

## WORKS vs GRACE (Can good works and a moral life get you into Heaven?)

MAY 2014

ISSUE 103

Isaiah 55: 8-9 ***“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”***

I am sure you have run across many people who think that by the virtue of their good deeds, God will accept them into Heaven. Let’s see if this corresponds with what God says.

In the Bible Jesus encounters a moral man face to face. Nicodemus was a devout Rabbi among the Jews, a Pharisee by profession; he was a classic example of a man whose (***religion***) was the Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments.

**(John 3: 1-7)** *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”*

Jesus answered, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*

Notice that Nicodemus comes to Christ giving him great compliments as a teacher from God, but rather than being flattered by that compliment, Jesus challenges him by telling him the truth that unless a man is born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

What did Jesus mean, born again? It simply means, born “from above” indicating a spiritual rather than a physical birth. This is Jesus’ challenge to moral man that you must be born again or “from above” showing us that the new-birth experience is God’s requirement for salvation.

Why do all men and women, regardless of how good they are, need to be born again spiritually? It is because ***morality*** is not ***spirituality***. ***Morality***, refers to our ethical relationship with one another, it is a horizontal relationship. ***Spirituality*** refers to our relationship to God. Being ***spiritual*** refers to a daily walk with God; it is a vertical relationship, God to person and person to God.

Therefore, ***morality*** is not ***spirituality***. Not every person is right with God. There are many good and moral people who would not hurt their neighbor or think of breaking the law as well as many atheists who live good and moral lives. Still being right with others does not make you right with God but being spiritual or born again makes you both moral and right with God.

Nicodemus is a perfect illustration of a good moral person who was not right with God. Why can’t a good moral life save you? It can’t save you because God’s standards are too high.

**[The question then becomes, how good is good enough to please God?](#)**

## Joy In Life

**As good as Jesus!** That's how good, sinless perfection! What an incredible requirement. With that being the standard then who is good? If a man were to be saved by works, he would have to be perfect as Christ was perfect. If you choose to be saved by good works, your goal will have to be perfection. **(James 2:10)** *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*

We need to be honest, really how good are you? Let's say you committed only one sin per week, that's fifty-two sins a year, if you live to be seventy, that's 3,640 sins. Put this into proper perspective, if you committed 3,640 crimes, no matter how minor and were caught, what would the verdict be when you stand before the judge? Imagine then how your righteousness appears to Holy God. **(Romans 3:10)** *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;*

Ask yourself, if anyone was good enough to be saved by his good works, then why did God nail His beloved Son on the cross? Christ's death for **all** men would be senseless. If you think that you can get to Heaven by your good works, then you are your own Savior; can you meet God's requirements? Jesus was sent by God to keep the law for us and give his life for our sins. All men need to be born again through faith in Christ.

**(Romans 3:20-24)** *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all-who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

Christ's message to Nicodemus was that the only hope of pleasing God was to believe in Him, **The Son**. Jesus concludes his conversation by saying, **(John 3:36)** *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

It becomes clear that no one can be forgiven by being good. God does not grade on a curve! It is all or nothing. God offers one way of salvation that is not dependent on your good works but upon the sinless life of the Lord Jesus.

God offers us salvation and fellowship with Him as a free gift through our Lord Jesus Christ who alone has met all of God's requirements, and He and He alone can forgive us our sins and fill our life with joy and meaning. **The truth is that a believer can never sin his way out of God's grace, no matter how many times he confesses the same wrongdoing.**

**God's mercy** is everlasting. Sometimes, though we might become convinced that **God's forgiveness** has limits however **Jesus' sacrifice** on the cross-paid our sin debt in full past, present, and future. This means that no matter how great our offense or how often we sin, **God's grace** covers every single one of them.

*"We always come up short when we overestimate our work, and underestimate the grace of God." AMT*