

The Only Way to Make Everything All Right

We all have a deep need to feel all right. And we can spend a lot of time and energy trying to do things that make us feel like we're OK – OK with ourselves, with others and even God.

But we don't need to wear ourselves out trying to be right with God through our own effort. The truth is we can't make our lives right on our own, but we *can* receive the righteousness of God by putting our faith in Christ.

Romans 3:20 (NIV) says, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin." That means the reason God established the law was to show us how much we need a Savior who can make us righteous before Him.

Self-righteousness is believing we are made right with God through our own works. For example, a person might think, "Well, if I read through my Bible every year, then God will be pleased with me." But the truth is we read the Bible because it helps us in our everyday life, not because it makes us right with God. In the same way, my preaching doesn't make me a righteous person. The only way we are made righteous (right with God) is by having faith in Jesus Christ – it's not something we can ever earn in our own effort.

I used to really struggle with self-righteousness. I remember years ago when the pastor at the church I was attending encouraged us to read through the Bible in a year. Every Sunday he'd ask, "Who's been doing your Bible reading?" Well, I didn't want to be the one not standing up, so I got really serious about it.

We each got a calendar so we could check off the days we read the chapters. As long as I had all my check marks, I liked

that calendar. But then I got 36 chapters behind and had these big, gaping holes! It was like a nightmare for me.

So one day I decided I was going to catch up, and I zipped right through the chapters. And honestly, when I closed my Bible I felt relieved. But then I heard the Holy Spirit speak to my heart, saying, "So, what did you learn?" And I realized I could not remember *one* thing!

God taught me an important lesson that day. He would rather we read one verse and actually get something out of it and connect with Him than read 36 chapters and learn nothing.

The point is we need to have the right motives for the things we do and stop making laws out of tasks that make us feel better about ourselves but are unfruitful.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV), Paul writes, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Every day of my life I say, "I am the righteousness of God in Christ." Now, I'm not righteous because I do everything right – no one is perfect, and none of us does everything right. The Bible says in 1 John 1:8 (NIV), "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

Now, it's important that we try to do what is right, but God wants us to live through faith in Christ. Then, as we have a personal relationship with Him, He puts the desire in us to do what's right and we can do it by His grace because we *want* to do it.

In Philippians 3:3 (AMP), Paul explains that we "take pride and exult in Christ Jesus and place no confidence [in what we have or who we are] in the flesh." He says he obeyed the law without fault, and if any person had a reason to have confidence in himself by the law's standard, he had more of a reason than anyone.

In verses 7 through 9 (NIV) of that chapter, Paul goes on to say, "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith."

Paul is saying that in order to have a relationship with Christ, he had to be willing to gather up all of his accomplishments and the things he had worked so hard for and get rid of them. That's because it's nothing but trash compared to the priceless privilege of knowing Christ as our Lord and Savior.

I want to be clear and say that what we do matters, but our good works do not make us acceptable to God. We are only made right with Him by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. That's when we can rest in knowing that everything is all right.
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