

There's no happiness in playing the game of pretense in which we try to justify or excuse ourselves, or look to ourselves as our hope, when all the time we know better. Simply acknowledge that God is right in His condemnation of your actions, attitudes, and heart. Admit your need and inability. This opens the door to confession and repentance of all that displeases Him and to real happiness!

But look out! We tend to see even confession and repentance as somehow earning God's acceptance or forgiveness. Never! His acceptance is ours through Christ alone, unmerited by us in any way. Our part is to live our entire lives in the continual realization that we are undeserving sinners and in constant appreciation for the gift of His mercy and grace.

Rejoice! You Qualify

Be glad you qualify for Him and His grace by being the sinner and failure you are. Celebrate that you can cast yourself on Him and His acceptance through His shed blood. Rest in the assurance that He wants to be the merciful supply of all you ever really need.

Don't expect in this life ever to be able fully to obey the royal law of love any more than the Pharisees could. Cast yourself on Him who alone can love fully and freely because He is love. Begin to learn to let Him live and love through you. This isn't as difficult as you might think, because He is in you and you are in Him.

The alternative is to keep on as you have in the past. Pridefully ashamed of our sin, we've tried to hide from it and from Him, just as Adam and Eve did after their first sin.

Instead, be honest with Him. Bring your sin and failure to Him. Let Him deal with it. Find Him to be trustworthy, even in handling your weaknesses. Find out He keeps His commitment to be all you need as you simply resign everything to Him, resting yourself in Him and His ability in you.

Everything's Out of Whack

But, everything in my world seems out of joint, you say. So it isn't going to work like you claim it will.

First, I didn't claim it would work. Only Jesus works nothing less and nothing else.

Second, everything is going to be out of whack as long as we're in a sinning world. You'd better let God teach you to live at peace with this loathsome reality, or you'll never live at peace in this world. We simply must stop living in a world of pretense. We have to become real with God, with ourselves, and with our world.

Third, how can we live at peace in a world gone askew? The only way is that He must replace this world as our environment. In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). We were made for perfection, not for this sinning world which is the opposite of perfection. May the perfect God increasingly become our environment.

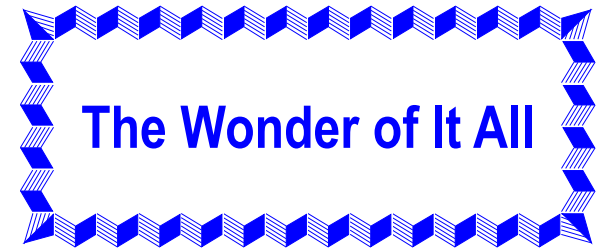
Further, God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Ephesians 1:4). There's no need to grovel, then, in our failure and sin. Instead we can live in holy excitement that all the perfect righteousness of our lovely Lord Jesus Christ has been credited to our account. We can stand blameless before the Judge of all the universe, who also happens to be our loving heavenly Father. In His Son's perfect righteousness, we stand before God positionally blameless, as we shall finally be in practice.

Enjoy Being in Him

Through the rest of this book, I'll be trying to help you learn how to live at home in Him who is also in you in Him who is the perfectly satisfying environment God has prepared for us for all of time and eternity. I'll try to help you spend the rest of your life enjoying your position in Him.

But let me warn you first. The flesh, your old independent self, will do its best to prevent you from allowing the Lord to be your center and circumference, your environment, and your very life. This independent self will do its best to keep itself at the center even of your finest attempts to rest contentedly in Him and His work for you.

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By: Pastor Ron Marr

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Ephesians 2:13

It's shocking! It's wonderful! Your hope to get close to the heart of God is that you are a sinner and a failure!

A Christianity That Works?

The phone rang. The voice at the other end was anxiously strained. She had seen my article in The Christian World Report titled, Do You Want a Christianity That Really Works? My caller really wanted her Christianity to work. She wanted it so desperately her heart was breaking. She felt she was worse off than she had been when she first accepted Christ. He'd delivered her from drugs and other evils, but she found herself still in bondage to smoking and a temper that had led her to swearing at her children again. Her guilt overwhelmed her. She felt hopeless and devastated when she heard such things from preachers as, "If you're carnal, you're not going to heaven."

I told her that her very failure, guilt, and hopelessness best qualified her to receive God's grace. I told her to cast herself on the Lord alone. I asked her to see Him not as Judge, but as her loving heavenly Father waiting to receive her with open arms of love. I encouraged her to let go of everything and rest in Him.

Later, I told my wife, I could almost cry for the pain of that dear lady. But how glad I was that I was able to hold out hope to her. With the greatest delight, I offer that same hope to you.

