

NO ONE IS GOOD

ISAIAH 6:1-8

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No One Is Good

Isaiah 6:1-8

Last time we were together, we said that God created us to live full and abundant lives. We further defined that as being in a right relationship with God and with one another. Being right with God brings us peace, joy, and contentment because being in a personal, intimate, and passionate love relationship with God gives us confidence to experience the fullness of life without fear. When we allow the love God has for us to overflow us onto the lives of people around us, we bring them joy, peace, and contentment as well.

The problem is that not many people, even those who claim to be Christian seem to be enjoying this abundant life. There are two basic problems. First of all, people try and either define or attain this full abundant life by means other than prescribed in the Bible. Secondly, sin prevents us from enjoying this abundant life.

In the booklet "Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws," Law #2 is stated like this:

"Man is **sinful** and **separated** from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life." The booklet goes on to expand on the concept like this:

"Man was created to have fellowship with God; but, because of his own stubborn self-will, he chose to go his own independent way and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin."

I think that one of the most frustrating things that American Pastors face is that church people think they're pretty good. In his book Respectable Sins, Jerry Bridges states over and over again that the Gospel is not just for unbelievers to be saved, the Gospel is for believers to remind us that we are still in need of the Gospel every day and we will continue to need the Gospel every day until that day we are home face to face with our Lord Jesus Christ. People who claim to be Christian tend to forget that we were not good, we are not good, and we will never be good until we get to heaven. Bridges goes on to quote C. S. Lewis' frustration over the blindness of Christians as to their own sin:

"The barrier I have met is the almost total absence from the minds of my audience of any sense of sin."

If you were to stop and think of it, without this constant awareness of how sinful we are, there is no way to let the wonderful truth of the Gospel touch us and change us on a daily basis. Gospel means "Good News." But in order to receive the Good News about the love of Jesus, we must first accept the bad news. The bad news is that we are hopelessly and eternally lost on our own; both before and after we became Christians. For my friends and for me, we make it simple: "I was a piece of garbage, I am a piece of garbage, and I will always be a piece of garbage until I see Jesus face to face. That makes it easy to apply the Gospel to our lives every day. And that causes our love for Jesus to grow every day. Church people are good at finding other people's sin while remaining blind to our own. Let me give you an example. No long ago, I had a couple in the church that both got kidney stones about the same time. First the wife passed her stone, and about a month later, the husband passed his. While I was over for dinner one night, the wife proudly told her husband, "The Bible says, 'Let she who is without sin cast the first stone.'"

I think that there are two truths that exist together that even unbelievers would agree to be the case. The world is a beautiful and intricate place that is well ordered. And further, human beings have this incredible ability to do great and noble things. The second truth is that when we look at all the bad things people do, we have to admit that something has gone terribly wrong. The Bible would agree with that assessment. Last time we were together, we said that God had a wonderful plan for our life and Jesus came to give us a full and abundant life. However, it seems as if this full and abundant life is always just out of our reach. The problem is described as the

main idea of this morning's text. **BECAUSE OF OUR INHERITED SINFUL NATURE AND OUR WILLFUL REBELLION AGAINST GOD, WE HAVE SEPARATED OURSELVES FROM THE ABUNDANT LIFE THAT GOD PROMISES US.** In other words, we have this natural bent toward evil and we more often than not follow that bent. This is what separates us from God.

I. WE WERE NEVER GOOD

We Are The Cause Of Our Spiritual Death.

The first truth that we must embrace is that we were never good. In other words **WE ARE THE CAUSE OF OUR SPIRITUAL DEATH.** The Bible says,

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23 / NIV).

In the Bible death does not mean that someone or something ceases to exist. In the bible, death means separation. When we physically die, our bodies are separated from our souls. When we spiritually die we are separated from God. So it is sin that separates us from God and from embracing His full and abundant life.

A. WE WERE BORN INTO SIN

Contrary to popular belief, we are not born into this world innocent or even neutral. We are born into this world physically alive but spiritually dead. If we want to be bible believing Christians, we must look at our cute little babies and realize they are sinners in need of God's salvation. In his great Psalm of repentance David confesses:

"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5 / NIV).

The Bible makes it clear that when Adam and Eve sinned, they allowed sin into the world and in them we all sinned. Sin is a disease that is passed on from generation to generation. The only one in all of human history to avoid this generationally transmitted sin was Jesus. Because Jesus was born of a virgin, He did not receive the sinful nature and bent toward sin. We are all born with a natural bent towards sin and if we are honest with ourselves, we can see how sin attracts us.

B. WE HAVE ALL REBELLED AGAINST GOD

Secondly, the Bible is also clear that not only do we have a natural bent towards sin; we have all rebelled against God. Again I have to say that I have not met many people who step up and say, "I am ungodly and no matter what I do, I can never be right with God." But listen to the Apostle Paul sums up the human situation including himself:

"¹⁰As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹²All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.' ... ¹³Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.' The poison of vipers is on their lips.' ¹⁴Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.' ¹⁵Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷and the way of peace they do not know.' ¹⁸There is no fear of God before their eyes.' ... ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10-23 / NIV).

