



## EASTER'S COMING!

Today's theme is the significance of what Jesus accomplished. Next week is Easter where we celebrate the bondage-breaking, death-destroying fact of the resurrection. It's a great Sunday to invite someone!

1. Who are you going to invite to join you for Easter Sunday?

## OUR CONCLUSIONS ABOUT JESUS DEFINE OUR RESPONSE TO HIM

[Ephesians 4:17-24] Paul uses a number of metaphors, such as clothing, about what we need to do—take these off and put these other things on because your old clothes aren't consistent with your new life in Jesus. But every sermon is either to do something or to know something. Before we can do, we have to know. Today's discussion is all about knowing the significance of Jesus so we can properly respond to Him, especially as we're moving into Easter week. We all have a theology (an understanding compiled about who God is) even if we haven't spent a lot of time clarifying it. The conclusions we draw about who Jesus is affect how we respond to Him. The worst thing is a partial truth because a half-truth doesn't lead us to complete freedom. Some people's theology focuses only on Jesus as Savior and misses Jesus' intention for us to live in a fullness of life. Some have relegated Jesus to only be a good moral example even though it's inconsistent to call someone a good moral example if you don't believe what they say...and Jesus said He is God. Others think of Jesus as a guarantee to get what they want like a divine butler. As believers, we need to be well instructed about Jesus.

2. How are you clarifying your theology? Why is this important?

## CAN YOU EVER BE GOOD ENOUGH?

[Galatians 2:16] There's nothing you can do beyond what Jesus has already accomplished for you. If you believe you just need to be good to make things right with God, you're misled. We have a theological construct called "justification" that's a legal term. By doing everything right, you can't be legally considered innocent. Someone has to be guilty and pay the price for missing the mark of perfection. Through Jesus we're justified and yet some of us walk around with a soul-crushing weight of guilt and shame that we continue to wear. The implication of this is that you have to continually prove yourself and demonstrate your worth to do away with that burden. This can also lead to doing good things for the wrong reasons, like going to Bible study to prove yourself to God rather in pursuit of Jesus. You're trying to prove yourself to a standard you've already gained through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Justification is the declaration in the cosmic court of law that on account of our faith in Jesus we're innocent and accepted.

3. If you closely examine your motives for doing "Christian" things is there an element of trying to prove yourself to God?

## YOU CAN'T EXCHANGE YOUR PAST BAD THINGS BY DOING NEW GOOD THINGS

[1 Peter 2:24] How do we get justified? It's an exchange. "Substitutionary atonement" means a substitute to cover the sins of someone else. As Jesus was crucified, He assumed all of the sinfulness of historical humanity so that we could be healed. This allows us to see ourselves correctly historically. Some of us carry a faulty assumption that we did bad things and now we need to make up for those bad things by doing good things. Jesus already did all of this for us. Failing to understand that Jesus already took care of our past robs us of the freedom that Jesus intends for us. We can't exchange our bad and good, but Jesus exchanged His perfection for our failings.

4. Are there bad things in your past you've failed to release to the exchange that only Jesus can offer?
5. How can our residual feelings about our past failings prevent us from what Jesus wants for our futures?

## THROUGH JESUS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO SOMETHING TO MAKE GOD LOVE AND VALUE YOU

[2 Corinthians 5:21] "Imputed righteousness" means goodness given to you by another. All of the sinfulness of humanity was put onto Jesus so He could wipe the slate clean. That means that God sees you through the lens of the completed rightness of Jesus. Sometimes some of us feel like God is just tolerating us. Some of us end up projecting on our Heavenly Father what our earthly fathers may have put on us. Things like that make us feel we have to work for God's affection. In truth, God the Father just looks down and says "I love you" and there's nothing more you have to do to earn His favor because God views you through the imputed acceptance of Jesus. Because of what Jesus did for you, you're fully approved, accepted, and loved.

6. What things can make us feel like God is just tolerating us?
7. As we have feelings of guilt, does this turn our attention toward ourselves or God?

## FREEDOM IS WHY IT MATTERS

God has already declared what Jesus did for you. What this means for you is freedom. Freedom to live life to the fullness. Freedom to understand what Jesus did for you. Freedom to see how God sees you. Freedom to see yourself consistent with your Creator's design of you. What we believe about our past and present is often how we move into our future. There should be a freedom to go into the transformative work that God has for us as He matures us. You have been declared innocent on account of the sacrifice of Jesus and no longer have to prove your worth because the Father is pleased with you due to what Jesus accomplished on your behalf. This allows us to live in spiritual freedom.

8. Does spiritual freedom mean freedom to do whatever you want?
9. How are the types of spiritual freedom we've discussed crucial to the ability to grow and transform in the way God want us to mature?