

# How are Good Works and Salvation Connected?

People love the idea of earning stuff. There are trophies awarded in sports for winning a competition. Money earned by doing some sort of work. Students get a good grade for doing well on a test. The list goes on and on. Most of the time earning what you get is not wrong at all. In fact, much of the time it is good, right, and biblically-based. However, the mindset of needing to earn rewards explains why it is so hard to accept how salvation really works.

## What All Christians Need to Accept

As indicated, we didn't and don't earn Salvation. That's a very good thing because it would be impossible for any human to actually do so. It is equally true, however, that now that we have been saved, we should be compelled to do good works for the person and cause of Jesus. Scripture tells us that a faith that does not result in good works is dead (James 2:14-26).

## Accepting What You've Already Accepted

Sometimes this is a truth that is hard to really accept even for those of us who have already supposedly accepted it. Sometimes, if we are not careful, we who have known this truth for years can drift into backward ways of unbiblical thinking. Biblical Christian thought goes against the natural way most of society thinks today in so many ones. This idea that we don't have to and can't earn this really good thing, this salvation, is just one of those things. Like so many other Christian counter-cultural thoughts, we will likely be struggling with this issue for the rest of our Christian

lives.

Accepting the counter-cultural teaching of Scripture is something I have had trouble with in the past. Not just this particular truth, but many other biblical truths as well. If we are not careful and alert, unbiblical “spiritual” practices and ideas can become a lazy habit. For myself, sometimes along the road of the Christian life, while I thought I had fully accepted a truth, the Holy Spirit will lead me to take a long look at myself and show me that, no I hadn’t actually and fully accepted it yet, just some of it and that that some of it needed to be revitalized and more fully rounded. This kind of spiritual growth is what happens on the lifelong climb of sanctification.

### **The Short Story of Salvation**

The whole need for human salvation in the first place started in the Garden of Eden. There was one particular tree there known as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This tree was exactly what its name implies. It embodied our free will to choose good or evil, to either willfully obey God or to willfully disobey Him. Adam and Eve, the first couple, chose evil, sin, disobedience of God’s one rule. Therefore, through them all humanity from that day forward was sentenced to death, eternal death.

The entirety of the rest of the Old Testament is God’s path toward the redemption of mankind through Jesus in the New Testament. We’re talking His own beloved Son here – His only Son. God the Father sent His only Son to die for a people who spat in His face and deserved exactly what they got. He did this so that we could be reunified with Him and have access to everlasting life (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-9). Doing what God did would be an unthinkable, mind-boggling sacrifice for any parent—and this was our Creator!

After he arose from the dead, Jesus went to heaven to intercede on our behalf before the Father. For our benefit, he left the Holy Spirit to guide His believers to the end. We did not deserve access to the Holy Spirit; He was freely given (Titus 3:4-5).

Yes, acceptance of this sacrifice of God's Son Jesus was and still is the **only** way for us to begin on that Holy Spirit-led path. As Romans 3:23 points out, all of us have sinned and therefore fall short of the glory of God. Because of this, we are completely unworthy to stand in the presence of God. Accepting the sacrifice of Jesus cleanses our sin and makes us able to stand in His presence. It is then that the Holy Spirit leads us up the road of salvation. It will prove to be an up and down road for us, with lots of hills and valleys, but thankfully His work on our behalf does not depend on our constant spiritual highs. His infinite love and grace have got our back.

### **The Final Answer**

Going back to that first question about the connection between good works and salvation, while the two are definitely connected, it's not like one might first assume. Salvation is nothing any human will ever earn by doing good. It was given to us. We were freely given the gift of salvation through the death of Jesus (Romans 6:23). With an authentic salvation experience, we are now bound for heaven, on the road of sanctification with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the end of final glorification in the eternal presence of God. And how does that authentic salvation experience work? It is by fully confessing complete and lifelong acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior in your heart and through your mouth (Romans 10:8-9). That is how salvation comes about. Now we do our good works not to earn salvation, more salvation, or continued salvation, but because Christ saved us, because He commanded

us to do so, because we love, honor, and praise Him for everything He has done for us and for humanity. Now we do so for the rewards awaiting us after this life with Jesus in eternity.

Now we obey His words and do our good works because He is truly our Lord today and forever (Luke 6:46).