

Episode 120

No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

- Romans 3.20-22

When you read through this chapter, you may find yourself a little suspicious of the statements Paul makes regarding the law. In the verses above, Paul pulls no punches, saying that God has shown us a way to be made right with him, without keeping the requirements of the law. Is he serious, or is he just being provocative to make a point? Surely preaching and teaching like this will lead to licentiousness - an immoral, unrighteous lifestyle?

Most bible scholars say that it's only when you ask that question that you are truly beginning to understand grace. And with that comes the same view, that only when people in your congregation begin to ask you these same questions about your sermon, are you really preaching grace.

The unconditional, covenant-bought, free gift of God that we call salvation, is deeply offensive to those who hold a superficial view of their sinfulness. It's only when we realise just how wicked we are, and how holy God is, that we begin to see how desperately we need this portion of scripture to be true. God has shown us a way to be made right with him, without keeping rules, constantly taking your spiritual pulse, trying in vain to measure up, because no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. Instead, we are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ, the price he paid on the cross on our behalf, and the irresistible love of God that allowed us to be adopted into his family.

But do I believe it?

No. I don't.

I say I do, but instead, I find within me the pain of merciless measuring, constant condemning, and the predictable disappointment in my day, my desires, and my dealings. Underneath the calm exterior screams the unfulfilled pursuit of perfection, a cesspool of shame seeping into every moment of the day.

Then morning arrives, and it brings with it mercies that are so new, they seem to wash and heal and renew and restore. Hope settles on my weary heart, and the ache subsides as strength returns. And then I close the bible and open the door, determined to get it right this time. Today, I will earn my Father's love.

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