



# RIGHT WITH GOD

**7**

Realities  
of Grace

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# Introduction

## Jesus has made a way to bring you into fellowship with God and make you a new creation.

When we accept Christ as our Saviour and Lord, all of our past mistakes and sins are forgiven. **We instantly receive a new nature inside us: the nature of God.** However, our minds still carry old memories, desires and habits, so it's crucial that we renew our minds in God's Word.

That's why the Bible warns us to guard our hearts with all diligence—from deceptions that come from other people or our own incorrect thoughts. Feeding on God's Word will reveal if we have any wrong beliefs, and it readies our heart with truth, helping us to stand strong in the understanding of this salvation Jesus Christ has provided for us!

Every person walking the planet is autonomous, meaning that each of us can choose to believe whatever we want. However, every belief has an accompanying consequence, so we need to use caution. Jesus said, "According to your faith, let it be to you" (Matthew 9:29, NKJV). Notice He didn't say "correct faith." **The key is to believe truth.** If you believe a lie, your faith in that lie will cause you to move toward it.

*That just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

**Romans 6:4 (NKJV)**

By studying God's Word, you'll learn the great consequences that come when you believe the truth. You'll come to know that **He loves you, His Word is true, and that Jesus has made a way to bring you into fellowship with God and make you a new creation.** The more you believe and meditate upon these truths in your heart, the freer you will be to live the amazing new life Jesus provided for you!

A good place to start is by learning the realities of this incredible grace God wants you to experience. Let's jump into the first one!

# Can You Earn Your Way to God?

**Jesus offered incredible mercy, grace and free access to God through Him.**

How many ways can you get to God? Jesus said there is only one way—and it's through Him.

*Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me."*

**John 14:6 (NLT)**

Unfortunately, man-made religion bypasses Jesus and teaches people that they must keep paying the price by relying on legalistic rules or perfect behaviour to get to God.

Yet I can't find Jesus showing up in the synagogues to announce that He had a newly expanded list of rules for the Jews to follow. I can't find Him teaching crowds of people about all the necessary rituals to follow or behaviours to modify before God loves them.

Instead, I find Jesus embracing those rejected or written off by religion. I see the broken, the hurt, the devastated and the outcast flocking to Him in droves. Why? Jesus taught a radical concept—the opposite of what works-based religion dictated was necessary to reach God.

Rather than adding to the heavy heap of legalistic rituals and self-effort that was burning people out, **Jesus offered incredible mercy, grace and free access to God through Him.** He also showed people something religion didn't—God's love.

You see, **it was love that sent Jesus to make a way for us to have a relationship with Him.** When Jesus declared He is the only way to God, it's because His sacrifice alone fulfilled the law and paid our debt in full.

That means rituals, legalistic rules and guilt cannot earn us right-standing with God. No amount of personal effort can match or achieve what Jesus did through the cross.

**So, how many ways can you get to God? Only one—and thanks to Jesus, that is more than enough!**

# Signed, Sealed and Delivered

**In Him, the answer is always “Yes” and “Amen”—signed, sealed and delivered!**

Many of us have been taught that prayer is presenting our requests and then waiting for God to make a decision.

Is that how salvation works, though? When I gave my life to Jesus Christ and asked Him to come into my life, did that request go before God for consideration? Was there a vote with the archangels? “We’ve got so-and-so asking for salvation. How do you guys feel about this one?”

**No, God will never refuse anyone choosing to believe on Jesus, because He will never go back on His Word.**

*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

**Romans 8:32 (NKJV)**

Jesus purchased salvation for us and sent Holy Spirit to dwell in us, which means God is not taking a vote when the unsaved request salvation. The same also goes for the rest of the package. When the Bible says, “Ask, and it will be given to you” (Matthew 7:7-8), the original language implies that **we are to declare it, not plead for it**. It’s like asking someone at the table to pass the butter. It’s not asking if they’re willing to pass the butter; it’s simply a way of communicating with the expectation that food will move around the table.

Jesus fully qualified us for every promise. **In Him, the answer is always “Yes” and “Amen”—signed, sealed and delivered!** (See 2 Corinthians 1:20.) You can believe and declare that His promises are yours!

