



## GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Subject: Goodness

Release date: October 4, 2016

# IS GOOD WITHIN YOUR GRASP

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17*

"Son, be good!" Has not every parent, at some time or another, given this kind of well-meaning but unheeded advice to his child? When you were on the receiving end, it wasn't that you deliberately intended to do wrong. Being good was not always within your grasp. Your curiosity and desires eventually overcame the words of counsel which you fully intended to heed.

Is goodness something which you can attain, or something which you are? Were you born with it? Or is it a characteristic of human behavior attained by a select few, often designated as "saints"? Frankly, there is the desire in the heart of every person for goodness. We want to be good, or at least to be considered good by our contemporaries.

Even the most depraved individuals may show a bit of "goodness" mixed with evil. I'm thinking of a gunman who recently opened fire on an office building, firing round after round into the glass windows of the building as dozens of terrorized victims crouched under desks and hid behind file cabinets. When an unsuspecting passerby happened to walk down the street directly in front of the gunman, the gunman stopped, stepped back politely and let the passerby walk in front of him, then continued his barrage of bullets.

Three of Jesus' biographers--Matthew, Mark, and Luke--tell how a wealthy young man once confronted Jesus, calling Him "Good master." But Jesus wouldn't let him address Him as "good" though He was just that. He replied, "When you call me good you are calling me God... for God alone is truly good..." (Matthew 19:16,17, Living Bible).

Like many today, this man associated goodness with doing things or not doing them, as the case may be. He related keeping the 10 Commandments to being good--no killing, no stealing, no sex outside of marriage. Jesus' reply, though, went beyond the level of behavior and said, in effect, that goodness relates to what you are--not what you do. There is one thing for sure. Any search for goodness has to recognize the essential goodness of God, a God of love, compassion, graciousness, and kindness who freely extends this to us, undeserving as we are. Remember Jesus' words, "God alone is truly good"?

The theologian of the New Testament, Paul, was convinced without a shadow of a doubt that there is no essential goodness in our hearts or lives. "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature," he wrote to the Romans (7:18, NLT).

Here we have a problem. If goodness is not what we do, and Paul says, "We can't *be* good, either!" we are in trouble. Do we give up? Do we forget about being good entirely? It is here that God comes into the picture. It was this very problem that brought His Son to planet earth. Paul described it in these words: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). In simple terms, an exchange takes place. God accepts the goodness of His Son in our stead.

An honest man no more thinks about "being honest" than a good man thinks about his goodness. Frankly, no matter how hard we try, there can be no lasting goodness without God. Until God touches the badness of our lives, which the Bible calls "sin," there can be no real goodness. Conversion alone brings the essential goodness of God to our broken, sinful lives. This is the only goodness that really lasts.

Resource reading: 2 Corinthians 5