

**Series: God Is Good #1797**  
**Title: Various Scriptures**  
***No One Is Good***

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We have been talking about the goodness of God and in this context, last time, we asked are people good? God is good. What about us? This is a question that has been around a very long time. Are we, basically, good? Of course I have to add the word “basically” because to be human is to know that many other humans are not just bad, but outright evil. We consult history and we find Hitler, Stalin, Mao. We consult the present and we find serial killers, egomaniacal dictators, corrupt business people, and the like. Common sense men and woman readily concur: there are bad people, there are evil people.

But aren't the majority of the human race basically, intrinsically *good*? Being equally honest, we do find good in people. The young person who drops what they're doing to help an elderly woman cross the street or put her groceries in the car. The neighbor who comes to our rescue when we most need her. The man who pulls over to the side of the road and helps us change that flat tire. The stranger who jumps in the freezing, icy lake and pulls out the stranded child gasping for air to stay alive. And countless other examples. Maybe these are two extreme? How about just the very nice and kind colleague? “He's such a good guy,” we might tell a friend.

Well, some of how we answer depends on how define the word “good.” What do we mean when we say people are “good?” Let's return to our text, Mark chapter 10 and verses 17-18. **“As [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before [Jesus], and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’<sup>18</sup> And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.’”**

Ah, according to Jesus *people are not good!* No one is good except God alone. We emphasized this: only God is good. And the immediate implication of this is that none of us are good. God is good. People are not good. God alone is good. We are all *bad*. Let's ask: what does the word “good,” used here three times mean? “Good Teacher...why do you call Me good...No one is good except God alone.” This is the Greek word *agathos* and it means good in essence or by nature; intrinsically good. Our Lord is saying to this rich, young man, God alone is good in essence, good by nature, only God is intrinsically good. And the Bible bears this out all over its many pages.

This is not the place to inundate you with many Scriptures references, but let me give you a few to digest. First, the Bible teaches that every aspect of our person is polluted by sin (by that which by God's standards is evil). As the theologian John Calvin said, “We are so entirely controlled by the power of sin, that the whole mind, the whole heart, and all our actions are under its influence (*Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 261).” Jeremiah 17, verse 9, **“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”** In Romans 1, verse 21 the Apostle Paul writes about people, apart from Christ, being evil and says, **“They became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”** In Romans 7 Paul adds, **“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.”** Our hearts are evil, our minds are evil, our thinking is evil, and our flesh (our bodies) are evil.

Second, because we are not good, but evil, we cannot please God on our own. Romans chapter 8, verses 7 and 8, **“The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,<sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”** (Romans 8.7 and 8.) And third, all humans are sinners. No exceptions. 1 Kings 8.46, **“For there is no one who does not sin.”** Psalm 14, verse 3 says, **“They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.”** Whoa, mark that. Psalm 14.3. “There is no one who does good, not even one.” How similar that is to the words of our Lord back in Mark 10, verse 18, “No one is good except God alone.”

Now, of course we must acknowledge this does *not* mean people are as wicked as we can possibly be. I am certain it has been your observation that some people are more evil than others. People are more or less good or bad. This is relative. *But*, God is absolute. Not relative. God is absolutely, perfectly, and eternally good. That is His nature. Friends, God alone is good in essence, good by nature, only God is intrinsically good. We are *not*. We are by nature evil. No wonder, in Matthew 7, verse 11 Jesus says, **“You, then, who are evil...”**

Now, I have not lost my place in Mark 10. Come back to that with me. Many people, the man in this story included, turn to religion to make them good. They have an intuitive understanding, a self-awareness, that they are not good. They recognize the bad things they think, say, and do. Their conscience speaks up and they listen. To rectify this, they turn on their human effort and attempt to be good and they tend to become religious and there are many world religions to choose from.

It is my conviction that the man who ran to and kneeled before Jesus believed himself to already be good, because his Jewish religion made him so. His own goodness is what made him able to stand before the Living God. He just needed that extra bit; that final and highest good work that would definitely push him over the edge into God’s unending favor. Hence his question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Notice that word “do.” What, by my own effort, can I *do* to please God? How can I become even more religious? How, by my own merit and good works, can I have eternal life?

To prove my point this guy thought he was already pretty good, listen to the man’s response when Jesus emphasizes with him keeping the commandments. I am reading in Mark 10, verses 19 and 20. This is Christ speaking, **“You know the commandments, ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’”** <sup>20</sup> **And [the man] said to [Jesus], ‘Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.’**” There is the man’s self-righteousness. This attitude reveals that he thinks of himself as already being good and doing good. His self-assessment is that he has done good by not murdering anyone, not committing adultery, he is not a thief, he has not given false witness, he has not defrauded *and* he has honored father and mother. And he says he has done this from his youth up. Impressive. Perfect track record. Or is it?

The Lord certainly challenges this. I am now reading verses 21 and 22 of Mark 10. **“Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’”** <sup>22</sup> **But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.”**

Remarkably, Jesus felt a loving compassion for this man, because the man was a hopelessly lost sinner. He was not saved. In the assessment of the Christ the man did *not* possess eternal life. What the young man did not grasp is that even if he truly had kept all these commands outwardly – *if* he had – God always takes into account inward attitudes and motives. He needed to obey the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5 when He says truths like,

**“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ ...”** <sup>22</sup> **But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court...”** <sup>27</sup> **You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’;** <sup>28</sup> **but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart....”** <sup>33</sup> **Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.’”** <sup>34</sup> **But I say to you, make no oath at all...”** The words of our Lord.

This man thought he was good, but He was not. Because not one of us, apart from Christ, are good. All of us are evil by our outward actions *and* inward attitude and motives. There is no one who is good, not even one. We are not as wicked as we can possibly be, but we are also *not* good. That’s the testimony of Jesus and all of the Bible. Furthermore, religion does not make us good. More on that next time and then we will consider Jesus’ answer to the rich, young ruler on God Is.

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