Paul has made it clear that since we were born into sin, we have a natural bent towards sin. Not only that, but we have all rebelled against God. Since God is perfect and holy, He cannot be in a relationship with anything or anyone that is unholy. Sin separates us from God.

C. WE CONTINUE TO SIN

And that brings us to the next point, no matter how good any of us think we are, the truth is that we continue to sin. I think the most difficult part of a modern pastor's job is to convince religious people who attend church regularly that they continue to sin and are in constant need of God's grace. Somehow we church people have come to think of ourselves as respectable and good. But just listen how the great St. Paul describes his ongoing battle with sin:

¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²²For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin" (Romans 7:15-25 / NIV).

Modern day Christianity has fallen captive to modern day psychology. Our culture teaches that people are by nature good. If we start from this very wrong premise, we will never be able to build a solid educational system and to be sure, our church will never be a legitimate Christian church. The Bible is clear on this point. We were born into sin. We have inherited sinful natures. We have all personally sinned and we continue to sin. **WE ARE THE CAUSE OF OUR SPIRITUAL DEATH.** Let me just remind us again of what that means. Life is only to be found in God. Since we sin, we continue to separate ourselves from God. Since life is only found in God and we separate ourselves from God because of sin, every human being finds himself physically alive, but spiritually dead. The point being that no one was ever good.

II. WE ARE NOT GOOD NOW

No Matter How Good We Think We Are, We Are Not Good.

That brings us to where we find ourselves now. We are not good. In other words, **NO MATTER HOW GOOD WE THINK WE ARE, WE ARE NOT GOOD.** It is frustrating to minister to people who think they are good in any way. The problem always stems from comparing ourselves to other people. But we are not supposed to compare ourselves to other people.

In today's reading we meet the prophet Isaiah. The name Isaiah means "Yahweh (Jehovah) is salvation." Jewish tradition has it that he was of royal blood or at least of noble descent. He gave the better part of his life to preach God's message to a people who had gone astray and showed no interest in God or his ways. Tradition has it that he was placed in a hollow log and sawed in half under King Manasseh's reign. Scholars think Hebrews 11:37 refers to this event.

A. NOT COMPARED TO OTHER PEOPLE

There is no doubt that when Isaiah is compared to the society in which he lives, we would have to say not only was he good, but he was great. And there is no doubt in my mind that compared to your co-workers, your neighbors, your classmates and friends, most of you would come out on top of those comparisons. You come to church every Sunday and you volunteer to help in many programs. You regularly give money to support the church. And most importantly of all, you don't harm anyone during the week. And again, we would say that is good.

B. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO DO THE RIGHT THING

And there is the problem. We are supposed to do the right thing. Where did we ever come up with the idea that we should be rewarded or commended for doing the right thing? Let me try and help you try and understand this concept. When was the last time a policeman pulled you aside and gave you a letter of commendation for driving the speed limit? When was the last time the mayor sent you a letter thanking you for not murdering anyone this year? Have you ever received a letter thanking you for not robbing your neighborhood bank? Why do you think that these things never happen? The simple answer is that we are expected to obey the law. I am not supposed to speed. I am expected to obey the speed limit. I am expected not to murder anyone or rob any banks. I am simply doing what I am supposed to.

Now let's apply that to ourselves. I may say, "I put a lot of time preparing the sermons to preach each Sunday." The answer to that should be, "Big deal. You're supposed to do that." People may say, "I give a lot of money to the church. I work hard teaching Sunday School, volunteering in a lot of programs, I clean the church, I help the poor people in the church, and I run small groups." Again the proper response is, "Big deal. As Christians, we are expected to do these things." To not do these things would be the same as breaking the speed limit, murdering someone, or robbing a bank. Why is it that in church we feel that doing what we are expected to do makes us good? Jesus made it clear that no one is good except God. You and I must be very careful never to think of ourselves as good because we do some good things.

C. COMPARED TO GOD

The proper perspective is to compare ourselves to God. In today's passage, we find a prophet who gave his entire life to serve God. We would think of him as a great man.

And then, God entered his world. Isaiah caught just a glimpse of God and only the fringe of God's robe entered the temple. Nevertheless, God revealed Himself to Isaiah. This is worth reading:

"¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:1-4 / NIV).

To me, this is the major sin of the modern day church. Just like Old Testament Israel, we have lost a sense of the majesty, the potency, and the holiness of God. Again, in his book Respectable Sins, Jerry Bridges says that the underlying sin of our time is ungodliness. He goes on to say that if he were to ask most Christians how many of us are ungodly, not many would raise our hands. The problem is that the sad truth is that we are all ungodly and this is the foundation that sets the stage for all of our other sins. Listen to what he says:

“Contrary to what we normally think, ungodliness and wickedness are not the same. A person may be a nice, respectable citizen and still be an ungodly person. ... Ungodliness may be defined as living one’s everyday life with little or no thought of God, or of God’s will, or of God’s glory, or of one’s dependence on God. ...

Now, the sad fact is that many of us who are believers tend to live our daily lives with little or no thought of God. We may even read our Bibles and pray for a few minutes at the beginning of each day, but then we go out into the day’s activities and basically live as though God doesn’t exist. We seldom think of our dependence on God or our responsibility to Him. We might go for hours with no thought of God at all. In that sense, we are hardly different from our nice, decent, but unbelieving neighbor. God is not at all in his thoughts and is seldom in ours.

