

## The Two Types of People and Their Outcome

All people can be placed into one of two categories, those who think they do not deserve condemnation from God (or “gods” for those who believe in multiple deities) and those who fully believe that they deserve condemnation from God. Put another way, some believe they merit acceptance from God on the basis of their own goodness and some believe they deserve the punishment of hell but depend solely upon Christ’s work alone in their behalf to give them good standing with God.<sup>1</sup> For the sake of this discussion, we will call the people that believe they do not deserve condemnation from God “workers.” We will call those who believe that they deserve the condemnation of God because of their rebellion toward Him, but who believe Christ took the punishment they deserve “believers.”

The Bible indicates that all people (“workers” and “believers”) will appear before the judgment seat of Christ:

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10*

Romans 2:7-8 contrast the two types of people:

*To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.*

From this passage, one might conclude that right-standing before God is achieved by works but this is simply not the case according to the Bible (*by grace we are saved through faith, not of works lest any man should boast Ephesians 2:8&9*). Rom 2:7 says that those who receive eternal life exercise perseverance in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality. This simply characterizes their lives but it does not form the basis of their right-standing before God. They are saved by grace through faith, not by works. The life style depicted in the Romans 2:7 passage naturally results from true faith. True faith produces perseverance in doing true good works and is motivated by a faith that seeks glory and honor and immortality which comes from God, not one’s own goodness. It is the God-given faith (produced by new life from above) of the believer that causes them (by His power) to do good works and to delight in the all out pursuit of glory, honor and immortality that has been promised to them by the One who saved them. The worker on the other hand directs his own life as he sees fit and has no power from God to do works that He classifies as good. Since they do not possess God-given faith, all they are capable of doing is classified by God as “sin.” (*whatever is not done from faith is sin-Rom 14:23*).

### Examination of the “worker”

These people are born sinners. As they grow up, they all without exception live life as they see fit.<sup>2</sup>

A small percentage of these people will adopt an atheistic view of God. Some will hold a polytheistic view (a belief that there are multiple gods). But most will say that there is a supreme being that created the world. Regardless which of these sub-categories they fall into, they choose a belief system and live life in a way that seems right to them, assuming or hoping that when they die, they will not suffer punishment at the hands of a

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<sup>1</sup> Some might object to just two categories sighting the occasional person who claims they believe in God but believe they are going to hell and those who call themselves atheists or agnostics. I maintain that all of these people fit into the “worker” category for the same reasons as others in that category because they are justifying themselves in their position as lord over their own lives. The person who says he believes in God but is going to hell really does not believe in either. If he did, he would immediately turn to God. The agnostics and atheists do not believe that they are deserving of punishment so they fall into the worker category even though they choose to block out the reality of God and the judgment that awaits them.

<sup>2</sup> *All have turned away, they have together become worthless; (Romans 3:12)*

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; (Isaiah 53:6)*

supreme being. The atheist convinces himself that since there is no God, there is no afterlife or judgment. The agnostic (one who adopts a view that we cannot know whether there is a God or not) merely goes through life assuming that “since God has not made himself known,” if He does exist, He will not hold people accountable. But for all practical purposes, he lives his life as if there is no God so we could call him a practical atheist. Those who hold to some type of belief in either one God or multiple gods live their lives in hope that they will somehow be good enough to avoid judgment or achieve some type of reward after they die. Thus, they rely upon their own goodness and generally compare themselves to other people in order to derive self-worth. In their minds, if they can avoid being at the bottom of the “goodness barrel” of humanity, they will be ok after they die. All of these unbelieving people hold to their own opinions about God and all of their understanding of God makes Him out to be less than the righteous God as He is revealed in the Bible.<sup>3</sup> The atheists convince themselves that He does not exist so there is no Righteous Judge that will hold them accountable. The religious people hold to a false notion that His standards of righteousness are less than perfect and not exacting. They falsely hope or assume that they merit acceptance by God (or gods) merely on the basis of their own goodness. (Included in this group are the millions of people who prayed a “sinner’s prayer” or walked an aisle of a church to “receive Christ” but whose lives prove they never possessed genuine God-given faith.)

### ***What factors will play a role in their judgment?***

To understand the outcome for these people, we must examine what God is really like and how He views them. The Bible says that God is a God of perfect righteousness. (*“The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him...Psalm 92:15.”*) This makes it impossible for sinful beings to dwell in His presence. (*Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong...Habakkuk 1:13*) He cannot judge according to human standards, He cannot accept plea bargains. (*For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes...Deuteronomy 10:17*). This righteous God says that no people are righteous, that they do not seek Him, that as a lifestyle, they have all turned away from Him rather than moved toward Him, that their heart has a tendency towards violence and cursing, that they do not know peace and that they have not feared God as the righteous judge who has given and preserved their life. (*See Romans 3:11-17*).

