

Why "Good" Isn't Good Enough

Isaiah 5:20-23; 6:1-5; Romans 3:21-26

This lesson theme is that morality is not relative and our "best" efforts are not enough to save us.

We live in a time when everything is considered relative. Morality is thought to be the product of culture of personal choice. People claim, I'm a good enough person – even better than a lot of Christians I know.

We need to understand that God's character is the standard of goodness and morality – not the lifestyles of other people, including Christians.

Personal Insight – Many people I come into contact with judge themselves by others. They think that at the end of the day, that they will be good enough and they will be over the line that will get into heaven. They think they are better than most people.

What if the line is not other people you know? What if the line is Billy Graham or Mother Theresa?

The line we are judged by is not other people but by accepting Jesus Christ as our Personal Savior.

GOD'S HOLY CHARACTER IS THE STANDARD OF GOODNESS.

EVIL RATIONALIZED (Isa. 5:20-23)

Moral standards were destroyed by new definitions of sin, people using God's vocabulary but not His dictionary. Like today's "double-speak," this kind of language made it easy to deceive people and avoid a guilty conscience. In today's world, increased taxes are "revenue enhancements," and poor people are "fiscal underachievers." Medical malpractice is not the cause of a patient's death; it's a "diagnostic misadventure of high magnitude."

The Jerusalem Bible translation of Psalm 12:2 says it perfectly: "All they do is lie to one another, flattering lips, talk from a double heart."

Vs. 21 - Instead of listening to God, the leaders consulted with one another and made decisions based on their own wisdom. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22; see 1 Cor. 1:18–25). "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil".

Personal Insight – While playing Basketball for Coach Paul Cooley in the 7th Grade. One of the Cardinal rules was no one was to drive the baseline. One day in a game I let my man drive the baseline and score. Coach called timeout and brought me to the bench and asked why I let him drive the baseline? I tried to give him a lame excuse. Coach Cooley gave a good lesson in what was Rationalization. From that day forward I have tried my very best not to make excuses for my failures.

Vs. 23 – Over 25 Million people are addicted to alcohol. Woe be to a society who has come under the bondage of strong drink.

HOLINESS RECOGNIZED (Isa. 6:1-5)

It has been said that the closer one gets to the altar, the more likely one is to become a missionary. Isaiah is touched with a coal from the altar and as a result he says "LORD SEND ME".

The temple referred to in verse 1 is the heavenly temple, rather than Solomon's temple. King Uzziah died in 740 BC and was one of Judah's greatest leaders, even though in his latter years he was disciplined for disobeying God. A great king may have left his throne on earth, but the greatest King was still seated on the throne of heaven. According to John 12:41, this was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Only here are the seraphim mentioned in Scripture. The Hebrew word means “to burn” and relates these creatures to the holiness of God. This is why they repeat, “Holy, holy, holy” before the throne of God. Some students think that the seraphim are the “living creatures” described in Revelation 4:6–9.

For young Isaiah, the outlook was bleak. His beloved king had died, his nation was in peril, and he could do very little about it. The outlook may have been bleak, but the uplook was glorious! God was still on the throne and reigning as the Sovereign of the universe! From heaven’s point of view, “the whole earth” was “full of his glory”. When your world tumbles in, it is good to look at things from heaven’s point of view.

Question: Can the death of a person we care about be an occasion for a new vision of God??

Application:

We need to see ourselves in the light of God’s perfect holiness.

Self-Righteousness is a serious sin that keeps people from recognizing their sins.

Personal – The more you look at me the more depressed you will be. The more you look at the political situation the more discouraged you will be. In fact the more you look at any situation the more disappointed you will be.....That is not the case with God.

RIGHTEOUSNESS REALIZED (Rom. 3:21-26).

Paul had shown that all men are sinners; next he was to explain how sinners can be saved. The theological term for this salvation is justification by faith. Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Christ on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Each part of this definition is important, so we must consider it carefully.

To begin with, justification is an act, not a process. There are no degrees of justification; each believer has the same right standing before God. Also, justification is something God does, not man. No sinner can justify himself before God. Most important, justification does not mean that God makes us righteous, but that He declares us righteous. Justification is a legal matter. God puts the righteousness of Christ on our record in the place of our own sinfulness. And nobody can change this record.

Do not confuse justification and sanctification. Sanctification is the process whereby God makes the believer more and more like Christ. Sanctification may change from day to day. Justification never changes. When the sinner trusts Christ, God declares him righteous, and that declaration will never be repealed. God looks on us and deals with us as though we had never sinned at all!

“But now the righteousness of God ... has been manifested” (Rom. 3:21, literal translation). God had revealed His righteousness in many ways before the full revelation of the gospel: His law, His judgments against sin, His appeals through the prophets, His blessing on the obedient. But in the gospel, a new kind of righteousness has been revealed (Rom. 1:16–17), and the characteristics of this righteousness are spelled out in this section.

Under the Old Testament law, righteousness came by man behaving, but under the gospel, righteousness comes by believing.

Vs. 22 - Faith is only as good as its object. All men trust something, if only themselves, but the Christian trusts Christ. Law righteousness is a reward for works. Gospel righteousness is a gift through faith. Many people say, "I trust in God!" But this is not what saves us. It is personal, individual faith in Jesus Christ that saves and justifies the lost sinner. Even the demons from hell believe in God and tremble, yet this does not save them (James 2:19).

Vs. 23 - God gave His law to the Jews, not to the Gentiles, but the good news of salvation through Christ is offered to all men. All men need to be saved. There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile when it comes to condemnation. "All have sinned, and are coming short of the glory of God"

Vs. 24 - One of His absolute attributes is love: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). When God relates that love to you and me, it becomes grace and mercy. God in His mercy does not give us what we do deserve, and God in grace gives us what we do not deserve.

Vs. 25 - Salvation is free, but it is not cheap.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan was trying to explain "free salvation" to a coal miner, but the man was unable to understand it. "I have to pay for it," he kept arguing. With a flash of divine insight, Dr. Morgan asked, "How did you get down into the mine this morning?" "Why, it was easy," the man replied. "I just got on the elevator and went down." Then Morgan asked, "Wasn't that too easy? Didn't it cost you something?" The man laughed. "No, it didn't cost me anything, but it must have cost the company plenty to install that elevator." Then the man saw the truth: "It doesn't cost me anything to be saved, but it cost God the life of His Son."

Vs. 26 - God must be perfectly consistent with Himself. He cannot break His own law or violate His own nature.

A God of love wants to forgive sinners, but a God of holiness must punish sin and uphold His righteous law. How can God be both "just and the justifier"? The answer is in Jesus Christ. When Jesus suffered the wrath of God on the cross for the sins of the world, He fully met the demands of God's law and also fully expressed the love of God's heart.

Application:

We cannot be good enough to save ourselves.