

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Is Good, Good Enough?

(No, we need Jesus.)

Richard Garbi

I have often heard someone say, “I think I am a good person,” or variations thereof: “They are a good person,” or “There are many good people in this world.” Often, this sentiment is paired with the notion that being good is all one needs to secure a place in heaven. This thinking is attractive because it includes our friends and neighbors in a broad sense of brotherhood while bypassing more challenging, introspective conversations. However, this belief contradicts the fundamental premise of the gospel: that Jesus came to “*seek and save the lost*” (**Luke 19:10**) and to save the world (**John 3:16–17**). Yet if goodness alone were sufficient, why then is there a need for a Savior?

To understand our need for Christ, we must first examine what we mean by 'good.' When people claim someone is good, they often refer to a relative human standard—a person who is law-abiding, kind to neighbors, friendly to strangers, benevolent to the needy, and diligent in work. But is this relative standard truly what it means to be good?

In the first chapter of **Romans**—immediately before condemning the practices of the Gentiles—Paul declares:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith” (**Romans 1:16-17**).

In **verse sixteen**, Paul makes a statement that drives to the heart of our topic; it is the gospel which brings salvation to mankind (not our own good works). In **verse seventeen**, Paul references a passage from **Habakkuk 4:2** that reads, “*The righteous shall live by faith.*” Given his statement in **verse 16**, the thought of this passage is that the righteous shall live by their confidence in God. If the righteousness of the righteous were sufficient, wouldn't Paul have said the righteous shall live by their

righteous deeds?

The reality is, the goodness of mankind is insufficient. **Isaiah 64:6** declares,

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms that, “*No one is good except God alone*” (**Mark 10:18**). While we might be considered good by human standards, we still fall short of God's perfect standard. We are called to be holy, as God is holy (**1 Peter 1:14-16**) and are not. Having considered the human scale of

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goodness, we must now confront a sobering truth: in the eyes of Scripture, our best deeds do not measure up to God's perfect standard.

Since only God is truly good and our deeds fall short of His standard, we are not good. In **Romans 3**, Paul charges us with sin, declaring, “*None is righteous, no, not one,*” (**verse 10**) and “*no one does good, not even one*” (**verse 12**). Furthermore, he reminds us that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (**verse 23**). Although we are called to be holy like God, we fall short. In fact Paul describes us as “*without strength*” (**Romans 5:6**) in regard to the weight of sin laid against us.

Yet, there is hope—Jesus is the answer! God understood that

continued on the next page...

we would be in need of a Savior, and He sent His own Son to pay the price for our sin.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith (Romans 3:21-25).

We are not good, but God is, and He paid the price for our sins. So, we are righteous because the righteousness of Jesus Christ has been applied to us.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (Philippians 3:8-9).

Those who follow Jesus are not just but have been justified. We are not righteous on our own, but we have the righteousness of Jesus.

However, our justification is not a license to continue in sin (Romans 6:1-2). Rather, we are called to cultivate our character and become more like our Creator (1 Peter 1:14-16). As Scripture instructs,

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Similarly, 1 John 3:3 reminds us, "And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." As we work on our character and produce good works, we know that our good works do not make us good; Jesus does that. But we also know that our labor is not in vain because we are in the Lord (see 1 Corinthians 15:58). Through Jesus, and His sacrifice, we can be good! "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

~ 1808 SW Summit Valley Drive, Lee's Summit, MO 64081
richard.garbi@gmail.com

One, Two, Three

John Morris

Biblical numerology is the study of how numbers in Scripture sometimes carry meaning or significance beyond their numerical value. It can be a slippery endeavor.

Sometimes it's clear that a number carries underlying significance, and one is able with relative ease to determine what that is. Think, seven. Other times, however, a number's significance is less obvious, and one has to examine the Scriptures more extensively to identify a pattern of usage (if, in fact, there is one). And in the process, one finds: (1) that numbers sometimes overlap in significance or meaning; (2) that numbers with apparent associations aren't always used in ways that align with those associations; and (3) that numbers usually appear only as incidental details, and carry no other meaning than their numerical value. In short, one discovers that not every numerical appearance is part of a pattern, and that no numerical pattern is without exception.

To some degree, then, studying the Bible's numbers is a bit like studying Old Testament types or New Testament parables. The student finds that there's enough information to ascertain intended meaning, but that not every piece of information is intended to contribute to that meaning.

And not all numbers have meaning. In fact, most of them don't. But some definitely do. And below, are three.

One: The Number of Union &/or Unity

- Of the union of husband and wife, Moses wrote: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined [i.e. united] to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).
- At Babel, all of humanity was united in purpose such that the LORD said of them, "Indeed the people are one" (Genesis 11:6).
- Describing His unity with the Father, Jesus declared, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30).
- Concerning unity among the apostles, Jesus prayed "that they may be one" (John 17:11).
- Concerning unity among Christians, Jesus prayed, "that they all may be one" (John 17:21).

- Christians enjoy the “*unity of the Spirit*” (**Ephesians 4:3**), since they are those who “*by one Spirit have been baptized into one body*” (**1 Corinthians 12:13**).
- And Christians can experience a fuller oneness with one another when they attain to “*the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God*” (**Ephesians 4:13**).

