

"Be Good!"

By Allan Pole



Theme: Show the world the goodness of God.

Text: Romans 15:14

Here's a thought: Being good does not come by working hard to eliminate sinful habits, but by allowing the Holy Spirit to take full possession of your life.

A city dweller moved to a farm and bought a cow. Shortly after he did, the cow went dry. When he reported this fact to a neighbour farmer, the farmer expressed surprise. The city man said he was surprised too. "I can't understand it either, for if ever a person was considerate of an animal, I was of that cow. If I didn't need any milk, I didn't milk her. If I only needed a litre, I only took a litre."

The farmer tried to explain that the only way to keep milk flowing is not to take as *little* as possible from the cow, but to take as *much* as possible.

Is this not also true of life? Those who only turn to God when they are in need miss the real joy that flows from a daily infilling of His Spirit.

I want to talk to you about a virtue that you will not acquire apart from the Holy Spirit of God working within you. In Romans 15:14 the Apostle Paul writes to followers of Jesus who had allowed the Holy Spirit to work:

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.
NIV

The goodness of the Holy Spirit can live in your:

Heart



"I am convinced that you are full of goodness, rich in goodness." - Romans 15:14

Jesus gives us many examples of goodness in His tenderness with young children *and* His anger with those who were self-righteous.

God is good, even when He doesn't seem good. He is so good that He is willing to look bad to do good. Have you been to the dentist lately? He's not exactly my favourite person because of the pain and discomfort he brings into my life, but I would be in bad shape if I didn't see him regularly. Even though at times he feels bad to be around I welcome the good that he brings to my mouth and to my well-being.

Remember this about goodness:

- It is something you are; you do good for good motives because you have good within you.
- It is also something you aren't; you have false motives, you are a sinner. Remember that any self-examination should be done in light of God's goodness and holiness, not in comparison with other people.
- It is something you are given.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 describes the change that God wants to bring:

19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. 20 Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. NIV

Three Boy Scouts reported their good deed for the day: "We helped an old lady across the street."

"Did it take all three of you to do that?" their scout master asked.

"It sure did," they replied in unison. "She didn't want to go."

Goodness that springs from human motivation looks for recognition, a thank you, or some benefit in return. Human goodness springs from a heart of self-righteousness. Godly motivation expects nothing in return and recognizes the source of goodness.

A halo has only to fall 11 inches to become a noose.

God is inviting you and me to come to Him and enjoy intimacy with Him. A reason God doesn't manifest His presence in real fullness is we might not actually want Him here. Being the church means being family, but what we have in Canada are many independent organizations involving lots of independent individuals who rarely establish genuine relationships in which they make themselves vulnerable to give and receive love. Our culture worships rugged individualism, but what God desires for us is mutual interdependence. Our natural tendency is to isolate ourselves. In fact, the reason we don't experience God more fully is that we are afraid of His presence.

It is an attitude the prophet Ezekiel calls a heart of stone.

Do you want to be filled with God's goodness? Then you must open your heart to Him. Do you want to open your heart to Him? Then you must open your heart to people also.

Have you been hurt and left disillusioned by people? If you want a heart of flesh rather than of stone, forgive that person and begin taking the risk again of opening up to God and people.

The goodness of the Holy Spirit can live in your:
Heart

Brain



"I am convinced that you are complete in knowledge, amply filled with all spiritual knowledge." - Romans 15:14

Here are some interesting facts about the brain (from www.rd.com/health/wellness/brain-facts):

- Your brain might account for only about 3 percent of your body weight, but it receives about 30 percent of the blood being pumped by your heart.
- When you're fast asleep, you might think that your brain is "shut off," but it's actually doing a whole lot more than when you're walking, talking, eating, and thinking.

- While most of our neurons have been with us since birth, and age does take a toll, your brain still makes new neurons.
- Research published in the journal "Nature Neuroscience" suggests that a person's brain activity may be as unique as his or her own fingerprints.

Many people think that it does not really matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere. These people would say that teaching and study are not important. What *really* matters, they would say, is the fact that one believes. This is not a Biblical notion. One can be genuinely *sincere* in what he believes, but genuinely *wrong*. One can even believe in God and spend eternity in hell.

