

THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 3

For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! Because of this light within you, you should only do what is good and right and true. (Ephesians 5:8-9, TLB)

WE’VE ALL BEEN THERE. You start with a three-putt, hit one OB on the second, then triple-chip the third. Your tee shot at the fourth is long and straight, but that just gives you more time to grumble as you make your way to the ball. When you get there, you breathe long enough to make a decent swing, and you watch as the ball lands at the front, curls forward to the hole, and stops a foot away. A kick-in birdie! A new day begins!

The story of a life changed by Jesus Christ is the story of a new beginning.

We live comfortably in our sin, unchallenged to change, sure that we know what’s best. Then something gets our attention, an instrument of the Lord in the guise of a late-night DUI, a cancer-stricken friend, or a stack of divorce papers. “My way” has become a dead end. A change enacted in a power far greater than our own—this is what we need.

And when we turn to Jesus—not just for a moment’s assuaging but for real and for good—he makes all things new. Actually, he has already done this. Redemption has been bought. But when our eyes are opened to it, and we cry out for his saving intervention, it is applied to us. We begin again.

When this happens, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, his light resides in us. This is a light that exposes, yes, so that we can see what all needs to be cleaned. But it is the light that illumines too, allowing for that cleaning.

In this light, we do not do what we once did. Rather, we do what is God-honoring. We do what is good and right and true. And we do it in spite of the criticism we may receive. We are not trying to push our morals on anyone; we’re just trying to live morally, as God would have us. No one despises integrity, honesty, or humility. You will not be condemned for rendering justice and mercy.

We choose righteousness when the light shines in our life, for it is then that we see how much better it is than darkness. We do good not in a competition for accolades but in consideration of the God we worship. We live in truth not to be seen as “gritty and authentic,” but because God’s truth is the compass that makes us moral.

Opening questions The PGA Tour’s “bounce back” stat is the measure of how a player does immediately after making bogey or worse. How good are you at bouncing back, in golf and in life?

READING Acts 9:1-22, Daniel 1:1-20, Proverbs 11:3-6

Paul’s new beginning

After reading Acts 9, how would you assess Paul’s qualifications for writing about new beginnings in Christ? How would you assess your own qualifications?

Honored for good

Daniel and his friends held out for God’s design. How did this work out? In what ways have you seen righteousness win the day around you?

The rewards of righteousness

Describe how the lines of Proverbs 11 paint a picture of the difference between living righteously and choosing an unrighteous course.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 4-minute video accompanies today’s study at <http://youtu.be/r6B4q9CAZKQ>