

# SET FREE!

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## THE RELIGION OF GOLF

**One season** I worked at a private golf and country club. It's a very exclusive club, one to which the Mayor of the City and his family belong. It is even frequented by the Premier of the province.

The membership dues are a year's salary for most of us. Plus there is an annual fee of \$5000, and a restaurant tab.

The members are treated like royalty with the best of the best in service and facilities. It would be classed with a five star resort. There are people to clean their clubs and even their shoes. When they wash their hands they dry them on freshly laundered towels.

In the dining room they have gourmet chefs catering to their every desire. In the lounge they have the Golf Channel on the TV, there are golf magazines, tournaments, special days for men and women, there are special classes for the children, visitor days, various food nights in the dining room, pictures on the walls of famous golfers that have visited the course –

**....it's all about golf!**

I would listen to the members as they discuss their game. They have a language that only a golfer would understand. They ask each other how they are doing in the art of perfecting their game. They work and work at "doing it better."

The conversations include: discussing how to hold the clubs just so, how to position their feet and arms – all in an effort to get the lowest score possible. They pay the Pro's big money to show them "how to do it."

These avid golfers will often play in the worst of weather conditions, anything to "get out there" and do better, to improve their game. They enjoy it most of the time, but at the same time they grumble and complain at how poorly they are doing.

They say how good the exercise is for them, but they ride around in electric carts and have caddies carry their clubs for them.



**This** all reminds me of many Christians and their efforts to be “better Christians.” To gain more of God’s approval at how they play the game of Christian life.

We gather not at the “Temple of Golf”, but we do come to churches where we have visitor days, special food nights, and classes for the kids and teens, and we get special pro coaches to come in and tell us how to “do it better.”

We console each other as we fail to “do” Christianity. We talk about how to improve our game, how to study more, to pray more, to come to the right special events, to read the right books, to be at the right church, how to **do** more and more.

We look to see what is “par for the course” and try to achieve it or to even exceed it.

### **Struggling to get God’s approval in the Christianity game!**

I like to speculate what would happen to a golfer if they managed to get a “hole-in-one” at all eighteen holes – “played the perfect game.” Would they ever play again? Would the struggle be over? I asked that question of a number of the members and received a variety of answers.

Some said that if they played the “perfect game” they would just find a harder course to play. Some have said that they’d see if they could do it again. Others have said that they’d never play again, and some others simply replied, “It just couldn’t be done” and left with a weary look on their faces.

Relating that to the life of the believer; could we ever be “perfect” at being a Christian? What would that look like?

Would it be a life of praying the right number of hours per day, reading the right number of passages of scripture per day, serving on the right committees, inviting the right number of non-believers to church, witnessing to the maximum people, attending all of the right meetings, reading all the right books, seeing all of the right videos, mastering all the steps to victory and success.

## Would or could we ever hit the right mark?

If we ever did achieve those goals it would all be self-righteousness!

Paul said that he used to play religion like that – and he was very good at it too. But one day he gave it all up. He was **set free** from the struggle to be the top religious player.

**Philippians 3:7-9 (MSG)** <sup>7</sup>*The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I'm tearing up and throwing out with the trash--along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ.* <sup>8</sup>*Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant--dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ* <sup>9</sup>*and be embraced by him. I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ--God's righteousness.*

Our struggling to look and be more righteous is not going to achieve anything but self-righteousness.

We are “in Christ”. We have His righteousness. We have the victory! He has played the perfect game and did it all with **one stroke!**

**1 Corinthians 15:57** *But now in a single victorious stroke of Life, all three--sin, guilt, death--are gone, the gift of our Master, Jesus Christ. Thank God!*

There is no point in us trying to do it in **our** strength. Instead, what we are to do is find our identity “in Him” and to revel in His victory.

Let's not be like those golfers, striving endlessly to be the best at the game of Christianity. We are **set free** from the struggle to play the perfect game. Instead let's just enjoy our life “in Christ Jesus.”



**Let's just rest in His victory!**

**Hebrews 4:9-10** (New King James Version) *There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.* <sup>10</sup>*For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.*

Relax from **your** labours to be a “better player” in the “game of life”.

**We are set free to rest “in Him.”**