

## Can Sinners Do Good?

- I. We've all heard the common excuse of sinners: "But I'm a good person..."
  1. When feeling condemned by Christians, unbelievers will often point to the fact that they are good people who do good things to justify their unbelief or their other sin.
  2. Are unbelievers really *good* people? Do they really do *good* things?
  3. Can sinners do good? The answer is yes and no.
  
- II. Definitions
  1. Good *adj.* - II. With reference to moral character, disposition, or conduct. 5. Morally excellent or commendable. a. of persons, with reference to their general character: Virtuous.
  2. Virtuous *adj.* - 2. a. Possessing or showing virtue in life and conduct; acting with moral rectitude or in conformity with moral laws; free from vice, immorality, or wickedness; good, just, righteous. The prevailing sense. In some early quots. as a general term of commendation (cf. sense 3). 3. a. Of acts, life, manners, etc.: Characterized by, of the nature of, virtue; according with, or conforming to, moral law or principles; morally good or justifiable
  
- III. Sinners, in their nature state, are not good and can do no good.
  1. There is none good, but God (**Mar 10:18**).
  2. All men are born spiritually dead (**Rom 5:12**).
  3. They are by nature the children of wrath (**Eph 2:3**).
  4. They can't change their nature and do good (**Jer 13:23; Jer 4:22**).
  5. They are children of devil (**Joh 8:44**) and are evil (**Mat 12:34**).
  6. In man's natural state there is none righteous and none that does good (**Rom 3:9-12; Psa 14:1-3**).
  7. The conscience of the natural man is defiled (**Tit 1:15**).
  8. Even good things that the natural man does are tainted with sin and not considered good, but filthy, in God's sight (**Isa 64:6-7**).
    - A. In order for a man to be clean in God's sight, the Lord must cause his iniquity to pass from him and cloth him with clean garments instead of filthy rags (**Zec 3:3-5**).
    - B. God must purge the sin of his lips so that his words can be clean (**Isa 6:5-7**).
  
- IV. It is true that sinners *can* do some "good" things.
  1. Jesus taught that sinners can love people (**Luk 6:32**).
  2. Sinners do good to people (**Luk 6:33**).
  3. Sinners lend money to people (**Luk 6:34**).
  4. Sinners give good gifts to their children (**Mat 7:9-11**).
  5. There are things that men know naturally (**Jud 1:10**).
  6. There is a such thing as *natural affection* which all men should have (**Rom 1:31**).
  
- V. But the "good" things that sinners do are not truly *good*.
  1. What appears good to us is not necessarily good to God (**Isa 55:7-9**).
  2. We must not judge according to appearance, but judge according to what God says is good (**Joh 7:24**).
    - A. Men may think they are good, but God sees what they really are (**Pro 16:2; Pro 20:6**).
    - B. Men may think their ways are righteous, but God knows their hearts (**Pro 21:2**).

- C. We live in a generation who are pure in their own eyes, but yet filthy in God's (**Pro 30:12**).
- 3. In order for an act to be *good*, it must be morally excellent and righteous according to the definition of the word.
- 4. Animals do "good" to their young.
  - A. Even the sea monsters give suck to their young (**Lam 4:3**).
  - B. Many animals will defend their young to the death.
  - C. Killdeer birds will try to lure a person away from her eggs by running away and pretending to be injured to get him to chase her.
  - D. In that animals are not moral agents, the "good" that they do is not truly *good*, but rather instinctual.
- 5. Sinners who do good to their children are doing it for the same reason that animals do the same, because it is instinctual to human nature.
  - A. If God turns someone over to a reprobate mind, then sinners can even lose their natural affection (**Rom 1:31**).
  - B. This happened to Israel when they were in Babylonian captivity and they forsook their little ones (**Lam 4:3 c/w Job 39:13-17**).
  - C. This has happened to millions of Americans who have murdered their babies through abortion.

