

Romans 3:23 NIV

When we fall short, we’re really short

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”

No one is righteous, says our text.

“All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory.”

In contrast, God is good—perfect.

He intended for us to reflect His goodness.

We not only fail to do that.

At times we don’t care whether we reflect his goodness.

Maybe just we forget.



- When you walk the halls at school, does it enter your mind: “I need to act as God wants here”?
- When you work, does it occur to you, “I am really working for God, not the company”?
- When with friends, do you remember that God wants you to act according to his standards?
 - At family get-togethers, does pleasing God shape what you say and do?

- When with your neighbors, are you conscious of the fact that he or she should see God’s goodness in you?
 - Making business deals or paying taxes, do you honor God in your calculations?
 - Do you choose books, music, and movies with God in mind?

After 60 years of preaching, I still struggle to stay a mindful of God in the situations I just mentioned.

I confess this hoping that you won’t conclude, “Well, if Bob fails, that gives me an excuse when I err.”
No wonder the Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

At great risk, we use others as a standard.

Former President Ronald Reagan told of a Los Angeles newspaper photographer, whose editor called informing him of a raging fire in Palos Verdes. The editor wanted the photographer to hurry to a small airport, board a waiting plane, get some pictures of the fire, and be back in time for the afternoon edition. Excitedly, he raced to the airport and drove to the end of the runway.

Sure enough, a plane with the engines revved waited, ready to go. The photographer got aboard, and at about five thousand feet, he began getting his camera out of the bag. He told the fellow flying the plane to get him over the fire so he could take his pictures and get back to the newspaper office. From the pilot side of the cockpit came a deafening silence. Then he heard these unsettling words: "**Aren't you my flight instructor?"**"



We often look at others thinking that they should be our life-models or instructors.

To reflect God's image means that we imitate Jesus; not any human being:

The only experienced pilot is Jesus.

All human beings struggle neck-deep in sin. As prophet Jeremiah said, "**The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.**"¹

"All have sinned and fall short of God's glory."

A preacher quit the ministry after 20 years and became a funeral director. When asked why he changed, he said: "I spent 3 years

trying to straighten out John and John's still an alcoholic. Then I spent 6 months trying to straighten out Susan's marriage and she filed for divorce.

I spent 2 ½ years trying to straighten out Bob's drug problem and he's still an addict. Now at the funeral home when I straighten them out, they stay straight."

Most of us struggle with some sort of sin. If anyone says: "I don't have a problem with sin!" that person suffers a serious pride crisis.

It amazes me how little attention some Christian leaders give to the matter of pride.

I began the year 2020 with a new Bible printed by a major publisher.

This Bible came with a concordance that lists major Bible topics.

The concordance lists Ituraea, which appears once in the whole Bible,² but lists nothing for the word *pride*.

Like to know how many occurrences of the word *pride* I have marked just since August in my daily Bible reading?

¹ Jeremiah 17: 9 NASB

² An area near Mt. Hermon governed by Herod the Tetrarch's brother Philip; see Luke 3:1

In four months, 25 different verses and this concordance doesn't list humility or hope either.

I need to be careful of my pride in pointing out this contradiction.

Why should God's image be my standard?

- 1. Reflecting God's image, rightly glorifies God, and benefits us.**

The Hollywood Church of Christ group first started meeting in 1938.

Norma and I were associated with the Hollywood Church from 1957-1991, 34 years.

In 1988, the Church celebrated fifty years of existence and ministry.

Many old-timers came back for the 50 year celebration and reunion.

Of course some charter members and old-timers still attended the Hollywood church.

You know how folks who haven't seen each other for many years talk about aging.

"Wow you look old!"

"You've got more wrinkles than 40 prunes."

Didn't you once have a full head of hair?"

"Is that really your hair?"

Many of those who came back commented to me about some who didn't seem to age or didn't show their years.



Those who didn't age as quickly weren't the Hollywood people who had tummy-tucks, facelifts, and liposuction.

Those who showed less signs of aging consisted primarily of folks whose lives better reflected Jesus' image.

They didn't abuse their bodies.

They forgave offenses against them.

They laughed a lot.

And they weren't worriers.

Those people didn't age as quickly.

Trying to reflect God's image glorifies God, and benefits us.

When Leonardo da Vinci painted "**The Last Supper**", he sought long for a model for his Christ. At last he located a chorister in one of the churches of Rome who seemed lovely in life and features, a young man named Pietro Bandinelli.

Years passed, and Leonardo hadn't finished painting the Last Supper. He had portrayed all the disciples save one; Judas Iscariot. He wanted to find a man with a hardened face distorted by sin. At last he found a beggar on the streets of Rome with a face so villainous he shuddered when he looked at him.

