



# Links Players

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## Grace

*But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...  
(Romans 3:21-23)*

This is one of the many “worth remembering” passages in the Bible. St. Paul has spent the first two and a half chapters of his letter to the Roman church convincing us that we are sinners worthy of God’s condemnation and dismissal.

This is pure, capital-L Law, which doesn’t paint a flattering picture of anyone. But Romans 3:21 marks a shift in the theological gears from Law to Gospel. To Grace. It even starts with “But...”

But... there isn’t much grace in golf, I’m afraid. Everybody knows that a “breakfast ball” off the first tee isn’t really a thing. Mulligans? Ix-nay. The same goes for “moving it in the fairway.” The requirement to play the ball where it lies leaves little wiggle room or room for interpretation. When someone I’m playing with moves a ball in the fairway, my inner Pharisee surfaces.

But I get it. We’re out there to have a good time. Who wants to play their second shot out of a divot? And everyone can move it in the fairway, right? Somehow, though, moving it in the fairway seems more sensible to me if I’m the one who has found the divot and you’re not.

Isn’t it interesting how, even in a recreational setting like golf, we chafe a bit under the law? We try to loosen its demands, even just a little. We are all opportunistic antinomians (i.e., anti-law), it seems.

I remember being gobsmacked back in 1968, as a 14-year-old boy, reading the issue of Sports Illustrated that told the story of Roberto De Vincenzo at the Masters.

Spellbound, even though, at the time, I knew next to nothing about golf. In the final round, he had erroneously signed off on a 4 for hole #17 rather than the 3 that he had actually gotten.

He finished second by one stroke. DeVincenzo’s fate seemed to me to be like a timeless Greek tragedy. His lament (“What a stupid I am!”) made no sense. I didn’t see him as nearly as stupid as a rule that would not permit correcting a simple accounting error recognized as such by everyone involved.

Precious little grace in golf, it seems.

DeVincenzo's bad math cost him \$5,000. The winner's purse that year was \$20,000. Second place got \$15,000. Admittedly, that \$5,000 difference could have bought him a lot more back then than it would now. It couldn't have bought him the green jacket, though.

And \$5K is small beans - even in 1968 dollars - compared to the debt of sin that we owe to God. Compared, as well, to the value of the winner's purse announced in Romans 3:21. Incalculable. Gift. Grace.

So, "What a stupid I am," for a \$5,000 error in documentation?

**Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for your amazing, free gift of grace to us.**

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Peter Muller

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