

## No One Is Sinless

Mark 10:17-18 (New American Standard Bible)

<sup>17</sup> As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do so that I may inherit eternal life?” <sup>18</sup> But Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

Romans 3:23 (New American Standard Bible)

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

### Introduction

Today’s sermon title is: *No One Is Sinless*. What I mean by the title is that no human is without sin except God alone. Neither can anyone claim that they are sinless. If we say we have no sin, we make God a liar (1 John 1:10). Since the creation of the world, from Adam and Eve, all the way down to us, all have sinned against God and against each other. The proof? Just look at the human history. Only God is sinless, and every one of us, with no exception, is a sinner (Romans 3:23). My intention is not to point out how bad we are, but to point out the necessity of redemption from sin and the necessity of mutual forgiveness. Anyone who wants to be with God must deal with their sins. Since we cannot redeem by ourselves through our own death, everyone needs a Savior. That Savior is Jesus Christ. We also need to forgive each other.

### Content

**Meaning of ‘Good’:** I heard a heart-warming story the other day. A lady in her 60’s had Alzheimer’s disease. She snuck out of her home one winter night in her scant clothing. She wandered on the streets for about an hour until someone found her and took her in. The Good Samaritan kept her warm in the house, gave her a winter jacket and brought her back to her house. How wonderful it is! Such people are praised by our society. We call them ‘angels.’

I know some people like that. You do, too. They are so nice and morally straight that they almost put us to shame. They don’t lie. They don’t cheat. They are kind. They are generous. They are upright. You name it. They do indeed many good things for the people as well as for the animals and environments. We call them ‘good’ people.

Speaking of being good, God's definition of 'being good' or 'goodness' is different from our understanding. That's what Jesus points out in today's text. One day, He was walking on the road with His disciples following. "A man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "**Good Teacher**, what shall I do so that I may inherit eternal life?"<sup>18</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone (Mark 10:17-18). The man was shocked to hear such a response from Jesus. His understanding of 'good' was challenged by Jesus. The man truly believed that Jesus was a 'good' teacher, and by calling Him 'good' in front of the crowd, he wanted to show Jesus his respect. I am sure most rabbis at the time would have loved and appreciated such recognition. Not Jesus. He refused to be called 'good' by him, or by anyone. Instead, He corrected the man, saying, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.' Shocking, isn't it?

Let's face it. Of course, Jesus was a good moral teacher. So were many others such as Socrates, Confucius, and Gandhi. So are we ourselves, we believe. Aren't we also good in our own eyes? Yet, Jesus says, No, you're not. Only God is. The truth is: no one, no human, is good except God alone. God's Word also declares that everyone is a liar (Romans 3:4).

So, here we go, Jesus' statement got our attention. It jolts us and makes us think. What's Jesus mean when He says no one is good except God alone? Does it mean that no one does anything good? No. Clearly, we know many people who do what is good. *Rethink*, Jesus challenges us, your understanding of being good by nature. *Open your eyes*, He urges, to see that the ability of doing good doesn't mean that we are good by nature. *Distinguish* being good from doing what is good, Jesus reminds us, because even the worst criminal in the world can still love and do what is good to his own children. Being good and doing what is good is not the same.

Here, we face a core question on human nature. No human is good except God alone, Jesus declares. Theologically, it is called human depravity or original sin. The innate tendency to rebel against God. The propensity to do what is evil. We are not born evil. But we are born with the inclination to go astray. We all carry such tendency in us from the birth to death.

Such tendency to sin has been with us from the very beginning of creation. Adam and Eve started it. Tempted by the devil, they both fell. Their first son Cain carried it on. In fact, Cain too had a chance to say no to his sinful temptation, but he failed. You know that it all began with God's rejecting of Cain's offering while accepting that of Abel. Cain was upset with that. So, God said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why is your face gloomy?<sup>7</sup> If you do well, will your face not be cheerful? And if you do not do well, **sin** is lurking at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." By the way, this is the first time the word 'sin' ever appeared in the Bible. Well, did Cain heed God's warning against sin? No, he didn't. On the

contrary, he succumbed to the temptation of jealousy and anger. One day he and his brother were in the field. He *rose up against his brother Abel and killed him* (Genesis 4:8).

The word 'sin' appears in the Bible over 1,000 times. It appears in almost every book in the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation. That's how much sin plays in human relationships with each other, with God, and even with our environment.

**Definition of sin:** 'missing the mark.' Shooting arrows and you miss the bull's eye. Sin means to miss the mark of God's expectation of us. God's Word deals with this issue of sin in humanity in the following ways.

Sin entered the world with Adam's disobedience to God's command. It immediately affected nature, people, and God and their relationship with each other negatively. Adam and Eve were kicked out of Eden. Their communication line with God in spirit was cut off. The Bible calls it: their spirits were dead. Adam had to toil, and Eve had to bear the child-bearing pain. Sickness, death, pain, and suffering entered the world as well. Those are the consequences of sin. Throughout the times, God called sinners to return to Him in repentance. He also prepared atonement for sins---*sin-offering*. The Old Testament sin-offerings (especially in Leviticus and Numbers) was a shadow of what God was going to do in the New Testament. God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ as a sin offering for sinners (Romans 8:3). The righteous died for the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18). Whoever believes in Him shall have eternal life and whoever rejects Him will face judgment on the last day (John 12:48). That's the core of the gospel we believe. Anyway, back to sin.

**Nature of sin:** it separates us from the Holy God. When we sin against God, sin blocks our access to God's presence. It also blocks our prayers, so they won't reach God or be answered by God. With our sins unresolved, no forgiveness is granted, therefore, we cannot see God or be with God in Heaven. That's why we need a Savior in whom we have redemption through His blood.

Another negative effect of sin is on our soul. Did you know that sin wages war against our own soul (1 Peter 2:11)? Each time we sin against people or against God, we declare a war against our own soul. Good example is AIDS. Our own immune system attacks our own body. That's not good. That's exactly what sin does to our soul: waging war against soul. By sinning, we not only do a great disservice to our own soul, but also bear the consequences of our sins. We reap what we sow.

**Good News:** God doesn't leave us alone in the battle with sin. First, He has given us a Savior to forgive our sins. Then, He also gives us the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth

(John 16:13). The same Spirit equips us with a way to handle and overcome our sinful nature in us. So, what's the way? Simply put, imitate God. Be holy as God is holy (Leviticus 11:44). Please Him with your lifestyle. Fight sin with God's Word. Fight sin with prayer. Fight sin by loving God and our neighbors. Fight sin by obeying His voice. Fight sin by keeping His commandments. Fight sin by being like Jesus in words and deeds. Ward off temptations by loving what God loves, hating what God hates, approving what God approves, and disapproving what God disapproves. By doing so, we become transformed into Christ's image (2 Corinthians 3:18) and live a life that is victorious over sin and death.

## **Conclusion**

No one is sinless. As long as we dwell in our physical body, we live with this sinful nature inside. However, we don't have to lose our battle with sin. In fact, God never wants us to succumb to sin every single time we are tempted. Rather, He wants us to overcome sin. He expects us to win over the temptations. He provides a way out as well (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Remember we do have Christ, a Redeemer who died on our behalf, the Sinless for the Sinners. So, when we sin against God and our neighbors, we confess our sins, repent our sins and receive forgiveness in Christ. Then, our relationship with God will be restored. That's the good news we have, that's the good news we believe, and that's the good news we share with others. Everyone is a sinner, of course, but we have a Redeemer who died on our behalf. With His help, we can overcome sin. Amen.