

# Why Can't I Just be Good Enough to Get to Heaven?

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Philippians 3:1-11

**1 How many of you have tried to share the gospel just to get the following responses: 2**

**“I’ll just take my chances.” 3**

**“I don’t think the Man upstairs would condemn a good person to hell!” 4**

**“I’m as good a person as the next guy!” 5**

**The assumption made here is that God grades on the curve! But the Bible, God’s word, never implied that! Instead, it says such things as: 6**

**There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. 1 7**

**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ... 2 8**

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 3:23.

**So; why can't you be accepted by God into heaven by just being a good 'ole boy?**

**Our scripture today answers that question. <sup>9</sup> It's from Philippians, chapter 3, verses 1 through 11.**

**Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh — though I myself have reasons for such confidence. <sup>3</sup> <sup>10</sup>**

**If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. <sup>4</sup> <sup>11</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> Philippians 3:1-4.

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 3:4-6.



**But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. <sup>5</sup>**

**12**

**I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. <sup>6</sup>**

**13**

**The first reason you can't get to heaven by just being a good 'ole boy is . . .**

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<sup>5</sup> **Philippians 3:7-9.**

<sup>6</sup> **Philippians 3:10-11.**

# I. Because God's Minimum Standard for Acceptance is Perfection! – v1-6

Because God's minimum standard for acceptance is perfection! <sup>14</sup>

If anyone could have achieved salvation by being good, it would have been the Apostle Paul whom God used to write this scripture. Let's start with verse 4, **If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more . . .** <sup>15</sup>

**Paul had the right background.** <sup>16</sup>

You may hear, "I'm a Christian. I was born in America wasn't I?" Does being born an American (or in any other country or culture) automatically make you a Christian? There are religions embedded in other cultures where a person might consider themselves a member of that faith because they were born in that culture. But that's not the case with our faith! <sup>17</sup>

You may hear, "I came from a Christian family. So, I guess I'm a Christian. Right?" Paul was born and

raised in a Jewish family. If anyone could claim a relationship with God based on his nationality and family heritage, it would have been him. Israel was God's chosen people. Paul was, therefore, racially pure! <sup>18</sup>

You may hear, "Dad was an elder in the church and mom sang in the choir. So, I guess I'm alright." But, "God don't have no grandkids"!

**If anyone came from the right family, it was Paul!** He was from the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was the only son of Jacob born in the promised land and the child of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife.

From Benjamin came Israel's first king, Saul. He was the one from whom Paul was named. <sup>7</sup>

Benjamin and Judah were the only tribes to remain faithful to the original kingdom when it was divided.

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<sup>7</sup> Paul was a Roman citizen. Paul was his Roman name (Παῦλος) which he could relate better to the Gentile world. Acts 13:9, in a Gentile (non-Jewish) setting, is the first time his name "Paul" is used. Saul was his original Jewish name. (שאול)



From these tribes came the nucleus for rebuilding Israel after the exile.

Mordecai, Esther's uncle, as well as Esther herself, came from this tribe.

So, Paul belonging to this elite tribe of Israel, was very prestigious in Jewish circles! <sup>19</sup>

You may hear, "I was baptized as an infant and have been raised in the church ever since." <sup>20</sup>

According to verse 5, **Paul was circumcised on the eighth day** according to the Law, <sup>8</sup> so he was ceremonially born into the Jewish faith. Paul was "raised" in the church of his day too! <sup>21</sup>

**Paul also had the right achievements!** Verses 5 and 6, . . . **circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.** <sup>22</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Genesis 17:12 - For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised . . .

You may hear, “But I’m one of the most active members of my church!”

Although Paul grew up in Tarsus (a city in another country), **he remained loyal to his faith.** <sup>23</sup> Whereas most Jews learned the local language and forgot Hebrew, Paul learned Hebrew as well as the local languages! <sup>9</sup>

Loyalty and involvement in your church will not provide you with salvation. You can’t earn your salvation by being a good church worker! <sup>24</sup>

You may hear, “But mom sat us on her knee and taught us the Bible every night. And, I won a perfect attendance pin in Sunday School!”

