

# Criterion for Salvation



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At some point, everyone will appear at the *Great White Throne*—it is *then* that everyone will know if they are saved or condemned; a believer or an unbeliever—there will be no excuses given because none would be accepted. Our faith and trust on God must be real and enduring through every trial or test. We must *know* the *standard of faith to enter Heaven*.

Jesus said to *hypocrites* Matthew 15:8 “*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*” We can praise God with our words, but we also must trust Him from the heart. The apostle Revelation 20:11 “*saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it.*”

He said that small and great stood before God vs 12, to answer for how they lived on earth. Revelation 20:15 “*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*” That is why Jesus gave serious warnings. Luke 21:36 “*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*”

We know that there are only two possible destinations when we leave this world—we head for one or the other when our time on earth is through, or when Jesus returns for His children. Many believe there is a Heaven or Hell after this life, but they do *not* know the *criterion*

for who gets which place—they do not know the deciding factor that would put a person in one place or the other for all eternity—they either do not *know*, or do not want to *accept* the Truth of the Bible.

Everyone is heading in the wrong direction from their birth—Titus 3:3 “*We ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.* 4 *But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,* 5 *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*”

We often think that if we do enough good things; help enough people; and give a little extra to the poor—that these right things, somehow, are added to our score, and help us gain entrance into Heaven. If that were so, we could boast, but we can never be proud—Ephesians 2:8 “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:* 9 *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*”

Society in general judges everyone on the work they do, or do not do—it does not know any other way. Any good *deeds* are just good *things* that we should do, as the Holy Spirit inspires us to do them, but there is no merit value to them. Luke 17:10 “*So you also, when you have obeyed all the orders given you, must say, ‘There is no merit in our service: what we have done is only what we were duty bound to do.’*”

If it is true that good people go to Heaven and bad people go to Hell, then we have to define *good* and *bad* before knowing the criterion for entering Heaven. Jesus said the “*hour is coming*” John 5:25, 29 when those who have passed away will “*Come forth; they that have done good [what is right], unto the resurrection of*

*life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*”

To do what is *good* and *right* is to *keep* the Word of God, so we can *keep* trusting Him in faith for everything in life. Doing *good* is *accepting* the teaching of the Bible—which means: *asking* God to teach us how to trust Him day-by-day; *trusting* Him in faith to heal physical afflictions; *depending* on divine power to have each day’s financial needs; and *believing* He will answer every prayer placed before Him in faith.

Our eternal destination will be determined by the standard of faith God has clearly explained in the Bible. We must *know* the criterion that determines whether a person *has*, or *has not*, lived up to that standard—showing whether they are considered *good* or *evil*.

*No one* meets the criterion at first, because *no one* has faith in God until their heart is converted from *reliance on self*, to *dependence on God*. It is all based on our *faith* in the resurrection power of Christ. Romans 3:22 “*Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:* 23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*”

If we have all sinned, we have all *missed the mark*; our faith in God is lacking; we have not met the criterion for salvation. Romans 6:23 “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” The result of sin is *death*; but the result of the gift is *life*—everlasting.

Since we have all sinned, we all need a Savior. Romans 6:22 “*Now that you have been set free from the tyranny of Sin, and have become the bondservants [servants] of God, you have your reward in being made holy, and you have the Life of the Ages as the final result.*”

Believing faith in the Atonement of Christ is, basically, the *criterion for salvation*. It is the *standard* of faith and the *requirement* of God for entering His kingdom. Eternal security proponents make the mistake of calling “good,” “works,” and then quoting Ephesians 2:9 “*Not of works, lest any man should boast.*” The previous verse explains: 8 “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*”

Eternal security teachers say we are *not under law*, but *under grace*, and quote Romans 3:20 “*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” We need to *know* when we sin, so we can *repent* and make corrections. Psalm 19:7 “*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*”

The Law, or Ten Commandments, can turn us back to God in faith and trust. 1 John 3:4 “*Every one who is guilty of sin is also guilty of violating Law; for sin is the violation of Law.*” The Law we violate refers to the Commandments. Romans 7:7 “*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*”

This is the clue—we can *recognize* the Law that is being quoted—Exodus 20:17 “*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house*”—nor covet anything that belongs to *anyone*. This is the *tenth* of the Ten Commandments! In the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, God gives the Ten Commandments twice! Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

Since God repeated these commandments, it must be important for us to *know* what these commandments *are* and *how* to follow them. These were not written to make God *happy*; but to make us *holy*. Jesus gave the young ruler the

standard of faith for salvation—Matthew 19:17 “*If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.*”

This *criterion for salvation* is to “*keep the Commandments!*” This is recorded *four* times in the NT—Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18; Luke 10:25. A lawyer asked: “*Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life [or what is the criterion for salvation]?*” 26 [Jesus] said unto him, *What is written in the law? how readest thou?*” The commandments define the Christian life.

Many think that being a Christian means not being free to do what you want to do. But Jesus says John 8:34 “*Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.*” Being a *slave* is not being free but being bound. Then Jesus explains John 8:36 “*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*”

If our apartment on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor had no railings, we would never go onto the balcony—it would be too dangerous. If we put some strong railings in place, most would go out, and even *lean* on the railings. Once there is a boundary, we have all the freedom we would want, *inside* that boundary. Boundaries provide freedom.

All too many think they are free to do anything they want—not realizing that they are slaves to the consequences of their choices. Galatians 5:1 “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*”

God gives us laws and commands to live by—so when we stay within these boundaries, we are free from the bondage to sin. If we step outside these boundaries, it is like stepping over the railing and trying to walk away from the edge of the twentieth-floor balcony. The consequences of being rebellious or lacking self-control are disastrous!

A recent study showed that 97% of Americans “believe in” the Ten Commandments, but only 5% could name three or more. Nevertheless, the Law can tell us everything we need to know to guide our life toward Heaven. The moral laws of God are the Ten Commandments of Scripture. We need to know if we meet God’s standard of behavior when the time comes to stand before Him.

Exodus 20:2 “*I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*” 3 *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*” That means God must be the focal point of our affections—our relationship with Him must be the most important thing in our life.

The rich young ruler’s possessions had *his* focus and affections. His *money* had first place in his heart. We will all worship something! If it is not God, it will be something or someone on earth. *What* has our affection—is the question to ask and to answer. The young ruler could not get past the *first* Commandment—he *did* have another god ahead of the God of the universe—it was his *money*.

The *criterion for salvation* is from the *Author of our salvation* Hebrews 12:2. Jesus said that if we love anything or anyone more than Him, we are not worthy of Him. Matthew 10:38 “*And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.*” 39 *He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*” That is the *Criterion for Salvation!*



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