

Are You Saved?

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[Ephesians 2: 4-10] But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Do people sometimes ask you this question, “Are you saved?” Then, what is your answer to such a challenging question? Is your reply a positive one such as, “Yes, I am saved through faith in Jesus Christ?” Or, do you show a rather uncertain view, “Salvation is my life’s goal. Therefore, I live each day faithfully to attain salvation.” Many Christians are faithful in their profession, attending church services, reading the bible, and praying daily. Nevertheless, many of them are not sure if they have been saved, although they believe in God and profess to follow Jesus Christ. I was one of such persons who would testify of my faith in Christ and yet lacked conviction in my salvation status. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesian church, wrote plainly, “*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 [verses 8 and 9],*” telling them they were saved Christians, not those who were on their way to reach salvation through their good living.

All religions of the world offer salvation, in some form or other, as a solution to the life’s problem of the eventual death. If a religion does not guarantee a place after death, what good is it and why should people believe in it? If a religion offers a way of becoming rich and famous during this earthly life and nothing further, those in such a religion are either mentally deficient or too greedy to see the serious problem of death that looms before them. We all die sooner or later.

The doctrines of salvation in all religions can be broadly categorized into the following two: ‘Salvation by grace’ and ‘salvation by works.’ Christianity’s true doctrine of salvation is that salvation comes to the believers by God’s grace, i.e. salvation by grace. Grace is defined as the ‘unmerited gift of God.’ Because we are sinners, we are not holy to be in God’s holy presence. However, God accepts us when we confess our faith in Jesus Christ because of His grace. Our sins are forgiven because Christ offered His life on the cross as the ransom for our sins. We are transformed from a sinner status to the forgiven-ransomed-saved status. That is how all sinners can be saved. So, if you are Christians who confess your faith in Christ Jesus, you are already saved and you do not need good works to qualify you as saved. Since you are saved already, you can testify of your saved status to anyone who asks you, “Are you saved?”

The other type of salvation doctrine is ‘salvation by works,’ which says you must work toward your salvation by laying good works in heaven. If you are on this track, you won’t know until you die if you have been saved or not. In other words, when death comes to you, you will die without knowing if you will land within the gate of the kingdom of heaven or find yourself in hell. This doctrine is anti-scriptural and anti-Christ in that the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary’s cross was not enough to save you but opened only a path toward salvation. If your church teaches this erroneous doctrine of salvation, I strongly recommend that you seriously question if such a doctrine correctly understands the value of Christ’s sacrifice.

Jesus died so that you and I can be saved through this blood. That was the reason why He bore the sins of all sinners on His shoulders as He hung on the cross. That is why He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Even His heavenly Father could not bear to see His Son with all sins of humanity on Him. During that hour He was rejected by God because He had to die such a cruel death and to be rejected by God so that you and I could be saved. If such death of our Savior Jesus was not enough to save us, and if we have to rely on our

'good works to save us, you are placing the worth of our Savior's sacrifice on par with your good works. How unreasonable and foolish you are in God's sight!

When one of the two robbers on Jesus' side on Calvary confessed to Him of his faith in Jesus as his Lord and Savior, our Lord gave him the word of assurance of his salvation as follows:

[Luke 23: 42-43] Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

What good works could this dying robber on a cross have done to merit his salvation? What was so wonderful was that he was saved just by confessing his faith in Jesus as his Savior and Lord. Our years of faithful church attendance, many hours of charitable deeds, and donation of our entire wealth to churches and temples cannot bring salvation to us. Saved Christians do good works because the love of God in Jesus came to be in our hearts when we are saved. And this love of Christ in us causes us to do good works as proof of God's grace and love toward humanity. The sequence must not be confused – salvation first, then good works, not the other way around.

[Ephesians 2:10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Saved Christians were created in Jesus for good works. That is the good plan of God and we submit ourselves to the persuasion of God's agape love to show the same love to fellow humans. You as parents are pleased to see your children do good work. But, if your children do not even recognize you as their parents, will you be pleased with their good works? The centurion Cornelius did good works but he was not a saved soul [Acts 10]. However, when the gospel came to his home through the apostle Peter, he and his family accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They were then saved. His good works brought him close to God but were not the basis of his salvation.

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you have been saved by God's grace. Believe this as a fact and live in full assurance of your salvation. And testify your salvation story to those around you whenever you can – precious salvation that came by the grace of God. Amen.

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