### ***What will be the outcome for these people in the judgment?***

God’s perfect righteousness demands that all sin be punished and all people are deserving of punishment.<sup>4</sup> He has declared the fit and proper judgment is that they be cast away from His presence in hell for eternity.<sup>5</sup> It does not matter that many people think that such punishment is unjust. The only thing that matters is what God thinks since He is the judge and has declared it to be just. (*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12.*)

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<sup>3</sup> Not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3)

<sup>4</sup> Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, (Hebrews 9:27)

<sup>5</sup> This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power (II Thessalonians 1:7-9)

## Examination of the “believer”

Like the “workers,” these people are born sinners. (The following words in blue font is a cut and paste from the worker description because these people start out living the same way as the “workers.”) *As they grow up, they all without exception live life as they see fit. A small percentage of these people will adopt an atheistic view of God, Some will hold a polytheistic view (a belief that there are multiple gods). But most will say that there is a supreme being that created the world. Regardless which of these sub-categories they fall into, they choose a belief system and live life in a way that seems right to them, assuming or hoping that when they die, they will not suffer punishment at the hands of a supreme being. The atheist convinces himself that since there is no God, there is no afterlife or judgment. The agnostic (one who adopts a view that we cannot know whether there is a God or not) merely goes through life assuming that “since God has not made himself known,” if He does exist, He will not hold people accountable. But for all practical purposes, he lives his life as if there is no God so we could call him a practical atheist. Those who hold to some type of belief in either one God or multiple gods live their lives in hope that they will somehow be good enough to avoid judgment or achieve some type of reward after they die. Thus, they rely upon their own goodness and generally compare themselves to other people in order to derive self-worth. In their minds, if they can avoid being at the bottom of the “goodness barrel” of humanity, they will be ok after they die. All of these unbelieving people hold to their own opinions about God and all of their understanding of God makes Him out to be less than the righteous God as He is revealed in the Bible. The atheists convince themselves that He does not exist so there is no Righteous Judge that will hold them accountable. The religious people hold to a false notion that His (or their) standards of righteousness are less than perfect and not exacting. They falsely hope or assume that they merit acceptance by God (or gods) merely on the basis of their own goodness. (Included in this group are the millions of people who prayed a “sinner’s prayer” or walked an aisle of a church to “receive Christ” but whose lives prove they never possessed genuine God-given faith.)*

### *What is the just outcome for these people in the judgment?*

God’s perfect righteousness demands that all sin be punished and all people are deserving of punishment. He has declared that the fit and proper judgment is to be cast away from His presence in hell for eternity. This is exactly what these and all people deserve according to the Bible. These people are cut out of the same mold as all other people, wretched sinners that God calls rebels and enemies.

## But while they were deserving of this punishment, God saves them

At some point in the life of these people, they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition, God supernaturally causes them to get a glimpse of who He is and what they are truly like.<sup>6</sup> They see themselves as wretched sinners<sup>7</sup> that are rightly condemned before the Holy God who created them and who stands in judgment over them. They stop relying on their own goodness realizing that to do so is utterly useless. They see that all of their good deeds are as filthy rags in God’s sight.<sup>8</sup> They see that nothing they have done or ever could do would

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<sup>6</sup> *I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. (John 12:46)*

<sup>7</sup> *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. (Luke 18:9-15)*

<sup>8</sup> *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; (Isaiah 64:6)*

atone for all of their sin and rebellion. They see on the other hand that God has graciously made a WAY<sup>9</sup> for them to freely receive forgiveness by receiving the gift that He has provided in their behalf, the sacrifice of His Son. They believe that He rose from the dead and that His death satisfied God's demand for perfect righteousness.<sup>10</sup> They accept God's terms for peace and surrender their lives to Him as the good and faithful ruler over their lives.<sup>11</sup> They see all of this salvation being of and from God and continue to see themselves as deserving of hell but saved by grace.

***What will be the outcome for these people in the judgment?***

At the point these people truly believe the gospel, they receive forgiveness from God on the basis of what Jesus did for them. God counts all their sins (past, present and future) as belonging to Jesus<sup>12</sup> who bore the punishment for them. God also counts Christ's righteousness as belonging to the believer<sup>13</sup> because He has accepted the blood sacrifice of His Son in their behalf. This blood He holds as infinitely valuable and considers it full payment (ransom) for the believer's sin. In addition to this legal transaction, God gives supernatural life to the sinner by coming to dwell within him.<sup>14</sup> This life unleashes the power of God in them to believe and begin living by faith, obediently trusting God as their Lord and provider of all they need to live. While in this life, they still have what the Bible calls "the flesh" which is an enemy of the believer and which always opposes the Holy Spirit that dwells within them. But God works in them<sup>15</sup> to produce righteousness and works that are done by His power through faith. (Because God is the One who causes the works by His power, He is the one who rightly gets all the glory for them.) Because they still have the flesh, they sometimes sin. But since they are new creatures, they cannot go on sinning the way they use to do before God saved them. They seek God for deliverance and cannot enjoy the sin the way they use to before God saved them.

These people will also appear before the judgment seat of Christ. But because God already punished Christ for every sin they committed, they will appear before the judgment seat spotless, without sin in God's eyes. (*Christ... having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him- Hebrews 9:28.*) Even so, at the judgment, these people will also be judged according to their deeds but without having any sin accounted to them. They appear there having a righteousness that was imputed to them by Christ Himself. And while they lived their lives of faith, God worked in them to produce true good works that glorify God.

