

Chapter 16

Still Not Convinced? Take the Test!

According to Ephesians 2:8-9, *“it is by Grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”* Aside from John 3:16 and Psalms 23, this is probably the most often quoted passage of Scripture in the Bible, and it represents the heart of the Gospel. Unfortunately it has also been one of the most misunderstood of all Bible passages.

No matter how much credit we would like to give to God for our salvation, we still resist giving God ALL the credit. We still want to reserve some of the credit for ourselves. Although the passage clearly states that our salvation is *“not from ourselves,”* we still insist that there is something we must do to make ourselves eligible for salvation. Most evangelical Christians believe that there are “preconditions” that must be met in order to become saved. Although there is disagreement about how these preconditions relate to one another, there is general agreement that they must be evident in the life of the true believer.

One precondition is belief or faith in Christ and His atoning death and resurrection.

Another precondition of salvation is repentance. Both John the Baptist and Christ Himself preached a gospel of repentance. Repentance is a change of attitude toward sin, a turning from sin, and a turning towards Christ for salvation.

Although not a precondition of salvation, good works always accompany salvation. The Bible clearly teaches that although no one is justified by works, saving faith is always accompanied by works. Good works are the proof that the faith is real.

In order for you to determine whether or not you have satisfactorily met the supposed necessary preconditions for salvation, I invite you to take the following test:

On a scale of one-to-ten, rate the strength and quality of your belief or faith in the deity of Christ and His atoning death and resurrection at Calvary:

1. I absolutely believe it, without ever the slightest trace of doubt.
2. I believe it very strongly, but on rare occasions I might experience doubts in moments of weakness.
3. I believe it very strongly most of the time, but sometimes wonder if it's really true.
4. I believe it is probably true, but I could be wrong.
5. I would give it about a 50/50 chance of being true.
6. It might be true, but I have no way of knowing for sure if it really is.
7. It's probably not true, but I would like it to be true.
8. It's probably not true, and I don't much care about it one way or the other.
9. I know it's not true, and I doubt that I am wrong about it.
10. I am absolutely certain that it's not true.

On a scale of one-to-ten, rate the degree of your repentance from sin and desire to turn from it:

1. My attitude toward the sin totally changed since I became a Christian, and I have turned away from every known sin in my life. I haven't looked back since.
2. I have repented of all the sin in my life, but do struggle from time to time with some minor sins.
3. I repented of my sins and asked forgiveness for them, but there still remain major areas of sin in my life which I am struggling with.
4. I have asked Jesus to forgive my sins, but I have to admit that there are many areas of sin I am still holding back on.
5. I have been growing in my walk with Christ. I am making progress with the sin in my life, but still have a very long ways to go.
6. I have repented of some of the sins in my life, but there are still many sins that I am not yet willing to let go of.
7. I have had a conversion experience, but not much has changed with respect to my attitude toward major sins in my life.
8. I have lots of sin in my life, but I don't think it's really that big a deal.
9. I love the sins in my life and couldn't care less about what God thinks about them.
10. I live my life without any guilt at all for my sins, and I wish you would leave me alone.

Finally, on a scale of one to ten, rate yourself on the amount and quality of the good deeds which you are producing in your life as evidence of your salvation:

1. I devote almost every waking moment of my life to the Lord's service, and I give away almost all of my money to the Lord's work and to charitable causes.
2. Although I am not perfect in this regard, I must say that I produce more good works than at least 90% of the Christians I know.
3. I consider myself to be above average in this respect, and I desire to produce an increasing amount of good works as I grow in Christ.
4. I am about average, compared to other Christians I know.
5. I am below average, when compared with other Christians, but significantly above the level of the average Joe on the street.
6. I have to admit. I'm pretty selfish and don't share very much of my time, talent and money with others.
7. I mostly look out for number one, but am respectful of the rights of others.
8. I mostly take from others.
9. I am downright mean towards others, and I lie and cheat without any remorse at all.
10. I am downright evil and delight in the misery of others.

Now that you have completed the above self-evaluation, let's take a look at your score. A total of three points is the best you can score. A score of 30 is the worst. Where do you think God draws the line

when deciding who is qualified to be saved or not? If you believe that salvation is an all-or-nothing proposition, then it is impossible for you to know for sure that you are saved. If you believe, on the other hand, that God's gift of salvation is an act of pure grace, completely apart from anything that you can take credit for, then you can know for sure that you are at least in the process of becoming saved. No one is completely saved. Even a perfect score on the above test would not qualify anyone for complete salvation. In order to be completely saved you would have to be completely and totally united with Christ and perfected in Heaven. In this present life we are only saved to the degree that we abide in Christ.

Faith should not be regarded as a prerequisite for salvation. It is simply a word used to describe the means by which we enter into relationship with Christ. It is trusting Christ to save us, not on the basis of any qualification or merit on our part, but solely on the basis of His shed blood on Calvary for our sins. It is not our faith that qualifies us for salvation. As a matter of fact, the word faith is used because there is always an element of doubt present.

Rather than thinking of faith as some sort of requirement for salvation, why not think of it as a door instead? God has given a measure of faith to everyone, and Jesus stands behind that "door" of faith and "*knocks.*" (Rev. 3:20) He invites you to enter into a relationship with Him. Simply open the door and invite Him into your life. There are no preconditions. You come as you are. You have nothing to commend yourself to Him, except His shed blood at Calvary.

It is Jesus who produces the evidence of your salvation. Apart from Christ you can produce nothing of lasting value. When you open the door and enter into relationship with Him, wonderful things begin to happen.

You can take no pride in the degree to which you experience God's salvation in Christ. God is the sole initiator of your salvation. It is He who sought you out. Any faith that you exhibit, or good works that are manifested in your life, are completely a result of God's initiatives. Because Christ paid the penalty for the sins of all mankind, eventually all mankind will come to full repentance and be reconciled to Christ. While it is true that Christians today are among the first fruits of God's plan of redemption, we were warned by Jesus not to be prideful and not to think ourselves as deserving of greater rewards than those who are last to be saved. In the end, all will be rewarded. I suspect that the rewards will not take the form of things, but instead the utter joy that we will experience when completely united with Christ. I believe that in the end all will receive the same reward. Jesus illustrates this truth in the Parable of the Vineyard in Matthew 20.