

Romans 4 - Can you be good without God?

Between last week, today, and next week we are looking at the first principle of the Gospel. The first principle of the Gospel is that all people are guilty and *need* to be saved. Salvation is not necessary where there is no sin. The argument that Paul presented in the first eight chapters is in the context of the Law of God.

So, in chapter one Paul demonstrated that even though someone might not have the Ten Commandments, they are still guilty before the Law because they have the witness of creation and the spirit of God. Even the person who lives outside of civilization has access to the knowledge of God because He has seen to it that man cannot deny Him because of the creation. He put it in them as Christ is the light of the world that lighteth every man that comes into the world. We also saw what happens to society as man perverts the creation when he rejects the knowledge of God.

Today we are going to look at chapter two to show that our sense of morality is demonstrated by the civilization we create which in turn proves that we are responsible, even if we do not have a copy of the Law in our hands.

1. There is no such thing as good without God -

It is popular for atheists to say that they can be good without God. However, when people say that something is right or wrong, what they typically mean is that something is convenient or that it is something they like. When an atheist uses the word *good*, he has to borrow that concept from God.

Atheists must resort to circular arguments when they say they can be good without God. They create a definition for good, but they fail one of the most basic rules of logic. Merely saying good is defined by doing good things is circular. On that basis, someone has said that Hitler was a very moral person because he acted in strict

accordance with his moral code. He thought that killing Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals was good. Did having a moral code make it right? Was it good just because he defined it as good? Of course not.

Who defines God? Who is to say what is good if not God? Can we just arbitrarily declare something to be good?

Pro 12:15 The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.

Pro 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

When *your* definition of good is contrary to *my* definition of good, then there is no meaning to the word good. If good becomes whatever someone wants it to be then a banana can be a sinner if being good is arbitrary and has no meaning. What is the *objective* standard for being good?

Laws do not determine whether something is morally right because there have been many laws to permit persecution. Courts do not determine whether something is morally right because there have been many court decisions that have been unjust according to whose political sensibility is offended. How beneficial something is cannot determine what is morally right because in one place your life is beneficial and another it is not, the moral rules become inconsistent from one moment to the next and all meaning to good is lost.

The cruelty of atheism is hard to believe when man has no faith in the reward of good or the punishment of evil. There is no reason to be human. There is no restraint from the depths of evil which is in man. The communist torturers often said, "There is no God, no hereafter, no punishment for evil. We can do what we wish." I have heard one

torturer even say, "I thank God, in whom I don't believe, that I have lived to this hour when I can express all the evil in my heart." He expressed it in unbelievable brutality and torture inflicted on prisoners.

– Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1967), 34.

Who decides what is good changes from generation to generation, or even from the same person from mood to mood. If what is good is so changeable then the word good means nothing. If God exists and is the ultimate authority in all things, then whatever is morally right is good because *it is consistent* with *He Who is* goodness and Who does not change.

Ps 25:8 Good and upright *is* the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

Mark 10:17-18 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is* none good but one, *that is*, God.

Ps 33:4-5 For the word of the LORD *is* right; and all his works *are done* in truth.

5He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Ps 145:17 The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Mal 3:6 For I *am* the LORD, I change not...

Ps 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to

everlasting, thou *art* God.

Ps 119:89 For ever, O LORD,
thy word is settled in heaven.

Proving *that* God exists is a different question which we will actually examine next week. Because we have a moral sensibility we demonstrate that we understand God, the Law-giver. What this demonstrates is that *faith* is *rational*. Because we have created laws that determine *moral* right and wrong, then we must acknowledge God because there is no such thing as *moral* right and wrong without God.

2. Civilization demonstrates our responsibility before God -

People create civilization by creating a moral structure to which they are held accountable. Since moral goodness has no meaning or is not possible without God, then recognizing our moral obligation demonstrates our sense of responsibility before God.