**Paul was a trained Pharisee.** He kept the Law of God to the letter! <sup>25</sup>

He was a well-educated person! He earned his BA at the University of Tarsus. Then, he went on to seminary in Jerusalem where he was a student of the

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<sup>9</sup> Acts 21:40 - Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic . . .



world-famous Gamaliel, the most prominent theological scholar of his day! <sup>10</sup> He practiced his faith to the most demanding degree. <sup>26</sup>

But the Lord says, **But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand . . .** <sup>27</sup>

You may hear, “**But I’m real zealous for my church!**” <sup>28</sup>  
**Paul was so fanatical about his faith that he persecuted the church!** He thought he was on God’s side.

King Philip of Spain was zealous for his faith. He started the European Inquisition.

Mohammed was zealous for his faith. He started his own religion.

**You can be very sincere and be very sincerely wrong!**

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<sup>10</sup> Acts 5:34 - a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law . . . & Acts 22:3 - Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers . . .

You may hear, “But I’m a good moral person. I’m certainly not as bad as some of those hypocrites in the church!”

No one could accuse Paul of omitting anything that the Law of Moses required. <sup>30</sup> But he said in First Timothy, chapter 1, verse 15, **Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.** <sup>31</sup>

The second reason you can’t get to heaven by just being a good ‘ole boy is . . .

## **II. Because a Personal Relationship with Jesus is the Only Way to Heaven! – v7-11**

**Because a personal relationship with Jesus is the only way to heaven! <sup>32</sup>**

**Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

**According to a Persian legend, a fabulous bird of the East was supposed to bring good fortune to all who came under the shadow of its wings. One day the king was riding along in royal splendor surrounded by his courtiers when suddenly the huge bird was spotted flying a short distance away. All the attendants, except one, immediately rushed to get under its shadow. The monarch, surprised that this servant had not joined the others, inquired, “Why didn’t you go with them?” The courtier responded, “Why should I go running after some old bird when I can enjoy the presence of my king?” The ruler was so moved and**



pleased by his servant's devotion that he promoted him to prime minister of the realm.

I believe the reason God created you was to enjoy your companionship. Like with Adam and Eve, He wants to walk with you intimately like He did with them in the Garden of Eden. When you choose Him over the cares and attractions of this world, it brings Him special joy! <sup>33</sup>

**Paul considered all of his achievements and ancestry in the flesh of no consequence.** He put it this way, **But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.** <sup>11</sup> It isn't our behavior, its God's grace!

<sup>34</sup>

Isaiah, chapter 64, verse 6, **All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.** <sup>35</sup> Therefore Titus, chapter 3, verse 5, could conclude, **. . . he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.** <sup>36</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Philippians 3:7.

**Paul lost everything; but considered it of no consequence compared with his experience with the Lord.** <sup>12</sup> The relationship with Lord Jesus is the only permanent relationship you will ever have. Everything else is temporary! Everything!

There is only one event in the future that we all know is going to happen. Every other future event is only a guess at best.

That for sure future event is the Lord's Second Coming and you had better be ready for it! Nothing else really matters compared to living with God forever! <sup>37</sup>

**Your greatest desire needs to be simply to be found in Him.** <sup>13</sup> Your salvation isn't based upon what you do, but where you stand – your trust in Jesus! <sup>38</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Philippians 3:8 - What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ . . .

<sup>13</sup> Philippians 3:9 - . . . and be found in him . . .

Your transformed life <sup>14</sup> becomes the result of the renewing of your mind so the Holy Spirit can produce fruit in it and you will appreciate your salvation. <sup>39</sup>

**Paul's first priority in life needs to be your first priority!** He concludes today's scripture with, **I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.** <sup>15</sup>

You need to experience God's transforming power in your life. You have the opportunity to share in the Lord's life and death so you can share intimately with Him in His resurrection! <sup>40</sup>

Forget trying to please God by being good. Rather, please Him by trusting Lord Jesus for your salvation. Then, surrender your life to His lordship. <sup>41</sup>

**Then – your life will be good enough!**

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<sup>14</sup> Romans 12:2 - Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.

<sup>15</sup> Philippians 3:10-11.



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