

## 1. The WRONG Answer



Some people answer: 'I have always tried to do what is right by everyone else and I'd like to hope that would get me into heaven'. Other people list qualities like being a good citizen, giving to charity or bringing up a family as the reason why they would hope to go to heaven. Still others say that they pray, they go to church, and keep the Ten Commandments.

All these answers involve what *We* have done. However, we do not earn heaven by our *Works*. What we have done will not be good enough.

## 2. The RIGHT Answer

The right answer is that we go to heaven because of what *Christ* has done, not because of what we have done. Christ paid the price for us to go to heaven, by dying for our sins on the Cross. This is *Salvation by Grace*, that is, as an undeserved free gift from God.



How do we know this? Because in the Bible, God clearly spells out how we get to heaven: 'By *grace* you are saved through faith, and that *not of yourselves*, it is the *gift of God, not of works*, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). Notice that twice in the verse we are told how we are NOT saved: not of yourselves, not of works. In contrast, the verse tells us we are saved by grace: it is the gift of God. Getting to heaven is not about us, it's all about God!



## From Mad Monk to Man Set Free



Martin Luther was born in 1483 in Germany. Growing up, he thought of God as 'the Thunderer', an angry God who punished wicked people. As a result, he never felt he could pray to God; instead, he would pray to saints. Luther gave up a promising law career (much to his family's displeasure) to become a monk; he thought that the way to please God was to punish yourself. As a monk, he had no money and few clothes; he would go without food for three or four days a week and he would attend seven chapel services every day. He went on a pilgrimage to Rome. None of these things, however, made him feel any different: God was still a distant, angry, God. So Luther increased his religious devotions. He would pray for hours or lie on the cold stone cell floor looking at a crucifix.



Then, to help him get his mind off himself, Luther was given the job of teaching the Bible. This was a new experience for him, as he had never really read the Bible before. What he found in the Bible surprised him: there was no mention of penance, pilgrimages or fasting to try to please God. Instead, he discovered that the Bible teaches that God loves us and sent Christ to die for our sins. We are saved by God's grace through faith (i.e. believing) in Christ. Luther believed in Christ and realised that he was now forgiven from his sin – free at last!

## Why Good Works won't Work

You might be a caring person, concerned for the needs and problems of others, a loving family member and actively seeking to do good in your community. However, God looks beyond our actions; He looks at our thoughts, our motives and our hearts. He sees what others don't: self-interest, pettiness, jealousies, hatreds, greed, arrogance, ruthless ambition and cruelty, things that are dishonest and dirty.

Some people think that the way to get to heaven is to keep the Ten Commandments but the reality is that, in our hearts, we have probably broken all of ten of them. If the Ten Commandments are a ladder to heaven, then all the rungs are broken.



C. S. Lewis spoke of his growing consciousness of his own sinfulness like this: 'For the first time I examined myself with a seriously practical purpose. And there I found what appalled me: a zoo of lusts, a nursery of fears, a bedlam of ambitions, a harem of fondled hatreds. My name is Legion'.

The problem is that we are all sinners. Romans 3:23 says, 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory (i.e. standard, expectation) of God'. This is why we can't go to Heaven.

## How we get to Heaven

One of the passages in the Bible from which Luther learned how we go to heaven is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians (2:16):

*'We are Justified by Faith'*



Justified is what happens when a judge acquits someone of a crime, pronouncing them innocent. It is more than being pardoned; it means to be cleared of any guilt completely. Justified means **Just** (as) **if I'd** never sinned at all. It is an act, not a process; we do not slowly become righteous. God the Judge pronounces us 'righteous' in His sight when we believe in Jesus Christ. But how can God pronounce sinful, guilty people 'innocent'? Because on the cross, Jesus died for our sins and paid the price for our forgiveness. All we have to do is believe in God's Son and put our trust in what He did for us on the cross. The moment we do, God justifies us!



## Can we Live how we Like, then?

If we are forgiven simply by believing in Christ, doesn't this give us a licence to sin? Knowing we are going to heaven, we need no longer try to restrain our sinful desires? No, the Bible teaches us that belief, if it is real, shows itself in actions: a person will repent, which means to turn from their sins, and they will be baptised as a sign they are now following Christ.

## A Rebel Transformed

As a young man, Fyodor Dostoyevsky joined an illegal group of radical Russian intellectuals. He was arrested and sentenced to death, but while facing the firing squad a horseman arrived to announce that his sentence had been commuted to hard labour. This experience not only changed Dostoyevsky's destiny; it also changed his character. He became a humble believer in Christ and went on to become one of the greatest novelists of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Dostoyevsky's life shows the amazing, transforming power of grace. Someone who has truly experienced God's grace becomes a changed person too. Overcome with thankfulness at God's forgiveness, they want to live to please Him. Thus, good works do not lead to salvation, but salvation leads to good works.



**If you want to become a Christian,** simply pray to God and (1) admit you are a sinner: say *Sorry*, (2) say *Thank-you* to God for sending His Son to die in your place, and (3), say *Please*: ask the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive you and come into your life. If you would like a free New Testament and Bible Study Course, send the reply slip to the address below:

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, please send me a free New Testament and Bible Study Course

**IF YOU  
WERE TO  
DIE  
TODAY  
AND GOD  
WAS TO  
ASK YOU  
WHY HE  
SHOULD  
LET YOU  
INTO  
HEAVEN,  
WHAT  
WOULD  
YOU SAY?**

*Think carefully!* There are two answers to this question: one right and one wrong. Take a moment to consider your answer before you turn over the page.