**THE GOOD WORKS MISCONCEPTION**

***Ephesians 2:8-9***

Sunday School Lesson 1

*Answers to Questions & Misconceptions About Salvation*

07/14/2019

**Introduction:** This week, we are starting our new Sunday School series dealing with the common questions and misconceptions that people have regarding salvation. Every person has some type of opinion that they have formed regarding what happens after our time on this earth has ended. These opinions are most often formed through years of listening to false teaching or through a person’s own responses to their experiences in life. Consequently, the witnessing Christian is routinely presented with questions and misconceptions when it comes to what it means to be saved. While the believer knows the true path to Heaven, it is important that he also know how to Biblically answer these challenges. This is not to undermine the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the lost soul. To the contrary, our Biblical answers are what the Holy Spirit uses to cut into the heart of man. The Bible is a powerful two-edged sword, and It has the answers to all of man’s foolish and ignorant questions or opinions. In our first lesson, we are going to look at how to answer the most common misconception found throughout the entire world regarding salvation: that it comes only by our good works.

1. WE MUST HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THE ROOT OF THE GOOD WORKS MISCONCEPTION: PRIDE. (EPHESIANS 2:9; ROMANS 3:27-28; JAMES 4:6; PROVERBS 6:17; ISAIAH 14:12-14)
2. **We must show the lost soul that reliance on good works leads to boasting and is based in pride (Ephesians 2:9; Romans 3:27-28).** The man that relies upon good works has created an allusion in his heart and in his life. While he recognized his sinful condition at some point, he has placated his conscience by committing his life to doing good works. He does not even realize the false sense of security and pride that he is fostering in his heart. He may have a genuine belief that he is pleasing God. He must see from the Bible that his method of salvation is not God’s method. If he is not willing to accept God’s method, then doesn’t that speak even further to his own pride? It may be necessary to provide an example of this pride from the Bible. Luke 18:9-14 gives the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee’s “righteous living” caused him to have great pride in his heart.
3. **We must emphasize how God views anything that is based in pride (James 4:6; Proverbs 6:17; Isaiah 14:12-14).** The Bible tells us that God resisteth the proud. Of course, Proverbs also tells us that God hates the proud look. After revealing this to the lost sinner, the believing Christian should challenge him to consider this thought. Would God make a way of salvation that leads people to the very sin in which he hates? The answer is most obvious.If this is not convincing enough, it may also be necessary to show them the source of pride. Isaiah 14 shows us that Satan himself was cast out of Heaven as a result of the pride of his heart. Pride is a wicked sin against God. It is a sin that has condemned countless souls to Hell.
4. WE MUST HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THE MAGNITUDE OF THEIR SIN DEBT AND THEIR INABILITY TO PAY IT. (JAMES 2:10-11; MATTHEW 7:21-23; GAL. 2:16; ROM. 3:20; ISAIAH 64:6)
5. **We must show the lost soul that his sin debt is great (James 2:10-11; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23).** Now that the lost person has seen the path that his reliance on good works is leading him down, we can help him see the foolishness in trying to earn his way to Heaven. This is first done by showing him how totally insufficient he is in paying off his own debts. People who are trusting in good works are guilty of minimizing their sin. That’s the only way that they can rationalize their ability to do enough good to cancel out the bad. James 2 points out that failure to one area of the Law makes us guilty of all of the Law. From here, we can transition to the book of Romans and show the price that has to be paid for sin. Of course, we know that the price is death. It is the only way to pay for our sins.
6. **We must emphasize that our good could never be good enough (Matthew 7:21-23; Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:20; Isaiah 64:6).** Matthew 7 shows how there will be some who stand before God and are cast into Hell, despite the fact that they did what the world would deem “good deeds.” Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:20 make it very clear that a man cannot justify himself before God through the works of the Law. Finally, Isaiah 64:6 compares the righteousness of man to filthy rags. A common question that I like to ask is this:“How much good do you have to do in order to earn your way to Heaven, and how close are you to reaching that amount?” I’ve never met anyone who has even tried to give a quantifiable answer to this question. Most commonly, they say that you just have to do more good than bad.
