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This topical Bible study is for God's glory
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All words spoken by Jesus Christ are in **red text**.

Imagine for a moment you have been asked to go out into the public, initiate conversations with people you do not know, and ask them if they think they are good enough to get into Heaven. If you are like me...you would likely not feel comfortable doing this. But for the purpose of learning and enlightenment...let's say you agree (with some reluctance and trepidation)...and you locate yourself in a community park where people go for a relaxing afternoon (i.e. likely more willing to talk).

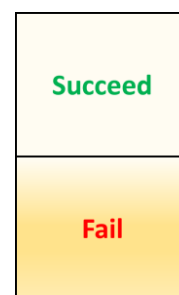
Given this scenario, what percentage of people do you think would say they are:

- Good enough?
- Not good enough?

In addition, what type of additional words do you think they would say? Do you think you would hear words such as: I've been a good person; I have not killed anyone; I have helped others; I've given to the needy; I attended church; and I hope God will recognize I am a good person and will allow me to enter into Heaven.

How would you respond if someone asked you the same question?

When you think deeply about the premise of the question of being "good enough" to get into Heaven, the question is based upon a perceived benchmark (or minimal standard of behavior) that one must exceed. If you're above the line you're good enough (succeed), below the line you're not good enough (fail). In addition, the question seems reasonable because just about every experience we have had in life regarding the receipt of rewards has been based upon our behavior that exceeds someone's predefined minimal standard. Throughout life, we received rewards or punishment from our overseers (parents, teachers, employers, etc.) based upon our behavior. As such, this concept is deeply rooted in our mindsets, cultures, and world religions.



However, all human benchmarks of what is "good enough" will never achieve God's standards. When our works (deeds, actions, and behavior) is driven by our flesh and not by the Holy Spirit—regardless of how we perceive the degree of righteousness of our works—they are like filthy rags to God. For in truth...when we "strip back the layers" and look into the core motivation that drives our behavior, many will find our works are self-centered, based upon improving our lives, and glorifying ourselves—including behaviors we consider are worthy of a "ticket into Heaven."

- "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.'" Isaiah 55:8-9
- "We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6
- "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23
- "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8
- "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." Romans 3:11-12

God's ways are radically different from the behavioral standards of "good works" devised by humans. God's ways are based upon Him reaching out to us with His grace and forgiveness for who we are, what we do, and all of our shortcomings that will never reach the standard that His Son—Jesus Christ—demonstrated during His life on earth, and upon the cross when He died as a sacrifice for our sins. In other words, God's grace—combined with our faith in what Jesus did for us—supersedes any attempt on our part to "earn" our way into Heaven.

"For by grace you have been 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

When we take a good look at ourselves—and compare who we are and what we have done against the perfection of His Son, Jesus Christ—who willingly gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins—is when we begin to realize it is impossible for us to be “good enough” to get into Heaven based upon our behavior.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:4-7

Entrance into Heaven is not based upon good works—for they will never be good enough—regardless of the standards we think (or the world thinks) are sufficient. Entrance into Heaven is based upon God’s grace extended to us through our faith in His Son, Jesus.

Jesus declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6

Jesus also declared, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” John 11:25



Free Ticket To Heaven
Paid for by Jesus Christ
To all who believe!

A miraculous transformation occurs within our heart and soul when we fully grasp God’s grace and love for us; when we fully understand the consequences of our sin; when we fully realize what Jesus did for us by dying on the cross (as a sacrifice for our sins); and we make the decision to step forward in faith by believing. This is when our behavior begins the transition from focusing upon self, to doing those things that please God—the One who:

- Loves us more than any human can understand and imagine (Romans 5:8).
- Forgives us each time we fail—as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).
- Guides us away from the lies and darkness of sin and into His righteousness (Acts 26:18).
- We will spend eternity with in Heaven (2 Peter 1:11).

