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Many believers know
they are forgiven,
*but they still live like
they're on probation.*



For a long time, I thought I could prove to God how good I was.

I would never have said it quite that way, of course. I knew salvation was through Jesus. I knew the right Scriptures. I knew we were saved by grace. But somewhere deep inside me, I had developed a quiet system for measuring how pleased God must be with me.

If I prayed enough, read enough Scripture, showed up at church, served faithfully, helped people, and stayed away from the things I knew were wrong, then surely God would be pleased with me.

The more I did, the better I felt about where I stood with Him.

And when I did not do enough? When I was tired, distracted, impatient, inconsistent, or simply human? That old heaviness would settle in. I would feel as though I had disappointed God again.

Without realizing it, I was auditioning for a place I already had.

I was trying to earn a love that had already been given.

That is exhausting Christianity. And it is not the abundant life Jesus died to give us.

It took time for it to move away from that mentality and to change my thinking and believing to the truth that **God loved me before I accepted Him!**

Before I could impress Him. Before I could serve Him. Before I could prove anything. Before I ever got everything right, God loved me.

And His love was never hanging in the balance, waiting to see how well I performed today.

“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

ROMANS 5:8

While we were still sinners. Not after we improved. Not after we became disciplined. Not after we learned enough Scripture or served enough people. Christ came for us while we were still unable to save ourselves.

Why We Can Never Earn It

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

ROMANS 3:23

Every one of us falls short. That is not God's way of humiliating us. It is the truth that clears away the illusion that some of us can work hard enough to deserve Him.

If acceptance with God depended on performance, none of us could ever be secure.

How much prayer would be enough? How much service? How many good decisions would finally outweigh the bad ones? How many days would we have to get right before we could be certain God was pleased?

There would always be one more thing to prove.

But God never asked us to build a ladder high enough to reach Him. He came down to us in Jesus Christ.

The Great Exchange

“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

This is one of the most beautiful truths in Scripture.

Jesus took our sin. We receive His righteousness.

Jesus took our sin. We receive His righteousness.

Jesus took our guilt. We receive His acceptance.

Jesus took our condemnation. We receive His freedom.

Jesus took our separation. We receive relationship with the Father.

At the cross, Jesus did what no amount of religious effort could ever accomplish. He paid the price completely.

We do not add our good behavior to His finished work to make it sufficient. His work is sufficient.

What Righteousness Really Means

For years, I heard the word righteousness and thought primarily about behavior. I thought being righteous meant doing better, trying harder, and becoming more disciplined.

But righteousness is first about our standing before God.

“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

ROMANS 4:3

Credited. That word matters. Abraham did not earn righteousness and hand God a spiritual résumé. He believed God, and righteousness was credited to him.

That is what happens when we place our faith in Jesus. We are not standing before God holding up a list of everything we have done right. We are standing before Him because of what Jesus has done for us. Our confidence is not in our record. It is in Christ.

The Case Is Closed

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

ROMANS 5:1

Justification is a legal word. Think about standing in a courtroom knowing the evidence against you is real. There is no clever argument that can erase it.

Then someone innocent steps forward and pays the full penalty on your behalf.

The debt is satisfied.

The case is closed.

That is what Jesus has done for us.

God does not pretend sin does not matter. He dealt with sin at the cross. Jesus paid the penalty in full, and those who are in Christ are justified by faith.

Yet many of us keep reopening a case God has already closed.

We replay old failures. We rehearse shame. We wonder whether this is finally the time God has had enough of us.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

ROMANS 8:1

Now. Not someday when you become a better Christian. Not after you have a perfect month. Not when you finally conquer every weakness.

NOW!!

Living Like You Are Loved

There is a difference between conviction and condemnation. The Holy Spirit lovingly corrects us and leads us toward truth. Condemnation pushes us away from God and tells us to hide.

Condemnation says, “You failed again. God must be so disappointed in you.”

Grace says, “Come to the Father. Jesus has already made the way.”

The story of the prodigal son gives us such a beautiful picture of this. The son returned home rehearsing a speech about how unworthy he was. He hoped he might at least be allowed to live like a servant.

But his father ran to meet him.

He embraced him.

He restored him.

He celebrated his return.

The son came prepared to negotiate for a lesser place in the household. The father received him as a son.

How often have we done the same thing with God?