Two: The Number of Distinction, Difference, &/or Division

- When God created humanity, He made two distinct genders: “*male and female He created them*” (**Genesis 1:27**).
- To Rebekah, God said, “*Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body*” (**Genesis 25:23**). And these two nations [Israel and Edom], perpetually at odds with one another, would come from two boys very different from one another: “*Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents*” (**Genesis 25:27**).
- While in prison, Joseph encountered the baker and the butler, two men with two very different futures: “*Pharaoh will lift up your head*” versus “*Pharaoh will lift off your head*” (**Genesis 40:12, 19**).
- When the Word came to His own, He was of two distinct natures: Son of God and Son of Man.
- When He died, He ratified the second of two different covenants, the former served “*in the oldness of the letter,*” the latter “*in the newness of the Spirit*” (**Romans 7:6**).
- He died between two thieves, two men who chose very different paths: one repentant in the end, one rebellious to the end (**Luke 23:39-42**).
- He will someday separate for eternity these same two types of people “*as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats*” (**Matthew 25:32**).
- Finally, the word of God pierces “*to the division of soul and spirit*” (**Hebrews 4:12**).

Three: The Number for God or that Which Flows From Him

- God is Father, Word, and Spirit.
- He is “*Holy, holy, holy*” (**Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8**).
- We are made according to His likeness (**Genesis 1:26**), and so are “*spirit, soul, and body*” (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**).
- God gave Moses three signs to prove he was divinely sent:

rod becoming a serpent, hand becoming leprous, and water becoming blood (**Exodus 4:1-9**).

- It was the third plague that moved Pharaoh’s magicians to say, “*This is the finger of God*” (**Exodus 8:19**).
- In the law of Moses, God ordained that “*three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD*” (**Exodus 24:17**): the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Harvest, the Feast of Ingathering (**Exodus 23:14-16**).
- The inner sanctuary of the temple (the Most Holy Place), where God dwelt between the cherubim (**Numbers 7:89; 1 Samuel 4:4**), was a room of three identical dimensions: “*twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high*” (**1 Kings 6:20**).
- Three times, God spoke from heaven during Jesus’ ministry: at His baptism (**Matthew 3:17**), at His transfiguration (**Matthew 17:5**), and soon before His crucifixion (**John 12:28**).
- Jesus, “*the eternally blessed God*” (**Romans 9:5**), resurrected on “*the third day*” (**Luke 24:46**).
- He performed three resurrections during His ministry: the 12-year old girl (**Mark 5:35-42**), the widow’s son (**Luke 7:11-16**), and Lazarus (**John 11:41-44**).
- He selected three men for His inner circle: Peter, James, and John.
- Three times, He selected them to accompany Him: when He raised the 12-year old girl (**Mark 5:37**), when He was transfigured (**Matthew 17:1**), and when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (**Matthew 26:37**).
- Three times, He prayed in the Garden (**Matthew 26:39-44**).
- Three times, He prayed on the cross: “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (**Luke 23:34**); “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*” (**Matthew 27:46**); “*Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit*” (**Luke 23:46**).
- The gospel of Jesus Christ, “*the gospel of God*” (**Romans 1:1**) includes three facts of primary importance: Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**).
- There are “*three that bear witness*” to Jesus Christ: “*the Spirit, the water, and the blood*” (**1 John 5:7-8**).



Please check your expiration date!

Here and There

On January 26, the elders of the church in **Lone Jack, MO** ordained **Flint Fenton** as an evangelist in the Lord's church. May God bless **Brother Flint** in this endeavor!

Special Meetings

The ladies of the **Smart Road Church of Christ, Greenwood, MO**, have planned a special Ladies' Day on March 1 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The theme will be "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Lunch will be provided. To see a flyer, visit *The Gospel Message* website using the information below.

The **Section Church of Christ in Osage City, KS**, plans a special weekend meeting for March 15-16. Please make plans to join them at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and 9:30 a.m. on Sunday.

The brethren at the **Summersville Church of Christ, Summersville, MO**, plan a weekend meeting for April 26-27. The theme will be baptism.

Additional details for these, and other upcoming meetings, can be found by visiting the Gospel Message website. You can use the QR code to the right to navigate to the relevant page. Or, visit the site in your web browser:



www.gospelmessage.net/meetings

How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young — even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You (Psalm 84:1-4).

2025 Special Meetings

- March 1.....Ladies' Day, Smart Road COC, Greenwood, MO
March 15-16..... Section Church of Christ, Osage City, KS
April 26-27.....Weekend Meeting, Summersville, MO
May 24-25.....Memorial Day Meeting, hosted by the Murray Road COC, Lee's Summit, MO
May 24-25.....Memorial Day Meeting, hosted by the South Fairfax COC, Bakersfield, CA
June 30-July 4.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO hosted by the Prince Road COC, Alton, IL

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If you would like to announce baptisms, new members, deaths, or special meetings in **The Gospel Message**, please contact **your editor**:

Wade Stanley, 18078 State Highway 149, Unionville, MO 63565 wadestanley@gmail.com

If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this paper, please either contact **the author** of the article or **your editor**.

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