

A Good-Hearted Man?

Luke 8:15

Nutshell: Christians are the only good-hearted people on earth, their hearts being set right towards man, but, more critically, towards God. Ironically, these good men are the most painfully aware of their naturally evil state. They are the only ones informed and motivated to fully battle that state (though most often they have farther to go than their unbelieving counterparts).

I. Context: The parable of the soils.

II. Text

Luke 8:15 And the *one* in the good ground, these are *the ones* who, with a virtuous and sound heart, hearing the Word, they hold *it* fast and bear fruit with endurance.

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. An outline of Luke to this point

I. About this Letter: So you'll know about this Jesus, 1:1-4

II. Rejoice! The Messiah is born! A boyhood turning point, 1:5 – 2:52

III. John proclaims repentance for Christ's coming, 3:1 – 20

IV. Messiah's Entry Credentials: Baptism and Genealogy, 3:21–38

V. His Initiation: Fasting and Temptation, 4:1 - 13

VI. His Self-Introduction and Hometown Rejection, 4:14 - 30

VII. Jesus: the FIRST MAN with absolute authority in Scriptures, and over angels/demons, sickness, and nature, 4:31 - 5:11

VIII. Turning-Point Healings, 5:12 – 32

A. Repatriating a leper, 5:12 – 16, touching the unclean outcast to preview His taking of our exile into Himself

B. Forgiving sin, 5:17 – 26, thus declaring His Deity

C. Healing/ renewal of a man's (Matthew's) soul, 5:27 – 32

IX. New and Old Covenants:

A. NC = OC replacement, patch-up, 5:33–39. NC: Law in ♥.

- d. Growing, v 8
- 2. This seems to cover ALL PEOPLE. *Everyone* is 1 of the 4.
 - a. Can whole swaths of humanity be non-receptive, for instance? Whole nations?
 - b. Yes, by two metrics
 - i. Nations are peoples, and people reject God, Ps 9:17
 - ii. God calls His people *out* of these nations, Rev 5:9
- 3. Note the prevalence of *temporary* reception
 - a. Both dried out and choked out *start out* with the Word, then fail. That's half of the 4 examples
 - b. That doesn't mean they represent 1/2 of mankind, just 1/2 of the *ways* the Word can be received
 - c. The actual proportion of ineffective soils to effective among mankind is found in Matt 7:13-14. Effective = few; ineffective = many.

Kid-speak: Remember the soil with rock under it and the soil with thorns? Did God's Word stay in them a *little while* or their *whole lives*?

- 4. In themselves, the temporary plants still sprang from the Word, **but** without "a virtuous and sound heart"
 - a. That virtuous and sound heart, then, becomes a main quest in the Christian life. **Do I have it?**
 - b. The Bible *in general* is the criterion. That is, do I receive it *all* without shame before men?
 - c. 1 John answers *specifically*- do I pass the 3 tests?
 - i. Keep God's commands
 - ii. Love His people
 - iii. Accurately, fully confess what He says about Christ and salvation, avoiding specific errors
- 5. As we said last time, the temporary life of the ended plants was *not* a sign of losing the new birth
 - a. Look at it this way: the dried out (offended) and choked (waylaid) ultimately drew their life from their own soil-their own soul
 - b. Their soul adapted to the Word as much as it initially desired, but its *deeper* desires ultimately won out:
 - i. Shallow: Don't reject others or be rejected by others
 - ii. Thorns: Sidetracked by competing factors
 - iii. (Both of these might *agree* with the Truth)

- c. The good soil- the good soul- is the result of the new birth, an irreversible act, 1 Jn 3:9
- d. But the new birth can only be tested over time, 1 Jn 3:10

Outline:

- I. Gardner God's Ready-Mix Soil, "good ground"
- II. "A Virtuous and Sound Heart"- from a Virtuous and Sound God
- III. This Heart Pumps the Hands that Grasp the Word

H. 8:15, "And the *one* in the good ground"

- 1. "The one" seed that fell into good ground
- 2. The reception is determined by the **ground**, not the *planting* (the evangelizer) or the *seed* (the Word, which is eternal and pure, whatever kind of ground/soul it enters)
- 3. What "ground" is man's natural soul? *Not* good.
- 4. Therefore, this is talking about a born-again person

I. Who are we looking for, then, in our journey through life?

THAT ONE, GOOD HEART.

