

## “What About Today?”

September 15, 2019

Matthew 25:31-46

Thank you for an opportunity to preach God’s Word again today. Please find with me the fifteenth chapter of Romans.

Back in the 1980’s I was the Pastor of the South Clinton Baptist Church in a town called Waymart in the State of Pennsylvania.

And one the people in our neighborhood was an extremely unfortunate man by the name of Willie. Willie lived in a mobile home that I would describe as ramshackle and literally falling down around him. I remember being in the house and seeing the conditions he lived in. It wasn’t much of a home. Someone had given him this trailer to live in. It was just where Willie lived. Eventually it did burn to the ground.

Willie was poor. He owned nothing. He was uneducated. And he lived alone. He had no skills that I ever knew of. He also didn’t work, except for odd jobs the neighbors would ask him to do. It was quite sad. And Willie never attended Church. But I did visit with him a few times.

Now, in that same Church was a woman named Beulah; Beulah Smith. Beulah was quiet; is very quiet. She’s still alive; 97 years old, in a nursing facility in Waymart, PA.

And Beulah, in essence, took time for Willie when nobody else would. She had her own family to care for. She had four children. Yet, she’d always take food to Willie. Whenever we had a dinner at the Church, she would always make sure a plate was put together so she could take it to him at his trailer. She’d also collect his clothes and wash and

dry and fold them for him. And she, in many ways, fulfilled these words of Jesus.

Matthew 25:34 *“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (35) For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat [food]: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: (36) Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

*(37) Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? (38) When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? (39) Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*

*(40) And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”*

I classed Willie among the least of these.

But, can you see the LORD’s point? What you do for those who are hurting, in prison, in need, and hungry and sick; those things the LORD sees as your doing them to Him.

Now, the reason for my story is this. Today’s topic is goodness. The goodness of the LORD is evident everywhere. But, what about goodness in human beings?

Look with me at the 14<sup>th</sup> verse of Romans fifteen.

Romans 15:14 *“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. (15) Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,*

*(16) That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*

*(17) I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. (18) For I will not dare to speak of*

*any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed ...”*

Romans 15 and 16 are the final chapters of the greatest book ever written; the Book of Romans. And, in his conclusion to Romans, Paul points us to the quality of goodness.

Here’s today’s lesson title “What About Today?” Shall we pray?

Your Christian life is not lived up here. Christianity is a much practical as it is internal. And the Christian life is clearly a matter of your heart; especially your heart going out to those in need.

Now, did you see the three things in this passage that describe what he knew to be true of the Christians in Rome?

Romans 15:14 “*And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are **full of goodness**, filled with **all knowledge**, able also to **admonish one another**.*”

What do you know about goodness? Like all of the things Paul speaks about from Romans twelve onward, goodness is one of the effects of the Gospel. Your salvation affects your eternal destiny. But it also affects what you are and what you do today.

So, today, is anybody really full of goodness; verse fourteen?

Romans 15:14 “*And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of **goodness** ...”*

The Ultimate Goodness, of course, is the LORD. You were created by a good God. The Bible even tells us that every single thing God made was good. And this good God created you in His image. But, as you know, that image has been marred by sin. Sin is the complete opposite of good. So, shouldn’t we expect God to re-make us into the good creatures we ought to be?

It’s as George MacDonald once said “He wants to make us in His own image, choosing the good, refusing the evil.”

Now, if you knew that God’s purpose for you was to make you good, what difference would it make in your mind and heart today? What about today? Would you go about, like Jesus, doing good?

Acts 10:36 “*The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) (37) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; (38) How God anointed **Jesus of Nazareth** with the Holy Ghost and with power: who **went about doing good** ...”*

Romans 15:14 “*And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness ...”*

Paul had obviously gotten news from someone from Rome regarding the lives of the Christians there. And had convinced Paul of this.

What kind of God would God be if, having first made us in His image, and our having fallen into sin, would He not want us to become good again?

God, through the Apostle Paul, tells the Christians in Rome “ye also are full of goodness.”

Practical, every day, on-going goodness is an effect of coming to Christ and receiving His salvation. If you aren’t good, you should expect the Holy Spirit in you to change you into someone who is “full of goodness” like these Romans. And, of course, as you will, the only way this is possible is because we have the “One Who went about doing good” living inside us.

I’ve discovered over the years that I’ve been a Christian that *some* people are convinced they are *innately* good while other people believe we are *innately* sinful. Innate means we were born that way.

