THE END OF STRIVING

Receiving Grace Over Religion: Defining Self-Righteousness

Performance vs. Grace

THE STRIVING OF LAW

"For if you are trying to make yourself right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ; you have fallen away from God's grace."

— Galatians 5:4 (NLT)

• Working, sweating, and striving to satisfy God by personal performance.

• Treating righteousness as an achievement to earn rather than a gift to receive.

• The result: Complete separation from the empowering flow of Christ's grace.

THE RECEPTION OF FAITH

"Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law... For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law."

— Galatians 2:16 (NLT)

• Righteousness is established by believing what Jesus has already achieved.

• Your identity as righteous is settled, anchoring spiritual security.

• The result: True spiritual rest, letting God work in and through you.

Paul's Resume: Garbage vs. Grace

"I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel... a member of the Pharisees, who demanded the strictest obedience to the Jewish law... I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him."

— Philippians 3:5, 7-9 (NLT)

THE RESUME TRAP

- **Paul's Ultimate Credentials**
  He possessed a flawless pedigree: pure-blooded heritage, elite Pharisaic training, and impeccable obedience to the law without fault.

- **The Complete Revaluation**
  Once considered highly "valuable," Paul discarded all self-effort, categorizing it as "garbage" compared to the righteousness that comes by faith.

The Five Tolls of carrying Guilt

"He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."
— Titus 3:5 (NLT)

01

Self-Condemnation

You constantly feel inadequate, feeling that you will never do enough to be accepted. This opens the door to severe loneliness, inferiority complexes, and crippling anxiety.

02

Punishment Mindset

You constantly expect bad things to happen, believing you merely deserve tragedy or sickness as a penalty for being so 'bad,' paralyzing your faith and resistance.

03

Blame Shifting

You play the 'blame game'—projecting your inner guilt onto other people or circumstances, indicating a failure to accept responsibility for your own actions.

04

Pessimism

A dark, heavy load of unresolved guilt creates a persistently negative outlook on life, making it highly difficult to maintain a confident or positive attitude.

05

Physical Illness

Unresolved spiritual and emotional guilt begins to take a direct toll on your physical body, ultimately manifesting as sickness or disease.

The Behavior Fallacy: Identity First

"God saved you by his grace when you believed... It is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done..."
— Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

BACKWARD RELIGION

Strive to Behave ➔ Earn God's Approval ➔ Define Identity

- Striving to behave perfectly in order to determine who you are before God.
- Relies on external control, list-keeping, and performance checks.
- Always leaves you feeling anxious, incomplete, and filled with guilt.

INSIDE-OUT GRACE

Settle Identity ➔ Receive Righteousness ➔ Align Behavior

- First settling the issue of identity: you are already made righteous in Christ.
- The Holy Spirit shifts your internal desires, changing you from the inside out.
- Natural, moral behavior begins to effortlessly line up with your new identity.

The Vine & The Branch: Connection First

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me and I in them will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

— John 15:4-5 (NLT)

EFFORTLESS FRUITFULNESS

- **The Only Responsibility: Attachment**
  The branch does not sweat, struggle, or exert effort to produce fruit. Its sole work is remaining firmly connected to the vine.

- **Severed Striving is Futile**
  Trying to manufacture righteousness, healing, or peace apart from Christ is impossible. Outside of active connection, "you can do nothing."

Summary: The Striving Cycle vs. The Rest of Grace

THE STRIVING CYCLE

• Definition: Sweating & working hard to make yourself right with God.

• Fuel: Driven by guilt and fear, which locks you in self-righteous performance.

• Costs: Leads to condemnation, pessimism, blame, and physical sickness.

THE FINISHED WORK

• Complete Security: Christ accomplished all legal demands of the law.

• Free Gift: Salvation and righteousness depend on faith, not obeying laws.

• Garbage Exchange: Paul discarded elite moral pedigree to gain union with Christ.

THE REST OF GRACE

• Settle Identity: Accept who God says you are—made righteous through Christ.

• Remain Attached: Fruit is manufactured naturally from connection to the Vine.

• Absolute Rest: End the stressful cycle of sweating, striving, and tithing out of fear.

TAKING A REST: THE CALL TO GRACE

"I have faith in Jesus Christ. I am the righteousness of God... I have a right to deliverance, I have a right to prosperity, I have a right to a good life, I have a right to peace because Jesus is my righteousness. I have faith in Him, and now I take a rest."

— Creflo Dollar, Defining Self-Righteousness

1. Settle Your Identity: Cease identifying yourself by behaviors and list-keeping. You are the righteousness of God in Christ.

2. Break the Guilt Cycle: Identify and systematically address the presence of unresolved religious guilt or expectation of bad things.

3. Rest and Receive: Move away from striving or sweating to get God to move. Rest in His finished work, allowing grace to flow.