bring us to God." (I Peter 3:18) "Hereby perceive we the love of God; because *He laid down His life for us*." (I John 3:16)

This past Christmas season some wealthy person went into a Walmart store in Pennsylvania and told them he wanted to pay for all the gifts that people had on lay-away. He handed over $50,000 in cashiers checks to pay for the gifts and left the store. When the customers were contacted they were told, "You don't need to pay for your lay-away gifts. Someone else has already paid for them. Just take them and go on your way." The customers had to believe that someone else had paid for their gifts so they no longer owed Walmart anything.

The message of God's Word, the Bible, is that forgiveness of our sins and salvation from eternal Hell are available to us as a gift from God; a gift that we do not and cannot pay because we are sinners; and do not need to pay because Jesus Christ has paid it for us. Salvation and forgiveness must be accepted by faith as a gift from God. To expect a person to get to heaven by his good deeds would be like throwing a cup to a man drowning in the ocean so he could bail the ocean dry and walk to shore. He doesn't need a cup. He needs someone to throw him a rope and pull him out. The rope that we sinners need is God's gift of salvation. "... God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ;" (Acts 11:17) Salvation is God's gift to those who *believe in Christ* as the Savior, not to those who try to earn it by their good works.

Now, if forgiveness of sins and a place in heaven are not gained by our good works, and if God offers this to us as a gift, how can we receive this gift? The only answer is, "By faith!" But what is faith? Faith is absolute dependence on the Word of God. Faith is believing that Christ died

for our sins and rose again. Faith is believing that God will immediately and eternally give a person the gift of forgiveness, salvation, heaven and eternal life if he will come to Him and receive it.

Consider some Bible phrases: "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "*Whosoever shall call* upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "*Whosever believeth* on Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." "Being *justified by faith* we have peace with God." "To him that worketh not, but *believeth on Him* that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness." "And *I give unto them eternal life*; and they shall never perish…."

We find two illustrations of these great truths in the Bible. Nicodemus was a very good man and even a teacher of religion. But Jesus told him that, in spite of his goodness, he could not get into heaven unless he was born again. The thief on the cross was a very bad man, guilty of robbery and probably even murder. But he turned to Jesus for help in his sinful condition and was promised that on that very day he would be with Jesus in heaven. Neither one of these men gained salvation by their good works. Depending on our good works will never get any of us to heaven. Depending on what Jesus did for us when He died for our sins on the cross will guarantee any one of us eternal life in heaven

Friend, if you are depending on your good and religious works to get you to heaven, you will never get there! But if you will get alone somewhere and talk to God (He is there to hear you) admit to Him that you are a sinner, thank Him that He sent His Son to die on the cross to pay the whole debt for your sins, and tell Him that you are trusting and accepting His gift of salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life. If you sincerely

do this He will do a work in your heart and you will at that moment be spiritually born again into the Kingdom of God. No matter who you are or what you have done, God will keep His promise to forgive your sins and save your soul. After this you will do good works, not to help you earn your salvation but to please the God who gave you the gift of eternal life.

—by James R. Hines

Brentwood Baptist Church

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Pastor Daryl York

Sunday

Sunday School. . . . . 9:30 A.M.
Morning Service. . . . . 11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening. 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday

Evening Prayer Service . . . . 7:00 P.M.

Nursery provided for all services.

How Good Do You Have To Be To Get To Heaven?

Am I Good Enough?

"Am I good enough to get to heaven?"
"How good do I have to be to go there?"

People wonder about these things because they think that they need to be good in order to go to heaven. They assume that when they pass into eternity God will put all of their good and bad works on a balance scale. If the good works outweigh the bad works they will be welcomed into heaven; but if the bad works outweigh the good works, they will be sent to an awful eternity in Hell.

If you are like most people you are assuming that your good works and religious deeds will get you into heaven. After all, you keep your sidewalk shoveled, and even shovel the sidewalk of the old lady who lives next door. You pay your taxes on time, do a good job at your workplace, donate to the Red Cross and even do some religious things, like attending church fairly often and reciting the Lord's prayer by memory. You are nice to other people and everyone likes you. So with all of this goodness, surely you will be able to get into heaven some day.

