

## What Difference Does It Make?

If God forgives me, what difference does it make how I live now? We read in the Bible about the thief on the cross who was saved right before he died, and we might think, why should we live out our faith if we can just repent at the end and still go to heaven?

We might think of people who lived wicked, wanton lives and then repented and converted late in life. I suppose we should be glad that they finally received God's grace but, at the same time, it doesn't seem quite fair. But then, God's grace isn't fair. That's the point of grace. God gives all of us what we don't deserve. He gives us His forgiveness, His life, even though we don't deserve it.

But if I can do whatever I want right up until the very end and then still receive God's forgiveness, why live any differently now? The answer is both simple and complicated. First, God didn't create us just to die and go to heaven. Heaven is not the end. Christianity's goal is not just to get to heaven when we die. Salvation is the aim of it, yes, but salvation is much more than just going to heaven when we die.

God created us to live a certain way, to live joyfully, abundantly, as His children. So, to live against His will is what the Bible calls sin. It's literally contrary to the way we were made. If we believe in God and what He tells us in the Bible, living in sin is actually not good for us or for anyone in our life. Living according to God's will, which is really the best possible way ... we live that way now and forever.

We have some real conflicts here on earth in the lives that we lead because of the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature. Among them is the idea that sin is a lot more fun and living like a goody-goody is really boring. And that's exactly the lie that the world and Satan himself has taught us. We have this idea that God's will is somehow oppressive and that if we want to really live fully, we need to be free to do whatever we want. That's not true. In fact, because God's our Creator, He's the One who loves us more than we love ourselves, His will is always the best thing for us. Again, the Scripture says He truly wants what is best for us. God doesn't want us to sin, and living in sin is actually bad for us. To live according to God's will is good for us, because humanity was created to live according to God's will. Living according to God's will every moment of every day would be paradise not only for us, but also for those in our lives.

Jesus came to forgive our sins and to give us eternal life in heaven, but He came to do so much more. He came to free us from the grip of sin so that we can live in the goodness of God's love. So His death and resurrection isn't just the solution for the end of our earthly lives, it's the means through which we can begin to live every day as God desires, which is much better than living as I desire.

God desires us to live in His love and to love those in our lives His way. We're not created to be selfish, self-centered, greedy, and unloving. That stuff kills. We're created to enjoy God's creation and to live life in His love.

Back to our original question ... why should I live according to God's will now if He will just forgive me in the end-no matter what I've done? The best answer is always found in the Scriptures. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, *"For the love of Christ controls us. He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and was raised."* Now think about it, Paul here doesn't even mention heaven. He's talking about living, really living. Heaven is important, and eternal life is

indeed a promise, but we shouldn't look at those things as separate from our present lives. Christianity isn't so much about trying just to get to heaven. It's about living as God created us, now and forever. If we should live however we want, will God still forgive us in the end? Faith in Christ would say that misses the point. Living your way, living sinfully, that's what destroys. Living in Christ means we get to live His way for others ... the way He loves us. There is joy in that way of life, now and forever, and so knowing that, the question really is: why would you want to live any other way?

That's the View from Here ...

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