



Can my good works get me into Heaven?

While most people think that their good works can get them into heaven, this tract explains what God requires.

First, let me ask you a question: What do you mean by good works?

Do you mean your acts of kindness to others? If so, that's good! God requires kindness.

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic.6:8)

The question is: Are you always kind? If not, then can you admit that your kindness is imperfect?

Do you mean your charity to others? If so, this is good too!

"And if I give all my possessions to the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." (1 Cor.13:3)

What the Apostle Paul means is that all outward acts of charity that are done without love are of no spiritual benefit in the eyes of God. Giving is good, but God requires love from the heart. Without pure love flowing from the heart in faith, the most generous giver will never see God. (*cf. Heb.12:14*)

- Do you give because it makes you feel good?
- Do you give because you are trying to look good in the eyes of others, avoid hell, or even purchase favor in God's eyes?

No one can substitute what is outward for what is inward. God looks upon the heart. Do you give out of perfect love? If not, then can you admit that even your charity is imperfect?

Biblically speaking, what is a good work?

Good works are only those things which God has commanded, just as sin is that which God has forbidden.

- Have you perfectly obeyed all that God has commanded?
- Have you ever lied? Have you ever lusted in your heart or desired what God has forbidden?
- Have you ever put anything above and before God?

If so, then what you call a good work is nothing more than an imperfect work that a perfect and holy God will never accept. No person, except Christ, can keep God's commandments perfectly; and therefore, all our good works fall short of what God requires. (*Rom.3:23*)

Two Kinds of Good Works

There are two kinds of good works: those that precede salvation and those that follow salvation. Those that precede salvation are worthless in the eyes of God, although they seem to be good. Why?

1. First, God requires that you be perfect and holy.

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt.5:48)

"You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet.1:16)

2. Secondly, everyone born after Adam is born in a fallen, sinful condition; and therefore, is less than righteous and holy.

"Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins." (Eccles.7:20)

3. Therefore, in light of points one and two, a sinful man cannot perfectly perform any good works in the sight of God.

"All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one." (Rom.3:12)

Because we are sinners, any work that we seek to bring to God is actually an offering that God rejects like Cain's. (Gen.4:4-5)

What does God's Word say about good works that precede salvation?

"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment." (Isa.64:6a)

In the sight of men, our good deeds may look pretty good, but when compared to God's standard of perfection, our righteous deeds are like filthy rags because they are tainted with sinful and selfish motives.

What does God require to get into heaven?

Imagine a person coming to your home at 2:00 a.m., seeking to enter through the backroom window. What would you do? Would you call the police? Would you use deadly force?

I suppose the reason for your response would be that you have very specific and definite rules that you have established for people to enter into your home.

Just as this is true for us on a human level, it is also true of God. God has established very specific and absolute requirements for entering into His heaven. What are they?

1. God requires that you possess a divine righteousness.

"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:20)

The scribes and Pharisees possessed a human righteousness that was merely outward and external. God requires a divine or perfect righteousness that comes from the inside. Are you trusting in a kind of righteousness that God does not accept?

2. God requires that you experience a new spiritual birth.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

You can be ignorant of many things and yet be saved, but to possess eternal life and see the kingdom of God, you must be born again. To be born again is not merely reformation (such as quitting smoking or drinking), or making an amendment, a moral change or an outward alteration of your life. It is a thorough and complete change of your heart, will, and character. It is the implanting of God's life in your soul, with the result being that the whole course of your life is changed.

Has this ever happened to you? Remember, this is not something we can give ourselves and without it, we cannot go to heaven or even enjoy it. Have you ever been born again? Can you acknowledge that you need to be born again?

3. God requires that you enter His way, through the narrow door.

"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9)

"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." (Luke 13:24)

By nature we are all separated from God (Isa.59:2) and sin is like a great barrier that stands between God and us. How then can we be reconciled to God? The answer is that by His sacrifice for us on the cross, He has opened a way through the great barrier by which guilty sinners can approach God without fear. Christ is that door. As the door, we must make use of Christ, not by standing outside looking at it, but by entering through Him.

Christ is a door free to all sinners. He said, "If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved."

4. God requires that you be converted from self dependence to dependence upon Him as a child depends on his/her parents.

"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.18:3)

You may get to heaven without money, rank or learning, but no one, no matter how wise, wealthy, noble or beautiful, will get to heaven without conversion.

There are many texts that speak of conversion (*Ps.19:7, 51:13; Acts 3:19; James 5:20*). However, it is not texts that save, but the truths of the texts. The truths about conversion all generally mean that you must be changed, renewed, transformed, and turned from going your own way to going God's way; from worldliness to holiness; from self-righteousness to self-distrust; from indifference to Christ to strong love for Christ; from carelessness about sin to deep repentance over sin. This is conversion.

Has this ever happened to you?

5. Finally, God requires faith in Jesus Christ.

"Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified (declared not guilty) by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus..." (Gal.2:16a)

Faith can be understood as:

Forsaking
All others (Works, human goodness, religious activity, etc.)
I
Trust and take
Him - Alone, for salvation from sin and eternal life.

In order to go to heaven, you must know that it is not something you can earn by good works or religious activity, or purchase with gifts. It is by God's grace, which are God's riches at Christ's expense.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one should boast." (Eph.2:8-9)

God is the giver. Will you be the receiver? If so, God says to you, I am the only Savior (*John 14:6*) and the sovereign Lord (*Phil.2:10-11*). If you will have Me as your God you must give Me supremacy over your entire life! God asks:

- Will you submit to My Word?
- Will you take Me as your happiness and treasure?
- Will you make Me second to no person, sin, or worldly interest?
- Will you lay everything at My feet and give it to Me to use at My disposal?
- Will you have Me as your only King, Prophet and Priest?
- Will you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me?
- Will you take My death to be your death and My life to be your life?

Then call upon His name for salvation, *"for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom.10:13)*.

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