

NOTE: This file contains the message: "THE SEASONING SALT OF GOODWILL".

OPENING SCRIPTURE(S): Luke 2:8-14 NKJV

8Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9**And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. **10**Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. **11**For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **12**And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." **13**And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: **14****"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"**

Our heavenly Father announced the birth of His Son Jesus with a joyful message of "glad tidings of peace and goodwill"—or, if you will—"God's good intentions" towards all mankind!

It seems long gone the days when we GAVE and RECEIVED Christmas cards that reminded us" of the "goodwill" God has towards us and expects us to have towards others.

Those cards made us feel "warm and cozy on the inside" for the "season"—but in practice and in everyday life—not so much!

I PRAY THE TITLE OF THIS MESSAGE RESONATES IN OUR HEARTS AND BECOMES CLEARER AS WE UNPACK THE MESSAGE.

THE "SEASONING SALT" OF GOODWILL

14I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness [or goodwill]. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them. **15**Even so, I have been bold enough to write about some of these points, knowing that all you need is this reminder from me..." Rom. 15:14-15

SOMETIMES, ALL WE NEED IS A "GENTLE REMINDER" OF THINGS WE ALREADY KNOW AND ARE ALREADY DOING. EVEN SO...

When you think of "goodwill"—what things come to mind? When I think of "goodwill" on a human level, I think about the nature and instinct of children. Jesus often used children in His teachings to illustrate the kind of trust, faith, or humility we should have as a result of "our new nature".

By nature and innocence, children are "alive with and abound in goodwill".

That's why they're "eager and animated" to show kindness to strangers, the homeless, and those who are destitute.

It "crushes them" to see "people wronged, treated unfairly, neglected, or scorned because of their race, lifestyle choices, or misfortunes.

For these and other reasons, parents MUST be "godly careful" not to upset the "fragile love and faith" of children by poisoning their minds so much that they become "overly suspicious instead of careful", fearful and pessimistic instead of hopeful, or "selfish instead of generous"!

1. What is "Goodwill"? Why we need it? And why does it seem lost to a "by-gone" time and generation?

LET ME ADDRESS THE SECOND QUESTION FIRST—WHY WE NEED "GOODWILL" AS A "SALT TO SEASON" ANY ATMOSPHERE...

"Goodwill" keeps us touch with the "human side" of faith—and conveys to others our "good intentions".

By definition, "goodwill" is defined as "a perpetual attitude of friendliness and kindness toward others.

Example: *Her goodwill made us feel welcome to the neighborhood.*

Goodwill is also defined as cheerful willingness to help or assist.

In business, "goodwill" is acting in the ethical best interests of employees, customers, and stakeholders. Example: *The lender accepted the risk with goodwill.*

»Let's say someone's credit was "below the threshold required for approval...but the lender or rental agent "approved" the application because they "didn't view a credit score" as the sum of the person. The lender or rental agent might recall a time in his/her own life when someone used a "legal, but rarely used provision" to approve them. That was "goodwill".

"Goodwill" is "scarce and scarcely expected" because the Lord told us in so many words it would be! (Ref: 2 Timothy 3:1-4 CEV)

"1You can be certain that in the last days there will be some very hard times. **2**People will love only themselves and money. They will be proud, stuck-up, rude, and disobedient to their parents. They will also be ungrateful, godless, **3**heartless, and hateful. Their words will be cruel, and they will have no self-control or pity. These people will hate everything good. **4**They will be sneaky, reckless, and puffed up with pride. Instead of loving God, they will love pleasure." CEV

2. When it's in our heart and nature to have "goodwill" towards people—we will have an attitude of "friendliness, acceptance, and generosity" towards them—and "goodness AND good deeds" will overflow FROM US and go BEFORE US as our "calling card"!

(1) The believers at Corinth had it—and showed it. Read along with me 2 Corinthians 8:1-9.

"7Since you excel in so many ways—you have so much faith, such gifted speakers, such knowledge, such enthusiasm, and such love for us—now I want you to excel also in this gracious ministry of giving. **8**I am not saying you to do it, even though the other churches are eager to do it. This is one way to prove your love is real. **9**You know how full of love and kindness our Lord Jesus Christ was. Though He was rich [He was rich in goodwill AND material blessings], yet for your sakes He became poor, so that by His poverty He could make you rich [rich in goodwill AND material blessings]." (2 Corinthians 8:7-9)

(2) There was a lot of “goodwill” among the believers in the early Church. Acts 2:44-47

44And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. **45**They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. **46**They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— **47**all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group [literally added to the universal Church] those who were being saved.” NOTE: Here, we see “goodwill working in reverse”—back to the people of God!

