

I'm Not Good

Aaron Beard
Trussville
April 1, 2012

Introduction: (Scripture Reading: Romans 3:9-18)

A. Living in the south we have many phrases and expressions that are used repeatedly without thought:

1. For instance, "Bless his heart..." really means, "What I say is really bad about him, but I don't want to sound mean" or maybe "He's got a really bad illness or disability that has nothing to do with his heart, but saying bless his heart makes me sound more compassionate"
2. For guys who are single they hear all the time about a girl, "She's got a really great personality..." and what this really means is, "She fell out of the ugly tree and hit every branch on the way down and I don't have anything else appealing to say about her but this."
3. Another expression we use without thinking is, "I'm good" – What this really means is, "Well, I've got some tough stuff to deal with, but I am going to say I'm good to speed the conversation up or so I don't have to tell you what's really going on" – Also say, "He's a good guy, but..."

B. We often say we're good when we're really not. In this lesson I want us to consider the spiritual side of this phrase when used of ourselves and when we use it about others:

1. Today you may be thinking you are good, and in the eyes of many you probably are, but what about in the eyes of God? If you aren't "good with God" I want you to fix that today!
2. There are also many we'd all consider to be "good people," and by physical appearances they are, but they aren't truly "good with God." I want to challenge us to others as God sees them. If we don't, we'll never be motivated to try to reach them. Why would we, they are good!

WARNING: Doing This Can Be Painful!

LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING... I'M NOT GOOD IF...

A. I Have Not Obeyed The Gospel Of Christ:

1. Many times we judge our own state and the state of others by physical appearances:
 - a. Perhaps our health is pretty good... our finances are in order... we live pretty moral lives with no major sins... we've got a good family... we've got good control of our lives. We're good, right?
 - b. You know, this is why so many don't feel their need for God while they are young... For many when they get a little older it seems like something suddenly clicks and they see they need God and they take their faith seriously. What changed? They begin to see life as it is... they see they aren't invincible, they see life is temporary, they have problems, they need more.
 - c. Laodicea made the mistake of judging their spiritual condition by how well their lives were going physically. They thought they were doing good, but they weren't. Looks were deceiving!
2. We aren't good and that's the reason why need Christ... the reason why we need to obey the gospel of Christ. Apart from Christ, all of us are condemned because there is none righteous! (**Romans 3:9-21**)
 - a. In chapters 1-3 Paul had basically created this great court scene... The whole world is on trial before God the Great Judge. Paul (along with God's law) acts as the prosecuting attorney. Our lives as well as Satan testifies against us. First Paul puts the Gentiles on trial and the verdict is clear... GUILTY! Then it's the Jew's turn. They felt better than the Gentiles, but the verdict is the sin... GUILTY! The penalty is set... "The wages of sin is death" – No defense!
 - b. You may read Paul's long laundry list of sinfulness and think, "That's not me..." – But sin is sin. All sin separates us from God, all sin creates guilt, all sin destroys our righteousness & goodness.

- c. Think about all the times you've messed up... Your failures, shortcomings, sins. We're all guilty. None of us can stand before God and claim righteousness. We're all condemned!
- d. This is the hopeless picture without Christ. While we are all guilty the blood of Christ was shed so we could be justified. He paid the penalty. But it means nothing if you don't come to Him!
- 3. Later, Paul describes our state and our relationship with God outside of Christ (**Romans 5:6-9**)
 - a. More strong language – Outside of Christ we are weak, ungodly, unrighteous, sinners, enemies, and deserving of the wrath of God. This doesn't sound like the description of a good man!
 - b. Because of man's sins we were all of these horrible things, but we couldn't do anything about it. We were helpless. God had to act on our behalf by sending Jesus to die for us.
 - c. Again, Paul shows that all of this can change through Christ. But if you haven't obeyed the gospel of Christ, which he describes in chapter 6, you are outside of the hope for change!
- 4. If you haven't obeyed the gospel of Christ you aren't good because you are dead and living among the fellowship of the lost! (**Eph 2:1-5**)

