Are There Good People in All Religions?

There are a lot of people in the world that will tell you, "All you have to do to make it to Heaven is be a good moral person." It is not uncommon to hear or read the admonition, "Attend the church of your choice." The reasoning behind such statements says, "One church is as good as another. After all, there are good people in every religion." Are there good people in all religions? Well, let's see what the Word of God says about that.

In Acts 28, you can read the story of Paul's shipwreck on the island of Malta. Upon his arrival there, Paul encountered the island's natives — what we might call "barbarians." But to the surprise of Paul and those with him, these natives weren't wild creatures. They were very hospitable and quite generous (verse 2, 7, 10). These people believed in divine justice (verses 3-4) and were religiously zealous (verse 6). Were these "good people"? Certainly.

A man named Cornelius is discussed in Acts 10. According to verse 1, he was an intelligent and well-respected military officer. Cornelius was a very religious person (verses 2, 4, 30). And when an angel of God appeared to him and gave him instructions, he was humbly obedient (verses 3-8). Would you consider Cornelius a good man? Of course you would.

How about Saul of Tarsus (who would later be known as the apostle Paul)? He was a very religious fellow (Philippians 3.5) and extremely zealous to do God's will (Philippians 3.6; Acts 22.4-5). Saul was well-educated in the Law of Moses (Philippians 3.6; Acts 22.3) and lived in good conscience (Acts 23.1). Surely we could say that he was a fine person.

In Acts 8, you can read the story about the treasurer from Ethiopia. He was a man of great authority — someone who had earned the trust of Ethiopia's queen (verse 27). He was religiously zealous and devoted to what he believed (verse 27). And he diligently studied to build his faith (verse 28). Would this Ethiopian fit into the category "good people"? Absolutely.

When Paul arrived in Ephesus in Acts 19, he found disciples — believers in Jesus Christ (verse 1). People there had been taught about Christ by a man named Apollos (Acts 18.24-28). In fact, even before Apollos came on the scene, these Ephesians had been baptized under John's baptism (Acts 19.3) for the remission of sins (Mark 1.4). There is no doubt that these were "good people."

So let's get back to our original question — are there good moral people in all religions? Well, the people on Malta were idolatrous (Acts 28.6), but they certainly did "good" deeds. We aren't really told what the religion of Cornelius was, but he was a "good" man. Saul of Tarsus was a devout Jew, to the point that he persecuted Christians (Acts 22.4-5), but certainly he had "good" intentions. The Ethiopian wasn't a Jew by birth but was by religion (a proselyte — Acts 8.27), and we have already commended his "goodness." The Ephesians were likely a mixture of Jews, proselytes, and pagans, but they seemed to be "good" people. Yes, the Bible seems to say there are good moral people in different religions.

But notice that all of these "good" people have something in common — they became Christians! Paul performed miracles for the Malta natives (Acts 28.8-9), indicating they were taught the Word (Mark 16.20; Hebrews 2.3-4). Cornelius was taught and acted upon what he learned (Acts 10.42-48). So did Saul (Acts 22.12-16), the Ethiopian (Acts 8.30-39), and the Ephesians (Acts 19.4-5). Were they all good people? Yes, but what there religion was did matter. They could not just "attend the church of their choice."

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