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<sup>9</sup> *I am the way the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me (John 14:6)*

<sup>10</sup> *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:24-26)*

<sup>11</sup> *But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. (Romans 6:17-18)*

<sup>12</sup> *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (II Corinthians 5:21)*

<sup>13</sup> *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. (Romans 3:20-21)*

*For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17)*

*It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. (I Corinthians 1:30)*

<sup>14</sup> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (II Corinthians 5:17)*

<sup>15</sup> *It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)*

Because of the power of God working in them, they did deeds that were “wrought in God,”<sup>16</sup> brought about by His power. These deeds will attest to the genuineness of their God-given faith. In the midst of great trials that God brings into their life, their faith is tested and they prove obedient, trusting God as their savior and one who has promised to raise them from the dead on the last day. *These (trials) have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (I Peter 1:7).* In the day of judgment, their own works and righteousness do not save them. (They were saved by the righteousness of Christ being applied to their account.) But their works do prove to all present on that day that they possessed genuine faith and that God is just to count them as righteous on the basis of the merits of Christ’s work in their behalf. (This is God’s prescribed way.) By God’s grace, they obeyed God’s invitation and God is just to deliver them because of their faith in Christ (which produced a life-long, heart-felt dependence on God as the only one worthy of praise.)

The good works that were done by this God-given faith will be found to result in praise to God by all. In this way, by God’s power, believers become delighted sharers in God’s work and will receive rewards from God in proportion to the work of God that had been accomplished through them. In spite of the fact that they do not deserve any such reward, they are motivated by their desire to hear God say, “*Well done good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:23).*” If a believer’s work does not stand up under trial, it will show its quality to be lacking and that man’s reward will be diminished accordingly at the judgment.<sup>17</sup> Also, on that day, no believer will take credit for any good works knowing that God is the one deserving of all honor and glory. The Bible symbolizes this attitude by picturing the saints casting their crowns before the throne.<sup>18</sup>

On the following page, a chart is provided to show the contrast between “workers” and “believers.”

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<sup>16</sup> *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."* (John 3:16-21)

<sup>17</sup> *By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.* (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

<sup>18</sup> *The twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:*

*"You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they were created  
and have their being." (Revelation 4:10-11)*

## Contrast of “workers” vs. “believers”

“Workers”	“Believers”
Hope to achieve right standing before God by trying to live (in their own power) life in a way that they believe merits God’s acceptance. (see note 3 below...Rom 10:3)	Considering themselves wretched sinners deserving of hell, they depend solely on Christ’s merit to make them right before God and they live by faith relying on God’s supernatural power to produce truly good works that result from Him being at work in them.
Rely on their own works as the means of achieving good standing before God	Consider their own goodness and good works useless in achieving good standing before God
Derive some sense of self-worth before God and man from the good things they do and the bad things they manage to avoid doing. They compare themselves to others and come away feeling as if they are not bad.	Confess their wretchedness openly before God and man their and seek merely to serve God and man with a heart of gratitude and heart-felt love for God.
Run their life as they deem best with an independent spirit. <sup>19</sup>	See themselves as desperately needy people that cannot live without God so they call upon Him for help as a way of life acknowledging Him in every aspect of living.
Pride and false humility characterize their heart.	True humility characterizes their heart. <sup>20</sup>
Think they merit (deserve) God’s approval on the basis of their own goodness. They believe in their heart that God would be unjust were He to send them to hell.	Believe that they are wretched sinners that deserve the full wrath of God. <sup>21</sup>
If they call themselves “Christian,” they know of Jesus’ death and resurrection as either a myth or historical fact, but not something He did personally just for them.	They view Jesus’ death and resurrection something He did for them personally and are extremely grateful. They are so taken by it, that they tell all their friends and family even if they end up being ridiculed or even persecuted. <sup>22</sup>
They balk at the notion that God has the right to send well respected people to hell. So, they hold to their own idea of what God is like regardless of what the Bible says.	They believe God is right in condemning all people on the basis of their deeds and see all people as deserving of hell. <sup>23</sup>
At the judgment, they will be surprised to hear God’s sentence of punishment upon them.	At the judgment, they will not see themselves worthy in any way of the reward He bestows upon them.
They hope good works will produce eternal life	Eternal life imparted to them by Jesus causes good works to come forth that God classifies as truly good. (They attribute glory to Him because He is the one that empowered the good works.) <sup>24</sup>
They believe that they deserve payment for their good works.	They believe that since God caused the good works, only He deserves credit for them.
By nature, they seek to avoid death (except on rare occasions when death appears to them a way of escaping severe suffering.)	They long for Jesus to appear and welcome death when it comes.

<sup>19</sup> *“Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.” (Psalms 2:3)*

<sup>20</sup> *He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:2-4)*

<sup>21</sup> *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:24-25)*

<sup>22</sup> *Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia--your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, (I Thessalonians 1:5-8)*

<sup>23</sup> *What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: “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.” “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.” “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes. “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. (Romans 3:9-20)*

<sup>24</sup> *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (II Corinthians 4:7)*