- 1. We sow the seed of the Word, wondering if this person might become that rare, good soil
- 2. This is usually not immediate, just as physical germination isn't (Several days or a couple of weeks)

J. "These are *the ones* who"

- 1. "The *one*," singular, referred to the seed
- 2. "*The ones*," plural, refers to the receivers

K. "With a virtuous and sound heart"

- 1. How does this square with Jer 17:9 & Jn 2:24-25?
 - a. Jesus already spoke of the "good man," Lk 6:45
 - b. The easiest resolution between the two is that the *good* men were first *bad* men, and God *changed* them, Deut 30:6; 1 Pet 1:23

Kid-speak: Do people start off with a good heart? No. So how can people ever get a good heart? God has to **change** it.

- c. But the "Old man" remains in the changed, good folk, Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9
- 2. "Virtuous" and "sound" represent the two most common Gk words for "good"- in order:
 - a. *kalos*, harmonious, valuable, virtuous (100x)

- b. *agathos*, good (intrinsically) (102x)
- 3. We have already seen *kalos* in this verse: “good ground”
 - a. It also describes the deeds commended to us, Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8 (2x), 14
 - b. And all that we generally choose, 1 Thess 5:21
 - c. It’s the word for the “Good” Shepherd in Jn 10
- 4. *Agathos* is the word for the “good man” of Luke 6:45 and the “good” and faithful servant, Matt 25:21, 23
 - a. Also the word for God in Lk 18:19 (He’s the only *source* of good and He alone fits the word *without qualification*)
 - b. It’s the word for a “good” conscience, Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 1:19; 1 Pet 3:21
- 5. There’s a lot of similarity between *kalos* and *agathos*. Perhaps where they differ, *kalos* leans more toward the idea of moral/right, while *agathos* toward pure/beneficial
- 6. In our v, Jesus describes a heart that is both *kalos* and *agathos*. It is fully good.

Kid-speak: Jesus used two words for “good” about the new heart God gives. If God gave you that heart, it’s *double-good!*

- a. The 2 words also occur together in Matt 7:17, 18: a “sound” tree brings forth “virtuous” fruit
 - b. And in **Rom 7:18**, In me dwells no “virtuousness”; “soundness” is elusive
 - c. Finally, in 1 Tim 5:10, The church-supported widow must have a reputation for “virtuous” deeds... having pursued every “sound” deed
- L. The Conundrum of a Good Me and a Bad Me
- 1. Jesus says that good hearts carry the good seed
 - 2. But most of us do not recognize our hearts as good
 - a. Which puts us in good company: Paul, Rom 7
 - ◆ b. But from Paul, we must also learn the **DUALITY**. *Both* things are true.
 - 3. There are two me’s, each clearly distinguished in Rom 7
 - a. They are both me. One is the original, temporary, ‘bad me’ (v 14, 18), and one is the new, permanent, ‘good me’ (v 15-17, 19-22, 24)
 - b. In my experience, most Christians see themselves more as one or the other of the “me’s”
 - c. Those who don’t identify with the ‘bad me’ are the ones

- I trust less, because they tend to trust *themselves* more
- d. But the ones who have trouble identifying with the ‘good me’ (me, for instance) create unnecessary problems
 - e. Every time the ‘bad me’ is staring me in the face (which could be 24/7, since he’s there 24/7), I’m discouraged.
 - ☞ i. Yes (answers the ‘good me’), but how do I even see him for who he is?
 - ii. By the eyes of the ‘good me’!
4. *There’s the encouragement every time I see the ‘bad me’!*
 “Thank You, Lord, for letting me see me. Nothing to admire or trust there!
- a. “That just leaves YOU to trust and admire! Praise You for the justifying righteousness of Christ.
 - b. “And as I fix my gaze on *His* soundness, I will *share* His virtue (and vice versa), 1 Jn 3:3
 - c. “And even rejoice in the virtuous, sound heart You’ve given me,” 1 Jn 3:21 (Still- credit to God)

Kid-speak: When God gives us a good heart, does our old, bad self go away? No, God’s lets him hang around to test our new, good heart.

