

## Do the Right Thing, and All Will Go Well?

by Brenda Seefeldt

Growing up in a performance society, this way of thinking sounds common place. If I do the right thing, then all will go well. If I do what God has directed me to do, then that direction will go well.

However, not everything I've done in my life and the plans I believe God has for me has gone well. And I've been doing the right thing--I think.

The trap then begins. If things didn't go well, then I didn't do the right thing. Was it my pride (a continual struggle)? Another sin? Should I have spent more time doing what was needed? Should I have spent more time in prayer? Is there something in my life that held back the blessings for that day?

Self-doubt and condemnation are plentiful. "If this..." and "What if..." invade my thoughts--and my prayer life. I can spiritually beat myself silly. Of course it is me who has fallen short. I have a history of falling short.

This way of thinking also creates spiritual competition between Christians. As I am beating myself up with my what-ifs, I could be thinking about him. You know who him is, the guy you are always comparing yourself to. He is doing such and such and his life is prospering. His business is prospering. His family seems so happy. Maybe if he prayed over me, I would prosper the way he is. Noticed how I used he since I'm a woman in the ministry and have had to deal with the thought "if I was a man, all things would go well."

Then one day I may hear a rumor that he is having a personal problem. Secretly I find myself saying, "See, he's really not any closer to God than I am." Selfishly I feel better. Sometimes I even feel like I'm on a higher plane than he because I don't have that problem.

"Do the right thing and all will go well" thinking probably was prevalent in the public moral failings of several TV evangelists and the leaders that I knew personally. To them it seemed that as long as the money kept coming in and/or the bookings, they were doing the right thing. They could justify their sin because the blessings continued.

One day Jesus paid a visit to his cousin at the Jordan River. The purpose of this visit was to be baptized by this wilderness preacher relative of His. This was the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. No miracles had been performed yet. No sermons on the mount had been preached yet. No Pharisees had been confronted yet. However when Jesus came out of the water, a dove from the heavens came down. With the dove a voice proclaimed, "This is My Own dear Son, and I am pleased with Him." --Matthew 3:17. This acceptance came from the Father. Jesus did not do the right thing. Jesus hadn't done anything yet but live. This acceptance came just because the Father willed it.

That must have been the source of Paul's constant joy. The former Paul, Saul, did the right thing, what he thought was the right thing, and was successful, famous, and miserable. Then Saul met Jesus and changed his life and his name. Paul did the right thing and ended up in prison then eventually an early and horrible death--and rejoiced. Yes, Paul kept his fame but it was totally different.

Paul didn't beat himself up with "What if I hadn't traveled to this city?" "What if I hadn't mentioned I was a Roman citizen?" "What if I hadn't appealed to Caesar?" "What if I hadn't appealed to Caesar, how many more cities could I have reached with the good news?" History tells us that if Paul hadn't appealed to Caesar he would have been set free to go to all those cities.

But we learn Paul didn't spend his time in jail with the "what-ifs." He continued on with every opportunity he had. Paul's acceptance didn't come from what he did or didn't do. It came because his Father in Heaven willed it.

This thought process is to not take anything away from doing the right thing. A righteous heart always wants to do what is right. But there is no guarantee concerning what will follow. Paul did the right thing and ended up in chains. Jesus did the right thing and got crucified.

This exemplifies God's grace. I am acceptable to God. I am acceptable to God. I am acceptable to God! This is the beginning out of which good works can flow from my life. I am not trying to prove anything (something I constantly battle with). I am not living under condemnation for not having done the right thing. I am walking in what has already been. God has proven His pleasure in me by dying for me and removing the barrier to His acceptance--my sin.

Because I am acceptable to God, I can now do the right thing. Whatever the outcome, I am free to do the right thing. I can strive for excellence because I am accepted by God--not because I'm doing the right things. It takes the pressure off and it brings joy in doing the right thing. I have been set free from my own self-condemnation. I have been set free from feeling like a failure because of spiritual competition. I am acceptable to God so I can now do the right thing.

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