

**Grace is Greater**

**Part 4 of 8**

**Grace Is Greater Than Your Mistakes**

**2 Corinthians 5:21**

Luke 6:38 says, “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

Message:

*2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

We’re in the middle of a series called Grace is Greater. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews said, *"See to it that no one misses the grace of God."* This series will open your eyes to grace that’s bigger than your mistakes, your failures, your desire for revenge, and your seemingly impossible situations. No sin is so great, no bitterness so deep that God's grace can’t transform your heart and rewrite your story.

*Week 1: Grace is Greater than your Depression*

*Week 2: Grace is Greater than your Guilt*

*Week 3: Grace is Greater than your Hurt*

*This weekend: Grace is Greater than your Mistakes*

*Next week: Grace is Greater than your Lack*

Let’s face it you and I do foolish things from time to time. We all make mistakes. In fact, no one is immune. Perhaps you’ve done the wrong thing...you've made some wrong choices...you've done what you knew you shouldn't do...and now you're suffering the consequences of those mistakes. Regardless of any mistake you’ve made, you need a fresh revelation of how righteous you are in God’s eyes.

*Hebrews 5:13 “Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.”*

This verse is saying most Christians stay in infancy and never grow into adulthood spiritually because they don’t understand what scripture teaches about righteousness.

This weekend I want to attempt to get you to leave the milk and move on to the meat.

The word righteous is a big word that we don’t use much anymore, so let me define it for you. *Righteous means not guilty, entirely pleasing to God.*

That’s what God did for you at the cross. He made you not guilty, entirely pleasing to God. Say that out loud! “I’m not guilty, entirely pleasing to God!” Think of it – when God looks at you, He’s totally pleased with you! You make Him happy! He’s smiling at you! He’s proud of you! His face is turned toward you.

I know that sounds crazy to many of us, because we know how imperfect we are, so let me explain how this works. I want to tell you about the craziest gift exchange ever!

At the cross, *we gave a pretty ridiculous gift to Jesus.*

* *At the cross, we gave Jesus our garbage bag of mistakes – past, present, and future!*

You and I have walked through life carrying all our trash. We’ve hauled with us our mistakes, regrets, sins, whatever you want to call them. We all have them. At the cross, we gave Jesus this junk as a gift and, out of love, He gladly took it. He received our trash as a present and took it away from us, so we no longer have to carry it, see it, or feel shame about it.

*1 Peter 2:24 “He personally carried away our sins in his own body on the cross.”*

I love the word *personally*. He didn’t theoretically carry away my sins. He personally carried my sins. He thought about me at the cross. He thought about my garbage, my regrets, my guilt, and my sins. And He said, “Vincent, let me free you from that stuff. I’ll take away all your sins.”

Here’s where it gets really good! He didn’t just forgive me for my past sins, but ALL my sins – past, present and future! To Jesus, on the cross that day, all my sins were in the future. So, when He died, He died for everything I’ve done wrong and ever will do wrong. My sins are all forgiven. So were yours! He hasn’t just forgiven your past sins, but your present sins and your future sins as well. You’re entirely forgiven. All your trash was put on Christ at the cross. You aren’t a sinner in His eyes anymore. You’re totally forgiven. You’re a saint. You simply believe it and receive it!

That’s our part of the *gift exchange* at the cross. We gave Jesus all our sins. (Isn’t that so very nice of us?) But at the cross He also gave us a gift. This part we don’t talk about much.

* *At the cross, Jesus gave us His perfect righteousness.*

Think of it like this: Jesus was perfect. He did everything right. He healed people, forgave people, loved people, and sacrificed for people. This earned God’s medal of righteousness. Like an Olympic athlete, Jesus won a gold medal in righteousness. Then, at the cross, *He put you on the winner’s podium and gave the medal to you.*

He gave you the credit for all His good works. You got credit for His healings, His forgiveness, His love, and His sacrifices. You were given Jesus’ medal of *righteousness as a gift.*

Now I know some of you think I’m smoking crack at this point, so let’s just take a look at what scripture says!

*Romans 5:17 “For if, by the trespass of the one man* [Adam]*, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!”*

Notice He gave you righteousness as a gift! You can’t earn it. You don’t deserve it. He gave you a *medal of righteousness.* You aren’t guilty, entirely pleasing to God.

*Romans 5:19 “For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Christ] the many will be made righteous.”*

Through the obedience of Jesus, you were made not guilty, entirely pleasing to God!

*2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

You became not just any righteousness, but God’s righteousness! He gave you His personal righteousness! When God says, “Hey! Where’d I put my medal of righteousness?” He looks at you, sees you wearing it and says, “Oh, yeah, there’s my righteousness! You’re my righteousness!”

When God says, “I’m righteous,” He looks at you as proof!

At the cross we gave Jesus a bag of garbage, and He gave us His righteous acts! We get credit for all He did! That’s the craziest gift exchange ever!

I think most Christians would say they believe God forgave them and gave them righteousness, but then they take the medal off and go back to their own self-effort and try to earn it. This leads to guilt, spiritual burnout, fear, performance anxiety, depression, and modern-day Pharisee-ism. Don’t take God’s gift of righteousness off and go out and try to be good! You’re already “gooder” (in your born-again spirit) than you’ll ever achieve in a million years of trying! You are, in God’s eyes, as good as Jesus.

*1 John 4:17 “In this world we are like Jesus.”*

God’s righteousness was given to you as a gift at the cross! Here’s where many ask, “So, what do I do now?” It’s really simple! You get to work it out. It’s not working out for salvation, but from salvation. My work now is to rest in Him. The Apostle Paul spoke about this in Galatians 3 and Philippians 3.

*Galatians 3:1-3 “Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ’s death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?”*

Being saved from a life of sin and death was entirely up to God, but then we go live our lives like righteousness is entirely up to us. No! It isn’t by our human effort; it’s His effort that makes us righteous!

*Philippians 3:2-3 “Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort.”*

It’s about what Christ has already done, not about what we do! Don’t put confidence in your own human effort.

“But Pastor, why does God’s righteousness matter so much?”

That’s a good question. Let me tell you why our effort (works-righteousness) is worthless and God’s gift of righteousness (faith-righteousness) is all we need.

1. When you believe you have God’s righteousness; you have power over your sin.

*Romans 6:14 “For sin will not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.”*

2. When you believe you have God’s righteousness; you get off the emotional seesaw of guilt and happiness.

*2 Corinthians 3:9 “If the ministry that condemns men [law] is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness [grace]!”*

*Galatians 3:24 “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified (declared righteous) by faith.”*

*Romans 4:6-8 “King David spoke of this, describing the happiness of an undeserving sinner who is declared to be righteous: ‘Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. Yes, what joy for those whose sin is no longer counted against them by the Lord.’”*

3. When you believe you have God’s righteousness; you know God welcomes you into His presence

*Psalm 17:15 “And I – in righteousness I will see your face.”*

*Philippians 3:9 “I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law. Rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ.”*