- M. Once again, to be clear: **God** has to give the virtuous and sound heart. The natural, human heart would never ask for it on its own, Rom 3:11.
- N. “Hearing the Word”
1. As is the criteria for *all* the soils/souls. Each verse, 12-15, has some form of “hear.”
 2. How can we tell who’s who spiritually? *We can’t* necessarily initially, but eventually, it’s their *response* to the Word of God in its entirety.
 - a. Not just the parts that support their preferred narrative
 - ★ b. That’s the only check on whether I actually receive the Word, since only *another* part of that Word can correct my misread connotation from *this* part
- O. “They hold fast”
1. Again, it’s the Word- The Word, the Word, the Word. They embrace the whole thing.
 - a. Tell me what I like. Tell me what I don’t like. Just tell me the truth, God.
 - b. NOT just any interpretation of the Word. There are a

- thousand counterfeits.
2. Sound hearts becomes easy to recognize:
 - a. They've recognized the Word's *pinching* and as Its nature
 - b. They use the Word only for God to be in charge
 3. Three important verses with this "hold fast" or "hold down" (17x), 1 Cor 15:2; 1 Thess 5:21; Heb 3:14 (3:6; 10:23)
 4. Note that all three are practiced in the presence of opposition or counterfeit
 - a. 1 Cor 15:2, some were doubting the resurrection
 - b. 1 Thess 5:21, "virtue" can't be held without evil being hated, v 22
 - c. Heb 3:14, the deceitfulness of sin was trying to pry the Word from them, v 13

Kid-speak: What's the one thing a person with a good heart will grab onto and never let go? The Bible!

5. In this light, those with an easy-going attitude about Scriptures or Christianity don't have the right idea
 - a. We can only secure our rest in Christ through exertion, Heb 4:11
 - b. That rest only comes and remains through arduous effort to "straightly cut" the Word of Truth, 2 Tim 2:15
6. "Holding fast" implies that it can slip
 - a. Remember, a virtuous and sound heart will feel the full brunt of trial (shallow soil), as well as of preoccupation, plenty, and pleasures (thorns).
 - b. The virtuous and sound heart will prove itself in its *response* to being exposed by the same obstacles which successfully waylay the faint and the fake
 - c. It *feels* like I've stumbled to falling, but there's the grace of God again, and I arise, Prov 24:16
7. Again, this is what a VIRTUOUS AND SOUND HEART does: *clings* to the Word
- P. "And bear fruit with endurance"
 1. Bearing fruit is connected to (and *only* possible when connected to) "holding fast" the Word
 2. Bearing fruit most obviously implies that the good heart *acts* by its (new) nature. It does *not* do nothing.
 3. More on this next time

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”)
Your ultimate (maybe near) prognosis is good, so long as the Old Man is not the only man.

V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong?
How have I lost righteousness?**
Do I believe God has given me a virtuous and sound heart?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?
I will not charge God with inability in this matter.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How do I take this on the road?**
Lord, I seek wisdom to see the New Man and rejoice.

Wrap-up: Perhaps the biggest issue as we question whether we have the virtuous, sound heart is how motivated *it* is compared to our *Old Man*. The Old Man never seems to run out of juice, but my new heart appears to await my conscious decision-making. I have to fuel my New Man.

So if I love the good, do I hate the evil? Do I hate the Old Man’s suggestions- *my own* inner suggestions? If I really hated them, wouldn’t that suppress them altogether?

No, PAUL ACCEPTS AN ONGOING **DUALITY** OF TWO ME’S, Rom 7:25. Each ‘me’ does his own thing. My good heart, though, is known through my **GOOD MIND**. That means that I that thinking and choosing is its natural course.

A great Biblical definition or synonym for love is “choose” (Matt 12:18, “beloved” for “chosen” from Isa 42:1). Therefore, to hate is to choose against. Hence, when my virtuous heart chooses against the Old Man’s suggestions, it is hating them.

The problem is, I **feel** the evil suggestion. I will probably only **feel** the ‘choice against’ it IF I remind myself where that choice is coming from, thanking God for a sound heart.