# I Once Was Blind, but Now I See

**The better you get to know Jesus, the more clearly you'll see how genuinely freeing the good news of Christ is!**

Jesus taught that legalistic religion can blind people spiritually. How?

It uses rules, rituals and guilt to remind people of their continual failure to live up to those same regulations. It keeps them focused on their efforts and shortcomings, blinding them to the **awesome freedom found in God's grace and mercy**.

The Pharisees considered themselves the best at following religious laws, yet Jesus called them "blind guides leading the blind" (Matthew 15:14, NLT). Why? They couldn't see how their self-righteousness blinded them to their need for a Saviour.

It's no surprise that the people whom Jesus irritated the most were the religious ones! His actions ticked them off. For example, when Jesus healed a man with a deformity on the Sabbath, the Pharisees were furious, thinking Jesus committed a Sabbath infraction (Luke 6:6-11).

Did they share the joy of someone set free from a physical disability? No. Did they marvel at the miracle Jesus performed in front of them? No.

All they could see was the rule they thought Jesus broke, which caused them to flip out and begin plotting how to get even with Jesus. See how blind and toxic religion is?

*Jesus then said, "I came into the world to bring everything into the clear light of day, making all the distinctions clear, so that those who have never seen will see, and those who have made a great pretense of seeing will be exposed as blind."*

**John 9:39 (MSG)**

If you were raised in works-based religion and struggle to see the freedom found in Jesus, I encourage you to dig into the new covenant. The better you get to know Jesus, the more clearly you'll see how **genuinely freeing the good news of Christ is!**

# It's All About a Relationship!

## Good news—God wants a rich relationship with us too!

**Performance-based religion is ironic. It teaches people they can get closer to God through methods that actually kill intimacy.**

*Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God?*

**Galatians 2:21 (MSG)**

For example, let's say a married couple finds their relationship in a rut. So they talk things out, and the wife hopes her husband gets it.

On Thursday night, the doorbell rings unexpectedly. The wife is surprised to realize her husband hired a babysitter to watch the kids. Suddenly, he comes out nicely dressed and says, "Babe, go put on something special. I'm taking you out."

She puts on her best red dress, and he takes her to their favourite restaurant. After heartfelt conversation and a great meal, he surprises her with a small, meaningful gift and tells her how much he loves her.

For the rest of the week, she is walking on air! She feels loved and excited about their relationship again.

The next Thursday, the husband books the babysitter again. He tells his wife to put on the red dress and takes her to the same restaurant. He covers the same conversation as last time, gives her a gift and professes his love. The following Thursday, sure enough: it's the same routine. By the fourth Thursday, she's dreading what's coming. Why?

His heart stopped pursuing their relationship out of love and instead relegated it to a system. It's the same way religion teaches people to ingratiate themselves to God. Unfortunately, rules and rituals don't create connection. Deep down, we crave rich relationships, not rule-based interactions. **Good news—God wants the same with us too!**

# Do We Need More Than Faith to Be Right with God?

**Salvation is available to everyone by faith alone in what Jesus accomplished through the cross.**

Have you ever struggled with thinking it takes more than accepting Christ to be right with God?

The early church struggled with the same issue. Why? Because different false teachers kept trying to tack on rules and legalism to the Gospel and drag it back into the burdensome old covenant ways.

Acts chapter 15 tells us the Apostle Paul and Barnabas argued vehemently against Jewish Pharisees who had begun teaching that salvation for Gentile believers required circumcision and following the law of Moses. Paul also wrote letter after letter to the early churches, urging believers to stick to the true Gospel message of Christ and to get rid of the religious rules they were adding. Why?

Because Paul knew adding old rituals and man-made traditions would enslave new believers and deny the true freedom found in the Gospel.

As a former hard-core Pharisee, Paul knew the joyless burden of legalistic religion. He also knew the incomparable personal transformation he experienced through Christ. No wonder he passionately shared over and over that **salvation is available to everyone by faith alone in what Jesus accomplished through the cross.**

*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 3:22 (NLT)**

Paul wanted to make sure believers didn't get bogged down in the mud of works-based religion but stayed rooted in the free gift of righteousness available through Christ.

Centuries later, the Gospel remains unchanged. We are still "made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law" (Galatians 2:16, NLT). What a message of great comfort and joy for us!