Is this the way you think? Certainly, we surmise, God wants good people in heaven so if a person does more good things than bad ones, he will surely get there. This may sound sensible to you, but that is not the way it works. Nowhere in all the Bible is there a single suggestion that our good works will help get us into heaven.

People will say, "How can that be? My parents and grandparents thought living a good life would get us to heaven. So why won't that work?" Here are *three reasons* why good works will not get anyone into heaven.

1 Good works do not pay for sin.

We are all sinners. God says "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Wise Solomon said, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Ec 7:20) Every sin, no matter how small, is an act of rebellion against a holy and sovereign God. Therefore, there is a shocking penalty for sin. According to the Bible, the penalty that must be paid for sins is death. God told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they w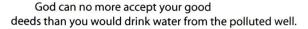ould die." (Genesis 2:17) The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:20) and the Apostle Paul pronounced that "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) Friend, are you a sinner? Then the penalty of your sins must be paid by death! Good deeds can never pay the penalty for your sins.

2 Our good works are not acceptable to God because they are defiled by our sins.

Supposing you are backpacking way out in the country. The day is hot and you have run out of water. Suddenly you see a well by a farmhouse with an old man sitting on the porch. You approach him and say, "Sir, I am really thirsty. Could you give me a glass of water?" He goes into the house and brings out a glass, lets down the bucket into his well, pulls it up, dips the glass in the bucket and hands it to you. The glass of water is a beautiful sight. It is clear and wonderfully cold in your hand. Just as you are about to take a big drink, you glance down. There, floating at the bottom of the well, is the rotten carcass of an old dog. Suddenly, the water in your glass has lost it's appeal. It has been polluted by the rotting dog.

This is exactly how God sees our good deeds. They look nice and appealing to us, but God sees that they are polluted by our sinfulness. Our sinful thoughts and sinful words contaminate the good deeds that we do and make them unacceptable to God. The great Old Testament preacher Isaiah said it this way, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses (good deeds) are as filthy rags;" (Isaiah 64:6)

God can no more accept your good deeds than you would drink water from the polluted well.

Even if our good works were not polluted by sin, the Bible makes it plain that good works do not solve the problem of our sins.

In Romans Paul says, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His (God's) sight." (Romans 3:20) "By grace are ye saved through faith….*not of works* lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9) "*Not by works of righteousness* which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us….(Titus 3:5) "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith *without the (good) deeds* of the law." (Romans 3:28) "Who hath saved us, … *not according to our works*…." (II Timothy 1:9)

Based on the Bible, it can be said that a person could do twenty good deeds every day, attend church every week, get baptized in every church in town, say prayers for two hours a day and still die and slip into eternal Hell. Good and religious works can not pay the penalty for sins. So how can the penalty for sins be paid? Certainly not by our good works!

3 Good works cannot pay for our sins because Christ has already paid for them.

In Old Testament times when a person sinned and broke God's law, he would have to bring a sheep, a goat or an ox to the priest, who would kill it and sprinkle the blood on the altar. The death of the animal made an atonement, or covering, as a temporary solution to the problem of that sin.

But the Old Testament Jews were also taught that some day God would send the Messiah, who would provide a permanent solution for the sin problem. This took place when Christ was crucified and His blood was shed. Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Then He rose from the dead to prove that He had defeated sin and death.

This great Bible truth is plainly stated many times in the Scriptures: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; *and the LORD hath laid on him* the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6) "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is *shed for many for the remission of sins*." (Matthew 26:28) "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*." (John 1:29) "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*." (Romans 5:8) "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that *Christ died for our sins according* to the scriptures;" (I Corinth. 15:3) "Who *gave himself for our sins*" (Galatians 1:4) "For Christ also *hath once suffered for sins*, the just for the unjust, that he might