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:16–17).

Ask yourself: *Can others trace my progress in expressing God’s love? Am I less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month?*

2. JOY (chara # 5479) is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances because our happiness is based on unchanging divine promises and eternal spiritual realities. Christian joy is not a shallow emotion that, like a thermometer, rises and falls with the changing atmosphere of the home. Rather, Christian joy is a deep experience of adequacy and confidence in spite of the circumstances around us. The Christian can therefore be joyful even in the midst of pain and suffering (John 16:20–22). This kind of joy is not a thermometer, but a thermostat. Instead of rising and falling with the circumstances, it determines the spiritual temperature of the circumstances. Paul put it beautifully when he wrote, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11). Joy is a gift from God; as such, believers are not to manufacture it but to delight in the blessing they already possess.

Ask yourself: *Do those who know me and watch my life see me as a joyful person?*

3. PEACE (eirene # 1515) is the internal serenity that only God can give because it results from confidence in one’s saving relationship with Christ. The verb form denotes binding together and is reflected in the expression “having it altogether.” Like joy, peace is not related to one’s circumstances (John 14:27; Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:6–7, 9). Jesus therefore told us to

not live tomorrow's challenges today, but to trust what lies ahead to Him. In other words, troubles are not absent; rather, God is present! And when the Holy Spirit is not grieved, the Dove of Peace is able to alight on the heart.

Ask yourself: *Has peace become more and more a way of life for me this year?*

Secondly, we will see the "fruit of the Spirit" in our public walk with others.

4. PATIENCE (makrothumia # 3115; "longsuffering" in KJV) is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. "Longsuffering" is the ability to endure injuries inflicted by others and the willingness to accept irritating or painful situations (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12; 1 Timothy 1:15–16). It is that gentle patience with people that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. Patience is also one of the supreme attributes of God. It is His character that is revealed as being gracious and longsuffering.

Ask yourself: *Am I more patient than I was three months ago? Or less? If I am not increasing in patience, is it because I am not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit?*

5. KINDNESS (chrestotes # 5544) is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives. It is the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. Kindness will soften any word or act that might hurt another. It is a tender concern for others, reflected in a desire to treat others gently, just as the Lord treats all believers (Matthew 11:28–29; 19:13–14; 2 Timothy 2:24). Kindness is when we choose to live out Ephesians 2:8 and 4:32. Kindness is seen as sensitivity toward others that produces deeds of self-sacrifice and love—even toward the unlovely and undeserving.

Ask yourself: *Is my character showing an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in the way I treat others?*

6. GOODNESS (agathosune # 19) is being Godlike, which is the opposite of fallen humanity. It is moral and spiritual excellence manifested in active kindness, exemplifying goodness (Galatians 6:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:11). Consider Jesus in Acts 10:38: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good . . ." When the Holy Spirit anointed Christ's life, what came out? He simply went about doing "good." The example of Jesus should be our guide for life—everywhere we are we should touch those around us with His goodness, as He has commanded.

Ask yourself: *Am I a visibly better person than last year? Do the Lord and the godly mentors He has put in my life see me doing "good" to all those around me?*

Finally, we will see the "fruit of the Spirit" in our private life when alone by

ourselves.

7. FAITHFULNESS (pistis # 4102) refers to having a trustworthy and dependable life. A faithful person keeps his or her own life in order so you can count on them. Like Psalm 15 describes, this type of person always keeps their word. Faithfulness is the same as loyalty and trustworthiness.

Ask yourself: *Am I making strides in reliability and dependability?*

8. GENTLENESS (prautes # 4240) is the opposite of asserting ourselves. It is a humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, having no desire for revenge or retribution.

In the NT, it is used to describe 3 attitudes: submission to the will of God (Col. 3:12), teachability (James 1:21), and consideration of others (Eph. 4:2).³

The Lord said that the meek are the ultimate winners. Those who are servants of the Lord must not strive, but resist selfish ambition because that is a reflection of Satan, not God.

Ask yourself: *What shape is my personal agenda in? Is it intact and my rights being defended? Or, is it as Christ desires—crucified with Him and fading?*

9. DISCIPLINE (enkrateia # 1466; “self-control” in KJV) refers to restraining passions and appetites and is defined by the Greek dictionary as “a virtue, which consists in the mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones” (1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Peter 1:5–6). The only force that can control our flesh is the Holy Spirit. When a Christian is yielded to the Spirit, we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him, and no longer to self. Self cannot control self; flesh is not able to harness flesh. Only the Spirit can discipline us.