One cannot carefully read the New Testament without recognizing how far short we come in living out a biblical standard of godliness.”

If you think of yourself as good in any way, please pick up Jerry Bridge’s latest book Respectable Sins. That will certainly change your perspective.

Well let’s see how Isaiah this godly prophet responds to God’s presence:

“⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty” (Isaiah 6:4-5 / NIV).

Isaiah realized that when compared to God and His standards of holiness for his life, he was just a piece of garbage. The only possible way any of us could think we are good in any way is if we were to compare ourselves to other people. The sad thing is that we always compare ourselves to people who are seemingly not as good as we are. Why don’t we compare ourselves to missionaries like Mother Teresa and others who have given their entire lives to serving God by serving the poor and outcast? We would not even come close to their level of living. And they would always say they are a piece of garbage. If they say they are garbage, what would that make you and me? Thinking that we are good in any way separates us further from God and the life that is in Him alone. **NO MATTER HOW GOOD WE THINK WE ARE, WE ARE NOT GOOD.**

III. WE WILL NEVER BE GOOD

Acknowledging The Truth About Ourselves Will Prepare Us To Understand And Receive The Truth About The Gospel.

So let’s review. We were never good. We are not good now. And the sad reality is that we will never be good until that glorious day that we meet the Lord Jesus Christ face to face.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES WILL PREPARE US TO UNDERSTAND AND RECEIVE THE TRUTH ABOUT THE GOSPEL.

A. THE GOSPEL FOR UNBELIEVERS

The Gospel is for unbelievers. We church people all agree with this. But let’s just examine this a little more closely. If you were to ask non Christians and Christians alike, people have confidence in going to heaven because we are pretty good people, try not to harm people and help where we can. The common conception is that when I die, if my good deeds outweigh the bad things I’ve done, then God will accept me into heaven.

To think in this vein is disastrous. The Bible makes it clear that our bad seriously outweigh our good no matter how good we think we are. And for unbelievers, Jesus said this:

"... I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6 / NIV).

There is no amount of good that anyone can do to be reconciled with God. We cannot be good enough. We can't be religious enough. We can't find God through other religions or philosophies. Jesus made it clear that He is the only way. All other attempts to get right with God except through Jesus will keep us separated from God.

B. THE GOSPEL FOR BELIEVERS

As I have said before, the Gospel is for believers. Jerry Bridges has written several books, most notably [The Pursuit of Holiness](#) and [The Discipline of Grace](#). In all the books I have read by him, he makes it clear that we need to preach the Gospel to ourselves every day. Christians tend to believe once we receive Christ as Savior, we don't need the message of the Gospel any more. Isaiah, who was a great religious man, called and blessed by God, needed to remember the message of the "Gospel" in that we are constantly in need of God's grace. He realized that ongoing forgiveness comes only from the hand of God and because of the grace of God. Listen to Isaiah's description:

"⁶Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for" (Isaiah 6:6-7 / NIV).

C. THE GOSPEL FOR YOU AND ME

Most of all we would do well to remember that the Gospel is for you and for me. As Bridges said, no one can be seriously reading their Bible without coming away feeling totally wicked and deserving of hell. We should constantly be driven back to the mercy and grace of Jesus. There is no way we can enjoy the full and abundant life of Jesus unless we are willing to admit our need for His constant love and forgiveness. Let me just give us some perspective as to what our attitude towards life and our good works should be. I have already said that Isaiah was a beloved prophet of God and sacrificed even his life. And yet, listen to how Isaiah refers to his good works:

"⁶All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isaiah 64:6 / NIV).

Acknowledging the truth about ourselves will prepare us to understand and receive the truth about the gospel.

IV. EPILOGUE

There really is not much more to say about this. If we can just remember that we were never good, we are not now good, nor will we ever be good until face to face with God, we will be fine. The Biblical assessment is this. **BECAUSE OF OUR INHERITED SINFUL NATURE AND OUR WILLFUL REBELLION AGAINST GOD, WE HAVE SEPARATED OURSELVES FROM THE ABUNDANT LIFE THAT GOD PROMISES US.**

In his book [The Truth for Life](#), John Blanchard describes this incident in the life of G.K. Chesterton:

"Many years ago there was a famous correspondence in The Times under the subject 'What is wrong with the world today?' The best letter of all was also the shortest, and read - 'Dear Sir, I am. Yours faithfully, G. K. Chesterton.' That devastating declaration showed a profound insight into man's universal malaise, and I believe that it can teach us a deeply challenging lesson. I am convinced that throughout the Christian church there are problems, difficulties and frustrations that would begin to dissolve immediately if only some Christians would be honest enough to answer the question - 'What's wrong' with the words 'I am!'"

Since none of us were ever good, and since none of us are good, and since none of us will ever be good until that day we meet Jesus face to face, we should understand that what keeps us from the plan of God for us to live full and abundant lives are sin and our refusal to apply the Gospel to our lives on a daily basis.