VI. *Why* do sinners sometimes do "good" things?

- 1. Sinners do not do good things for God or for the sake of doing good.
- 2. They will not seek after God; God is not in all their thoughts (**Psa 10:4**).
- 3. Sinners do good for selfish reasons.
  - A. They love people *who love them* (**Luk 6:32**).
  - B. They do good to people *who do good to them* (**Luk 6:33**).
  - C. They lend money to people *to receive as much again* (**Luk 6:34**).
- 4. Sinners do good for natural reasons.
  - A. It's natural to care for one's child.
  - B. It's natural to feel love for one's family.
  - C. If one does something out of self interest or instinct, it's not *good*.

VII. The good things that a sinner does cannot compensate for the evil that they do.

- 1. Unbelievers will try to excuse their sin by pointing to the good things they do.
- 2. On God's eternal scale of justice, one sin outweighs an innumerable amount of good deeds.
  - A. Never was this shown more demonstrably than with the first man, Adam who died spiritually for one sin and took the human race with him (**Gen 2:17 c/w Gen 3:6 c/w Rom 5:12,18**).
  - B. This is why eternal salvation must be by grace and not works (**Eph 2:8-9; Rom 11:5-6; Rom 9:11; 2Ti 1:9; Tit 3:5**).
- 3. Even the good that good men do doesn't negate the evil they do.
  - A. If a good man does evil, all his good will not be remembered and he will die for his iniquity (**Eze 33:12-13**).
  - B. Think of all the good that Moses did, and yet one sin kept him from entering the promised land (**Num 20:12**).

- VIII. Why are reprobate sinners sometimes better people than elect saints?
1. God often chooses chief sinners to be His elect (**1Ti 1:12-16**).
    - A. The devil doesn't care about the reprobate, but he seeks to devour children of God and tempt them to sin (**1Pe 5:8-9**).
    - B. Sometimes children of God are nearly indistinguishable from the children of the devil (**Mat 13:24-30**).
    - C. Conversion is a process which takes time (**Pro 4:18**).
    - D. Imaginations and bad ideas have to be cast down (**2Co 10:4-5**).
    - E. If God's children are otherwise minded, God will reveal His truth to them in time (**Phi 3:15**).
    - F. We are by nature impatient which is why God sends us tribulation (**Rom 5:3; Jam 1:3**).
    - G. Old habits die hard.
  2. Consider some examples of children of God who did wicked things.
    - A. Lot, was a just man (**2Pe 2:7-9**), and yet he chose to live in Sodom and Gomorrah, offered his daughters to crazed sodomites to pacify them, and got drunk and committed incest with his two daughters.
    - B. David committed adultery and murder, and yet he was a man after God's own heart (**Act 13:22**).
  3. Consider some of the good things that reprobates did in the Bible.
    - A. Many who are children of the devil will plead with Jesus on judgment day about all the wonderful works that they did while on earth (**Mat 7:21-23**).
    - B. Judas preached the gospel and cast out devils (**Mar 6:7-13**).
  4. The children of this world are wiser than the children of light (**Luk 16:8**).
  5. Some people are just naturally nice.
    - A. Some people have a naturally positive disposition and are naturally nice people; others are irritable, impatient, selfish, and have generally abrasive personalities.
    - B. Some people are naturally mild mannered; others are quick tempered, opinionated, loud, and controlling.
    - C. Imagine two people, one who is a naturally nice person who is a reprobate, and another who has a naturally irritable and abrasive personality who is one of God's elect saved by grace.
      - i. One might conclude that the reprobate is a "good" person because of his nice mild-mannered personality, and that the child of God is not a "good" person because his character flaws.
      - ii. But imagine how much worse the child of God would be if he wasn't redeemed by Christ and wasn't trying to be a better person by God's grace.
      - iii. Imagine how much better of a person the reprobate would be if he were redeemed by the blood of Christ and could act out his natural tendencies from a pure heart.
  6. One day all of our imperfections will be purified and we shall be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (**Rom 8:29**), being delivered from the body of this death, and we will finally be able to live out the holy life that our inward man has always struggled against our flesh to do (**Rom 7:14-25**).