3. “Genuine goodwill” doesn’t “require or wait for goodwill” to be shown first—because those who have it know that “goodwill seasons” any atmosphere—and will be evident in a variety of ways.

I want to draw from Paul’s letter to the Galatian believers [Galatians chapter 1:22-24] to make two quick observations:

“22And still the churches in Christ that are in Judea DIDN’T KNOW ME PERSONALLY.” **23**ALL THEY KNEW was that people were saying, “The one who used to persecute us is NOW PREACHING the very faith he tried to destroy!” **24**And THEY PRAISED GOD because of me.” Galatians 1:22-24

1) We don’t have to know people “personally” to show “gracious goodwill” towards them.

“22And still the churches in Christ that are in Judea didn’t know me personally.” Galatians 1:22

NOTE: “Goodwill” can “open doors for us and make up the difference” when people don’t know us personally—or when our faith is shaky!

2) When “goodwill” is operating in us—we won’t be reluctant or hesitant to say “kind things about someone” TO PEOPLE WHO MAY NOT KNOW THEM PERSONALLY—or WHO DO KNOW THEM—but have had the “same experience” we had with them!

“22And still the churches in Christ that are in Judea didn’t know me personally.” **23**All they knew was that people were saying,

“The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!” Galatians 1:22-23

We MIGHT NEVER have the “same experience” someone else had with a person or a people—but if “goodwill” is working in us as a “seasoning”—we’ll be careful NOT to “poison” the atmosphere—so they’re unable to do what the believers at Judea did in verse 24: “And they praised God because of me.” Galatians 1:24

Our 4th and final point...

4. Jesus addressed 3 “back-to-back” attitudes concerning His disciples—each having the potential to either “cultivate or undermine” goodwill in the group AND their ministry to others. Go to Mark 9:33-50.

(1) Who Is the Greatest? (33-37) One person’s or competing desires for “recognition or promotion” can “stymie goodwill” toward everyone!

“33After they arrived at Capernaum, Jesus and His disciples settled in the house where they would be staying. Jesus asked them, “What were you discussing out on the road?” **34**But they didn’t answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest.

35He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to Him. Then He said, “Anyone who wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.” **36**Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, He said to them, **37**“Anyone who welcomes [is humble and accommodating of] a little child like this on my behalf welcomes Me, and anyone who welcomes Me welcomes my Father who sent me.”

(2) Cliques. (38-41) Cliques and divisions or partiality caused by cliques and divisions limits “goodwill” to those in our group!

38John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw a man using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he isn’t one of our group.”

39“Don’t stop him!” Jesus said. “No one who performs miracles in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me. **40**Anyone who is not against us is for us. **41**If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah [just showed goodwill], I assure you, that person will be rewarded.”

(3) Offense. (42-50) Real or perceived offenses can hinder/cause us to withhold “goodwill” towards “everyone” or “certain ones”!

“42“But if anyone causes one of these little ones who trusts in Me to lose faith, it would be better for that person to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around the neck. **43**If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It’s better to enter heaven with only one hand than to go into the unquenchable fires of hell with two hands. **45**If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It’s better to enter heaven with only one foot than to be thrown into hell with two feet. **47**And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. It is better to enter the Kingdom of God half blind than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, **48**‘where the worm never dies and the fire never goes out.’ **49**“For everyone will be purified with fire. **50**Salt [goodwill] is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor [place among us], how do you make it salty again? You must have the qualities of salt [goodwill] among yourselves and live in peace with each other.”

CLOSING THOUGHTS AND INVITATION TO ETERNAL LIFE.

If we have a “deficit of goodwill” towards all men, God has a variety of ways to fix that—including sending us to the very people we despise!

A beautiful illustration of this is painted for us in Acts chapter 10.

In this chapter, we see one man’s faith and generous goodwill working righteousness unto salvation; while another man’s prejudice and lack of love nearly disqualified him!

If we teach our children—and anyone else’s children we have access to—what it means to have “goodwill towards everyone” and model the same before them—God in Heaven will be pleased and Christ will be “praised in the earth” and “revealed” to those who don’t yet know Him! GOD IS READY TO MAKE PEACE AND EXTEND “GOODWILL” TO ALL WHO WILL COME TO HIM AND MAKE JESUS LORD AND SAVIOR!