

All good people go to heaven... right?

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

That's it? Isn't there more? Nothing in life is free right? That is how many people feel about Christianity's most important message. Salvation is free... but I must have to *do* something.... right? The Bible tells us clearly that the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance of a perfect God is a free gift. There are no strings attached. Ephesians tells us that it is a gift from God, and not a result of works so that we have nothing to brag about. In Romans 6:23 we learned the difference between the wages of sin (death), and the gift of God (eternal life). This verse in Ephesians expands on that thought to tell us this gift is so much God's doing and not ours that we have no reason to sing our own praises. We don't do *anything* to deserve God; in fact, none of us do deserve God. He gave his Son for us as a gift.

This verse frees us from the belief that we need to earn our way into heaven. Nothing about salvation is purchased by us. We could not do anything well enough to earn our salvation. Remember the parable Jesus told of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18? Read verses 23-27 below.

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

Ten thousand talents does not mean a lot to us today because we do not use that currency, but in Jesus' time the parable would have had an immediate impact. The servant owed the equivalent of a hundred million dollars.... Well not exactly that much but it is an incredibly large amount of money. Certainly more money than he could repay. The master forgave the debt - not because the servant did anything. He did not do a lot of good works, he did not serve the master faithfully, he did not say a special prayer, and the parable does not even tell us that he

was a particularly good servant. The parable just tells us that the servant recognized his debt, and asked for patience. Actually the servant asked for patience and he promised he would repay the debt – an obviously impossible task. Imagine pledging to repay that amount of money.



The master in this parable represents God, and he is the one who holds the debt of our sin. Our sin is an impossible debt. You see, even if we are a good person from this moment on, we still sinned in the past. We cannot go back in time and erase the sin that we all have committed. The Bible tells us that all of us have sinned (Romans 3:23). We cannot change that fact, and the standard that God has set is not to be just *good* but to be *perfect*. We cannot repay the debt for our sin. Like the servant in Matthew 18, the debt is too large. Even if we never sin again for the rest of our lives, and commit to give everything for others and for good, we are still sinners and deserve death. We cannot repay God for our sin or repay the debt. The servant in this parable represents us upon realizing that our debt is impossible to repay. Our sin is too much for us to escape. We can only fall on our knees and beg for forgiveness.

God provided a way for us to be forgiven and that is through the death of His only son Jesus. Jesus' death is provided as a gift from God. He alone paid the price for our sin to offer forgiveness and provided the way for us to repay the debt. At great cost to himself, Jesus suffered and died instead of you. He offers this forgiveness as a gift. God is not offering just forgiveness of our debt of sin, but payment of our debt. He is not just saying, "O.K., I'll overlook it this time." He is saying, "I sent my Son to pay for all of your sin." The debt is paid, the sin is corrected, justice is served, and we can be freed.



Jesus' death for our sin is a gift, and is available to any that call on Him to forgive their sin. Have you asked Jesus to forgive your sin today? You only have three choices here – either you believe you never sinned (really?), or you believe that you can pay the price for it on your own (good luck with that), or you realize your need for a savior and call on Jesus for forgiveness. Jesus' forgiveness is a free gift.

Won't you accept that gift today?

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