



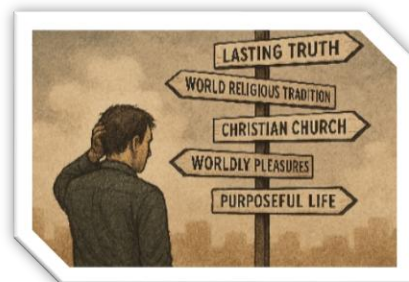
Grace Outreach Ministries Asia

...encouraging the oppressed and giving hope to the abandoned

Who is Telling the Truth?

Finding Lasting Truth to a Better Life

Are you seeking a better life built upon unshakable truth? You are not alone. Life is tough! Frustrations with relationships, work, and the search for purpose often leave people feeling weary and directionless. Many seek answers through religion, longing for truth, peace, and a moral compass. Yet despite sincere pursuit, they frequently encounter confusion or contradictory teachings.



So, where can one find lasting truth? Is it hidden in world religious tradition, the Christian church, worldly pleasures, or is a purposeful life just an illusion?

World Religions: Shared Desires, Different Paths

Among many world religions, there seems to be a common thread: they aim for truth, peace, and a moral way of living, often seeking connection with something divine. However, their definitions of a "good life" and their approach to achieving it differ significantly. Just to name a few:

- **Hinduism:** Seeks truth through meditation to achieve *moksha* (freedom from rebirth), emphasizing *dharma* (duty).
- **Buddhism:** Pursues peace via the Eightfold Path, like practicing mindfulness to reach *nirvana*.
- **Islam:** Focuses on submission to Allah, with moral living through the Five Pillars, such as daily prayers.

As mentioned earlier, the pursuit of enlightenment and a purposeful life often varies greatly in method and belief. Many world religions emphasize human effort, placing the weight of spiritual fulfillment on personal discipline and moral achievement, rather than on receiving divine grace. Yet for many, this path leads to frustration and disappointment. Disillusioned, they turn instead to the world's substitutes: indulgence in sex, drugs, and material wealth. But rather than satisfaction, they often find themselves on a more destructive path, further from the peace and a purposeful life they desired.



So where can we truly find peace and purpose? Is the search itself just a mirage? God, in His boundless grace and mercy, has been speaking to humanity and offering a solution since the beginning of time. Yet mankind has often been too blind

to see, and too deaf to hear. The Bible, in stark contrast to the world's ever-shifting beliefs, reveals a liberating truth: **a purposeful life in Jesus**. Biblical Salvation is not something to be earned, worked for, or bought with worldly riches, but it is a gift freely given by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9).

But what group or denomination is correct? If one searches for purpose and salvation through religious groups, they could easily end up like those who seek purpose outside of God: frustrated, disappointed, and disillusioned.

Distinctions Within Christianity: Faith, Works, and Grace

Among groups that identify Christianity as their foundation, notable distinctions exist between Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox traditions regarding salvation.

- **Catholic and Orthodox theology** directly integrate works and sacraments into the process of salvation. They view these sacraments as means of cooperating with grace rather than merely expressing it. For instance, the Catholic Catechism (CCC 1129) affirms that the sacraments are necessary for salvation.

So, what are the basic differences in the "Christian" groups' understanding of salvation?

- **Protestantism:** States that salvation is by God's grace through faith alone. Works will not save them; rather, works demonstrate the faith and sanctification working within them.
- **Catholicism:** Teaches that faith and works cooperate, with sacraments serving as "means" of grace (CCC 1996-2005).
- **Orthodox Christianity:** Salvation involves *theosis* (also called divinization), where faith, works, and sacraments work synergistically: meaning they work together to create a greater effect than each could achieve alone. They believe that by faith, prayer, and holy living, a person grows closer to God, sharing in His love, goodness, and holiness, while still remaining human.

While these approaches are honorable, according to the Bible, man's works cannot save him.

Can Mankind Become "Moral Enough" to Be Saved?

From a theological standpoint, Biblical Christianity's claim is clear: **Salvation is not earned, but received**. However, in world religions and even within some Christian traditions, the mechanism of salvation differs fundamentally.

The Bible teaches us that human effort, no matter how virtuous, falls short of God's perfect standard, requiring divine intervention for salvation. Humans are prone to sin, which prevents them from achieving moral perfection. Romans 3:23 states, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (ESV). Even our best efforts are flawed, as Isaiah 64:6 notes, *"All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment."* Moral perfection cannot save anyone.

Salvation is a gift of God, given by His grace through faith, and not earned through works. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *“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”* (ESV).

The Role of Repentance and Grace

When the Holy Spirit draws people, He reveals their sin and rebellion against God, leading them to repentance. John 16:8 explains, *“And when he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment”* (ESV).

