

## January 23

**Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)** <sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.

Maureen had been part of the church since she was a little girl. She was very outgoing and was willing to help whenever she could. As she grew and as the church grew, she felt she was being prepared for a bigger role in the church. When the elders announced they were praying for someone to head a new community outreach program that would feed families, Maureen felt she was the perfect choice. She voiced her willingness to do whatever the leadership needed her to do. However, when the leadership announced that Evelyn, who had been part of the church for less than a year, would head the new outreach, Maureen was hurt, angry, and confused. Certainly, she had earned that new position. Besides, Evelyn was not only new to the church but to the community. It simply was not fair. After listening to Maureen voice her feelings, the pastor calmly explained that positions in Christ's church are based on faith and not on merit lest anyone should boast.

For a time, I had the same train of thought as Maureen. It is a form of legalism that causes us to believe that we can earn a position with Jesus because of what we do instead of who we are and what He has done. Such thinking leads to a perverted idea of what leadership should resemble in Christ's body. In my early days in the church, I was picked to serve on a committee commissioned to get people more involved. After much discussion, the group decided to place those who had not been coming into a position of authority so they would feel compelled to come. We were putting merit over faith. Of course, that did not work as it led to even more problems. When Jesus raises a person up, He never takes away from us or slights us. He looks at our level of faith and commitment. He assigns us responsibilities to match our faith and abilities. After all, on the surface, David's only qualifications for becoming king were his victories over wild animals. In those victories, God saw a young man of faith. All of Jesus's promises become real to us because of faith, and not because of works.