

# Your Two Options for Getting Into Heaven

I am a rule follower.

- I am a stickler for playing a game according to the rules.
- For those "some assembly required" purchases, I follow the directions *precisely*.
- If my Dremel power tool tells me not to use it as a dental tool, I won't—no matter how tempting it is. (And, yes, that warning exists.)
- As a rule follower, I'm that guy who drives 55 when the sign says 55. Even in Nashvegas, where most drivers misread the number "55" as "75."



That's why I was embarrassed to receive a speeding ticket this week.

I was already especially alert. Why? It was Memorial Day. I was driving in Texas with out-of-state plates. I had already seen a half-dozen patrol cars watching traffic. I was on a section of an East Texas highway that changes speed limits with more regularity than a five-year-old asking, "Are we there yet?"

But it happened. I obviously missed a change in the speed limit as I approached Lufkin, and one of the city's finest took the opportunity to meet me. We actually had a pleasant conversation which concluded with my signature on a ticket.

For the next hour, I was frustrated, not with the police officer, but with myself. I am a rule follower.

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It is a hallmark of Christians that we hold to the belief that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life. I agree that faith in Christ is the way to eternal life, but the Bible also tells us of another route to eternal life. *"God 'will repay each person according to what they have done.' To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Rom. 2:6-7).*

There you have it. The Bible tells us we can get to heaven though good works. But before we start preaching a gospel of good works, let's be clear on what Paul said in these two verses. Eternal life is possible for the person who is *persistent* in doing good.

*Persistent* is a rather important word. It was important on Memorial Day when I was handed a speeding ticket. It didn't matter that I am a rule follower and I obeyed almost every single speed limit. I missed one—one! It didn't matter that I was ignorant of the correct speed; I was still guilty. I had failed to be persistent in obeying the traffic laws.



*Persistent* is far more important when it comes to eternal life. I have not been persistent in doing good—and neither have you. We're born with a sin nature (Ps. 51:5), and from day one, we're drawn to sin. So even though the idea exists that a person could gain heaven through a persistent life of good works, our penchant for doing just the opposite keeps that from ever happening. As Paul said in a later passage:

*"There is no one who does good, not even one" (3:12).*  
So for salvation and eternal life:

- Option #1—a life of good works—is off the table. Completely.
- Option #2—faith and trust in Christ—is available.
- Option #3 doesn't exist.

We're in a fix. We've sinned and no amount of good works from this point forward will make up for that fact.

*"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).*

Jesus is our only option.