





Question:

Why is it important for a Christian to be and do good?

Here is the whole question in context




- How do we interest people who don't even care about knowing God, much less Jesus? Or do we let them go? If we let them go, when?
- I've run across people who are not Christians, but expect Christians to be "good" (and they condemn them when they aren't!) How do we address this issue and turn it into an opportunity to share the gospel?




About interesting people in the gospel

- Considerations:
 - Ultimately it is the Holy Spirit's job
 - "When he (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." John 16:8
- However, we are commanded to be **Jesus' witness**
 - "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8
 - Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matt: 28:18-20




About giving up:




- **We cannot always interact but we can always pray**
- Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should **always pray and not give up**. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. . . . I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. **However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?**" Luke 18:1-8
- Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; **pray continually**; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. . . . Hold on to the good.²²Avoid every kind of evil. 1 Thes. 5:14-18

This passage ties into the question of "goodness"



- A very important question
- First, we need to set the Biblical foundation
- **Our salvation is NOT by good works:**
 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. Eph. 2:8,9
 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 6:23
 - And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:11-12

But once we are saved. . . .



- CONTEXT of Eph. 2:8,9:
 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.¹⁹For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
- Good works evidence of faith
 - But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."
Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. James 2:18-19

Good works a fruit of the Spirit

- We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, not by our works
- Once we are saved we cannot do "good" by our own strength, we need the Holy Spirit's help
 - The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. . . . Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Gal. 5:22-23; 6:9-10



Good works and goodness can be powerful witness

- Remember Constantine and how he made Christianity legal in the Roman empire?



- Well....that didn't last. . . .

Emperor in 355: Julian, the Apostate

- Raised Christian
- Later studied Platonism
- Renounced the Christian faith and tried to restore the pagan religions and old Roman virtues
- Apostate: one who has forsaken the faith (heretic: false faith)



"the bravery/virtue of the Roman army"

It didn't work

- "He found it difficult to rebuild pagan temples, dedicated pagan clergy were rare and ineffectual and the sacrifices were seldom conducted properly."
- One of his letters:
 - "Why do we not observe that it is their benevolence to strangers...the pretended holiness of their lives that have done the most to increase atheism [Christianity]. . . . It is disgraceful that when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Galileans [Christians] support not only their own poor, but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us."
 - "Whilst the pagan priests neglect the poor, the hated Galileans devote themselves to works of charity, . . . Such practice is common among them, and causes a contempt for our gods."

Vicisti, Galilae

- The perhaps apocryphal, his dying words were "Galilean you have conquered!"
- Regardless, the witness of Christian conduct made a significant impact on the pagan world that was as the Roman historian Sallust complained " the filth of the world drained into Rome as bilgewater into the hold of a ship."
- Half the population of Rome were slaves; over 200,000 lived off the dole. It was a time of moral corruption of the rulers and indulgence by the people. Crass disregard for human life, from the slaughter at the games to the exposure of the infants was rampant.



Religions:

- There Greek cults of the worship of Adonis and Aphrodite included secret, sexual ritual and temple prostitution.
- The cult of Demeter and Persephone contained no moral practices or obligations of any sort. It simply required that its adherents witness certain holy spectacles and special mysteries.
- From Asia, Attis and Cybllene brought worship that included frenzied gatherings and sacred sex.
- Egyptian religion of Osiris. . . .mummification, not conduct, was the guarantee of eternal bliss.



In addition



- To participate, all were very costly:
 - In the *Metamorphoses*, initiation fees cost Lucius all his money and one historian of the time commented, "there were few who could afford the price of immortality."
- It was not that people were not religious, if you could afford it, many practiced a number of belief systems.
- John Ferguson in *Moral Values of the Ancient World*:
 - "the people of the time were living consistently with the moral teachings of their particular religion."

What made the Christian unique?

- John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. **As I have loved you**, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
- Remember context of this statement
- Sacrificial love unique among all belief systems of that time.

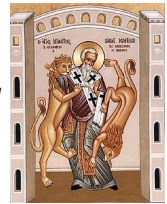


How we live a key theme

- From probably the earliest book:
 - James 1: 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save . . . 22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. . . . 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
- Paul commands orthodoxy and orthopraxy, correct doctrine and life
 - 1 Tim 4: 16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (people do watch us!)

The witness of the early believers

- On his way to Rome to be thrown to the beasts during Trajan's persecution of the Christians, (c. 110 AD), St. Ignatius ,
- *Those who profess to belong to Christ will be known as such by their conduct. Certainly, what matters now is not mere profession of faith, but whether one is found to be actuated by it to the end . . . [He then asks for their prayers that] I may be a man, not merely of words, but also of resolution. In this way I shall not only be called a Christian, but also prove to be one.*



Prayers of the martyrs, about to die

- "Oh, Lord Christ, let me have no cause for shame."
prayer of Senator Davidas



Impact on Justin Martyr

- "For I myself, while I was rejoicing in the teachings of Plato, heard the Christians abused. But I saw that they were afraid neither of death, nor of anything usually thought fearful, and I considered it was impossible that they were living in wickedness . . . Do you not see how they are thrown before the wild beasts to make them disown the lord, and they refuse to be overcome? . . . Such things do not point to a human agency. There is the power of God, here are the proofs of His abiding presence."



An explanation of their life

- From the *Letter to Diognetus*:

Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind by either country, speech or customs... they conform to the customs of the country in dress, food and way of life in general. The whole tenor of their way of living stamps it as worthy of admiration and admittedly extraordinary.

They reside in their respective countries, but only as aliens. They take part in everything as citizens and put up with everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their home, and every home a foreign land.

They marry like all others and beget children, but they do not expose their offspring. Their board they spread for all, but not their bed. They find themselves in the flesh but do not live according to the flesh. They spend their days on earth, but hold citizenship in heaven. They obey the established laws but in their private lives they rise above the laws. They love all men, but are persecuted by them. They are unknown yet are condemned; they are put to death, but it is life they receive.

Goodness matters

- People do notice and they have a right to expect it from us.
- Basic morality the foundational expectation
- When we mess up, no excuses.
- We have not lived up to our calling.



BUT to make an impact we need to

- We need to go beyond basic morality
- Much in the Bible on behavior
- **Look at ultimately what matters to Jesus, Matt 25**

"Then the King will say . . . , 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

- ⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

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Something else makes Jesus very angry

- "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'
- "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'
- **"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'**

Application



- Once you are a believer—
- What do you spend your time on?
 - In God's Word? Christian materials, books, web?
 - Talking to other believers?
 - In doing "good works"—however you can?
- What do you not see?
 - We know about every tragedy and to many we can respond, ask for insight and wisdom.
 - Pray for an eternal perspective
- Don't strive for "balance" (self-indulgence) but for obedience

Final quote on goodness

**"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."**



John Wesley