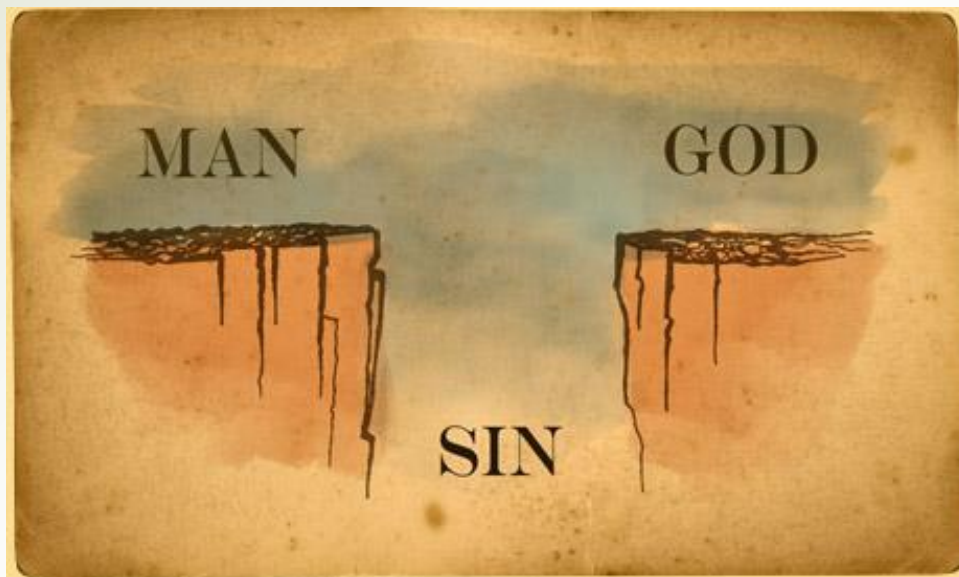


*Are we really
Good Enough?*



A closer look at sin and salvation

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Introduction

"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."

- **Ephesians 2:8-9**



According to a variety of polls, almost two-thirds of Americans (64%) believe they will go to heaven when they die. Nearly half of Americans (48%) believe that a person will earn a place in heaven because of one of the following reasons:

- They have tried to obey the 10 Commandments.
- Are generally good or have done enough things for others.
- Because God loves all people and will not let them perish.

As nice as this all sounds, does the Bible back up these popular beliefs? Is it really that easy to get into heaven? Can our salvation be "earned"?

Fasten your seatbelt, because that is what we're about to explore.

Warning! The following contains many scripture references found in the Bible. Normally I try to keep the use of the Bible as proof of the Bible or Christianity as minimal as possible, but in this case it's unavoidable! So if you are skeptical about the Bible, or have concerns about its reliability and authenticity, I invite you to read another paper of mine called "*Scripture*", which can be found at <http://writingdrummer.online/gallery/scripture.pdf>.

When Did Sin Begin?

Genesis 1:26 says *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'".* In other words, when God first made human beings, they were perfect just like Him. However, a bite of a forbidden piece of fruit changed all of that. As a result, through Adam and Eve's disobedience, the inherent ability to sin entered the human race, and human beings became sinners by nature.

When Adam and Eve sinned, their inner nature was transformed by their sin of rebellion, bringing to them spiritual death and an imperfection which would be passed on to all who came after them. Thus, we are sinners not because we sin; rather, we sin because we are sinners. This passed-on inheritance is called inherited sin. Just as we inherit physical characteristics from our parents, we inherited our sinful natures from Adam. In other words, we can't help but sin. It's in our blood.



Sin in the Bible

So what exactly is a sin? If you picked someone off the street and asked them, they'd probably say someone who kills, steals, or cheats. And the Bible certainly mentions those. But it doesn't stop there. Pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed, lying, jealousy, drunkenness, swearing, adultery and sexual immorality are just a few that also make the list. We are also told in **1 John 5:17** that *"all wrongdoing is sin."* And not only does the Bible tell us the things not to do, but in **James 4:17**, we are informed that anyone *"who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."*

You get the message: there are many different ways to sin, everyone does it, and we do it all of the time.

But how often? Probably more than you think.

Let's say that starting at age 10 (about the time when a child is getting to be old enough to be able distinguish right from wrong), and age 70, you sin three times a day. That's not very much: one naughty word, one little fib, one evil thought, one small flare up....doesn't take much. So that number could very well be conservative. But during that 60 year period, you would have sinned 65,700 times!

Can anyone who sins that much in a lifetime be worthy to go to heaven, despite all the good they may have done? Let's find out.

Sin and Heaven

When talking about heaven in the book of Revelation, the apostle John states *"But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false..."* (**Revelation 21:27**), and *"Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood"* (**Revelation 22:15**). Finally, **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** says, *"Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?"*

Those statements are pretty clear: there is no sin, thus no sinners, in heaven. And if that isn't clear enough, **Romans 3:10** says, *"there is none righteous, no not one."* No human being is holy and perfect enough for heaven. One sin (let alone 65,700) and it's over. Imperfection. No heaven. If a perfect God allowed sinful humans to enter the perfection of heaven, it would no longer be perfect.

So what standard should be used to determine who is "good enough?" Since He's the creator, God's standard is the only one that counts, and He has already ruled. **Romans 3:23** says that *"all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory."* And the payment for that sin is eternal separation from God (*"For the wages of sin is death..."*).

