

Good with God
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"Such is the confidence we have through Christ towards God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God." 2 Corinthians 3:4-5

Paul is talking about his confidence through Christ towards God. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, because of the Gospel, Paul knows that he is good with God.

We like the idea of being "good with God" - but then Paul adds the caveat. This good relationship with God, it has nothing at all to do with me. Or what I've done. Not a single thing. We claim nothing as coming from ourselves.

I am a proud American. I am even a fan of the rugged individualism, pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Socially there's a point to that - perhaps overplayed, but in life, you really do need to put the work and effort in. The more work you put in, the more likely you are to succeed. By and large, this approach has served our country well.

That may be great wisdom for our confidence in dealing with each other. If I have cleaned up the mess I made in the kitchen, I can be confident that my wife won't be mad at me for making a mess. If I get my work done and well, the boss probably won't get on my case. Get my homework done, and teachers and parents are happy.

But our relationship with God doesn't work that way. Because spiritually, as sinners, we don't get it done. Even our good works in life are tainted with sin. Do I clean up after I cook simply out of love for my wife or because selfishly I don't want her to get on my case? Or as is more often the case, do I not clean up because... well, I'm messy and sometimes easily distracted? There's sin there, at work, all the time. As Isaiah notes, all our righteousness is as a filthy rag. (Isaiah 64:6) While that might work well for dealing with other sinful people, where we'll all just take what we can get, it doesn't hold up before God Almighty.

And yet, you do hold up before God Almighty. In fact, God Almighty delights in you with utter joy and love. Not because of how good you are, but because of Christ Jesus. Because you are forgiven and joined to Him. And the thing is - Jesus doesn't mess up. God's attitude towards you isn't going to change, because Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We don't get to claim anything as coming from ourselves in terms of our relationship with God. We don't earn it, we can't claim any credit for it, it's not based upon our merit. And our old sinful flesh hates that, because we want to be the star of our own show. But faith pulls you out of yourself and places you in Christ Jesus - and that's where it's safe to be. Remember that Christ Jesus is your Savior and Redeemer, and you have utter security in Him.