

## Faith Not Works – Two Entirely Different Qualities

All my life I have wanted to please people. I want to be a person you can count on. I want to say and do the right things, and encourage others. I am willing to sacrifice to help others. I am glad to go the extra mile to help someone else. But in actuality, I fall well short of being as helpful as I should.

A person not versed in the Christian faith would think that acts of human service make for a person certainly headed for heaven. Not necessarily so. Being helpful is not the make-or-break qualification God is looking regarding salvation.

I heard a speaker at a recent training event who talked about the importance of “doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way and for the right reason.” The last part of that statement is the “game changer” because it focuses on our inner motivation. For a person of faith, acts of service have nothing to do with us and everything to do with God. “The right reason” is why we serve others, but it still isn’t related to salvation. God appreciates everyone who does good deeds, but the chance of an eternity with God is an entirely different subject. With all the good things we do we can, we can’t earn our way into Heaven. Salvation is a free gift in response to our love and dedication to the Heavenly Father.



*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).* Salvation goes much deeper than being a good person. It relates to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus was perfect, yet He was crucified for *our* sins. If the “punishment for sin is death,” we, who are far from perfect, should have been on that cross instead. *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).* Yet, Jesus took our place on *our* cross. He died so we could have hope for eternal life. If we are faithful and sincerely confess our sins, God will forgive us. He wipes the slate clean. We need to be perfect for God to offer salvation. That is the purpose of the cross. That is why it is our cross.

Make no mistake – God wants us to help others. Otherwise, our faith would be empty and meaningless. Pretending to have faith but not acting on it is empty faith. *What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (James 2:14-18).*

Good deeds (“works”) are important. When done in God’s name they show others that God loves them, through us. But, don’t confuse acts of service as earning the way to Heaven. The bottom line is for Jesus to be our Lord and Savior. Salvation is a free gift that comes only from God.

**Two Distinctively Different Questions:** Have you asked Jesus to be your Lord and Savior? Then, if He is, have you tried to emulate Jesus by helping others because of your faith?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father. We want to be good people, and help others who are in need. But, we do these things in response to our faith and love for You. We turn our life over to You, and we seek eternal life with You. Amen.