Ask yourself: *Do others see me as graciously under the control of God’s Spirit of Discipline? Am I beating under and giving knockout blows to my flesh—like Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:27?*

When God’s Spirit is at the helm of our lives, there will be a remarkable change in our homes, churches, and lives. By pursuing grace-energized goodness in our world full of badness, we will see that as believers we are in the same family—God is our Father. We are headed toward a common goal—heaven. We serve a common Master—Jesus. We follow the same Guide—His Word. And share the same passion—Christ—Who gets all the glory!

³ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997).

In closing this wonderful lesson in being kind, or "good," I pray that God will make Colossians 3:12–17 a reality in each of our lives and families!

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

Wanted: Grace-energized Women of Kindness

Paul asks Titus to train women in the church how to become kind in their personal life, marriage, home life, and in their ministry to others in Christ's Name.

How can we, with God's Word in our hands, understand this life-style God calls good? What does that mean to us who want to please God and live this way?

Is there any example to follow? Is there a clear pathway God has laid down for us? If this is what determines my eternal rewards, it is something God must have very clearly explained, right?

Exactly, and there are four very notable people in the New Testament that are described as "good" or "kind". So this attribute Titus is to train women in becoming brings us into great company. The New Testament examples of being good are in order of occurrence in the Scriptures:

- Joseph of Arimathaea (Luke 23:50) who sacrificially gave his own family tomb to Jesus, and publicly identified with Jesus by burying Him;
- Dorcas (Acts 9:36) who was known as a generous, loving servant of Christ's church in real and tangible ways; and many people testified to her kindness and generosity. She was described as someone who works to benefit others, does deeds of kindness and speaks words of kindness.
- Jesus Christ our Lord (Acts 10:38) whose entire earthly ministry was described by Peter as "who went about doing good"; and
- Barnabas (Acts 11:24). Look at the last one in that list with me.

In Acts 11:24 the Spirit of God praises this quality in Barnabas: he was a **good** man, he was full of the Holy Spirit, and he was full of faith.⁴

Acts 11:24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. NKJV

A Simple Life of Kindness

Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to pastor the great missionary church at Antioch. We know from Acts that Barnabas was a Hellenistic Jew born and raised on Cyprus. His life had been watched by the church at Jerusalem, and they had deep respect for his godliness and generosity. In a time of great need he had sold his property on Cyprus

⁴ John Calvin said at this verse: "Barnabas is praised by the Holy Spirit. But this is said not so much for his benefit as for ours. This condemns the ungodliness of everyone who envies other people's labors and grieves to see them successful". What blesses me most is that Luke wrote this description of Barnabas *after* the break between Paul and Barnabas, recorded in Acts 15:39. Since we know that Luke was Paul's traveling companion, this statement written with the Spirit's prompting and Paul's knowledge, probably means that it reflects Paul's assessment of Barnabas as well.

and laid it at the apostles' feet (4:36–37). Barnabas was known as an encourager. He could be described as cheerful, big-hearted, and loving. He was the perfect choice of a pastor that was needed in the fast-growing church at Antioch. Acts 11:23 says:

When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. (v. 23)

Did you see what Luke records? Barnabas, sent from Jerusalem had eyes to see “the evidence of the grace of God”! Think about what a grace-energized kindness does to a person.

Barnabas is a crucial character in the New Testament as he is the first pastor of a gentile church we see in the book of Acts. James pastored in Jerusalem but that church was primarily Jewish and dealt with those issues for a long time. But a pastor to people steeped in sin, paganism, and without Biblical backgrounds to their culture—that is who Barnabas pastored. And...

Barnabas Saw Past the Exterior

“Barnabas could easily have seen the situation in a different light. These people were new, untaught Christians. They still carried the mire of Antioch with them. Some of them had miles to go in their language and relationships and ethics. But Barnabas “saw the evidence of the grace of God.” He could see Christian grace and charm in their lives—the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace...”—and “he was glad.” So he simply “encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts,” to meditate on him, to make him everything!

In this way Barnabas helped them focus on that which would cleanse them of the defilement of Antioch. His advice is appropriate for all Christians, whether in beginning stages or well along the path. Maclaren rightly warned, “Many of us are so busy thinking about Christianity that we have lost our hold of Christ.”

Barnabas saw grace, rejoiced, and then tenderly encouraged God’s people. How was he able to do this? The refreshing water of the Spirit flowed from Barnabas’ innermost being. Can you think of anyone like that? Why not be such a person?

... the goodness and fullness of the Holy Spirit and faith seen in Barnabas began to reproduce in that young church. “And a great number of people were brought to the Lord” (v. 24).⁵

And the type of man God picked is so amazing. Barnabas was a renowned teacher and discipler, but his personal life was characterized by being a loving, gentle man who was generous and a great encourager—because he had grace-energized kindness.

⁵Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Acts—The Church Afire*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1998, c1996. [282 word quote]