This past spring 2019 a book was published called “The Goodness Paradox.” Can you imagine what that’s about? It was written by Dr. Richard Wrangham. Dr. Wrangham is a

Professor of Biological Anthropology at Harvard. And the book simply says two things. One, we're all a combination of both good and evil. And two, that the only way to understand this combination is to accept the theory of evolution.

Quote "Adolf Hitler, who ordered the execution of some eight million people and was responsible for the deaths of many millions more, was said by his personal secretary, Traudl Junge (pronounced Trod Jung), to have had an agreeable, friendly, and paternal manner. He hated cruelty to animals: he was a vegetarian, adored his dog Blondi and was inconsolable when Blondi died.

Pol Pot, the leader of Cambodia whose policies killed maybe a quarter of his country's people, was known to his acquaintances as a soft-spoken and kindly teacher of French history.

During eighteen months in prison, Joseph Stalin was always amazingly calm and never shouted or swore. In effect, he was a model gentleman-inmate, not obviously the kind of person who would later annihilate millions for political convenience."

He then quotes Theodosius Dobzhansky, a geneticist who said this. "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution." So, the entire book, "The Goodness Paradox," is based upon the fact that we are prone to both terrible things as well as doing good things and the solution to our dilemma is to consider two types of monkeys. "The central question animating this book: (says Dr. Wrangham) why are humans both highly tolerant, like bonobos (a type of pygmy chimpanzee found only in the Democratic Republic of Congo), and highly violent, like chimpanzees?"

Now, folks, it's not so much that he's an evolutionist that strikes me. It's the fact that here we are in 2019 still trying to figure out if man is innately good or if man is innately evil.

Science is still trying to figure it out without God and apart from His Word.

[Found on <https://heleo.com> "Are Humans Good or Evil? A Primatologist Looks to Our Ancestors for the Answer" by Richard Wrangham].

Now, everybody knows that each of us is capable of sin, even gross sins; and we all often do sin. There are two basic principles in this world; there's good and there's evil. There's good and there's sin. Both are extremely powerful. And both of them have a very similar origin. Do you remember the trees God placed in the center of the Garden of Eden? One was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The other; the tree of life.

And which tree did God command Adam and Eve to stay away from, to not eat from? It was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Evil, sin, wrong; these are the things we easily identify with; while good, righteousness, and holiness are things that sometimes seem so very far away from us.

Now, I've often wondered why the LORD planted this one tree in the Garden that He'd made for Adam and Eve. Here's one possible reason. God made us good in the beginning. Everything He made was good. But, God also knew, from the very beginning, that to choose Him was to choose good. God made Adam and Eve with the ability to choose.

Genesis 2:17 *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."*

Both of them chose to eat from the tree that He specifically commanded to stay away from. And the rest is history. All of us, by nature, prefer sin over good.

So, what is man like in his basic nature? Would you go back with me to the words of the Creator? Here's what He

says through Paul. Here's what we are all like before we come to Christ and receive His forgiveness and salvation.

Romans 3:10 "As it is written [in Psalm 14:1-3], **there is none righteous, no, not one:** (11) *there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.* (12) *They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; **there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***"

No righteous people. None who do good; which, by the way, was also spoken by Jesus. Matthew 19:17 "...*there is none good but one, that is, God ...*"

And Paul adds this. Romans 7:18 "For I know that **in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:** for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."

That's what we find in God's Word. That's what we are prior to receiving Jesus as our Savior and LORD. You were born with sin nature. It's innate; natural. You sin by nature. You sin by habit. And you sin by choice. But, don't you also have the desire to do good things? Yes. So, having a sin nature in no way precludes having the desire to do something good for somebody.

And then we read this. Romans 15:14 "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are **full of goodness** ..."

What made the difference? What made the difference in you? The difference is a Person. The entrance of Jesus Christ into your heart and life changes you.

Have you been delivered from the penalty and the power of your sin? Can you not now live to please the LORD? Can you not now do good works? Are you not now good?

Are you not commanded by the LORD to cleave to that which is good? Romans 12:9 "...*cleave to that which is **good.***"

Hasn't the LORD commanded you to overcome evil with good? Romans 12:21 "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with **good.***"

Galatians 6:10 "*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do **good** unto all men...*"

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good** works ..."

Colossians 1:10 "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every **good** work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; ..."

1 Thessalonians 5:15 "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is **good**, both among yourselves, and to all men."

Titus 3:8 "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain **good** works."

Hebrews 10:24 "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to **good** works: ..."