Did you know that even the devil and his demons believe in God? James 2:19 challenges:

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder. NIV

What you think about is vitally important. There is raging within our society a battle for the minds of people. The media, government, entertainment industry, education system and business sector all try to get people to think a certain way.

Judge Fossett of Brooklyn, New York sentenced some 2,700 young people to the reformatory during a five-year period. Not one of the entire 2,700 was a member of any Sunday School.

Lee Baxton was a businessman who served as a city mayor for two years. During this time, he presided over Mayor's Court, hearing some 2,400 cases. He made a standing offer to pay the court costs of any person convicted of a criminal offense if that person had been regular in Sunday School attendance during that year. There were many who said they used to attend "a long time ago" or "I plan to go when I am released," but not once in 2,400 cases did he have to pay anyone's fine.

While solid Christian education may not be a cure-all, there can be no doubt that the influence of regular worship with a church and Bible teaching is a significant factor in lowering crime.

Do you read your Bible regularly? Participate in a group that studies the Bible? Read books that encourage you in your walk with the Lord?

It is vitally important that you let the goodness of God and His Word abide in your brain!

The goodness of the Holy Spirit can live in your:
Heart

Brain **Tongue**



"I am convinced that you are competent to instruct one another, to admonish and counsel one another." - Romans 15:14

Jesus explains in Luke 6:43-45:

43 No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. 45 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. NIV

Can the human spirit be "seen?" A young man who devoted himself to solving ideological and moral problems had been hoping to be further stimulated by meeting the great philosopher Socrates. But contact with this intellectual "giant" so overawed him that he scarcely dared to open his mouth to speak or to ask a question. They walked side by side for a while without conversation. Then Socrates suddenly broke the silence and said kindly but briefly to his young companion, "Speak, that I may 'see' you." In this short sentence lies the deep recognition of the connection between spirit and word. What is inside eventually comes out.

If you talk with someone for 10 minutes you begin to catch some clues about their interests. Is it sports? Their job? Their family? Listen to yourself and consider what rolls off your tongue. Is it foul language? Is it good and godly?

What has captured your heart? Your tongue reveals your heart. Your tongue is a good thermometer that gauges your spiritual temperature.

The goodness of God in you is just itching to get out. Are you getting yourself equipped to instruct and counsel others?

Instructing one another in the ways of God can be a part of your daily conversation. The key is to find common ground as springboards for discussions on spiritual matters. Here are some ways to find common ground:

Be natural. Many believers seem to have forgotten how to act normally when they talk about Jesus. Invite response, questions and comments.

Be open. People will see Jesus in you when you are in the midst of the difficulties, not when you pretend you have no problems.

Be respectful. Respect is not agreement. Each person, regardless of how far from God's ideal he is, bears the image of God.

Be simple. If your listener is not a follower of Jesus, avoid theological words like justification, sanctification and redemption if you want your listener to understand you.

Don't forget. Remember how you felt and what you thought before you chose to follow Christ. Be sensitive to your listener's background; don't get offended when he acts and talks like the sinner he is.

Be patient. It takes time for the truth to soak in. Don't be discouraged if what you say isn't accepted right away.

Goodness is listed as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. Goodness is given to you.

A man who drank heavily was converted to Christ and lived victoriously for several weeks. One day as he passed the open door of a tavern, the pungent odour drifting out aroused his old appetite for liquor. Just then he saw this sign in the window of a nearby cafe: "All the buttermilk you can drink - 25 cents!" Dashing inside, he ordered one glass, then another, and still another. After finishing the third he walked past the saloon and was no longer tempted. He was so full of buttermilk that he had no room for that which would be harmful to him.



How can I get the air out of a glass? I could do one of two things:

- Suck it out with a pump. This, however, would create a vacuum and shatter it.
- Fill it with water.

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allowing the Holy Spirit to take full possession of your life.

The goodness of the Holy Spirit can live in your:

Heart

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Show the world the goodness of God.

