

## ARE YOU TRYING TO BE WORTHY?

Are you trying hard to be worthy to attain the Celestial Kingdom in the presence of God? If so, in one way I'm glad. Having lived in Utah for over 50 years, I can state frankly that some of our best neighbors have been honest, devout and sincere Mormons who are trying to be worthy of future glory.

I said, *"In one way I'm glad."* In another way, however, I'm sad. It concerns me that even my most devout Mormon acquaintances seem to be lacking assurance that they will "make it." They are TRYING, they HOPE they will, they THINK PROBABLY that they will make it, but many have admitted that they do not KNOW WITH CERTAINTY. I'm sad that they are missing the joy of the certainty of which the Bible speaks. *"These things have I written... that ye may know that ye have eternal life..."* (I John 5:13). Notice that we can know that we have eternal life now as a present possession.

I am sad because I see many people becoming depressed. They try so hard to measure up, but there is always more to be done. Some live in terrible depression, overworked and robbed of joy. Too many even give up in despair and commit suicide.

Many people must wonder, *"What's wrong?"* Jesus said, *"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:30).

If you are trying to work your way to Heaven, you really have your work cut out for you.

Joseph F. Smith said, *"We have entered into the bond of that new and everlasting covenant agreeing that we would obey the commandments of God in all things whatsoever he shall command us... It is only in this way that we can consummate our mission, and obtain our crown and the gift of eternal lives, which is the greatest gift of God"* (GOSPEL DOCTRINE, by Joseph F. Smith, pg. 210). That is a heavy load.

The Book of Mormon holds out the same slight glimmer of hope, too. It says, *"For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do"* (II Nephi 25:23). In all honesty, who would dare to claim that they have done ALL they could do? It surely sounds as if one must do his very best before God's grace "kicks in." What a gloomy prospect that is!

Remember that God is holy, has no respect of persons, and is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity. He is the holy God who had a man stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath, who kept Moses out of the Promised Land because he struck the rock, who had Achan stoned for greed, and struck Ananias and Sapphira dead for lying. Indeed, I'm sad about you trying to be worthy, for no matter how good you are, and no matter how hard you are working, you're in trouble! (Please don't stop reading now, for I have good news for you later.)

The bad news, however, is very plain. *"For there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good, and sinneth not"* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'"* (Galatians 3:10).

Furthermore, the Bible is specific that good works will not make us worthy of Heaven. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us..."* (Titus 3:5). *"For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2: 8, 9).

Have you been taught that those who believe in salvation by grace are people who say they believe and then keep on living any old way they please? That certainly is not the teaching of the Bible. Paul asked, *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Romans 6:1, 2)

I dare say that you have thought about James 2:20 as you read the last two paragraphs, and you wish that you could quote it to me face to face. I, too, like James 2:20, for it is a valuable warning to people who have a fake faith which is devoid of good works. Saving faith will work. The passage, however, does not teach that Abraham was justified by offering Isaac. Notice James 2:23, *"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness..."* Genesis 15:6 is what James was quoting. By reading Genesis, one discovers that Isaac wasn't even born until several years after Abraham was justified by believing. Years later, his works demonstrated and verified his faith.

Why do Christians do good works? True Christians are new creatures in Christ. (II Corinthians 5:17) Our desires and attitudes have been changed, and we even have a new nature. (II Peter 1:4)

The good news in the Bible for those who admit that they are unworthy sinners is that God, in His love, has provided a way for repentant and trusting sinners to be forgiven, saved, and given the gift of eternal life freely. Justification (being declared acquitted and righteous in God's sight) comes BY GRACE. *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 3:24). Justification comes BY BLOOD. *"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood..."* (Romans 3:25). Justification comes BY FAITH. *"Through faith in his blood...To declare...his righteousness that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* (Romans 3:25, 26).

How can a person be qualified for Heaven?

Only through faith in Christ who suffered for our sins on the cross (I Peter 2:24). *"Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet [fit, suitable, qualified, WORTHY] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"* (Colossians 1:12).

A person can be made fit for Heaven by the altogether Worthy One, the perfect, sinless Son of God *"who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood"* (Revelation 1:5). As you comprehend the Grace of God, you will want to serve Him. Then you'll experience the easy yoke and the light burden, for it's a delight to serve the One we love.

-Ira T. Ransom

**Here is a prayer which will help you obtain salvation and peace:**

*"Dear God, I know that I am unworthy naturally, and can never be good enough to deserve Heaven. I am thankful that Jesus suffered on the cross for all my sins. Sincerely by faith I invite Him to come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior.*

*In Jesus' name, Amen."*