

Trying to Prove Ourselves

You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight. **—Luke 16:15**

My old friend Pete Cantrell often says, "The greatest freedom is having nothing to prove." I think this is one of the most profound statements I have ever heard. The person who needs to prove how right or how strong he or she is, is one who is not free. There is a struggle inside to make others think they are right and strong. The truth is, if we really are right and strong, we don't have to say anything! Freedom is being experienced, therefore, when one is having nothing to prove. He or she does not need to justify themselves, make themselves look good. It is enough that God knows for people like that. (See John 5:44.)

When you are justified before God, you are free. Seeking to be justified or vindicated before people is a crippling, endless, and counterproductive enterprise; you are never at peace. No freedom. But when you know that God Himself declares you righteous, you are free and have no need to get your satisfaction from comparing yourselves with others.

The heart of the gospel is at stake here. What justifies us before God—our good works? Or is it our confession to God that we are sinners? Answer: we are justified when we do not try to prove ourselves before God but lean on His mercy. The way a person is converted is to ask God for mercy.

When we are trusting our works, there will always be a need to try to prove ourselves—by words. The greatest freedom is having nothing to prove. This freedom comes when we put all our "eggs into one basket," namely, the death of Jesus on the cross. That brings freedom because this alone is what justifies us before God.

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