The Curse of Works

My heart aches for the millions of the Lord's people

THE WONDER OF IT ALL

who are being told to just straighten up and fly right. The church's great error today is the same works-righteousness that Paul was forced to expose and oppose in the earliest days of the Christian church. It's an awful legalistic thing, visiting on us nothing but perpetual failure and hopelessness.

The purpose of the law is to show us our total inability to please God and to serve as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ (Galatians 3:24 KJV). The law is a terribly hard master, whipping us with our failure to meet its demands, visiting on us condemnation and guilt. It shows us our impossibly hopeless sinfulness and neediness. For this we can be grateful if we also see the hope there is for us in the free grace and mercy of God in Christ.

We're saved by God's grace alone. The wonder of God's grace is that our very sin and sinfulness, our very failure to please Him, qualify us for His mercy and full salvation.

Now, we accept this as true of our initial experience. We came in utter hopelessness to the Lord. He freely saved us from eternal death and hell and gave us the free gift of present salvation, eternal life, and heaven.

Always by Grace Alone

But are we content that we are qualified to receive God's grace and every other good gift He has for us always and only by our failure alone? Are we content to be nothing more than needy sinners dependent only on God and His grace? Or do we hope somehow to escape the stigma of sin and become good people?

Secretly, do you hope someday to find yourself somehow pleasing God and to some extent at least deserving His love by your good living? I honestly believe that virtually all of us do. We've relegated such thoughts as, There is none righteous, no, not one (Romans 3:10) to significance for the unsaved only.

A close Christian friend said in quick response to an obvious assumption on my part, I'm not a sinner! She really is a good person by human standards, and she likes to be a good person. Inadvertently, however, she had laid bare her self-righteousness.

God Hates Self-Righteousness

That's what this hope in yourself actually is self-righteousness. Do you know that there's nothing God hates more than self-righteousness? Do you really know what He thinks of self-righteousness? You should. You've probably heard Isaiah 64:6 often enough: All our righteousness are like filthy rags. Dirty rags are not just unattractive: they breed disease, destruction, and death.

God Himself is the righteousness of His children. Only His righteousness in us ever will be anything other than filthy rags. If we think anything else, we're doomed to a lifetime of disappointment, frustration, and failure.

Not Good Enough

She lay on her deathbed as I visited her. In her voice was an unexpected hollowness caused not by her physical condition but by a haunting fear coming from deep within. She'd been a Christian for many years, a Sunday School teacher, a godly mother, and a good witness for the Lord. But now she was expressing a fear that she wasn't altogether ready to face her Maker.

My surprise subsided as I realized it was this cursed self-righteousness revealing itself. She had seen herself as essentially a good person. Often she'd said, "I wouldn't do that."

Here it was on her deathbed haunting her. Oh, she knew all right that only Jesus and faith in His shed blood and finished work could get her into heaven. But what about her sin and failure? How could she face her Savior? She didn't deserve Him or His heaven!

How confused we are! That's exactly why we need His mercy and grace: we don't deserve Him or His heaven. Jesus alone is enough for us at heaven's gate. Only He! It's our failure, our incapacity in ourselves to please Him, that qualifies us for Him then, now, and during all the time intervening.

But Are We Looking for Him?

The problem is that we may not be looking for Him, but for something less, even for a Christianity that works. If we expect ever to be spiritually successful to be good we're in trouble.

We must expect only to be bad, always needy sinners with but one hope: Him. Finding Him sufficient, we must cast ourselves repeatedly on Him and His grace. We must lay ourselves down again and again in Him and rest in the assurance that Christ in us is our hope of glory, that we in Him are complete. He is the Christianity that works.

David was a man after God's own heart, but this wasn't because he was faultless. He was an adulterer and a murderer, sins he committed long years after he came to know and love the Lord! He was a man after God's own heart only because he was willing to be a sinner needing to turn to God again and again. He looked to his God in spite of his sin.

We come, not in our goodness, our righteousness, our holiness, but in Him and in His. We come counting on Him, His righteousness, and His undeserved mercy and grace. We look away from all else to Him. We lay ourselves down in His arms of love and rest there, where we receive Him as enough for right now—enough hope and help, enough mercy and grace, enough forgiveness, love, joy, peace, and all else we need.

This is the wonder of it all. Our sin and failure, our pain and hurt, our frustration with ourselves and our circumstances seem insurmountable. But His grace covers them all.

Be Real

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

What is truth? Reality. What actually is.

This is part of what God meant when He said His name is I AM. He is real. There's nothing in Him that's unreal.

My dear one in Christ, be real. Be honest. Be the needy sinner you are. Face the truth about yourself, your sin, your failure, your need. If you feel that the idea of His being all you really need is too abstract for you, just be real enough to admit it. Trust Him to change your comprehension of that reality.