B. If I Am Caught Up In Religious Error:

- 1. We live in a culture that says that everyone is good as long as they are sincerely religious:
 - a. We hear things like, "As long as you worship Jesus" and "We all serve the same God" and "We are all going to the same place, we are just taking different paths to get there."
 - b. Churches look more like a buffet line than the pillar and ground of truth! You can find any kind of worship, any set of programs, & any doctrine you want... If you can imagine it, it exists!
 - c. If you question the beliefs of others you're considered intolerant, unloving, Pharisaical, & a legalist
 - d. If you tell someone they aren't good because of what they believe people are shocked! We are told not to judge others, but accept everyone & everything... as long as they believe in Jesus
- 2. First of all, this situation is not good. It is not a picture of what Jesus prayed for when He prayed that all of His disciples be one (**John 17:20-23**). It is not what Paul said we should be when he said there should be no division among us, but that we all speak the same thing (**1 Cor. 1:10**). It is not what results from the New Testament which declares one Lord, one God, one faith, one baptism (**Eph. 4:1-6**)
- 3. If you living in error in what you practice in your Christianity, you need to understand you are not good because it makes you guilty of lawlessness (**Matthew 7:21-23**)
 - a. Question: Are these people religious? YES! Are these people sincere? YES! Are these people doing "good works" in their faith? YES! Are these people saved? NO! Shocking isn't it?
 - b. What's the problem? Lawlessness. Breaking the word down we see its meaning... they were guilty of acting without law. Perhaps they were off somewhere in their personal morality, perhaps they were off somewhere in their religious activity. They were off, they didn't get it right.
 - c. These people seemed good, but they were weren't... at least not in God's sight. This is why is so vital that we seek to get things right. This issue of authority is a salvation issue.
 - d. It's no wonder Jesus said the road was strait & the gate narrow that leads to life while the way was broad leading to destruction. If you aren't acting according to His laws, you're not good
- 4. If what you believe and practice isn't within the doctrine of Christ, you are not good because this means you don't have the Father or Jesus! (**2 John 9-11**)
 - a. What's the problem here? Its transgressing God's law. How? We go beyond what it says. How many people say, "God never said not to!" That the exact attitude this is condemning.
 - b. Illustration: Circle with man it with God's laws. Inside it is the Father and Son. What if we step outside of that sphere? There's no Father and there's no Son... is there salvation there?

- c. If you are going beyond what God has said in your religion, then you're not God because you left the Father and Jesus behind! Return to the sphere of fellowship by abiding in His laws!

C. If I Am Not Taking My Own Faith Seriously:

1. Sometimes we feel we are good based on where we are in our spiritual growth and involvement
 - a. We may get a false sense of security that is based on spiritual successes of our past. We reason that because we have been baptized, or we were "raised in the church," or because of works we've done in the past. We may not be doing much spiritually now, but we feel we're good.
 - b. Perhaps we feel like we are doing enough. Maybe we've got this unofficial mental checklist of what we need to do to go to Heaven (attend ___ services a week, pray ___ times a day, etc). Doing more, seeking to grow, being evangelistic aren't seen as necessary... Why? "I'm good"
 - c. We get complacent because by comparing ourselves to others... We look around & say, "I'm good"
2. We aren't good if we don't take our faith seriously because we aren't growing. What's the big deal about growing? Without it there is uselessness, blindness, sin, & no hope of Heaven! **(2 Peter 1:5, 8-11)**
 - a. We say we don't believe in "Once Saved Always" saved but sometimes we live like we do. We put confidence in our past and think somehow we get a pass when it comes to growing.
 - b. Peter doesn't just talk about wanting to grow, he talks about actually growing. We have to have a hunger for it. He says we are to "make every effort" → In other words, we do what it takes!
 - c. Peter is being positive. He's describing all the benefits of seeking to grow. If the benefits are ours if we seek to grow, then the opposite is true of us if we quit growing!
 - d. Fruitfulness, maturity, and heaven are not accidental accomplishments. They are the results of a life that is lived with purpose. You don't wake up one day and suddenly say, "Hey, I've..."
3. It means we aren't good because our faith is inactive and uninvolved faith **(James 2:14-17)**
 - a. When we read this passage its usually in the context of saying that "faith only" is a false doctrine, and it certainly shows that, but was that really James' main reason for writing this? I don't think so! The context shows us the application is much more broad and practical than that.
 - b. James has been talking about not treating others with partiality, being merciful, and serving others by taking care of their physical needs... Then he describes a faith that doesn't do these things
 - c. This kind of faith is dead. Is it faith? Yes, it's faith. But it's useless. So we say, "I'm a believer" but it means nothing to use if it's not a belief that is obeying and serving. We can say, "Faith only is wrong!" and yet be daily living that false doctrine
 - d. James says this kind of faith will not save us! If my faith is inactive and uninvolved, I'm not good!
4. A person with an appreciation of grace, who lives in the grace of God, will take their faith serious and be committed to pursuing the kind of good works God has prepared for him! **(Eph 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14)**