

The Judged Hardened sinners like Judas and Herod, who killed the babies of Bethlehem, will be there. Nice people like Nicodemus (John 3), who treated others right and helped those in need; but saw no need to go to the cross for forgiveness, will be there.

Theirs is a gospel for the strong. Telling people they have to be good and nice to make it to heaven is bad news to most of us. Even when we do our best to be like this, we fail. And besides that; how good, how loving, how helpful do we have to be to make it to heaven? The worst part is; we have to tell God, who sent His Son Jesus to die for us, that we don't need Him.

We don't go to heaven because we are good people and we don't go to hell because we are bad people. Going to heaven or hell is based on what we do with Jesus. But, it is also true that... only good people make it to heaven because the change we experience in salvation makes us good people. This means.....

Evangelical, Bible believing people who put their faith in Christ but were not serious about living for Him, will be there. First Corinthians 15:3 says people can believe "in vain". Jesus said:

"Many will say to Me in that day: 'Lord! Lord! We have preached in Your name. We have done many wonderful works in Your name.' But then I will say to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who do evil things.'" (Matthew 7:22-23)

These are conservative preachers who called Jesus "Lord" - the Old Testament name for God (Psalm 23). But they kept doing evil things. And the kind of life we live is what God judges us by.

Every reference to Judgment in the Bible is a judgment of **works**, of goodness and especially of loving others. James 2 says, "**faith without works is dead**," and the work he lists is loving the poor by helping them. Romans 2:6 says:

"God will repay every person {man} for what he has done. To those who patiently keep on doing good he will give eternal life. But for those who

are self-seeking; reject truth; and follow after evil; there will be wrath and anger."

Saved people still do wrong, but we hate it, fight it and seek forgiveness for it and deliverance from it. (Romans 7:14-20 / 1 John 1:8-10). And the "goodness" we have, comes from God. We are changed, born again, when we are forgiven. The new, spiritual birth gives us the desire and power to live for God. He is "in us to **will** and to **do** it." (Philippians 2:12-13)

Settling Out of Court The Holy Spirit, through Paul, told people who had been horrible sinners {male prostitutes, etc.}, "You have been **justified** (declared righteous, not guilty, innocent). God is a moral Judge and can let people like you and me go to heaven for two reasons.

Jesus, though tempted, **lived a perfect life** for you and me. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, "Him, who knew no sin, was made to **be sin** so that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

The life Jesus lived is credited to us. God sees us as sinless and sees Jesus as sinful. To God, we are already "**seated with Christ**" in heaven (Ephesians 2:6). Jesus defeated Satan, and won the right to let us into heaven. (Colossians 2:15)

Jesus **took our punishment** for us. God, "made Jesus an atoning sacrifice for us - through faith in his blood - because in His forbearance He had let sins committed beforehand go unpunished - He did this to demonstrate His justice." - Romans 3:20-27

Suppose a young man is found guilty of killing a family of three for drug money. No good or moral Judge would let him go free. But suppose that boy is the Judges' son and he sentences him to die; takes off his judicial robes; stands by him and takes his punishment for him. That is what God did for us all when, in Jesus, He came as one of us and took our punishment for us.

**Jesus lived a life we could not live
and paid a price we will not pay.**