# **It's Not What We Do, It's Who We Believe In**

**You don't need the rules of religion to please God. You need Jesus!**

Today, some people believe that the church should preach such a harsh message that every sinner either runs to the altar for forgiveness or out the back door in shame. Yet I can't find Jesus or the apostles doing that.

When they preached the Gospel in a city, it would explode with great joy! Jesus consistently attracted massive crowds, and when He received persecution it was never from the crowd. It was always from the legalistic, religious people. In fact, those same religious people nailed Jesus to a cross because He brought a message that said, "You don't need the rules of religion to please God. **You need Me.**"

*Can't you see the central issue in all this? It is not what you and I do—submit to circumcision, reject circumcision. It is what God is doing, and he is creating something totally new, a free life!*

**Galatians 6:15 (MSG)**

You see, following oppressive, legalistic rituals or trusting in our good works won't bring our hearts to life or earn us better standing with God. And teaching people that they are dirty sinners doesn't change their hearts, either. It only loads them down with more guilt, causing them to think God rejects them for failing to be "good enough." Jesus didn't operate like that.

He extended mercy (John 8:1-11), forgiveness (Luke 7:36-50) and incredible compassion (John 4:1-42) to people. **He offered people the joy of being loved, accepted and forgiven.**

As believers, **the more we realize that it's not what we do but who we believe in that truly matters, the more freedom we experience.**

No wonder the Apostle Paul wrote, "May what our Master Jesus Christ gives freely be deeply and personally yours, my friends. Oh, yes!" (Galatians 6:18, MSG).



# God Has Never Stopped Pursuing You

**God pulled out all the stops to provide a way for us to enjoy a redeemed relationship with Him.**

There's an old saying that goes, "Religion is man's pursuit of God, but Christianity is God's pursuit of man."

You see, religion involves people pursuing God's love, blessing or presence by following a bunch of man-made rules. Religion is a harsh, relentless taskmaster for so many people.

For example, there are devotees to certain religions who drive steel pins through their cheeks to please their god. Followers of other religions crawl on their knees up steep mountains to a statue of their god to prove that they are worthy of love or to have their prayers answered. Some people volunteer at church hoping it earns them brownie points with God.

Religion always places the burden on an individual to pursue God's favour. But after humanity's fall in the garden, notice that it was God who searched for man!

While Adam and Eve hid in shame, **God still pursued His relationship with mankind...** and He continued until He made a way to restore it. That way was accomplished through Christ's death and resurrection.

*When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"*

**Genesis 3:8-9 (NLT)**

Maybe you haven't lived perfectly and feel like you need to hide in shame from your Creator. Or perhaps you feel burnt out from trying to earn your way into God's good graces. Whatever your circumstances, recognize that **God pulled out all the stops to provide a way for us to enjoy a redeemed relationship with Him.**

What amazing news to know that you don't need religious works to reach God—you **just need Jesus.**

# Conclusion

**God is already in love with you. He is an excellent, adoring parent who is crazy about you.**

**God loves us before we do anything to earn it**, just like loving parents do today.

When a family welcomes a new baby, that infant hasn't earned any love yet. They mess their diapers, keep their parents up all night and never say thank you. Actually, for the first few years, kids don't earn anything at all. They don't help out financially, clean the house or appreciate all the hard work their parents put in.

Yet as parents, we pour our hearts and souls into our kids because we're helplessly in love with them. We don't pick up our new baby and go, "All right, kid, the jury is still out on you. We haven't figured out if you're going to be a blessing to our family or not. So, in eighteen years, we'll let you know if you've earned our love or not."

No one does that! **From day one, we heap love onto our kids** to help them to learn and grow. When they mess up or fall, we're the first ones there to pick them up and love on them.

**That's what our Father God is like.** He is not some distant, affection-less parent waiting to see if we're worth loving. He loves us before we've done a single thing to earn it because we are His kids (1 John 3:1).

*We love each other because he loved us first.*

**1 John 4:19 (NLT)**

So, if you've been struggling with thinking you need to earn God's love, think about this: **you cannot earn what you already have. God is *already* in love with you.** He is an excellent, adoring parent who is crazy about you. Today, meditate on how deeply His love runs for you no matter what!