

What if you do nothing?

Some people, while they acknowledge the existence of God, choose to do nothing in connection with their spiritual life. To put it another way: Some people, while they believe in God, do not follow God's lead. Is it necessary to follow anything? Can you be accepted by God if you merely live your life as you think best and pay no attention to following what God indicates is best? What if you do nothing? Jesus Christ said:

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.¹

God has made a choice, so each person must make a decision in harmony with the path God has chosen. The prophet Amos puts it this way:

Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?²

What if you do nothing? Two people cannot walk together unless both have decided to. If you pay no attention to God, you won't be walking with God. We see the pattern repeated over and over again in the Bible. God makes a promise and gives an instruction; faith in God is believing his promise and following his instruction. This is what God expects from each of us. Just accepting that God exists is not enough. In the epistle of James the question "What if you do nothing?" is handled like this:

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder.

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.³

James wrote about Abraham "...his faith was made complete by what he did." Jesus Christ underscores this point in the following passage.

What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.⁴

What if you do nothing? We have seen here that from God's point of view doing nothing is not an acceptable option. Taking it one step further, the word of God contains many passages indicating that God expects a determined effort be made. Jesus Christ said:

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.⁵

The apostle Paul utilizes a figure from the world of sports to emphasize the point that God expects a determined and aggressive effort to be made.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

¹ John 12:26

² Amos 3:3

³ James 2:19-23, 26

⁴ Matthew 16:26-27

⁵ Matthew 11:12

Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.

No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.⁶

Note the level of concern the apostle Paul has here. He is concerned that his effort to attain the prize will not be sufficient. He continued striving though and we can see from the following passage written much later in his life his confidence in God's promise. Paul believed God, followed his instructions and therefore is confident he will receive what God has promised. What if you do nothing? Doing nothing is not an acceptable option.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.⁷

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⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

⁷ 2 Timothy 4:7-8