LINKS DAILY DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY | NOVEMBER 6TH, 2026

Links Players

QUESTIONS ENCORE
ISN'T BEING GOOD, GOOD ENOUGH?

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9, ESV)

A quick GHIN search reveals that you play to a plus-four handicap. Your last twenty rounds have been superb, and your ball-striking is better than ever.

Today, you could do no wrong—until the final hole. Through seventeen holes, you had carded ten birdies and seven pars. You were playing extraordinary golf.

But on the final hole, a par four, three balls sailed out of bounds, two shots found the water, and you finally scraped the ball into the hole after three putts. The result was an inexplicably disastrous 15.

After seventeen magnificent holes, you were ten under par and "taking dead aim" on eighteen. But that one hole cost you eleven strokes. Your final score? A one-over-par 73.

You remind your playing partners that ten birdies were an extraordinary accomplishment. But none of that changes your score. You sign for a 73.

Your mind races: "If only I had hit the fairway with my first swing! If only!"

That brings us to one of the most common misunderstandings about Christianity: "I'm a good person. Isn't that enough? After all, I'm not Hitler."

Most of us do not consider ourselves evil. We love our families, go to work, and usually try to do the right thing. Surely God would not reject someone who has lived a good life—right?

However, the question is not whether we are better than other people or whether our good deeds outnumber our bad ones. The question is whether we meet God's standard. And his standard is not relative goodness; it is perfection.

James writes, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it" (James 2:10).

One violation does not mean we have committed every possible sin. It means we have broken God's law and cannot claim perfect obedience. And, if we are honest, our failures are hardly limited to one.

Scripture examines not only our outward actions but also our motives, desires, and thoughts. Even our honorable deeds are often sullied by pride, selfishness, or a desire for recognition.

This is where Christianity differs from every attempt to earn God's approval through good works. God does not lower his standard. Instead, he provides the perfect righteousness his standard requires. How so?

Jesus Christ lived the perfectly obedient life we have failed to live. He fulfilled God's law without exception. Then, on the cross, he willingly bore the judgment our sins deserved.

Theologians call this the Great Exchange: our sins are counted against Christ, and his perfect righteousness is credited to those who trust in him.

Paul explains, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus did not become sinful; he bore our guilt as our substitute. In him, believers are forgiven and accepted as righteous before God.

God does not overlook our sins or "grade on a curve." Through Jesus Christ, he provides the righteousness he demands and we could never achieve.

John Newton, a participant in the evils of the 18th-century slave trade, later wrote "Amazing Grace." He came to understand that he could never right his wrongs by moral effort; his only hope was to be found in God's mercy through Christ.

It boils down to this: Am I trusting in my own goodness or in Jesus Christ?

Good works matter, but they are the outcomes of salvation, not the grounds for acceptance. We are reconciled to a holy God by grace, through faith in Jesus—not by posting a better score.

Prayer: Father, open our eyes to see how amazing your grace truly is. Turn us from trusting in ourselves and teach us to rest in Jesus Christ. Amen.

READING: Ephesians 2:8–9, ESV

1. Have you ever allowed one disastrous hole to overshadow an excellent round? How does that experience help you understand the illustration?

2. When you think about standing before God, are you more inclined to compare yourself with other people or to consider his standard? What do James 2:10 and Ephesians 2:8–9 reveal about the difference?

3. What does the Great Exchange mean, and how should trusting Christ's righteousness change both your assurance before God and your everyday obedience?

NOTES

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