

There Are Good People In Every Church

Franklin Church of Christ
Edwin Crozier
August 20, 2006
AM Worship

Introduction:

"You Church-of-Christers think you are the only ones going to heaven."

"You think your church is too good for everyone else."

"You guys are a bunch of legalists trying to be saved by your good works."

"What makes your church better than anyone else's? I think there are good people in every church."

Have you ever heard statements like these? People in the religious mainstream have made them for years. Allow me to explain what these kinds of statements really are. They are biasing statements, meant to discourage the child of God from accepting, following and teaching the doctrine of Christ. They are the statements to which people resort when they cannot make biblical arguments. Despite the fact that these are purely emotional and slanderous attacks that prove absolutely nothing, these kinds of statements often hold power over Christians, causing them to back away from the doctrine of Christ. I would like us to consider one of these statements—"I think there are good people in every church." Is that true? If it is, does that mean that one church is as good as another? Does that mean that there are saved people in every church? Examine these questions closely.

Discussion:

- I. Yes it is true; there are good people in every church.
 - A. Are you shocked to hear me say it? There are good people in every church. That is, if by good you mean people who do good things. There are even good people among the Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. That is, if by good you mean people who are generous, kind and have a great reputation. There are good people among the pagan idolaters and atheists. That is, if by good you mean people who are caring, concerned and compassionate.
 - B. I have met and know personally many good people from all kinds of churches and religious backgrounds (or lack thereof as the case may be). I have family who I would match against the best in this congregation for goodness. Yet, they are members of different churches.
 - C. Does this kind of goodness grant salvation? Absolutely not. Consider Jesus' statement in **Luke 11:13**. These people would be generous and sweet, kind and caring. But they were not saved. Jesus called them evil.
- II. In reality, there are no good people in any church (not even in this one).
 - A. Are you shocked to hear me say it? There are no good people in any church, not even in this one. That is, if by good you mean holy as God is holy (**I Peter 1:16**).
 - B. Jesus said, "No one is good but God" (**Matthew 19:17**). Men say, "There are good people in every church." Jesus said there are not. No one is good but God.
 - C. Read **Romans 3:9-18**. Some today would claim that there are righteous people in every church. There are those who have never turned aside in every church. There are some who are profitable in all churches. But Paul said that no one is good, "no, not one!" These statements are based on Paul's argumentation found in the first two chapters of Romans.
 - D. I believe this is clear. No matter what church you go to or do not go to ... No matter how sincere you are in your religion ... No matter what you understand or do not understand, you are not this kind of good. You fall short of the stature of Christ and His holiness. You are lost and no matter what you do you cannot change it. You cannot save yourself.
- III. Goodness unto salvation only comes by God's mercy through obedience to Christ's gospel.
 - A. There is a dilemma. No matter what good we do, we are still not good. "Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin'" (**Proverbs 20:9**)? The statement, "There are good people in every church" really has no meaning. The "goodness" we do cannot remove sin.
 - B. How can we become good? **Ephesians 2:1-10** explains. We can only receive this goodness by God's grace. God, through His love and mercy, can make us alive together with Christ and raise us up. If He does, we cannot boast because we have not done and cannot do anything worthy of salvation. Rather, God will work in us, recreating us, taking our sins away so we can do the good works that He has prepared for us to accomplish.

- C. But God is clear. Not everyone will receive this mercy. Who will? **Ephesians 2:8**, those who have faith will receive mercy. **Ephesians 2:2** demonstrates those who are disobedient will not. Thus, only those who, through faith, obey Christ will receive mercy.
- D. How do we obey in order to receive the goodness that comes through God's grace. **Ephesians 2:6** spoke of those who are raised up with Christ. Who is that? **Romans 6:3-5** and **Colossians 2:11-14** both explain those who have been buried with Christ in baptism were also raised with Him by the working of God, through faith. Who receives the mercy of God, being made alive in Christ Jesus, created anew for good works? Those who faithfully turn from their sins and submit to God in obedience, being baptized for the remission of their sins. No one else.
- IV. Those who teach and follow a different gospel are accursed.
- A. The important question then is not, "Are there good people in every church?" Rather, it is, "Does every church teach Christ's gospel?" The answer is clearly, "No." **Galatians 1:8-9** is strikingly clear. If a church teaches some other gospel than what we find in scripture, it is accursed. The members of that church, no matter how much good stuff they do, are lost.
- B. We have seen the gospel of Christ. Jesus died, was buried, then arose so that we may follow in His footsteps, dying to sin, buried in baptism with Him and then raised, by the working of God through faith, to walk in newness of life. What are other "gospels"? Here are some examples.
1. *Unless you are circumcised, you cannot be saved.* (**Acts 15**)
 2. *Be sprinkled or christened and you will be saved.* (cf. **Romans 6:4**—baptism is a burial.)
 3. *You are saved by faith only.* (cf. **James 2:24**—not by faith only.)
 4. *Say the Sinner's Prayer.* (cf. **Acts 2:38**—why didn't Peter use this one.)
 5. *Be sincere, honest and good.* (cf. **Ephesians 2:8-9**—salvation is by grace not by man's goodness and sincerity.)
 6. *If you do not know the gospel message, you will not be condemned by it.* (cf. **Luke 12:47-48**—they may receive a lesser punishment, but still they are punished.)
- C. But **Galatians 1:8-9** is clear. If you practice any "gospel" other than Christ's, you are not saved.
- V. Let's allow God to decide who He will save.
- A. After we consider all of these things. I believe we must remember what the Bible says in **Romans 9:15**. "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy." I think we should leave deciding who will be saved up to God, leaving "I think", "I feel" and "I am sure" out of it.
- B. Having said this, let us be quite clear. God has told us upon whom He will bestow mercy. This statement is not some cop out to keep from answering questions about who is saved. God gave us His Word so we can know who will be saved. If we do not measure up, we can change. If we know someone who has not met the conditions, we can teach them.
- C. **Mark 16:16** says, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." **Acts 2:38** says, "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." **Romans 10:9** says, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." **1 Peter 3:21** says, "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism ..."
- D. God has declared upon whom He will have mercy. We must not change it or make exceptions. We must accept it and change ourselves. "Let God be true but every man a liar" (**Romans 3:4**).

Conclusion:

Are there good people in every church? Yes. But none are so good as to earn salvation. Man is not saved by goodness but by grace. However, only those in Christ will receive God's grace. Are you in Christ? If not, submit to **Romans 6:3-4**. Submit to **Galatians 3:26-27**. Enter Christ and be saved by God's grace.