

Bottom Line: My Efforts Or God's Mercy?

Lesson 8

What happens when you're living your life thinking, "Bottom line: it's all up to me"?

"It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy... What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath – prepared for destruction?"

What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory – even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

As he says in Hosea:

*'I will call them "my people" who are not my people;
and I will call her "my loved one" who is not my loved one,' and,
'It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them,
"You are not my people,"
they will be called "sons of the living God." ...*

"What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works." (Romans 9:16-32)

"So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kill us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help.

"This is the how and the why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children." -- *Alcoholics Anonymous*

- How does the "Bottom line: it's all up to me" way of thinking play into a life of drinking and getting high?
- What happens when you start to believe that the bottom line is not your efforts or attitude or sincerity, but God's mercy?

- Sometimes people who are very serious about their religion go through life without any peace or hope because they're thinking, "Maybe God won't answer my prayers because I'm not praying quite the right way," or, "Maybe God won't bless me because I'm not completely obedient to him yet," or, "Maybe God won't accept me until I quit smoking and swearing and start going to church every Sunday." What does the Bible's message of God's grace say about that?