7. WE CAN HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THAT GOOD WORKS HAVE NEVER BEEN GOD’S PLAN FOR THE REDEMPTION OF MAN. (ROMANS 4:1-8, 9:31-32; 2 TIMOTHY 1:9; 1 PETER 1:19-21)
8. **We can show them that God’s plan was the same before and after the cross of Calvary (Romans 4:1-8, 9:31-32).** Just as people struggle with faith salvation today, there were many Jews who struggled with it during the time of the early church. They looked at the Gospel as if it were a new doctrine to them that ran contrary to what the men of the Old Testament believed. In Romans 4, Paul shows us that men such as Abraham and David were saved by faith just like we are saved today. It was Abraham’s faith that was counted unto him for righteousness. These verses make it very clear that the answer from the beginning has always been faith. Man’s own works of righteousness have never been sufficient to appease the judgment of God. Romans 9 further shows that Israel as a whole did not attain to the law of righteousness because they sought it not be faith but through works.
9. **We can emphasize that God’s plan for salvation through faith in Christ was set in motion before the world even began (2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:19-21).** God’s plan of salvation did not start after Adam and Eve sinned. He had His plan of salvation set in place before He ever even created the world. While this might be a deeper concept to talk to a lost person about, it may be necessary in order to show them that God’s way has never been about good works. There are many false teachers out there who teach different methods of salvation for different dispensations. Such teaching is not in harmony with the Word of God, and it is used by Satan as a means to cause confusion regarding salvation. God did not hesitate to reveal His plan of salvation to mankind. Shortly after the fall of mankind, God told Adam and Eve that the Messiah would come. He certainly was not taken by surprise.
10. WE MUST HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THAT GRACE IS NOT GRACE IF IT IS COMBINED WITH WORKS. (ROM. 11:6; ACTS 15:5-11; GAL. 2:21; 2 COR. 1:9; JOHN 14:6; HEB. 10:17-18; 1 TIM. 2:5-6)
11. **We must show them that you cannot combine grace through faith with good works (Romans 11:6; Acts 15:5-11).** There are generally three types of people that you will meet who are relying upon good works for salvation. The first type are those who have a general regard for God and are trusting in being a good person to get to Heaven. The second type are those who worship some false god and believe that their god wants them to do good works for the after-life. The third type are those who may actually be the hardest to reach. This is because they are so close to salvation. It is right there in front of them. These are the people who are relying on both faith in Christ and good works to get to Heaven. You tell them that they need to put their faith in Christ, and they will tell you that they have already done that. Yet, when you ask them how to get to Heaven, they tell you: believe in Jesus and do good. These people must understand that grace is not grace if you add works to it. This was very well explained in Acts 15 when this exact same problem arose within the early church.
12. **We must emphasize that salvation is found through Christ alone. There does not need to be anything added to that (Gal. 2:21; 2 Cor. 1:9; John 14:6; Hebrews 10:17-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).** There are many verses that could be used to make this final point. Salvation is found through faith in Christ Jesus alone. It is not found through faith in Christ along with anything else. When we add our good works to faith, it frustrates the grace of God. We make the death of Christ to be in vain. 2 Corinthians 1:9 presents us with an option to either trust in ourselves or trust in Christ. Again, it cannot be both. Christ said He was the only way of salvation. There is no more offering of sin needed because Christ already made atonement for it. Finally, 1 Timothy 2 tells us that there is only one mediator. When you go to trial, you select one attorney. You cannot represent yourself and have someone else represent you. You have to make a clear choice who will be representing you. That choice is Christ!

**Conclusion:** As Christians, we must go out into the world and let them know that their good works will never be enough to bring them salvation. Man’s idea of good is nowhere close to God’s standards. In fact, the major religions that promote this false teaching continue to lower their moral convictions in order to make it possible for their congregation to meet their standard of righteousness. We have the truth, Christian. Let’s make sure that we are well prepared to answer every man and help them see that the only way is Christ.