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Romans 12:1-3

Take a moment to deeply reflect upon and internalize the following spiritual truth:

It’s not about our works to gain God’s approval...but rather,

IT’S ABOUT GOD’S GRACE AND OUR FAITH IN WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US!

“For by grace you have been 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

Saved By Works Thinking	Saved By Grace Thinking
Look at what I did!	I am grateful for what Jesus did for me.
My works gain God’s appreciation of me.	I am doing this for God’s glory.
I am worthy of the rewards I receive in Heaven.	If I receive rewards in Heaven, it will occur because of what God has manifested through me.
I should be recognized for what I do.	I pray the things I do are pleasing to God.

Here is a list of consequences that occur with a works-based salvation:

- Requires self-focus and self-confidence (reliance upon self and not God).
- Is motivated by the flesh and not spiritually driven.
- Creates pride and a sense of entitlement.
- Facilitates a judgmental perception towards others.
- Hardens the heart.
- Stifles worship and loving God because they are making it on their own “merited” works...and not His grace.
- Invalidates the sacrificial death of Jesus.

The above list of behaviors describe the Jewish religious leaders Jesus encountered during His ministry. Jesus declared the characteristics and consequences of their works in Matthew chapter 23.

However, those who are saved by His grace alone—will be transformed and will express loving praises to Him—while upon earth and for eternity. For we know our transformation has occurred because of what God has done for us and through us, and not because of our vain and useless attempts to be good enough.

The Transforming Power of God’s Grace

God’s grace is exemplified by His attributes of benevolence, mercy, and agape love.

- **Benevolence** is a desire, inclination and compassion to do good for others.
- **Mercy** is an act of compassion and restraint by one who has the power to punish an offender.
- **Agape** love transcends all forms of love generated by our human emotions and finite minds. In addition, agape love exists within the spiritual realm where God resides—because He is the source!

God’s grace is a core aspect of His character.

God’s grace is a free gift and cannot be earned.

God’s grace operates within the spiritual realm.

God’s grace is how He expresses His love towards us.

God’s grace is where we find the desire to forgive others.

God’s grace transforms our soul and heals the scars caused by lies and sin.

God’s grace will dissolve the chains that keeps us under the bondage of sin.

God’s grace is perfect, complete, and only accessible through His Son, Jesus Christ.

God’s grace will create an entirely different perception of who He is and what He desires for us.

God’s grace is one of the greatest stumbling blocks known to man because it is a mystery to many.



“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the **mystery** of His will.” Ephesians 1:7-9

However, those who think they are good enough; those who are proud, those who consider themselves worthy, and those who think they are capable...will find it difficult to find God's grace. But rather, those who find God's grace are those who:

- Desire righteousness.
- Realize:
 - They are bound by sin.
 - The consequences of their failures, mistakes, and weaknesses.
 - Their need to put their faith in God and in His Son to get through this thing called life.

If my works are insufficient...should I continue or discontinue my works?

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." James 2:26

It is important to continue works. However, when we pass through God's spiritual "door" of salvation based upon His grace, the process of sanctification (by the Holy Spirit) is indicated when the purpose and motivation of our works transitions to:

- An outward expression of our faith.
- Our love for God.
- A reflection of His glory.
- A compelling desire that others may:
 - Know God's grace through His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - Be free from the bondage of darkness and sin.
 - Spend eternity in Heaven with our Savior and Lord.

"For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men." Titus 3:3-8

Knowing we are forgiven is more powerful than we realize—for it spiritually changes us from the inside out—and melts away all of the earthly things we think are more important.

Listen to a wonderful love song from Jesus to each of us. You will be blessed!

Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjGttJuhsAw>

There has been only one person who has ever lived that met God's standards...and He was the one and only worthy, spotless and perfect sacrifice for the sins of all of us who fall short. Jesus declared, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."** John 3:16-17

May God richly bless you with His grace and peace.

All for His Glory,
Harold D. Thomas