

Not Works

Bill Brinkworth

In Ephesians 2, Paul addresses converted Gentiles (Eph. 2:11), and reminds them of the most important points of how they became a Christian. This crucial step has eluded many religions, even some “Christian” denominations. The distinctions that separate a lost, even religious, person from a saved person are that:

☞ A saved person is saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) because Jesus died on the cross and paid for their sins.

A person is saved, not because one is good looking, worthy of salvation, or an exceptional person. All are saved because God is good, and He loves us, and it has nothing to do with who we are.

If we will make the first step to believe Jesus died for our sins, God’s love will do the rest. We have to go first, not wait to have some proof, but do as a child does when he believes what his parents tell him. The child believes and obeys, so must we do and trust what God has told us. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”*

Ephesians 2:8

☞ We are saved because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. There is nothing we can do to earn God’s approval (Eph. 2:9), other than trusting Christ as Saviour. No amount of good works, kindness, or religious mumbo-jumbo will get us higher

than the coffin lid. We cannot earn our way because the ticket has already been paid. Trying to do something to earn salvation is negating the trusting by faith we must do.

“Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:9

However, doing deeds according to what Scripture commands, doing what we can do for the cause of Christ, or bringing honor to God after we are saved is the right thing to do for Him (Eph. 2:10). A born-again person is saved to serve, not just to sit and soak in God’s goodness.

Many nod their head in agreement to Ephesians 2:8-9, but do not connect what it says they may be doing or believing. The whole point of the two verses is that there is nothing we can do to earn Heaven.

Even biblical doctrines have been turned into good works people hope will make them worthy of Heaven. Countless people and religious leaders have clarified their salvation as “Of course I am going to Heaven, I have been baptized,” “I tithe,” “Help the poor,” “I live a good life,” or “I obey the rules of my church.” Many are good works that will please God after one is saved, not good works to get one saved and to Heaven. Those deeds can become conditions added to what God said to do in Eph. 2:8-9.

It is only faith that will get one God’s promise of Heaven. You cannot add anything to it.

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How Good Are You?

Bill Brinkworth

In the Bible, young David’s foe, Goliath, was a giant of a warrior. It is recorded he was “six cubits and a span” tall. One immediately wonders, “How big is a cubit and a span?”

A cubit is from the tip of one’s middle finger to the tip of the elbow. Most assume it to be 18 inches.

Others say that it may have been measured by the cubit of the king at the time. King Saul was a large man so his cubit could have been 20 inches long.

To make it more confusing, there are other lengths attributed to this measurement. The Babylonian cubit is known to be 20.65 to 21.26 inches long. The long Hebrew cubit was 18.36 to 18.9 inches.

The exact size of a span is also questionable. Its length is derived from the distance from an extended hand’s tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger. Most assume it is nine inches. One can easily see that this is also an unreliable measurement

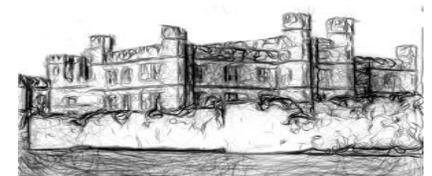
because it depends on whose hand is measured.

Depending on what standard was used, the giant Goliath may have been 9.75 to 11.5 feet tall. One can easily see that a subjective, comparative measurement is not accurate.

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“I Have a Mighty Castle”

From A Story by C. H. Spurgeon



Charles Spurgeon likened a man in his unsaved, natural estate to a man who lived in what he thought was a strong, impenetrable castle. Within it, the man hid behind its protective outer and inner moats. Beyond those deep, water-filled waterways were tall, thick walls, and further within, if an enemy could ever get beyond them were protective fort-like dungeons.

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How Good Are You?

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Similar measuring is used when one compares his “goodness” with that of another. “I am not as bad as that adulterer” or “I’m not as bad as that liar and murderer.” Who made you the standard for measuring who is naughty or nice?

Ultimately it is not man’s standards that are accurate or count. What one may think is good behavior, another may view as poor. Standards on measuring good conduct can change from one person to another, and even change several times a day. What is acceptable in one country may be abhorrent in another. Some behavior accepted today was frowned on in previous generations.

“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

II Cor. 10:12

Ignored by most, the origin of what defines righteousness and evil is God’s Word, the Bible. Within its preserved pages, man can read what God says is right and wrong. His opinion never changes and is the only one that ultimately matters. His measurements of behavior have been steadfast through most of human history.

God cuts quickly to the chase.

He makes it quite clear, by His gauge, none are “good.” As hard as man may try, he is still a sinner, and his efforts in controlling his conduct are only external, temporary, and fall short of what God deems good.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”

Rom. 3:23

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:” Rom. 3:10 Also: Rom. 3:9, Gal. 3:22.

God’s honest judgment of us certainly should change our judging of others. We are all sinners!

Except for God’s mercy and giving us a way to have our sins forgiven and forgotten there would be no hope for any of us to miss Hell. Forget your opinionated judgments of others and see yourself as God sees you — a sinner, and not “good”. Your measuring tool of goodness means little

However, we can be forgiven for our iniquities. The only way is by trusting that Jesus’ death on the cross is payment for our wickedness. Then, once cleared of our sins, we can follow God scriptural commandments and please our heavenly Father. Our obedience and deeds are then “good” in His eyes.

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” *Romans 10:13*

“I Have a Mighty Castle”

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Now the first moat that goes around the sinner’s trusting place is his good works. “Ah,” he says, “I am as good as my neighbor. I pay my bills on time. I tithe to the church on even the smallest thing I earn. I am a good, respectable gentleman, indeed.”

When the Lord comes to save this man, He easily storms the first obstacle the man has created. The approaching thundering voice of God shouts, “Salvation is of the Lord!” If salvation be of God, how can it be of good works, and instantly the moat is dried up.

“There is still the moat of ceremonies,” the man thinks. “Well, I may not be able to trust in my good works, but I have been baptized. I have been confirmed. Do I not take of the sacrament? That shall be my trust!”

The convicting army of God again attacks and approaches this second barrier. Again, the master shouts, “Salvation is of the Lord!” This watery obstacle is also dried up.

Confused, the man retreats further into his fort of protection. He never expected this protection to fail him. Behind the tall, thick, strong walls, he stows himself away. The sinner looking over the fort’s walls convinces himself of his safety and says, “I can repent. I can believe whenever I like. I will save myself by repenting and believing.”

Up the walls God’s conviction approaches. The walls are easily battered down. His voice shouts, “Salvation is of the Lord. Your faith and your repentance must all be given you or else you will neither truly believe nor repent of sin.”

The castle of self is overcome. Any hopes the sinner had are all cut off. He knows now salvation is not of anything he could have done as he reads the banner that replaces his own. It proudly waves, “Salvation is of the Lord!”

Is the battle over? Oh, no. The sinner has retired to the dungeons in the center of the castle. He now uses another tactic, “I cannot save myself. There is no salvation for me.” The sinner sits down and cries, “I cannot be saved. I will perish.”

This battlement is also attacked by the Lord. The Lord’s commanding voice shouts, “Salvation is of the Lord. It is not of man; it is of God. I can save even the worst sinners. This sword, you see, cuts two ways; it cuts pride down, and then it cleaves the skull of despair. If any many say he can save himself, it halveth his pride at once. If another man say he cannot be saved, it dasheth his despair to the earth, for it affirms that he can be saved when he truly sees salvation is of the Lord. I came to save all that would believe and trust that Jesus’ payment for sin is the only way to victory!”