

Good Enough For God

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Are you good enough for God? How good must one be to please God? How do you know if God is pleased with you? Does going to church earn us points with God? By the way, going to church isn't one of the Ten Commandments. We are commanded to keep the Sabbath holy by not doing work on that day, but nothing is mentioned in that commandment about weekly attendance at church or temple. Have you kept the Sabbath holy by avoiding physical exertion? Okay, so what about the other commandments? Have you obeyed every commandment without fault, including the commandments about coveting? Does perfect compliance make you good enough for God?

I hope you see the problem here. Our perceived status with God varies depending on what measuring stick we use. The most common measuring stick is comparing ourselves to other people. "I'm not as bad as those people," we might say. That's a cop-out because we can always find someone who is less righteous than us. When I make myself righteous at the expense of others, that's called self-righteousness. Jesus hung out with the unrighteous, not with the self-righteous. Awareness of our failure at being righteous is the beginning of true humility.

God's Holiness is the Standard

The proper measuring stick is God's holiness. Leviticus 19:2 says, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Isn't God making an unreasonable demand of us? Let's be realistic. Who can attain to the level of God's holiness? No one can. And yet, that is the standard God uses. God imposes such a high standard because He wants us to realize that we can't attain to it. Jesus says in Mark 10:18, "No one is good, except God alone." Psalm 14:3 says, "No one does good, not even one." Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. By God's standard, no one is righteous, no one measures up, no one is good enough.

But we need to feel good about ourselves. Our fragile self-esteem requires a positive self-view. We don't want to be self-deprecating people who see themselves as miserable sinners. We want to believe we're okay. The truth is

we aren't good enough, not even close. But we don't have to be miserable about it.

Why Jesus Matters

If we could be good enough by our own efforts, then Jesus wasted his time on Earth. Jesus came because we weren't good enough. God knew we weren't good enough from the beginning. That's why he sent Jesus. The human Jesus was the only one good enough for God. In him, God said He was well pleased. The divine Jesus fixed our problem of not being good enough.

1 Corinthians 1:30 says that Jesus has become our righteousness. His goodness becomes our goodness. We no longer have to be good enough because He is good enough. That's one of the basic tenants of Christianity. The implications are wonderful. We don't have to strive to please God because, in Christ, we are already acceptable to God. Our status with God isn't based on our behavior, but based on our belief in Christ's death in our behalf. We need not compare ourselves with others anymore. We are free from the pressures of guilt or fear in our relationship with God. No longer do we worry if God is displeased or fear whether God will punish us.

Never Good Enough

I struggled with how best to present this point, so if I sound too strong, it's because this topic is the most important I've ever written about. So many people wonder if they are good enough to get into heaven. The answer will always be no. We will never be good enough. Jesus died so we don't have to be good enough. Instead, we can have a relationship with God that supersedes such worries.

When guilt or fear assails us, we have a choice. We can justify ourselves before God based on our own merits. Or we can lean on Jesus. Jesus justifies us before the Father as our loving advocate. Our confidence need not rest in our goodness, but in God's goodness. I want to trust in God's goodness and not my

own. For years, I condemned myself for failing God. Now, I understand that God accepts me unconditionally, not because I did anything right, but because Jesus brought me into loving relationship with God.

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