Repentance is a changed mind that leads to a change in direction, turning from sin to God’s forgiveness. Acts 3:19 states, *“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.”*

(Note: The biblical concept of repentance literally means “a change of mind.” But it’s not just intellectual; it is transformational. True repentance involves a change of heart and mind about sin (e.g., seeing themselves the way that God sees them), which causes one to turn away from sin and self-centeredness to God, where they receive His forgiveness and grace for salvation.)



Grace is God’s loving, unmerited favor, providing salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Romans 5:8 emphasizes, *“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Even faith itself is a gift from God. Romans 10:17 states, *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ”* (ESV). Salvation is never by human works, as Titus 3:5 affirms, *“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy”* (ESV).

Conclusion: Having peace and purpose in life is a gift.

In a world full of competing paths and shifting beliefs, only one offers lasting truth without demanding perfection: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. True peace, purpose, and salvation are not found through human striving, but through receiving God’s unearned gift of grace by faith. Jesus does not ask us to climb our way up to Him. He gloriously came down to meet us where we are. While denominations within Christianity debate the role of works, the Bible is clear, human effort cannot bridge the gap between God and mankind. The question is not whether we can be good enough, but whether we will humbly receive what He freely offers. Peace is free and with His peace we will find purpose.

STUDY NOTES / END NOTES

The biblical concept of **repentance** (Greek: *metanoia*) literally means “a change of mind.” But it’s not just intellectual—it’s transformational. True repentance involves:

- **A change of heart and mind** about sin
 - **Causing a turning away from sin** and self-centeredness
 - **And turning toward God**, receiving His forgiveness and grace
-

References Showing Mankind’s Failure

1. Romans 3:10-12 – Universal Sinfulness

- a. “As it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.’”
- b. Context: Paul quotes Psalm 14 to show that all people, Jew and Gentile, are under sin’s power. No one naturally meets God’s standard of righteousness.
- c. Failure: Even the best human efforts at goodness are tainted by sin, preventing moral perfection.

2. Isaiah 64:6 – Imperfect Righteousness

- a. “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”
- b. Context: Isaiah laments Israel’s sinfulness, acknowledging that even their “righteous deeds” are flawed in God’s sight.
- c. Failure: Human attempts at morality are insufficient, likened to “polluted garments,” unable to earn salvation.

3. Ecclesiastes 7:20 – No One is Sinless

- a. “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”
- b. Context: The Preacher reflects on human nature, recognizing that no one achieves moral perfection.
- c. Failure: Everyone sins, so no one can claim to be “moral enough” to avoid destruction on their own.

4. Jeremiah 17:9 – Deceitful Heart

- a. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

- b. Context: Jeremiah describes the human heart's tendency toward sin, which leads to destructive choices.
- c. Failure: Human nature is inherently flawed, making self-reliant moral improvement unreliable.

5. Romans 7:18-19 – Struggle with Sin

- a. “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.”
- b. Context: Paul describes the internal conflict of wanting to do good but being hindered by sin's influence.
- c. Failure: Even with good intentions, humans struggle to consistently live morally, showing the need for divine help.

Examples of Mankind's Failure

Here are simple, relatable examples illustrating human moral shortcomings:

- **Personal Failure:** Someone tries to live honestly but lies to avoid embarrassment, showing how sin creeps into good intentions (Romans 3:10-12).
- **Societal Failure:** A community aims to help the poor but ignores systemic injustice, like unfair wages, reflecting flawed “righteous deeds” (Isaiah 64:6).
- **Inner Struggle:** A person wants to forgive a friend but holds a grudge, unable to fully act on their moral desire (Romans 7:18-19).
- **Self-Deception:** Someone thinks they're kind but gossips behind others' backs, unaware of their “deceitful heart” (Jeremiah 17:9).
- **Universal Sin:** Even a “good” person snaps at a loved one in anger, proving no one is sinless (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Why Mankind Can't Be “Moral Enough”

The scriptures above emphasize that sin is universal and persistent, affecting everyone (Romans 3:23). Human morality, while valuable, is imperfect and cannot bridge the gap to God's holiness or undo destructive tendencies (e.g., selfishness leading to conflict or spiritual separation). In Christian theology, salvation requires God's grace, often through faith in Christ's redemptive work, not human merit.

- **Paths of Destruction:** These can be personal (e.g., addiction, broken relationships), societal (e.g., war, injustice), or spiritual (eternal separation from God). Moral effort might mitigate some harm but doesn't address the root issue of sin.
- **Hope Beyond Failure:** While mankind fails morally, Christianity teaches that God's grace offers salvation. John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world...") and Titus 3:5 ("He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy") highlight that salvation comes through God's initiative, not human morality.