James 4:17 "Therefore to him that knoweth to **do good**, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Isn't it clear that what should shine out of your life now that you are in Christ is *good*?

Isn't it obvious what God wants to do with your life?

Something else that I've noticed among Christians over the years is this. We want to know God's will as though it was something that God might write in the sky as a note for us to know exactly what His will is. Would you really like to know His will? It's right here in the Bible. "Live, like Jesus, a life of goodness. Like Jesus, go about doing good. That's the will of God." This is God's plan for you. He wants you and me to be changed on the inside and on the outside. He wants you to be good. In and of yourself, it's not going to happen. But, when you depend upon Him Who lives in you, you will be and can be full of goodness.

Now, what does it mean to be good?" It means at least all of this. To be good means to be generous, to be compassionate, to be kind, to be decent, to be moral, to be helpful, to be

a good Samaritan, to be a good wife, to be a good husband, to be a good son, to be a good daughter, to be a good man or a good woman at your job, to have good character; someone whose language is good; no cursing; someone whose attitude is good; not a critical spirit; to be a good neighbor; to go out of your way to do something good for someone; to be practically good on a daily basis. So, what about today?

Folks, a Christian is someone who's filled with goodness; that means today; and tomorrow, of course. That means it's not a fake goodness. That means you are here to be positive, to help people, to accept it when you've been cheated, to care for people who don't care for you; to stand up for those who are being treated unjustly, to encourage those around you; all of this and much, much more. Goodness is practical and daily holiness.

And, folks, when you are good to others, they see God's glory in you. Here's how Jesus puts it in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:16 *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good** works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*

Dr. R. Paul Stevens is a professor of marketplace theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He tells the following story describing his days as a teenager.

"Though my parents never intended it, their spiritual nurturing included exposing me to the ministry of the poor to the rich. They built our lovely family home on a three-acre plot next door to a one-room shack without water, electricity, indoor plumbing or a furnace. Albert Jupp lived with his aged and ill mother in that smelly, dank shack. As he was occupied with the care of his mother, Albert was unable to hold down a steady job. Somehow he eked out an existence beside the Stevens, us, his rich next-door neighbours. Today the rich hardly see the poor except on television or from an air-conditioned tour bus.

Each night Albert would get a pail of water at our outside tap, which was always kept running, even in the dead of winter when our neighbours had their taps safely protected from freezing. My mother was one of the most generous souls on earth, and her sensitive conscience would not allow her to set a fine meal before our family without thinking of Albert and his mother. So night after night I was asked to make a pilgrimage up the hill to the shack with two portions from our table for our poor neighbours. I confess that as a teenager I usually resented doing this. But what I think was bothering me was how that nightly visit to the Jupps made me think about my own existence as a rich young man. Daily I was confronted existentially with the truth that the rich cannot know God well without relating to the poor. My neighbour made an evangelical invitation to my heart." [Found on <https://theologicalstudies.org.uk> "Living Theologically: Toward a Theology of Christian Practice" by R. Paul Stevens].

Folks, can you see that goodness begins in the heart of God and that it's His goodness that has become a condition you find ourselves in when you do good things for somebody else? Your goodness is the product of the Holy Spirit Who lives inside your spirit.

Galatians 5:22 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, **goodness**, faith ..."*

Folks, the term "Gospel" means "Good News." And, one of the reasons God sends you and me out with the Good News every day is this. He wants people around you and me to become good in Christ. There's no other way to become good except through the work of God working His salvation in you. You see, the LORD wants human beings to be re-made in the image of His Son. What is that image? It's goodness in every aspect of our lives. Folks, God is good.

In conclusion, would you pray this prayer with me in light of today's study? "LORD, teach me to stop depending upon myself and fill me with Your goodness for today. In Jesus' name, amen."

Now, it might be that you've never been saved. If so, you aren't really able to praise the LORD.

Today, though, you can come to Him for salvation and forgiveness of all your sins. He paid the full penalty for your sins. And He's right now ready to completely forgive you of every sin you've ever committed. Will you pray this prayer?

- **I Admit** – that I am a sinner and in need of a Savior (Romans 6:23)
- **I Abandon** – self-effort and realize I cannot be saved by my works or efforts (Acts 16:31)
- **I Accept** freely Christ's payment for my sins, required of the Father (John 3:16)
- **I Acknowledge** Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior (Acts 4:12)

So, what will you do with these precious words from the LORD's heart this week?

Will you be filled to the full?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 434 "Revive Us Again"