Rom 2:14-16 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:
15Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)
16In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

The Gentiles who do not have the law refers to those who do not have the Law as given by Moses. Why we refer to the Gentiles as living in civilization is because the word, *Gentiles*, is often translated as *nations*. Those who lived outside of civilization were those who lived in the wilderness and uninhabited, or unsettled, places. The Gentiles in civilization apart from Israel, who are the people of the Law, live in society

accusing or excusing each other according to the laws that reflect their conscience.

3. The judgment of our conscience -

By accusing and excusing each other, they demonstrate their guilt because they violate their own conscience depending on what is convenient according to their lust. We see this in some very interesting ways.

Eccl 12:14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

You can be sure that even though you think no one knows, God sees!

Hypocrisy

Rom 2:1-2 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

2But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

When man rebels against the kingdom of God, he creates the Anti-kingdom, the kingdom that stands in the place of God's kingdom. He does not measure himself by God, but makes himself the measure.

2Cor 10:12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Setting God aside, man seeks to organize as a collection of people with one set of goals and values. Including all men according to the least common denominator, this collection of people

excludes God. People cannot agree about God but they can agree about wealth. Not everyone wants God, but everyone wants wealth. The collective becomes God and determines what is good by consensus. Collectivism is permissive and permits all things excusing each other, but is doomed because it is impossible to sustain all the contradictions. Collectivism then accuses each other. They believe in free speech until they don't like your speech. They want unity but only by killing off the opposition. They want diversity as long as you don't disagree with them. Everyone has their truth and is right as long as you agree with the power that stands at the head of the collective. The collective replaces the Kingdom of God and becomes the Anti-kingdom. Some power must stand at the head of the Anti-Kingdom. Just as Christ rules in the Kingdom of God, the Anti-kingdom has its Anti-Christ. It is no wonder that the collectivist Anti-kingdoms have so often declared themselves as atheist states: God doesn't fit in.

When man becomes the measure of man, envy moves in and the accusing begins. Their neighbor has more wealth than them. Their neighbor has more privilege than them.

Jas 4:1-5 From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?

2Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

4Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

5Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

4. The consequences -

As people judge each other and accuse them or excuse them according to which is more convenient, they demonstrate that they understand the judgment of God.

Rom 2:3-5 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

4Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

5But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

We are found guilty before God as we demonstrate by our civilizing law making that we understand the Law of God. The more man rebels against the Law of God in his conscience, the harder his heart will become as he lays up wrath, misses the rapture, and will be judged by the righteousness of God in the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

5. The remedy -

Jas 4:6-10 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

7Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.

9Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

10Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

The remedy is to humble oneself before God and repent. As a civilized country, we cannot just build more inner-city basketball courts to amuse our youth into being well behaved. We cannot just be silent when our kids are being told they can make decisions that will mutilate their bodies or cause sterilization when their brains and the ability to make the wisest decisions are not fully developed. This is like the adults who described what they actually believed as kids (first three examples are from [fox.com/rd.com/list/ridiculous-beliefs-as-children](http://www.fox.com/rd.com/list/ridiculous-beliefs-as-children)):

- I believed that if I ate a watermelon seed, a watermelon would grow in my stomach.
- I believed that all teachers lived at school. I thought they slept in the classrooms and never went to the bathroom, EVER!
- I believed that all dogs were males and all cats were females. I have no idea where I got that idea.
- I believed the adults pushing me to be transgender knew what they were talking about.

Jer 4:22 For my people *is* foolish, they have not known me; they *are* sottish children, and they have none understanding: they *are* wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

As a civilized country we cannot continually promote pleasure above responsibility.

The humbling that is necessary is first to repent and turn to God with a willing heart in spite of how our pride pushes back against the Spirit of God. What America needs is to turn to God.

For some that will mean becoming a child of God by faith in Christ. For others that will mean getting involved, learning God's Word, and being faithful and available for Christian service. For yet others, it will mean praising God for the joy that comes from serving and then

be encouraged to get up each day to go at it again no matter what the world is doing.

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2. Civilization demonstrates our responsibility before God - Rom 2:14-16
3. The judgment, Eccl 12:14, Rom 2:1-2, 2Cor 10:12, Jas 4:1-5
4. The consequences - Rom 2:3-5
5. The remedy - Jas 4:6-10, Jer 4:22