He hired the man to sit for him as he painted the face of Judas on his canvas. When he was about to dismiss the man, he said, "I have not yet found out your name."

He replied: "I am Pietro Bandinelli. I also sat for you as your model of Christ."³

"All have sinned and fall short."

Reflecting God's image, rightly glorifies God, and benefits us in numerous ways.

Here's a second important truth.



2. Being out of sorts with other people creates stress in us.

Breaking the long silence after a quarrel, the husband said meekly to his wife, "Honey, I've decided to agree with you." "Too late," she snapped, "I've changed my mind."

I don't tell Norma, but in those few times we disagree, I often feel sick to my stomach.

The onset of many illnesses occurs after folks experience stress and tension.

³ Adapted from *Indian Christian*; other materials adapted from David Wilkerson; Richard Carswell, *HOW SMALL A WHISPER*; and *Don Emmitte*. Illustrations from ClipArt (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989) and Don Emmitte

Our society currently deals with severe depression and anxiety.

I suspect we can trace much of it to people being out of sorts with God.

Fewer people now attend worship; many now spend Sundays watching professional or youth sports, attending fundraiser brunches, family functions.

Our Creator ranks low in their priorities.

All mankind is out-of-sorts with God.

"All have sinned and fall short."

A character in one of Flannery O'Connor's short stories asked the question, "Have you ever looked inside yourself and seen what you are not?"

Maxie Dunham asked, "Well, have you? Have you ever looked inside yourself and seen what you are not? That's sin—denying or neglecting who God is calling us to be.

- Sin is falling short of the glory of God. Sin is searching for self-glory.
- Sin is ... convincing ourselves we have no sin.
- Sin is thinking that we are not dependent upon God or accountable to Him.
- Sin is convincing ourselves that we are good enough."⁴

⁴ Adapted from Maxie Dunham, *That's What the Man Said*, P - 28

3. If two folks disagree, each blames the other. When Norma and I have one of our "rare" disputes, she says that she is right. And for sure, I insist that I'm right.

Now we understand that whoever is wrong should apologize and make up.

If someone offends you, he/she should take the initiative and express regret, correct? "I didn't do anything wrong. He's the one who should say that he's sorry."

The guilty party should apologize—make amends, true?

So all of us offend God by sinning and falling short of his glory.

So who should apologize for our failure?

In our relationships with others, you know what aggravates conflicts:

"He never writes."

"She never calls me. I always have to call her."

"He borrowed from me and never paid me back."

"She never does her share."

"He's thoughtless and inconsiderate."

Aren't those the things that make us upset with other people?

That's why we become angry with our friends, co-workers, and family.

Apply these principles to your relationship with God.

Have you made promises to God that you haven't kept?

"Lord, help me out of this mess and I'll always be faithful to you."

"Dear God, just get me out of this jam, and I'll never miss services again."



If your friend, co-worker or spouse made a promise to you and didn't keep it, would you still be talking?

So who took the initiative in resolving our conflicts with God?

God did, of course.

We "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."

We have a gracious loving God, don't we?

God forgave the massive debts we owe him.

So what does He expect of us?

He wants us to be sorry and to act like we regret our wrongdoing.

"Godly sorrow leads to repentance."

The Lord wants us to believe Him and trust Him.

Turmoil results from being out-of-sorts with God especially not trusting our future to Him.

We tend to think our future and happiness depend on the quality of our President and other leaders.

Political leaders do not determine your ultimate future.

Your relationship with God does.

The Old Testament teaches that.

Jesus taught that:

“Believe in God; believe also in me,” John 14.

Faithfulness to God our Creators is the *Book of Revelation*’s primary message.

When God powerfully destroyed the Egyptians and their false gods, he delivered about 2 million Hebrews from slavery.

He assigned Moses to lead the Hebrews to the Promised Land.

In various ways, God tested their faith and trust on the journey.

The Hebrews forgot God’s rescue operations:

- The ten plagues on the Egyptians;
- Parting of the sea;
- Destruction of Pharaoh’s army;
- Gushing water from a huge rock formation.

Instead of enduring their tests and proving their faith in God, they grumbled, complained, and fought with one another—even over leaders.

Of the 2 million, do you recall how many original Hebrews got to the Promised Land? Only two men, Joshua and Caleb.

I think God is testing us right now.

We bridge the gulf between God and our sinful selves by believing Him and humbly serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

We need a new heart--a heart at one with God that daily trusts and honors Him:

“justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

We don’t need to be out of sorts with God any longer.

We trust and depend on God, not the newscasters, politicians, and elitists, who seem not to believe in our Creator, and who would like for us to idolize them.



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