

## **When is Good, Good Enough?**

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The scriptures today tell us that anger is as bad as murder. If you continue to read Matthew 5 and Matthew 6, you will see other commands laid down by God. The laws concern anger, adultery, divorce, oaths, or bearing falsehoods, or retaliation for a perceived wrongdoing. God commands us to love our enemies, and to turn the other cheek. The gospel tells us to love one another, and to love The Lord our God above all else. God tells us to pray earnestly and not wear our faith like a mask, but to live our Faith as a constant presence. He tells us to be good Samaritans, and to perform good deeds and to spread the word of our faith.

These are but a few of the words of God and his disciples which give us a Godly standard to live by. In Matthew 19: 16-22 A rich young man came to Jesus and said, teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? And Jesus said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Why do we have faith and try to live life as good people? To us, the answer is simple, to earn a place in Paradise, to go to Heaven. If you are like most people, you

believe that everyone lives forever somewhere, that once you die, your soul goes somewhere. Most Americans believe in life after death.

In other parts of the world, the prevailing belief is that the soul comes back around for another lap— (reincarnation) we just start over as someone or something else.

It does not seem to matter if you are talking to Muslims, Hindus, or Christians, most believe that if you live a good life with good deeds you will go to heaven/paradise. Why? Because most people believe that good people go to heaven. Behave yourself now and you don't really need to worry about what happens next. Then you go on with your life.

Sometimes we have an event in our life that forces you to seriously consider the question of, **what comes next**. It could be anything, illness, a birthday, a funeral, anything. It seems the older we get, the more often you find yourself pushing what comes next from your mind. The fact is, the mortality rate for humans is 100%. So why do we worry?

Because as good as you are and most of us are pretty good, you are not really sure if you have been good enough. You hope so. **But how good is good enough?**

The bible makes us wonder. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, it will be hard for rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this they were greatly astounded and said, "then who can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

Oh dear, does that mean I should give everything up and stand on street corners and preach the word of God? Surely there must be a less radical approach?

How about those radical extremists who blow up babies and children and themselves and others in the name of their God? They think they are going to Paradise. But wait, you say, isn't it the job of religion to help me understand where the line is? What the standard is? Do I have enough time to stash away enough good deeds to counter balance my bad deeds?

Teachers, preachers, rabbis, priests, are all in the business of getting us safely to the other side. Specifically, they are responsible for helping us understand how to live in such a way to ensure a happy ending.

So why are we still unsure? We go to church, we read the bible, we pray, we follow God's Commandments, our religious teachings, we give to the poor, we love our fellow man, we honor our parents, we love God. Shouldn't that be enough to get us into heaven? I hope so, my heart answers.

Several years ago, I had a preacher named Clyde Stanfield. He had always believed in God and he had trusted in God his entire life. He was married, did not drink, or cuss and was a great father to his two boys. He treasured his Mother and Father and his only brother. Every Sunday when he preached he reached right into my heart and I knew he was preaching right to me. The other members of the congregation said they felt the same way. He was my Christian example. The person I always wanted to be. Then his life changed. His teen-aged son took his younger brother out for a ride in the car, in the middle of the night. His younger son was killed that night in a car accident, the older son was near death and was brain damaged. His wife

divorced Clyde over this accident. She could not forgive the living son for taking the younger son into a fatal accident. Clyde's brother passed away, his mother had a stroke and his father died, all in the span of a year. Clyde never wavered in his faith. He always believed in God's love for him, and his family. Years later Clyde remarried a woman named Barbara and they raised his son and cared for him together. Several years later I asked Clyde if he thought my newly deceased husband was in heaven, because he was such a good man, Clyde looked at me and he said I hope so Marge. He was a really good man. Why did a really good man not tell me "yes"? I am sure your husband is in heaven? Perhaps because only God knows for sure. However, God sent us a message about life after death. A big one.

We believe, as Christians that Jesus is exactly who he says he is. **The Son of God**. He came for the reason he said he came, to forgive sin. He came to save us from sin. He gave us everlasting life by forgiving our sins.

With this in mind, Jesus said, **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** How could he claim to be the only way to God? **Because he was the lamb of God!**

Sin, according to ancient Jewish law, had to be paid for with blood. Ancient Jews insisted on slaughtering an animal to pay for sin. God sent his only son, our Lord, to die for our sins.

In our modern society we all pay for our sins. We punish our children for their wrongdoings, we punish those who break the law. Our prisons are full of men and women paying for their sins against society. Our legal system is overrun with cases involving parties who want money or

justice for the damages they incurred at the hands of another.

What we need to be **“good enough”** is to be saved or delivered from our sins and for all the hurt we have caused as a result of our sin. If you believe that Jesus is who he says he is, **our Savior**, and that he died to save us from our sins, then you know the answer. The answer is: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”**

Footnote: Many ideas were adapted from the “Discipleship Study Bible” and from “How Good is Good, Enough? By Andy Stanley