

Article: Are You Good Enough?

What do you need to do, to get to heaven? Let me repeat that one more time. *What do you need to do, to get to heaven?*

When asked this question, the average person may respond that they need to do religious and good things, like praying, volunteering, and trying to be an overall positive person - definitely doing more good than bad. By praying, volunteering, and being a positive person, they qualify themselves for the pearly gates.

While this definitely sounds like a reasonable response, what typically is not clarified in peoples' answers is to what degree a person should pray, volunteer, and strive to be a positive person. In other words, what typically is not specified is how much a person should pray, volunteer, and be positive.

You see, we have it figured out that for a person to obtain eternal life, they have to be good. And if a person is bad, they do not get to heaven but are disqualified to hell. But here is the catch: we typically are hesitant to define just how much good and for how long the good needs to be done to qualify oneself for eternal life. We are a little gun-shy about defining how much and how long goodness must be done to obtain eternal life. We typically like to keep this part vague or grade everyone on a curve because we like to grade ourselves on a curve.

And so, as long as we can come up with enough good things in our lives and the lives of those around us, we can conclude that eternal life is within our grasp.

A problem arises, though, when we read of the Parable of the Good Samaritan in **Luke 10**. From this parable, we are told that for a person to inherit eternal life, they must love the Lord God with all their heart, soul, strength, and neighbour as themselves. Indeed, eternal life is possible when you set God above everything else and let go of all your thoughts, words, works, knowledge, and insights. Yes, if you commit to God's will in all that you have in body and soul and flesh and spirit, in all that you are, with all of your strength, health, and senses, you will obtain eternal life.

Keep in mind that this is easier said than done. This is not a partial calling to love God and neighbour with a half-hearted attitude. Obtaining eternal life is something one does with everything - everything a person has!

This looks like this: to obtain eternal life, love should spread throughout your whole body and your whole being into every part of you. From head to foot, inside and outside, all that you do should be captivated by love. No hate, no resentment, no grumbling, no apathy, and no frowning are allowed. If you are to inherit eternal life by what you do, you are to love and delight in God completely, never be annoyed to go to church, read your Bible, and never rush to study the catechism. And regarding your neighbour, you should not see anything indecent in him. You should always put the best construction on your neighbour, never giving in to gossip. Your mouths should not speak any evil, and your hands and feet must be innocent, too, only going the way of goodness. In short, all of your thoughts must be clean. All of your deeds must be kind. All of your words must be pure and uplifting. Even your ears must filter out the negative and only hear the best construction about your neighbour. And get this: you should desire to die a thousand times over than anger God with just one sin.

So, how are you doing? Have you done enough? Have you loved enough? Have you given enough? Has love permeated your whole being completely?

If you think you have done enough to inherit eternal life, you are actually lying. You are severely deceived if you think you have done enough and somehow racked up enough brownie points before

God. You see, when we look at the Ten Commandments, we not only see what we should do but quickly learn of our weakness - we learn that we do not do what we ought to do before God and our neighbour. We learn what love looks like and that we fail to love God and our neighbour properly.

And so, we are very much in the same boat as the Priest and the Levite in that Parable of the Good Samaritan. The Priest and Levite saw a poor, half-dead fellow on the side of the road and did nothing for him because they had neither love for God or their neighbour. Tragically, they understood the man on the edge of the road was in trouble, but walked by without love.

Truth be told, though, we are probably much closer to that poor man on the side of the road than the Priest and Levite. When God's Ten Commandments do their work on us, they reveal that we do not love the way we ought to, like the Priest and Levite. However, the Law does something more. It shows us just how dark and depraved our sinful nature runs through us. The Law helps us see that we have been beaten up by our sin and left half-dead in the ditch of life. Indeed, the Law shows us that we are not where we should be. The Law shows us our sins, reveals our sickness, and makes us aware of our misery. And so, the Law helps us understand that we cannot do anything to inherit eternal life. In fact, the Law helps us realise that the only thing we have earned is damnation.

God's good and true Law cannot help us out of the ditch of our sin, restore us, or heal us. The Law only diagnoses our problem, which is why we need something more - a Good Samaritan, a good neighbour to rescue us.

Consider the parable again. The Good Samaritan came and had compassion on the half-dead man. He came to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He then set him on his animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, he paid the innkeeper to look after the wounded man. This is our Jesus!

Like the Samaritan, Jesus came down to you, your lost and dying condition, so that He might pour the oil and wine of the Sacraments upon you! Indeed, Jesus placed you not on an animal to carry you to an inn, but He set your sins upon Himself to give you forgiveness, life, and salvation. And like the Samaritan who brought the man to an inn, Jesus has brought you to the Church and given His Word to be that medicine of forgiveness that is continuously delivered to you, restoring you unto salvation.

Jesus is that perfect neighbour; He did not pass you by on His road to the cross. But being full of love, He scooped you up unto Himself.

And so, we see that the Law shows you and me our lack of love. It shows us that we cannot do anything to inherit eternal life. However, the Gospel shows you and me our Good Samaritan - Jesus Christ - who did everything for you so that you might inherit eternal life. Yes, daily, the Law will remind us of our inability to properly love and our failure to acquire eternal life by our reason and strength. But the Gospel... Yes, the Gospel continually declares to us that we do have a Good Samaritan who has loved us and, out of joy, given us His kingdom!