God and Justice

Sin is lawlessness (**1 John 3:4**) and embodies everything contrary to God's holy nature. Thus, sin is a crime against God and His justice demands a penalty of death and separation from Him for it (**Romans 1:18-32; 2:5; 3:23**) as imperfection cannot be in His presence.



In the Old Testament, the wrath of God is a divine response to human sin and disobedience. Idolatry (worshipping other gods, or anything, other than God) was most often the occasion for divine wrath. God addresses idolatry in the first of the 10 Commandments, which should tell you something!

The wrath of God is also consistently directed towards those who do not follow His will (**Deuteronomy 1:26-46; Joshua 7:1; Psalm 2:1-6**). The story of Sodom and Gomorrah in **Genesis 18** and **19** is perfect example of this. God's wrath against sin and disobedience is perfectly justified because His plan for mankind was and still is holy and perfect, just as God Himself is holy and perfect. In fact It has to be.

In the New Testament, Jesus' teachings support the concept of God as a God of wrath who judges sin. The story of the rich man and Lazarus speaks of the judgment of God and serious consequences for the unrepentant sinner (**Luke 16:19-31**).

In short, sin has to be punished, or God is not just. And God has proven throughout the Bible that He is a just God. Over and over throughout the Old Testament we witness it. God is patient, however, and will put up with unjust behavior for a while, sometimes hundreds of years, but there is always a point where He says "enough is enough." He doesn't like punishing or destroying us, his children. But like any parent, his patience will evidentially wear out, and discipline is the only course of action.

We have no way on our own to make our wrongs right. Our good does not outweigh our bad. One sin ruins perfection, just as one drop of arsenic in a pitcher of water poisons the whole pitcher.

Let's Recap

To sum up what we just discussed, most Americans believe they will be going to heaven when they die, and most of those believe their spot in heaven is determined by the amount of good they do on the earth, i.e. they can earn a spot in heaven.

God originally made humans perfect like Him, but after Adam and Eve's sin, humans became imperfect and thus the inclination to sin was introduced and is in all of our genes. Sin, according to the Bible, can be anything as subtle as a simple lie to adultery or murder. If we only sin three times a day from age 10 to age 70, we will have sinned 65,700 times.

The Bible states that heaven, like God, is perfect, thus sin (or sinners) cannot enter it. We are sinners, thus we cannot enter heaven in our current condition. And more than that, we have to be punished for it.

Talk about a bleak picture! But fortunately, there is an antidote.

A Redeemer is Born

So what did God do? Although He didn't have to, and even though we don't deserve it, He became a man in the body of Jesus. **John 3:16**, which is perhaps the most recognizable scripture in the Bible, clearly states this: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."* This is called God's gift of grace: something offered to us that we don't deserve. *"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"* (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

Jesus lived a sinless life of obedience (**Hebrews 4:15**). He had no sin, so at the cross He was justified to take our sin and make it His own. Once He paid the price for our sin, we could be declared holy and perfect just like him (*"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*- **2 Corinthians 5:21**).

But for this to happen, we must do something. And that is to accept this gift, by confessing our sins to God (repent) and asking for his forgiveness. **1 John 1:9** says *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (see also **Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; and 1 Peter 3:18**). Only then are we sin-free and able to enter heaven. To reject that perfect plan is to reject God's love, mercy, grace and favor and ultimately incur His wrath.

The people who go to heaven are all alike in one way: they are sinners who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have recognized their need for a Savior and humbly accepted God's offer of forgiveness.

- *"And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.'" (Acts 16:31)*
- *"Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." (Romans 10:9-10)*
- *"And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:11-12)*
- *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:36)*
- *"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many." (Romans 5:12, 15)*

The Bottom Line

In the proverbial nutshell, God's loved us so much that despite the fact that our sin demands our death, He sent His Son to be our substitute upon the cross, thus demonstrating that His justice was not violated, but instead satisfied (**1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9**).

Jesus said in **John 3:36**, *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on Him."* *"The one who believes in the Son will not suffer God's wrath for his sin, because the Son took God's wrath when He died in our place on the cross"* (**Romans 5:6-11**). Those who do not believe in the Son, who do not receive Him as Savior, will be judged on the day of wrath (**Romans 2:5-6**).

"God requires perfection to get into heaven. We either find that perfection in ourselves or we find it somewhere else, in someone else." – R.C. Sproul

One of the more eye opening, and at the same time frightening verses on this topic is **Matthew 7:21-23**, which explains that there will be some who believe in God and even do good works in God's name, who are still condemned:



"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

But why? Well, as we've learned earlier, it takes more than just believing that He exists or just doing good to satisfy God's requirements for spending everlasting eternity with Him. Your heart, mind, and soul has to be right with Him as well, achieved by accepting the gift of redemption He's offered us through Jesus' death. But God won't force it upon anyone. It's up to each of us to decide whether or not to accept His gift.

Acknowledgements

The following were the primary resources I used to write this paper:

- "I'm Just a Little Sinner, Greg Koukl "Stand to Reason": http://www.str.org/videos/i-m-just-a-little-sinner-2#.VP_Cbzo5CWw.
- Got Questions website: (http://www.gotquestions.org/questions_sin.html)

More of My Writings

All of my writings can be found on my website called [Pen to Paper](#).