We come to Him with our heads down, carrying our list of failures, hoping He will still let us stay somewhere near Him.

But in Christ, we are not barely tolerated guests in God's house. **We are His children.**

Living From Acceptance Instead of For It

This does not mean obedience no longer matters. It means the reason for our obedience changes.

I obey God because I am loved, not to get loved.

I serve because I am loved, not to earn His approval.

I worship because I am loved, not to impress Him.

I grow because I am loved, not to prove that I am worthy.

That shift is enormous.

When we live for acceptance, spiritual disciplines become evidence we present to God. When we live from acceptance, prayer becomes time with the Father who already loves us. Scripture becomes the voice of the God who wants us to know Him. Service becomes gratitude. Worship becomes response.

We are no longer auditioning.

Maybe you have spent years trying to prove to God that you are good enough. Maybe you have measured your relationship with Him by your best days and your worst ones. Maybe you know Jesus forgives you, but somewhere inside you still feel as though you are on probation.

You can put down the scorecard.

You are not on a waiting list for God's acceptance.

Because of Jesus Christ, believers are accepted, justified, and made righteous before God. Our standing with Him is based on Christ's finished work, not our personal performance.

God loved you first.

You can stop auditioning now.

The Father has already made His decision.

Ponder This

1. Have you been trying to earn what God has already freely given through grace?
2. Are there areas of your life where rejection still shapes how you see yourself before God?
3. Do you believe God merely tolerates you, or do you believe He delights in you as His child?
4. How would your daily life with God change if you truly embraced His full acceptance of you?

Pray Today

Father, thank You for loving me before I ever did anything to earn it.

Thank You that my standing with You is not built on my performance but on the finished work of Jesus.

I release the weight of condemnation, shame, and rejection. Teach me to see myself the way You see me.

Help me live from Your acceptance instead of striving for it. I want to obey, serve, worship, and grow because I am loved, not so I can become loved.

Thank You that in Christ I am fully accepted, fully forgiven, and fully Yours.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Blessings!

Teri Winters

Continue Your Journey

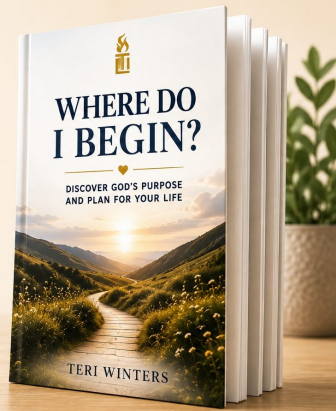
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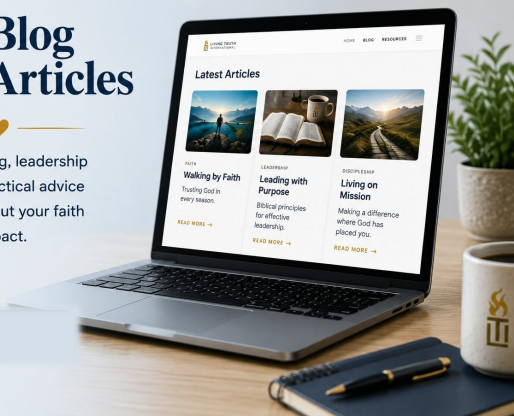
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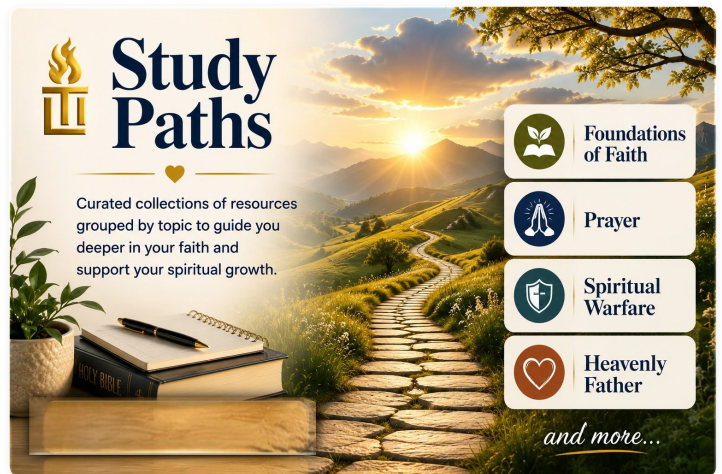
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